

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR SUNDAY 25TH APRIL – SHEPPARTON UNITING CHURCH

Introit:

Call to worship (*Psalm 23*)

The Lord is our shepherd, we shall not want.

God leads us into green pastures and beside still waters;

God restores our soul and leads us in the paths of righteousness.

Even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we fear no evil; for you are with us; your rod and your staff – they comfort us.

You prepare a table before us in the presence of our enemies; you anoint our head with oil; our cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life, and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Acknowledgement:

I pay my respect to the traditional custodians of this land on which I live, work and worship. To the members and elders of the Yorta Yorta Nations past, present and emerging.

Hymn: 10 (TiS) 'The Lord's my shepherd'

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Confession:

Heavenly Father, we thank you that in Jesus you have given us a Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep.

We thank you for the compassion of the Good Shepherd, leading his sheep to still waters and safe pasture.

We thank you for the love of the Good Shepherd, who knows his sheep by name.

We thank you that eternal life is available to us through the Good Shepherd, that we may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

O God, you are the Good Shepherd who attend to our needs, but we fail to see your abundant life in our midst. Our consumer culture has engraved upon us the message that we are not good enough. Help us to see that we are your beloved children, created in your image that we may live out your goodness in the world.

Through Jesus Christ our risen Lord.

Amen.

Declaration of Forgiveness:

The saying is worthy of full acceptance that Jesus Christ has come, is coming, and will continue to come to save His people. You hold this faith. I declare to you all that your sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

Doxology: 771 (TiS) 'Now to Him who loved us'

Readings: Acts 4: 5-12, 1 John 3: 16-24

Musical item: Tongans

Reading: John 10: 11 – 18

Sermon:

- The gospel reading for today (John 10: 11-18) does not include verse 10 which is helpful in understanding our passage for today.
- In verse 10, Jesus states "I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly." This sets the tone for our reading today.
- Today, the fourth Sunday of Easter is known to many as the 'Shepherd Sunday'. The emphasis is on Jesus as the Good Shepherd, the one who lays down his life for his sheep.
- In other words, Jesus is precisely the Good Shepherd because he is the lamb that was slain. And, he did it for the sake of his sheep...that they may have life and have it abundantly.
- In a world where many live unfulfilling lives, lives without meaning or lives that are unsatisfying, Jesus offers abundant life.
- We can tell stories of the times when we wanted and worked so hard to get what we thought would be most satisfying and fulfilling and gives meaning to our existence. We wait a long time and we finally got it and once we had it, it didn't do what we thought it would do or bring with it what we thought it would bring.
- We are still as unhappy as before, there is no joy, it didn't fulfill, and it didn't satisfy. Yes, we got what we wanted but there is no abundance.
- The Psalm for today (Psalm 23) puts it this way..." Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." That is life in abundance.
- Abundant life is life in relationship the Lord... The Lord is my shepherd. It reveals the connection between the Shepherd and the sheep, between us and the holy, and with what's good, true, and beautiful in the world.
- It is not so much about getting what we did not have but living more fully into what is present. It is love that leads to loving. It is about joy that leads to joyful obedience to God. It is about peace that leads to becoming peace makers.
- That is abundant life given in and through the Son of God as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.
- It is engaging more fully and more deeply into our own lives and the lives of others with love, peace and joy.
- That is the kind of life that never adds to the pain of the world. It is Jesus's way of being in the world – as the lamb that was slain. It is the presence of God lived through your life and my life.
- The church as Christ the risen one's body, though scarred, is called and anointed with the Holy Spirit to be the shepherd of God's people.

- The church as the shepherd of God's people is called to lead people to abundant life, always leading to the green pastures, to the still waters, to the table that is set in the presence of the enemies and the cup that is overflowing.
- That abundant life is central to the mission of the shepherd, it is eternal, and it is available. It's always been here, right before us. Sometimes we just need someone to help us find it, to point to it, to show us that it is already here.
- The contrast between the Good Shepherd and the hired hand is that the hired hand does not own the sheep and does not care for the sheep. If it gets too difficult, too scary, too risky, too "woolfy" the hired hand takes off.
- And the wolves, they come to snatch and scatter. Wolves devour lives and they come in different shapes and sizes.
- Sometimes it is the wolves of fear or busyness. Sometimes it is the wolves of achievement or needing approval. Sometimes it is anger and resentment or maybe the wolves of despair and failure.
- But Jesus, the Good Shepherd says, "I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly." It is promise to each of us and the mandate of his mission to the whole world.
- He is the Good Shepherd for he is the lamb that was slain. He is the Good Shepherd for he has called, equipped and empowered the church to follow him in offering abundant life to all his sheep. That is the good news. Amen.

