

United Parish@Home

Sunday Services



April 2026

**The United Parish of Chinnor, Sydenham,  
Aston Rowant and Crowell**

**The ministry team offer you these services, particularly if you find you are unable to attend church.**

**Our prayer is that these services will help you still feel connected to, and loved by, your church family.**

**Easter Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April page 3**

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April page 10**

**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April page 15**

**Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April page 21**

**Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2026**

**Easter Day**

**Opening prayer**

On this glorious Easter Day, let us celebrate once again that empty tomb, that Jesus is alive and that even in dramatic scenes of noise and confusion, he meets and greets us with words of comfort and joy.

Risen Lord Jesus, breaking forth from the tomb, breaking the power of death, breaking new ground where faith will flourish-we greet you with joy and jubilation on this Easter Day! Christ is Risen!  
He is risen indeed. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! Amen

**Psalm 118 vs 1-2, 14-24**

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
his love endures forever.  
Let Israel say: His love endures forever.

The Lord is my strength and my song:  
he has become my salvation.  
Shouts of joy and victory  
resound in the tents of the righteous:  
the Lord's right hand has done mighty things!  
The Lord's right hand is lifted high:  
the Lord's right hand has done mighty things!  
I will not die but live,  
and will proclaim what the Lord has done.  
The Lord has chastened me severely,  
but he has not given me over to death.  
Open for me the gates of righteousness;  
I will enter and give thanks to the Lord.  
This is the gate of the lord  
through which the righteous will enter.  
I will give you thanks, for you answered me;  
you became my salvation.

The stone the builder rejected;  
has become the capstone,  
the Lord has done this,  
and it is marvellous in our eyes.  
This is the day the Lord has made.  
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

### **Prayer of confession**

Father God, we have not loved you with our whole heart, we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We are truly sorry and humbly repent for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ. Have mercy on us; that we might delight in your will and walk your ways to the glory of your name. Amen

### **Collect for Easter day**

Lord of all life and power;  
who through the mighty resurrection of your Son  
overcame the old order of sin and death  
to make all things new in him:  
grant that we, being dead to sin  
and alive to you in Jesus Christ,  
may reign with him in glory;  
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit  
be praise and honour, glory and might,  
now and in all eternity.  
Amen

### **Bible Reading John 20 vs 1-18**

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So, she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

So, Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in.

Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen.

Finally, the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead).

Then the Disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and one at the foot. They asked her, "Woman why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realise it was Jesus.

"Woman," he said, "Why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means teacher)

Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to your brothers and tell them, I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

### **Reflection** *(by Margaret)*

When we are faced with life changing and challenging situations in our lives we will all have different ways in which we will deal with them. Some of us will hide away and try and deal with things on our own. Others will be sharing all they are going through with everyone they can.

Then there are those who will quietly discern and seek appropriate help so that they can understand and look at the bigger picture.

We all have different thoughts and beliefs about the death and resurrection of Jesus and that means that we will all react in different ways. And this was no different for Jesus' followers.

Some of Jesus' followers had been expecting that something truly unbearable was going to happen and had been expecting the worst.

Some of the women at least, had already made preparation for his death as they made sure that they would know where he was to be buried, as well as being prepared with the spices they would need for the anointing of his body. They loved him and believed in him, but they were fully aware of the cynicism and selfishness of those that despised Jesus. In the backs of their minds, they knew that Jesus would not succeed against such hatred and would be rejected and killed. And so sad, but not surprised, they set off to take care of Jesus' body. Yet, of course when they saw that his body had gone, they were thrown into disorder and terror. Hope and new life were not part of their plan.

Some of Jesus' other disciples shared a different view on his death. They had witnessed his remarkable healings after all. Yet as it became clear that nothing was going to happen to save Jesus, that he really was going to die, they scattered in devastated disarray.

Those who came to the tomb had varied reactions. The empty tomb meant different thing to those who visited it that first Easter morning.

