

**WESLEY UNITING CHURCH
SUNDAY, APRIL 21ST, 2024
FOURTH SUNDAY IN EASTER
10:00AM
A SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING**



Ordos Protestant Church, Mongolia: where creative, imaginative architecture reflects faith in life-giving resurrection.

During the Easter Season – a period of fifty days from Easter Sunday until Pentecost – the Christian Church rejoices in the Risen Lord. The reason for such joy is the intuition and belief that the Risen Lord anticipates a risen world, marked by three Hebrew ethical traits: *chesed* or loving kindness, *mispat*, best translated as right governance toward justice, and *tsadaq*, which means justice reflected in beneficence and virtue for the common good. Within the context of these rich Easter ethical traits, these last weeks we have also heard readings which affirm the importance of freedom: the freedom to question (as represented in the scepticism of the disciple Thomas the doubter, as he queried the truth of Jesus' resurrection), and the freedom to imagine beyond the obvious, to look further ahead to the horizon (as the resurrected Jesus' invited the people on the road to Emmaus, to do, paralysed as they were in despair at his execution).

We have much to give thanks for: a world view ceded us by Jesus which is life-giving in our current global malaise, and Wesley itself, as we have been shepherded through challenging times by the Good Shepherd. Let us celebrate together!

GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

PRELUDE **Chorale Prelude on 'Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland', BWV 659** J.S. Bach 1685-1750

INTROIT **The Good Shepherd** Roger Petrich

The Good Shepherd is risen,
who laid down his life for his sheep
and willingly died for his flock. Alleluia.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY AND SAFE CHURCH STATEMENT

Let us acknowledge the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples,
The first inhabitants of this place,
part of God's good creation.
We honour them for their custodianship of the land,
on which we gather today.

The Uniting Church in Australia believes that all people are made
in the image of God, and so we accept every individual regardless
of race, age, creed, sexuality and gender.

INTRODUCTION: Jan Sismey

WELCOME AND LIGHTING OF THE COMMUNITY CANDLE

INVOCATION OF THE TRINITY AND GREETING

The Lord is risen.
He is risen indeed.

In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
The Lord be with you
And also with you.

OPENING PRAYER

Living Word,
whose love abides in us,
You call us to love

in truth and action.
Open our ears to the wisdom.
Transform our charity into justice.
Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP

How shall we live when we have more than enough?
We have no greater praise to offer than caring for your creatures and Creation.

The earth is our teacher – nurturing and tender.

In this hour, O God, nourish us in the soil of your love.

Let us worship God, the Ground of all Being.

Written by Rev. Paul Mitchell, Walla Walla, WA (ancestral homelands of the Cayuse, Umatilla, Palus, and Walla Walla), senior pastor of Pioneer United Methodist Church OF the USA.

HYMN 474: Gather Us In

Marty Haugen (b. 1950)

PRAYERS OF ADORATION

God Creator;

we adore you.

God crucified and risen us;

we adore you.

God among us and within us;

we adore you.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit;

God Creator, God crucified and risen, God among us and within us, you give us abundant life.

CONFESSING OUR 'HUBRIS' (SELF SUFFICIENCY)

Our prayer today arises from the image in the Gospel about sheep. The image, which we moderns see as unflattering, with regard to our dependence upon God, nevertheless, opens the door to a reality check about human vulnerability, and the need for a realistic sense of humility. This prayer points to those many situations, where we as human beings still plead for God's presence and compassion, when we are out of our depth. It takes the format of the Lord's Prayer

O Lord our Shepherd,
may your flock not want

in the refugee camps
of Yarmouk, of Darfur, of Dadaab.

May life-giving pastures of nourishment be theirs
in Sudan, in Niger, in Chad.

May waters of peacefulness and healing flow
in Somalia, in Syria, in the Ukraine.

**And may souls be restored in our own cities and towns
where violence and hunger still live.**

O Lord our Shepherd,
death shadows the valleys
and the houses and hills of the earth's many nations and states.