Hymn: 494 (TiS) 'In water we grow'

SERVICE OF BAPTISM

Presentation: *(The Elder brings the baptism candidates forward, and introduces them to the congregation)*

Riley Geoffrey Fortin and Abby Caroline Fortin have come today to present Riley, Olivia Sophia Heenan and Parker Riley Fortin for baptism.

Scripture:

Hear the words of the Lord Jesus Christ: All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.

The meaning of baptism:

Obedying the word of the Lord Jesus, and confident of his promises, the church baptises those whom he has called.

Riley, do you turn to Jesus Christ, who has defeated the power of sin and death and brought us new life?

I turn to Christ.

Do you pledge yourself to God, trusting in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and in the Holy Spirit as Counsellor and Guide?

I pledge myself to God.

Riley and Abby what do you ask of God's church for Olivia and Parker?

We ask that they be baptised into the faith and family of Jesus Christ.

In light of the covenant promise and of your request, I ask you now: Do you believe that the gospel enables us to turn from the darkness of evil and to walk in the light of Christ?

We do.

Riley, Olivia and Parker, may the Lord open your ears to receive his word and your mouths to proclaim his praise.

Let us confess the faith into which we are baptised. *(The people stand)*

Do you believe in God, who made you and loves you?

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, your Saviour and Lord?

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, and the continuing work of our salvation?

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.

(People remain standing for the act of baptism)

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

(The Elder pours water into the font)

The Lord be with you.

And also, with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Eternal God, we thank you for the gift of water: in the beginning you moved over the waters to bring order out of chaos; from the great flood in the days of Noah you saved those in the

ark; through the Red Sea you led your people to freedom from slavery in Egypt; across the river Jordan you led Israel to the land you promised; in the waters of the Jordan our Lord was baptised by John and anointed by the Holy Spirit.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, bless this water and those who are to be baptised in it; that they may be born anew of water and the Spirit, be raised to new life in Christ, and continue to be his faithful disciples; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be all honour and glory, now and for ever.

Amen.

Riley Geoffrey Fortin, I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Riley Geoffrey Fortin, from this day on the sign of the cross is upon you.

Olivia Sophia Heenan, I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Olivia Sophia Heenan, from this day on the sign of the cross is upon you.

Parker Geoffrey Fortin, I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Parker Geoffrey Fortin, from this day on the sign of the cross is upon you.

Riley Geoffrey Fortin, Olivia Sophia Heenan, and Parker Riley Fortin are now received into the holy catholic Church according to Christ's command.

Aaronic Blessing (Sung whilst the family is being taken through the congregation by the Elder)

Responses:

Riley and Abby, I ask you now to respond to God's graciousness to Olivia and Parker by making these solemn promises:

Will you provide for your children a Christian home of love and trust?

With God's help, we will.

Will you set before Olivia and Parker the example of a Christian life, and will you pray that they will learn the way of Christ?

With God's help, we will.

Will you encourage your children to grow within the fellowship of the church, so that they may come to faith in Christ?

With God's help, we will.

I charge you, the people of this congregation, to maintain the life of worship and service, that these children and all, the children among you may grow in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the knowledge and the love of God.

With God's help, we will live out baptism as a loving community in Christ: nurturing one another in faith, upholding one another in prayer, and encouraging one another in service.

Prayer:

Almighty God, we praise you for all that you have done for us. We thank you for declaring your love for Riley, Olivia, and Parker. As you have loved them from the beginning, continue to protect and guide them. May they become loyal disciples of Jesus Christ.

We thank you for your goodness to Riley and Abby. Grant your blessing upon their home and help them to keep the promises they have made.

We pray for ourselves who so easily forget your grace, that by sharing in this mystery we may recall our own baptism and continue to walk in the light of Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Praise be to God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Presentation: *(Gifts from the congregation and certificates of baptism)*

Notices/Joys and Concerns:

Offering:

Prayers of the People:

Hymn: 210 (TiS) 'O for a thousand tongues to sing'

Blessing:

Pray fervently for the hopes of your heart. Live in confidence that your prayers are heard. Work tirelessly to be the answer to someone else's prayer: to be a sign of good things and a guide to the pleasant places.

May God remember us, hear our prayers and hold us.

May Christ come to us, bringing new beginnings.

And may the Holy Spirit provoke us to love and good deeds every day.

Amen.

779 (TiS) 'May the feet of God walk with you'