For Peter and the beloved disciple the dark empty tomb gave them new hope, they had been right about Jesus, there was one last miracle to perform after all. So, they ran to spread the good news.

But it was different for Mary, the empty tomb left her grief stricken with great loss and could not feel hope until she sees Jesus with her own eyes.

It was then and only then that she could go and tell the other disciples what she had seen. The same went for Thomas, and the two disciples who were walking to Emmaus, or Peter, who had betrayed Jesus, all needed to meet the risen Jesus. Yet all believed through different experiences.

Mary needed to see, Thomas needed to touch, the pair on the Emmaus Road needed to make sense of scripture, and Peter needed to be forgiven and given responsibility.

Jesus knew that everyone he met had different personalities and ways of coping with life changing situations, so he treated them as individuals.

God knows who we are and how we cope, because he made us. And so, when we want to share the good news of the risen Jesus, we need to remember that our listeners will hear it differently.

We all came to faith in different ways and through different channels because we have learnt through our own personal experience that Jesus can be encountered in many ways.

This Easter we need to be reminded to discern what it is that people need in order to meet the risen Christ and try and help them in that need.

Some need to meet Jesus through grief, some in hope, some in human touch, and maybe some who are angry at the cruelty of the world.

Jesus wants to meet everyone where they can find him, so that all may share in his risen life. There isn't a package deal that fits all, there is only new life in Christ when we meet him where we are. Amen

### **Prayer**

Risen Lord Jesus, amazing things happened on the first Easter morning.

On Friday there was darkness, pain and despair, Suddenly, there is light, life and indefinable joy.

Lord as we come to you today, bring us to a place of joy and delight as we worship you as the resurrected Lord.

Risen Lord Jesus, when Mary came to the tomb at first light, they came to grieve but were met with amazing, good news. We come to you today and bring our sorrows, our sadness, our confusion and pain: we ask that you will meet us in our deepest places with the good news of your presence and comfort. We lift to you all those we know who need your risen, consoling presence right now. Startle them and us with your joy.

Risen Lord Jesus, those that opposed you on Good Friday thought that they had won. But here, at the entrance to the tomb, they are transfixed by your majesty and glory. We pray for your troubled world, that those who oppose you will see who you truly are and will turn and fall at your feet. We bring to you now all those places in your fragile world today where there is conflict and opposition to your will and your ways.

Risen Lord Jesus, we hear again the good news of your resurrection, give us the courage to tell our friends and family the wonderful news. We think of those close to us who don't know you yet. Help us to bring joy of your living presence into our homes, our schools, our places of work and recreation. Amen

### **A time for personal prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
For ever and ever. Amen

### **Hymn - Love's redeeming work is done**

Love's redeeming work is done;  
fought the fight, the battle won:  
lo, our Sun's eclipse is o'er,  
lo, he sets in blood no more.

Vain the stone, the watch, the seal;  
Christ has burst the gates of hell;  
death in vain forbids his rise;  
Christ has opened paradise.

Lives again our glorious King!  
Where, O death, is now thy sting?  
Dying once, he shall doth save;  
where thy victory, O grave?

Soar we now where Christ had led,  
Following our exalted Head;  
made like him, like him we rise;  
ours the cross, the grave, the skies.

Hail the Lord of earth and heaven!  
Praise to thee by both be given:  
Thee we greet triumphant now;  
hail, the Resurrection Thou!

**Final Prayer and Blessing:**

Thank you, Lord,  
for this wonderful, hopeful day.  
Thank you that you are alive and with us  
in all the celebrations and challenges of life.  
Go with us now to enjoy our celebrations  
and face any challenges ahead.  
May we share your good news and blessing  
with all that we meet in the coming week.  
Amen

May we find in Christ Jesus, our risen Lord, a companion for our journey, a sure  
ground for our hopes, the peace that passes understanding, and the joy that life  
is eternal.

And the blessing of God Almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be among us and remain with us always.  
Amen

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2026**

**2nd Sunday of Easter**

**Opening Prayers**

O Lord, open our lips and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

The glory of the Lord has risen upon us. Let us rejoice and sing God's praise for ever. Amen.

