

Church at home

East Leake Methodist Church 2021

Sit comfortably in a quiet place and prepare, start with a brief period of silence, turning your mind and spirit towards God. You may want to have a cross or candle in view as a focus.

Welcome & Call to Worship

Based on Acts 4:11

My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest friend
but wholly trust in Jesus name

Christ alone cornerstone
weak made strong In the Saviour's love
through the storm
he is Lord
Lord of all

Hymn The Church's One Foundation (690) StF

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rIS166ppoE>

Prayer

For the joy of fresh sunrise,
for the hope each new day brings,
for a love that knows no bounds,
we praise you,
bountiful God.

But even as words of praise
pass our lips,
we know that we have not always lived
as those who are loved, forgiven and set free.

We have allowed ourselves
to be imprisoned by tradition,
captivated by habit,
limited by fear.

Through the healing power
of love made flesh,
make us whole,
to live and love
with open hearts
and generous spirits. Amen

Reading **Psalm 23 (King James version)**

1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.
3 He restoreth my soul:
he leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil:
for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Reading: **Psalm 23 (Psalms/Now)** **Chris Watkins**

The Lord is my constant companion.
There is no need that He cannot fulfil.
Whether His course for me points
to the mountaintops of glorious joy

or to the valleys of human suffering.
He is by my side.
He is present with me.
He is close beside me

when I tread the dark streets of danger,
and even when I flirt with death itself,
He will not leave me.
When the pain is severe,
He is near to comfort.

When the burden is heavy,
He is there to lean upon.
When depression darkens my soul,
He touches me with eternal joy.
When I feel empty and alone,
He fills the aching vacuum with His power.
My security is in His promise
to be near me always
and in the knowledge
that he will never let me go.

Hymn **The King of Love My Shepherd Is (479) StF**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWfZ-8s71-k>

Reflection

At the centre of the Bible we find the book of Psalms. This is a great collection of songs and prayers that express the heart and soul of humanity. In them we find that a whole range of human experience are expressed.

David and other writers have clearly and honestly poured out their true feeling, reflecting a dynamic, powerful and life-changing friendship with God. The psalmists confess their sins, express their doubts and fears, and ask God for help in times of trouble and they praise and worship him.

As we read the book of Psalms, we hear believers crying out to God from the depths of despair, and we hear them singing to him in the heights of celebration.

The psalm we are concentrating on today, Psalm 23, seems relevant as we emerge for a long year of restrictions, sorrow and despair. In describing the Lord as a shepherd, David wrote out of his own experience because he had spent his early years caring for sheep.

Sheep are completely dependent on the shepherd for provision, guidance and protection. The New Testament refers to Jesus as our good and great shepherd, so, we too are often referred to as his sheep, not frightened, passive animals, but obedient followers, wise enough to follow one who will lead us in the right places and in right ways. Psalm 23 does not focus on the animal-like qualities of sheep but on the discipleship qualities of those who follow.

When we allow God, our shepherd to guide us, we have contentment. When we choose to go our own way we often blame God but it is down to us, if we stray away from the path. God knows the 'green pastures' and 'quiet waters' that will restore us.

This past year death has been brought into focus for many families, with the pandemic, losing loved ones, Sir Captain Tom Moore, and most recently

HRH Prince Philip, no one is spared, in the words of Queen Elizabeth: “grief is the price we pay for love”.

When a much loved friend and church member was facing the fear of death she gave to me ‘My 23rd Psalm’ which gave her strength and comfort:

The Lord is my enabler
I shall not lack for strength
He comforts me when I am sad
And helps me to rest and play
He gives the strength I need to cope
To help me show his glory
Even when I feel most bewildered and hurt
And can't see the way ahead
I will still cling to Him
And try not to be afraid because
You Lord are always there
And I am comforted by knowing
That You know the plan You have for me
It's your opinion that matters
And You give me all sorts of good things
You've been faithful so far Lord
So surely You will continue
Until I get home to heaven
With You for Ever.

I often point people towards the Psalms in times of sorrow and joy, as you read them, you will hear believers crying out to God from the depths of despair, and you will hear them singing to him in the heights of celebration.

I take great comfort myself from reading the psalms, I think I would be right in thinking that we all have a favourite psalm, mine is psalm 139, I am reminded that God knows and loves me completely. I remember my sister showing me a the scan photograph of her grandson, I thought wow! I can now see what God has always been able to see, but, psalm 139 is for another day! Let's get back to psalm 23! Henri Nouwen, the Dutch Priest, writer and theologian in his book ‘A Spirituality of Living’ writes:

“Oh, if we could sit for just one half hour a day doing nothing except taking a simple word or phrase from the Bible and holding it in our heart and mind. “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Ps. 23:1 NRSV). Say it three times. We know it's not true, because we want many things. That is exactly why we're so nervous. But if we keep saying the truth, the real truth- “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want”-and let that truth descend from our minds into our hearts, gradually those words will be written on the walls of our inner holy place. That becomes the space in which we can receive our colleagues and our work, our family and our friends, and the people we will meet during the day.” (Pp. 16-17)

Whether you are despairing or rejoicing, you will always hear the psalm writers sharing honest feelings with their God. Let the honesty of the psalms guide you into a deep and genuine relationship with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, our blessed Shepherd. Amen

Hymn The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want (481) StF

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-elQQayhpak>

Prayers of Intercession

Jesus, good shepherd, we bring to you in our prayers
those at the mercy of the wolves of violence and abuse;
those scattered by prejudice and persecution;
those harried by the pressures of life
and their responsibilities to others;
those who feel abandoned by their families and friends;
those robbed of the fullness of life by illness, poverty, by fear;
those who feel excluded from the sheepfold of church or society,
those on the fringes of our communities.
Jesus, good shepherd, unite us, inspire us
and use us to draw others to your love. **Amen**

Silence: Take a few moments to hold before God people, places, events that you want to place in god's hands today.

Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,
The power and the glory,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Hymn Give Me the Faith Which Can Remove (661) StF

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdvECYqjPcc>

Blessing

As you continue on your way,
May you know that god goes before you.
By the strength of his Spirit,
Share your faith with the uncertain;
Share your love with the unlovely;
Share your presence with the lonely;
And share god with everyone,
Just as God has shared himself with you,
In the unfading blessing of Jesus Christ,
Our Lord and Saviour.

Amen