**3rd May 2020**

**Fourth Sunday of Easter**

**‘Good Shepherd Sunday’**

**Collect:**

Risen Christ, faithful shepherd of your Father’s sheep: teach us to hear your voice and to follow your command, that all your people may be gathered into one ﬂock, to the glory of God the Father. **Amen**

**Gospel:**

Jesus said, ‘Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.’ Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

*(John 10:1-10)*

**Making Meaning:**

This week’s reflection is given by the Archdeacon of Bromley and Bexley, Paul Wright:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmXV1S\_ovio&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmXV1S_ovio&feature=youtu.be)

**Prayer:**Merciful Father, You gave your Son Jesus Christ   
to be the Good Shepherd and, in his love for us,  
to lay down his life and rise again:  
keep us always under his protection,  
and give us grace to follow in steps;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**A Personal Note:**

Good Shepherd Sunday always signals, for me, the anniversary of my licensing as Rector here in Shipbourne and Plaxtol. Today marks three years, and it is really very hard that we can’t be together at this time to celebrate. I don’t think any priest imagines fulfilling his or her calling under these sorts of conditions; it’s as if the Good Shepherd in me has been tied to a chair, albeit with hands free and access to the computer and the telephone. But is that enough? Shepherd’s generally spend most of their time out in ‘the field’ and with their ‘sheep’, but these are the very freedoms that have been curtailed, and it’s not easy re-imagining the practical outworking of ‘church’, which is so essentially social and ‘real’ (as opposed to virtual). Do please pray for me, and for Donna, at this testing time: for energy and focus to carry on doing the best we can.

**Song:**

*There are very many versions of Psalm 23 – here’s a less well known one that has a fresh ‘edge’ to it:*

Because the Lord is my Shepherd

I have everything I need

He lets me rest in the meadow and leads me

To the quiet streams.

He restores my soul, and he leads me

In the paths that are right. Lord…

*…You are my Shepherd, you are friend,*

*I want to follow you always, just to follow my friend.*

And when the road leads to darkness

I shall walk there unafraid

Even when death is close, I have courage

For your help is there

You are close beside me with comfort

You are guiding my way. Lord…

In love you make me a banquet  
For my enemies to see  
You make me welcome pouring down honour

From your mighty hand

And this joy fills me with gladness

It is too much to bear. Lord…

Your goodness always is with me

And your mercy I know

Your loving kindness strengthens me always

As through life I go

I shall dwell in your presence for ever

Giving praise to your name, Lord…