

**Sunday May 8<sup>th</sup> 2022.**  
**A service of worship for use at home**  
**Prepared by Rev Dr David Monkton**  
**'Our Creation, preservation and all the blessings of this life.'**

Nottingham North East  
Methodist Circuit

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**Introductory prayer.** 'O Lord our God, you rule over all things and you accomplish all things. You never remove your hands from your works, nor ever shall. Guide us we pray with the power and the wisdom with which, from the beginning you have loved and made all things, through Christ our Lord. Amen (Julian of Norwich.)

**Hymn - StF 1. All people that on earth do dwell.**

1 All people that on earth do dwell,  
sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.  
Serve him with joy, his praises tell,  
come now before him and rejoice!

2 Know that the Lord is God indeed;  
he formed us all without our aid.  
We are the flock he comes to feed,  
the sheep who by his hand were made.

3 O enter then his gates with joy,  
within his courts his praise proclaim.  
Let thankful songs your tongues employ.  
O bless and magnify his name.

4 Trust that the Lord our God is good,  
his mercy is forever sure.  
His faithfulness at all times stood  
and shall from age to age endure.

**Prayer of adoration.**

Maker of heaven and earth. creator of all forms of life from the very beginning of time, may we cheerfully give thanks for all that you have given. We look at the small things of life, the intricate nature of all around us, the smallest insect, the largest whale, the atoms that bind us together, the vastness of the universe. Our minds boggle at the greatness of it all.

Help us O God to value all of your creation as we make our pilgrimage through life, and may your Holy Spirit guide us.

Forgive the mistakes that we make as we go along on our journey, and direct us all along the way of peace and concord. through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

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Let us bear in mind that this world is a place for all kinds of people to live in, and for all kinds of people to receive the good news of Jesus Christ.

**Let us pray.**

Hospitable God, when we have made **the church** a closed place where only those who know the unwritten rules are welcome. **Forgive us and enlarge our hearts.**

When we have made **our minds** a closed place where only those who think as we do are welcome. **Forgive us and enlarge our hearts**

When we have made **our hearts** a closed place, where only those who love as we do are welcome. **Forgive us and enlarge our hearts.**

**Thank you for loving us as we are and for calling us to grow into the image of your Son in whose name we pray Amen. (Michaela Youngson)**

**Gospel Reading. St. Luke chapter 24 verses 36-49.**

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

<sup>37</sup> They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. <sup>38</sup> He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? <sup>39</sup> Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

<sup>40</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. <sup>41</sup> And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" <sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup> and he took it and ate it in their presence.

<sup>44</sup> He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

<sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup> He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

**Psalm 23.** (as recorded in reading 805 in Singing the Faith.)

The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want he makes me lie down in green pastures He leads me beside still waters he restores my soul he leads me in right paths for his namesake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley I fear no evil for you are with me your Rod and your staff they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies, you anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the House of the Lord my whole life long. (from the New Revised Standard Version)

One of the appointed lessons for today is Psalm number 23 which must be the most popular and well-known Psalms in the whole of the Bible

It is also a reading which reminds me that I have ministered in areas where there are large numbers of sheep! The first was around Saffron Walden in Essex, in the more rural parts bordering on Cambridgeshire. The second place was the Shetland Islands where it is estimated that there are ten sheep to every human being. There are some very ancient breeds of sheep that to be found there as well, who eat kelp, a form of seaweed.

A popular meal which is it eaten there is called reasted mutton, which is eaten mainly around the time of the Viking winter festival of Up Helly Aa. Basically, it is a form of preserving mutton by salting, and it is also used for making soup. Both of my daughters send for it from time to time.

This is the lambing season. One of my friends, a Shetlander, sent me a photograph via Facebook just last week of a black baby lamb. The first lamb to be born this season. What was most delightful was to see the way in which the other pregnant ewes came around to see the first new newly born baby, then give it an affectionate little nosey nozzle to welcome it into the world. Shepherding is still very much part of the crofter's life.

There are lots of lessons to learnt about shepherding that can be applied to human life.

What does the 23rd Psalm teach us?

First of all we have to remember that is a song of personal Thanksgiving and it is voluntarily given. It is something that goes beyond the normal demands of religion, but at the same time we have to remember that if we say the Lord is MY shepherd we have to mean it!

The other thought that was very important to remember was that when someone had experienced something to be thankful for in their lives the natural thing to do was to go to the sanctuary, the temple. Hence the words at the end of the Psalm which speak of dwelling 'in the house of the Lord for ever.'

There is so much to be thankful for in life. Although there are hardships in our lives, there are for all of us so many times when 'our cup runs over' with goodness. The Christian may well be deeply upset and disappointed when things go wrong, and when there is a sense of loss it is very hard to forget,

But there are occasions when the individual can give thanks for the blessings they have received- as well as the corporate blessings we have given thanks for. There are so many things that human beings have in common.

Have you noticed that in many parts of the Bible you find the phrase 'Lord, confirm the feeble knees?' It means 'Lord, 'strengthen those who are weak in spirit that they may have strength to stand up for what is good and right.'

