



# 'Worship at home' April 21<sup>st</sup> 2024



We continue in the Easter season, focussing on our experience of the risen Christ. Today is known in the church's liturgical calendar as 'Good Shepherd' Sunday, as we think about following Christ with all of our lives, and the blessings we receive. Anzac Day also falls in this coming week, and we pray for peace in a world torn apart by conflict.

## Opening

Alleluia! Christ is risen:

**Christ is risen, indeed!**

Inviting us into newness of life;

**To walk with him in faith.**

We are led by God through the ups and downs of life;

**Along right paths to places of restoration and peace.**

Even in the valleys when we encounter fear, darkness or death;

**God is always there, with us, calling us forward;**

Bringing the promise of new beginnings

and the hope of new opportunities;

**Offering us fullness of life,**

**overflowing with goodness and abundance.**

## Psalm 23

*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 name's sake. 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.*

*New Revised Standard Version*

The idea of Jesus as the Good Shepherd assures us of God's unfailing care for us, as God protects and guides us through the ups and downs of life. The image is of God's constant presence and provision in abundance. It is a comforting image, and this Scripture passage is well-known and much-loved.



Sheep are known for their following instincts; people are not always so obedient. We are far more likely to stray, to wander off the track in search of greener grass, or even to run in the other direction! Following Christ, the Good Shepherd, takes

commitment, endurance and perseverance. It is not an easy short-cut path to wealth and happiness, but a call to turn the other cheek, walk the extra mile, and be willing to put aside everything, even our own lives, in order to follow.

### **What makes Jesus the ‘Good’ Shepherd?**

**When have you found following Christ difficult?**

**When have you found that following Christ brings new beginnings, new opportunities, abundant life?**

### **John 10:11-18**

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The 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. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know*

*the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I 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. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No 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."*

*New Revised Standard Version*



## Through Light and Shadow

through light and shadow  
I am led, I follow,  
through the ins and outs  
the ups and downs  
of these days,  
when my heart is failing,  
when my spirit rejoices,  
when I can barely put one foot  
in front of the other  
still you beckon me on...  
when I stumble you support me,  
when I can go no further  
you carry me,  
through light and shadow,  
in death's dark vale,  
and on the mountain peaks  
you lead me,  
through tangled webs,  
on rocky ground,  
on smoother paths,  
through light and shadow  
you lead me,  
I follow,  
may I never walk alone...

~ written by Sally, **Eternal Echoes.**

[http://sallysjourney.typepad.com/sallys\\_journey/](http://sallysjourney.typepad.com/sallys_journey/)

## Closing

May we be blessed with God's goodness and mercy,  
May we know the comfort and love of Jesus Christ,  
May we be filled with the Holy Spirit to guide our paths.  
Amen



As we prepare to think about Anzac Day this week, we are prompted to pray for peace amid current global uncertainties and conflicts, and for those most deeply impacted. We wish to honour those who work for peace in these regions, and to stand in solidarity with those who suffer in situations of violence and injustice. We recall that

the Lord is our shepherd, and is with us, and we look to God for guidance in difficult times of turmoil and war as well as in times of abundance and tranquility.

*“The pursuit of peace is at the core of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. We echo his words when we share the greeting ‘peace be with you’ with members of our worshipping congregations each week. Jesus expresses the centrality of peacemaking in the Beatitudes; he preaches that peacemakers will be the children of God (Matt 5:9).”*

*- Rev Alistair Macrae, past-President UCA Assembly*

## **Prayer**

God of peace, we pray for peace in our world, the lands where the Prince of Peace walked long ago; let there be an end to the cycles of violence and vengeance that have prevailed for too long; let there be an end to the all-too frequent killing and maiming of people, victims of hate and prejudice; let there be an end to all political agendas that justify and prolong conflicts.



### **God of peace, hear our prayer.**

Bring justice for all the people of our world regardless of race, culture or religion; sustain the courage and determination of all those who work for peace and keep them strong in the face of threats and persecution; establish such mutual respect and harmony between all peoples that we will live and work together for the sake of all.

### **God of peace, hear our prayer.**

Keep our own hearts and minds free from fear and prejudice; Help us to be instruments of your peace where we are.

**God of peace, hear our prayer.** - adapted from prayer for the Holy Land  
by the Uniting Church in Australia National Working Group on Worship. 4