



Parish of St. Mary's Swynnerton & St. James' Cotes Heath  
 Sunday April 25th 2021 (Easter 4)

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<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82172796502?pwd=dm9PandVL1l6YTgzOFFTQzQ1L0NqQT09>

Our Sunday service at St. Mary's will be at 10am. If you would like to join in from home, use the link above.



It seemed right, last Saturday, to pause and lament the passing of Prince Philip, a man who embodied and symbolised a generation described by Simon Armitage as "The Patriarchs". As with any bereavement, we mourned the "end of an era", grieved for what was lost and were thankful for what had been.

As we face our own future, there's a similar sense of disorientation – what have we left behind forever, what do we need to lament, what will the months and years ahead hold? No doubt it's a time for us all to take stock.

- A good example of "taking stock" was the Annual Church meeting for St. Mary's and St. James' where we met to review the year and hear reports of church activities. Twenty-four people took part via "Zoom" and elected a new church council. We heard that the advertisement for a new Rector will appear this week and the meeting gave a round of applause to Ray Lewney for his dedicated leadership through the challenges of the last year.



- Matthew Parker was consecrated last week and says "It is a relief now to actually be the Bishop of Stafford! I am excited about where the Spirit is leading the church in these uncertain times. I am daunted by the task ahead, but ..encouraged by the fellowship of God's people and the eternal faithfulness of God." Matthew was able to have 6 close family members with him at Lambeth palace as well as a handful of bishops.

- As President Biden hosted a Leaders' Summit on Climate this week, "Earth Day 2021" also took place. In 1970, the first Earth Day mobilized around 20 million people to demand environmental action. Today, more than one billion people in 192 countries participate in each Earth Day to build environmental democracy and advocate for sustainability.

The theme for this year is [Restore Our Earth](#), which focuses on restoring the world's ecosystems through natural processes, emerging green technologies and innovative thinking. The campaign seeks to collaborate with faith groups who especially understand that nature must be treated as a sacred part of our world. More at [www.earthday.org](http://www.earthday.org)



St. Luke's continue their regular Thursday morning worship at 10am. The link is :  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3558390555?pwd=ZlNvRVcxbHZ1VWRaUzhGS1Vqcy9QZz09>

**“Lord, the one you love is ill.” John 11 v3**

Let's pray for those in our church family who  
Have lost someone they love,  
Are looking after elderly parents,  
Will be having hospital treatment soon,  
Are recovering at home,  
Feel lonely or unloved,  
Live with chronic illness or disability,  
Worry about a relative or friend,  
Struggle with depression and anxiety,  
Find life is overwhelming.



**“Even before a word is on my tongue, Lord,  
you know it all.” Psalm 139 v4**

**We pray for our country.** We pray for our Queen as she continues her journey of service to you and the country without her faithful husband by her side. Please give her strength and courage and comfort in her grief and may she be blessed with the ongoing support of her family. We pray for the government as they lead us carefully out of this pandemic and back to a more normal life. May they make the right decisions Lord and not be swayed by people with misguided motives and self-interest. We pray for the recovery of the economy Lord that there may be work for those people who have lost their jobs due to Covid and who are struggling. And we pray for our NHS and its workers as they work to clear the backlog of cases and provide ongoing care for us all. Give them strength and support as their hard work continues. Lord in Your Mercy.

**Hear Our Prayer**

- Thanks to Val Adams for preparing the intercessions for this Sunday and to Nicky Beasley for the message.

**GOSPEL FOR EASTER 4. John 10:11-18.**

Who or what are you putting your trust in today? Politicians, scientists? It's difficult to know what to believe with a daily barrage of conflicting news stories, differing opinions on how to manage our current situation, and the subject of the vaccines at the moment appears very confusing. Such is our challenging way of life as we live through this pandemic.

In today's passage from John's gospel Jesus is trying to explain to the Pharisees who he is and what his purpose is. To do this he uses the image of a shepherd saying, 'I am the good shepherd' and goes on to list the attributes that make him one. Repeatedly he tells them that he is prepared to lay down his life for his sheep, that he knows his own and that they know him and that he must bring other sheep into the fold. This image of the shepherd describes an intimate relationship between a shepherd and his flock and it is one of trust and of knowing one another. It is that same relationship that Jesus has with his Father, verse 15 says, 'just as the Father knows me and I know the Father'. But his role as shepherd was in sharp contrast with those whom Jesus described as the hired hands.