May the strength of your grace and
the assurance of your love
ever with us and ever embracing,
bring comfort to the many grieving and alone.

**May there be a table of reconciliation prepared
where enemies may sit down in peace
and may the cup of joy overflow for those
whose suffering has been their drink.**

Let your goodness and mercy pursue us,
O Shepherd, our Lord,

May you come to our aid even in our reluctance to admit our need
and may all your people dwell
in the unity of your love
as long as life endures.

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.

Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Friends in Christ, know this: the mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting, and I remind you of this surpassing grace – in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

A STORY FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART

PEACE

We greet each other with the words, “The peace of the Lord be with you” or if from a distance, the hand over the heart, or the hands clasped.

SERVICE OF THE WORD

During the season of Easter, readings from the Acts of the Apostles replace the Hebrew Bible

PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING

In our struggle to hear your word O God,
bless our doubts,
our wonderings,
our deep questions and deeper mysteries.
Teach us to love your questions as well as our answers.

EPISTLE 1 John 3:16-24 pp. 990-991

¹⁶We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. ¹⁷How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? ¹⁸Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. ¹⁹And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him²⁰whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; ²²and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.²³And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. ²⁴All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

GOSPEL: John 10:11-18, pp. 872-873

¹¹“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord - **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

ANTHEM Loving Shepherd of Thy Sheep French melody ‘Orientis partibus’ c. 1200, arr. Ludwig Lenel, words by Jane Leeson (1807-82)

Loving shepherd of thy sheep, keep thy lamb, in safety keep,
Nothing can thy power withstand, none can pluck me from thy hand.
Loving shepherd, ever near, teach thy lamb thy voice to hear;
Suffer not my steps to stray from the straight and narrow way.
Where thou leadest, I would go, walking in thy steps below.
Till before my Father’s throne, I shall know as I am known.

PREACHING

PRAYERS OF THANKSIVING FOR WESLEY AS WE LOOK TO THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Our response after each prayer offered by members of the congregation will be “We give thanks”.

OFFERING HYMN 659 The Lord is My Shepherd

Brian Boniwell, arr. Kevin Hunt.

The Offering is received as the congregation sings. We remain standing as the prayers over the offerings are made.

PRAYERS OVER THE OFFERINGS

In Easter gratitude and hope, we give of our money and of ourselves to your reign.

Amen

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

We are asked to pray today for the peoples of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. We also include prayers for the people of Sudan.

At the end of each petition the following bidding is offered and we end with the "Our Father"

Liturgist: Lord have mercy

Response: **Christ have mercy**

Our Father in heaven

hallowed be your name

your kingdom come

your will be done

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

THE SENDING FORTH

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SENDING SONG 749 Thuma mina somandla

Trad. South African, arr. Anders Nyberg

COMMISSION AND BLESSING

"Love will come to perfection in us when our relationship to this world is just like Christ's. There is no fear in love, for perfect love drives out fear." (1 John 4:17-18)

Form in us, O God, a community of creativity and collaboration.

Our salvation is bound together with Creation.

Go in peace, and remember:
goodness is stronger than evil;
love is stronger than hate;
light is stronger than darkness;
life is stronger than death.
Victory is ours through Christ who loves us.

The Lord is risen
He is risen indeed.

Our service has ended
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ.

POSTLUDE **Kyrie “Orbis Factor” from *Livre Œcuménique***
Jean Langlais (1907-91)

Liturgist: Rev'd Dr. Geoff Dornan
Preacher: Anne Sutton
Music Coordinator: Jade McFaul
Organist: Callum Tolhurst-Close
Wesley Music Scholars: Pippa Newman (viola), James Monro (cello),
Evangeline Osborne and Martin Magill (choir)
Bible Reader: **John and Tarlie Alcock**
Sound and Video: John Alcock & Philip Bruen, Christine Hearn & Keith Hart
Flowers arranged by: Ann Sutton

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