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us;  
let us pray with one heart and mind.

*Silence is kept.*

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

**Gospel Reading** John 20: 19 -31

**Bible Reading** Acts 2:14a, 22–32

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— <sup>23</sup> this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. <sup>24</sup> But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. <sup>25</sup> For David says concerning him,

“I saw the Lord always before me,  
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;  
<sup>26</sup> therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;  
moreover, my flesh will live in hope.  
<sup>27</sup> For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,  
or let your Holy One experience corruption.  
<sup>28</sup> You have made known to me the ways of life;  
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.”

<sup>29</sup> ‘Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. <sup>30</sup> Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. <sup>31</sup> Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying,

“He was not abandoned to Hades,  
nor did his flesh experience corruption.”

<sup>32</sup> This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

### **Reflection** *(by Jacky)*

In the Gospels, Peter is often impulsive, courageous one moment and afraid the next. Only weeks before this moment in Acts, he denied even knowing Jesus. Around a charcoal fire in the courtyard of the high priest, Peter’s confidence completely collapsed under the pressure. Three times he said, “I do not know the man.” Peter, who promised never to abandon Jesus, could not even admit he was his disciple.

Yet in Acts 2 we meet a very different Peter. The writer of Acts, Luke, shows us a remarkable transformation. The same Peter who once shrank from a servant girl in fear of recognition, now stands before a crowd in Jerusalem and speaks boldly about Jesus. The difference is not that Peter has suddenly become naturally brave or eloquent. The difference is the resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter’s sermon begins with a clear proclamation: “Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs.” Peter reminds the people that Jesus’ life was not hidden. God’s power had been visible in him. The crowds had seen it. The evidence was there in their own experience. And Peter does not soften the difficult truth. “You, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.” This is bold preaching. Peter is no longer protecting himself. He is willing to speak plainly and publicly about the reality of the cross.

Yet the cross is not the end of the story. “But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death.” And, of course, the resurrection changes everything.

What looked like defeat becomes victory.

What looked like the end becomes the beginning of God’s new work in the world.

This is the heart of Peter’s message: “God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.” Peter speaks not as a distant commentator but as a witness. He has seen the risen Christ. He has eaten with him. He has been forgiven by him.

And perhaps that forgiveness is part of Peter's courage. The man who failed Jesus has been restored by Jesus. The one who once said "I do not know him" now proclaims him openly.

Peter's transformation, and that of many of Jesus's followers is for me convincing evidence that the Resurrection did indeed take place. How else could this confused and frightened group of people have the courage and audacity to proclaim this Good News otherwise? And be willing to die, often gruesome deaths because of this proclamation.

For Peter, and Jesus' followers of the time, their witness was one seeing the Risen Lord physically. Our witness is more spiritual in nature. We have the eye witness accounts recorded in Scripture, and we have what our minds, hearts know to be true.

The first sermon of the church is therefore not simply about Jesus. We are hearing the fruit of what Jesus has already done in Peter's life. The fearful disciple has become a bold witness.

And that same Spirit that help us to proclaim the Good News boldly:  
Alleluia, Christ is Risen! Amen

### **The Benedictus** (*The Song of Zechariah*)

- 1 Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel,  
who has come to his people and set them free.
- 2 He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour,  
born of the house of his servant David.
- 3 Through his holy prophets God promised of old  
to save us from our enemies, from the hands of all that hate us,
- 4 To show mercy to our ancestors,  
and to remember his holy covenant.
- 5 This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham:  
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
- 6 Free to worship him without fear, holy and righteous in his sight  
all the days of our life.
- 7 And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
- 8 To give his people knowledge of salvation  
by the forgiveness of all their sins.
- 9 In the tender compassion of our God  
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,

10 To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

*Luke 1.68-79*

## **Prayers**

*Take some time to offer to God your own prayers.*

## **The Collect for 2nd Sunday of Easter**

Risen Christ, for whom no door is locked, no entrance barred:  
open the doors of our hearts, that we may seek the good of others  
and walk the joyful road of sacrifice and peace,  
to the praise of God the Father. Amen

## **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

## **The Conclusion**

God, who through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ  
has given us the victory, give us joy and peace in your faith. Amen.