As we get older however we might be tempted to think it means literally 'strengthen our 'physical feeble knees.' In other words, may our legs get stronger again so that we can move along more quickly!

Here in the Psalm however it speaks of 'The Lord's rod and staff' comforting us. We need to remember that a staff is not only of use to protect the sheep from their enemies such as wolves and hyenas, but for human beings a staff can also be used as a walking stick. We may also think of God's help being a bit like a walking stick- helping us and giving us that extra support when we need it!

Just before beginning my ministry as a probationer, I spent a happy three months in pastoral work in a very rural area of New York state in America, but just before returning home I had the opportunity of seeing the Niagara Falls. The best view of these Falls is from the Canadian Side. I had no transport of my own so I had to walk over a very high suspension bridge to see the better view

I'm very nervous of heights, and I didn't want to cross this high narrow bridge at all.

I said to myself. 'Here you are, a Preacher of the Gospel and you are afraid to cross this bridge and see the marvellous view from the other side.'

So I decided on a plan- that I would say the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm to myself as I walked across in order to keep my mind occupied.'

I started saying the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm slowly in its traditional form. 'The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want....and so on through the Psalm. Then there were the words, 'yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me...'

By that time I was at the centre of the bridge at the farthest point away from land on either side and the confidence came to me to finish the walk to other side without any fear!

It is believed that the Psalmist had a near death experience or illness that made him write these words in the first place., but he journeyed on and he saw the blessings from God come flowing into his life.

There are many times when we have to walk by faith in order to live out our lives in a Christlike way. There are times when we fail, but we are called upon to keep persevering in faith and we can win through.

***May we all get to the point where we are able and be prepared to say. 'The Lord is MY shepherd' and take this to heart in every part of our lives.***

### **Hymn - StF no 479. The King of love my Shepherd is whose goodness faileth never.**

1 The King of love my shepherd is,  
whose goodness faileth never.  
I nothing lack if I am his,  
and he is mine forever.

2 Where streams of living water flow,  
my ransomed soul he leadeth;  
and where the verdant pastures grow,  
with food celestial feedeth.

3 Perverse and foolish, oft I strayed,  
but yet in love he sought me;  
and on his shoulder gently laid,  
and home, rejoicing, brought me.

4 In death's dark vale I fear no ill,  
with thee, dear Lord, beside me;  
thy rod and staff my comfort still,  
thy cross before to guide me.

5 Thou spreadst a table in my sight;  
thy unction grace bestoweth;  
and oh, what transport of delight  
from thy pure chalice floweth!

6 And so through all the length of days,  
thy goodness faileth never;  
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise  
within thy house forever.

### **Intercessions**

Let us continue to pray for the Country of Ukraine. For all whoso bravely fight for the well-being of their country against such overwhelming odds. Let us remember all who have lost loved ones in the warfare, and all who are fleeing to avoid the conflict.

### **Lord in your mercy hear or prayer**

Let us remember all who live in war torn countries in all parts of the world. Where human rights are disregarded, and large numbers of people are struggling even to exist.

### **Lord in your mercy hear our prayer**

We are asked to pray on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of each month for the Methodist Church in Rwanda. Let us pray for Rwanda for its continued stability and peace and difficult problems to face if refugees are directed to live there.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayers**

Let us remember those who have asked for us to pray for them, and others who need our prayers.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayers.**

Bearing in mind especially the forthcoming local elections. Let us remember those who are offering to serve us in these critical times of expensive living. That those elected to serve us may do so with utter integrity

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayers**

Help us Lord to keep the welfare of others at heart, their need in mind, body and emotionally too. Be with us in all the stages of life- that we may truly trust in you for ever. **Amen**

### **The Lord's prayer.**

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.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.

### **Hymn. - STF.111. Lord of the boundless curves of space.**

Lord of the boundless curves of space  
And time's deep mystery,  
To your creative might we trace  
All nature's energy.

Your mind conceived the galaxy,  
Each atom's secret planned,  
And every age of history  
Your purpose, Lord, has spanned.

Your Spirit gave the living cell  
Its hidden, vital force:  
The instincts which all life impel  
Derive from you, their source.

You gave the growing consciousness  
That flowered at last in man,  
With all his longing to progress,  
Discover, shape and plan.

In Christ the living power of grace  
To liberate and lead  
Lights up the future of our race  
With mercy's crowning deed.

Lead us, whom love has made and sought,  
To find, when planets fall,  
That Omega of life and thought  
Where Christ is all in all.

### **Closing prayer and benediction.**

Loving and gracious God, you are ever present with us, always walking beside us no matter what we face. You are God of the past the present and the future -always unchanging in a world that is constantly changing. Help us to continue to put our trust in you, to step out with confidence and follow wherever you may lead us.

May we always remember that no matter who we are you will always welcome us with open arms. Enable us to share your love, forgiveness, grace, and our acceptance of others -that they too may come to know you and grow closer to you. Amen

***May grace, mercy and peace from Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us now and always.***

***Amen.***