So who were these hired hands? Jesus was referring to the Pharisees, the religious leaders who opposed Jesus and his teaching. They were not good leaders of the people of Israel and did not truly care for them. He equated them with robbers and thieves. In the previous verse he says, 'all who came before me are thieves and robbers but the sheep did not listen to them'.

But the point that Jesus is really trying to drive home and the one which he repeats five times is that he will lay down his life for his sheep. Now that certainly reveals the depth of love that he has for us and the lengths that he will go to save us and protect us. It is an act that he will carry out willingly and of his own choosing to be in obedience to his Father's will.

In 1 John 3:16 the bible says, 'this is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid his life down for us'.

It is now four weeks since Easter Sunday, that glorious day when we celebrated the resurrection of Jesus back to life after the horror of his brutal torture and death that he had suffered on the cross. Many times before these events took place, Jesus had told his disciples and the religious leaders that he would be rejected, killed and after three days he would be raised from the dead. Luke 9:22-24 is one example and it is also recorded in all the gospels. Jesus's words were true and he said that it would happen and it did.

On Sunday I will be reading some verses from the well-known Psalm 23 written by David. He describes how the Lord is his shepherd and how he experiences that close personal relationship. It is his good shepherd who leads him to green pastures and still waters and whom he trusts to walk with him in the dark valleys. Those dark valleys are the difficult times that we face that can cast a shadow over our lives or it's when we feel afraid or anxious. The words and promises of Jesus are true, he can be trusted and he proved it. He too can be our good shepherd, so let us ask ourselves what are we trusting in? Amen.

**Introduction: We have come together as the family of God in our Father's presence to offer him praise and thanksgiving, to hear and receive his holy word, to bring before him the needs of the world, to ask his forgiveness of our sins, and to seek his grace, that through his Son Jesus Christ, we may give ourselves to his service.**

**Psalm: O be joyful in the Lord, all the earth; serve the Lord with gladness and come before his presence with a song. Know that the Lord is God; it is he that has made us and we are his; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and bless his name. For the Lord is gracious; his steadfast love is everlasting, and his faithfulness endures from generation to generation. Glory to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.**

**Confession: Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and repent. Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin. Renew a right spirit within us and restore to us the joy of your salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image, to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

**Creed: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

**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.**

**Intercessions: We pray for our world.** We thank you Lord for the beauty of our world. For the birds and the flowers that we can see and enjoy every day and for all the creatures that live on our planet. Help us Lord to care for and look after these precious resources you have given us. Inspire those who are fighting to reverse climate change and motivate governments to work together to make this happen. We lift to you all the people in the world who don't have even the basic necessities in life such as food, shelter and to live without fear. We pray for the aid agencies and charities working with these people to bring what help and relief they can. Lord we live in a world where there is enough for everyone. Help us to share your resources more fairly. Lord we pray for those who live in areas of conflict, oppression and fear and those who live in exile. Please Lord bring together Governments and leaders to find solutions to these conflicts and bring peace to your world. Lord in Your Mercy, **Hear Our Prayer**

**We pray for our church.** Lord, we thank you for all those who have kept our churches going during this last difficult year. Those leading services and the various zoom meetings, those dealing with admin and all the practical things that still need doing and those who have been going out of their way to care for others in our community. We thank you Lord that we have been blessed with so many good and faithful people. Lord we pray for the new Rector whoever they may be that it won't be too long now before they are appointed. Lord we know that you have your hand on that person now and that they will be right for us so we pray that you will guide them and us through the application process during the coming months.

As Friday was St George's Day, we thank you Lord for the life of our Patron Saint St George. Thank you for his courage and bravery and may we all be inspired to follow his shining example. Lord in Your Mercy, **Hear Our Prayer**

Finally, we lift to you all the people on our prayer list. We thank you for answered prayer and in a moment of silence lift them to you and anyone else on our hearts that needs our prayer.....

**Merciful Lord, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen**

**OUR FATHER**

**THE GRACE**