## **Hymn**

Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;  
endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.  
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,  
kept the folded grave-clothes where Thy body lay.

*Refrain: Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;  
endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.*

2 Lo! Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb.  
Lovingly He greets us, scatters fear and gloom;  
let His church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,  
for the Lord now liveth; death hath lost its sting. [Refrain]

3 No more we doubt Thee, glorious Prince of life!!  
Life is nought without Thee; aid us in our strife;  
make us more than conqu'rors, through Thy deathless love;  
bring us safe through Jordan to Thy home above.

*Refrain: Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;  
endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.*

**Sunday April 19<sup>th</sup> 2026,  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter**

**Introduction**

The gospel reading and the theme for this 3rd Sunday of Easter is the account of two disciples walking home on Easter Sunday evening. As they walk a stranger joins them and is invited by the couple to stay for dinner. It is only when Jesus breaks bread that they realise it is Jesus himself.

**Opening Prayer and Collect for 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter**

O God, whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread, please be with us as we as we worship you in this At Home service. Open the eyes of our faith, that we may sense Jesus in all his redeeming work; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Psalm 116**

<sup>1</sup> I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.

<sup>2</sup> Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.

<sup>3</sup> The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came over me;  
I was overcome by distress and sorrow.

<sup>4</sup> Then I called on the name of the LORD: "LORD, save me!"

<sup>5</sup> The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.

<sup>6</sup> The LORD protects the unwary; when I was brought low, he saved me.

<sup>7</sup> Return to your rest, my soul, for the LORD has been good to you.

<sup>8</sup> For you, LORD, have delivered me from death, <sup>19</sup> Praise the Lord Oh my soul  
the LORD.

**Reading**

**Luke 24:13 to end On the Road to Emmaus**

<sup>13</sup> Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles<sup>[a]</sup> from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. <sup>15</sup> As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; <sup>16</sup> but they were kept from recognising him.

<sup>17</sup> He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. <sup>18</sup> One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

<sup>19</sup> “What things?” he asked.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. <sup>20</sup> The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; <sup>21</sup> but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. <sup>22</sup> In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning <sup>23</sup> but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. <sup>24</sup> Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”

<sup>25</sup> He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” <sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

<sup>28</sup> As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. <sup>29</sup> But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

<sup>30</sup> When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. <sup>31</sup> Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight. <sup>32</sup> They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

<sup>33</sup> They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together <sup>34</sup> and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” <sup>35</sup> Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

### **Jesus Appears to the Disciples**

<sup>36</sup> 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.”

### **The Ascension of Jesus**

<sup>50</sup> When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. <sup>51</sup> While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. <sup>52</sup> Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. <sup>53</sup> And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

### **Reflection [by Brian]**

I must confess this gospel passage is one of my favourites in the whole New Testament since it shows that Jesus walks alongside us, even when we might not recognise his presence.

It contains all the elements of a ripping yarn. Two clearly depressed disciples trudge home after witnessing the terrible death of the leader who they have been following, who had inspired them and who they thought was their Messiah. A stranger joins them as they meander home. This stranger questions them and encourages them that all they had witnessed earlier that day was foretold in scripture. Something about this stranger and what he says causes them to do a double take, as they later tell the other disciples: ‘didn’t our hearts burn within us?’

There have been times in my life when my heart has burnt within me – for example in beautiful scenery or a holy moment in church or in the eyes of a child. I call these ‘God moments’. Clearly the two disciples had a God moment as the stranger witnessed to them.

They invited the stranger to stay, and it is only when the stranger breaks bread that the penny drops, and they recognise that it is Jesus. So, off they go, back to Jerusalem, to tell the other disciples. I bet they didn't meander on the return journey?

As they are telling the other disciples their 'ripping story', Jesus appears to all of them and wishes them peace. They are all transformed by these series of God moments and go to the Temple to tell all the good news and worship God. No wonder Luke says in the final words of the gospel 'they were filled with great joy'. Note the text says 'great joy'.

### **Personal prayer**

Following on from the above reflection, why not start these personal prayers by thanking God for those God moments you have had when you've seen the world in a different light or when your heart was burning within you.

You could then go onto pray for what is on your mind at the moment and pray for those you know who would value your prayers. Amongst other things, why not pray for:

- for Church leaders, elders, pastors, councils and congregations who seek to minister in the multitude of churches, chapels and fellowships across the world. Especially pray for our United Parish and for Jacky, our Rector, the ministry team and the PCC.
- for your family and friends, for your neighbours, for local, national and international leaders and governments.
- for shopkeepers, carers and wardens; for hospitals, doctors and nurses and others in the front line, the NHS.
- for what you have seen on the news lately; the trouble spots of the world and those places and peoples in need.
- for peace and justice to reign in those parts of the world where evil exists in terms of war, oppression and hate.
- for those you know who would love you to pray for them at this time, for the lonely, the ill, the stressed, the bereaved.
- finally, pray for yourself and your situation/s.

Why not finish with the Lord's Prayer

## Hymn

“To God Be the Glory,” written by Fanny J. Crosby in 1875, is a hymn of praise and celebration. The lyrics rejoice in God’s greatness and the gift of salvation through Jesus:

1. To God be the glory, great things He hath done,  
so loved He the world that He gave us His Son,  
who yielded His life an atonement for sin,  
and opened the life-gate that all may go in.

Refrain:

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,  
let the earth hear His voice!*

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,  
let the people rejoice!*

*O come to the Father through Jesus the Son,  
and give Him the glory, great things He hath done.*

Refrain:

2. O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,  
to ev'ry believer the promise of God;  
the vilest offender who truly believes,  
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Refrain:

3. Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done,  
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;  
but purer, and higher, and greater will be  
our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.

Refrain:

## Closing Prayer

Dear God, we come before You with hearts full of gratitude for the time we’ve spent in Your presence. We ask that You fill our hearts with Your perfect peace. May your peace guide us through the rest of our day, protecting our minds from anxiety and our spirits from unrest. We ask that you keep us grounded in your love and help us extend your peace to those around us. Amen.

***Celtic blessing***

May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. And may the sun shine warm upon your face; the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

**The Grace:**

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.

## SUNDAY 26<sup>th</sup> April 2026

### EASTER 4

#### **The Greeting**

We continue our journey through Eastertide, experiencing the joy of the Risen Lord. This fourth Sunday of Easter traditionally features Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and is also kept annually as the World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

In the Gospel, Jesus describes himself as the Good Shepherd, who is prepared to lay down his life for us; he knows us intimately and wants to bring everyone into his fold.

On this Day of Prayer for Vocations, we might pray that everyone should be willing and able to fulfil their own vocation. We continue to pray for war-torn countries, that they will find a Good Shepherd to guide them out of conflict.

**"Christ is risen!"**

**"He is risen indeed! Alleluia!"**

#### **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**

#### **A Psalm set for this Sunday Psalm 23**

The Lord is my shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters.  
He shall refresh my soul and guide me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me; you have anointed my head with oil and my cup shall be full.

Surely goodness and loving mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

**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**

We praise you,  
O God, for giving shape and meaning  
to the ancient image of yourself as shepherd  
through the person of Jesus Christ.

Forgive us, O God,  
for the times when we fail to reach out and accompany  
those who are going through difficult times;  
those who feel imprisoned in a valley of shadows  
and find themselves overwhelmed by life.

Jesus, good shepherd,  
help us to take the time and make the space  
to hear your call to us. Amen

## **Absolution**

Jesus himself bore our sins in his body on the cross,  
so that, free from sins  
we might live for righteousness;  
by his wounds we have been healed.  
For we were going astray like sheep,  
but now have been returned  
to the shepherd and guardian of our souls.  
In Jesus Christ we are sought,  
we are found,  
we are forgiven.  
Thanks be to God!

**Amen.**



## Gospel Reading John 10.1-10 Jesus the Good Shepherd

‘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.

### Reflection (By Tony)

How does it feel to be called a ‘sheep’ by Jesus? How does it sit with you, being an individual, unique and special, to be considered along with everyone else as a ‘sheep’?

In our culture, on the one hand we are a series of numbers: NHS, National Insurance, Drivers Licence, Passport, Bank Account Sort Code and Account, etc. etc. – individual yet feeling anonymous; on the other hand we are known as individuals within our families and network of friends, and are encouraged culturally to express ourselves and be appropriately assertive about ourselves.

Jesus is very clear: he “*calls his own sheep by name*”. Genesis tells us we are created in God’s image (*Genesis 1:26*) and in Isaiah, that our names are engraved on the palm of God’s hands (*Isaiah 49:16*). We are deeply loved and known as individuals, called by name.

We are all in God’s eyes his children, made in his image and yet unique and special, but created within his family, his flock. Each of us are created to live life, and to live abundantly.

Living abundantly, means to live with paradox, being free yet being a servant.

Free from the powers of death and sin, free from the thief and bandit, the stranger who want to steal and destroy. But this freedom is found and lived by knowing the voice of Jesus, and following him in obedience and servanthood.

We're almost in the middle of the 50 day period between Easter and Pentecost. A time that must have been challenging for the first disciples, adjusting to the dramatic events of the previous days and waiting for the promise of Jesus, of the Holy Spirit coming in power, to be realised. Part of what sustained and kept them, was knowing they were 'sheep', one flock loved and watched over by the Good Shepherd.

As I write the main news headline is of a world leader threatening "death, fire and fury". How that contrasts with a God who promises judgement, justice and mercy, achieved through freely coming in human form as the 'Servant King' and allowing his creation to crucify him in order that he could rise again and overcome the powers of death and sin.

***"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."***

**"Christ is risen!"  
"He is risen indeed! Alleluia!"**



## **Intercessions**

Let us pray for our 'shepherds' in the Church: that they may keep watch at the gate of the Lord's sheepfold, not allowing thieves and robbers to harm the flock, and welcoming the Lord when he comes to call his own.

Heavenly Father, in our United Parish help us to feel part of the One Flock, but not to be exclusive, ever aware of those seeking you and those in need of the Shepherd's care.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray that all Christians will hear the voice of Jesus calling them to follow and to serve him.

Especially Father, we pray that our hearts will be moved and open to offer ourselves for ministry within and without the Church, both formal and informal.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for those who suffer for doing good: that their patient witness may be an effective work of God in the world today.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for those who have gone astray like sheep, especially our own loved ones: that the shepherd and guardian of their souls may find them and bring them home.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for those who are walking in a dark valley at this time, especially for the sick, the elderly and bereaved: that the Good Shepherd may give them courage and lead them beside the restful waters of healing and peace.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for our dear departed ones, especially for those who have died recently,

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, who called your Church to bear witness that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself: help us to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be drawn to you; through him who was lifted up on the cross, and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

## **Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## **Hymn**

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.

He makes me down to lie

In pastures green: he leadeth me  
the quiet waters by.

My soul he doth restore again;  
and me to walk doth make  
Within the paths of righteousness,  
ev'n for his own name's sake.

Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,  
yet will I fear none ill:  
For thou art with me; and thy rod  
and staff me comfort still.

My table thou hast furnishèd  
In presence of my foes;  
My head thou dost with oil anoint,  
And my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy all my life  
Shall surely follow me,  
And in God's house forever more  
My dwelling place shall be.

## **Closing Prayer and Blessing**

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, make you perfect in every good work to do his will; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

**"Christ is risen!"**

**"He is risen indeed! Alleluia!"**