

Greetings to our members, those from United Congregational Church in Conway and all our friends at home,

For this Second Sunday of Easter, we will be centering on the image of the Good Shepherd.

This Sunday there is an all-church conversation and information gathering concerning the recommendations from the Pastoral Search Committee for a shared ministry with the United Church of Conway. A letter from our Church Clerk has already been sent to you via email that includes the Shared Pastor Agreement document. This conversation is a time to review the recommendations and have a facilitated conversation about it. There will be no votes taken at this gathering. This conversation begins this Sunday, April 11 on Zoom at 10 AM followed by our weekly Fellowship time.

Next Sunday, April 18, a Special Meeting has been called to consider the Shared Pastor Agreement proposal and vote on a motion to accept it. Please remember that while members and friends may participate in the all-church conversation on April 11, only members of the church have voice and vote at the Special Meeting. This meeting will be called to order at 10 AM.

This is an important moment in the life of our congregation. Your participation as a church member is essential in our search for a new pastor.

May we enjoy God's blessings and give thanks,

Pastor Rob

Welcome to Sunday Worship

April 11, 2021

Good Morning to our members, those from United Congregational Church in Conway and all our friends at home. This Sunday is the Second Sunday of Easter. Today's service centers on two familiar texts that bring to us the images of the Good Shepherd and the sheep.

Prayer Requests: We are accepting requests for prayer (healing, comfort, thanksgiving, and others). Please send your requests to the Pastor at pastor01089@gmail.com. Requests will then be sent out through our email list to the congregation for our common prayer life during the week. PLEASE remember that all prayer requests received become public knowledge. If you are uncertain if your request for another might be confidential, do not send it.

And now let us be in worship

Call to Worship (Responsive, L=Leader, P=People)

L For all things bright and beautiful,

P For all human faces, hearts, minds, and hands which surround us,

L For the Life and the life of this world, for all that you have laid before us, O God,

P We lay our thankful hearts before you.

Morning Unison Prayer & the Lord's Prayer

Loving God, like a shepherd who seeks the lost sheep, you call us by name. Like a woman who searches for a lost coin, you search for us until we are found. Like a parent who welcomes back

a wayward child, you welcome all who come to you. For your love, your compassion, your care, we give you our thanks, in the name of Christ, our Savior and Redeemer who taught us to pray saying...*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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

Prayers of the People

Our prayers this morning focus on Jesus as the Good Shepherd with prayers of thanksgiving and with prayers of blessing. There will be time for personal prayer and meditation. Let us come to prayer.

Good Shepherd, Care Giver, Protector, from whom all our blessings flow, and in whose pasture, we live our lives, hear our prayers. Hear our offerings of thanksgiving. Praise be to you in all things and for all things. You provide sunlight and seasons. You bring forth the bounty by which we are sustained. In the midst of your creation, you have placed us with one foot on earth, and one foot that desires to stretch into eternity. In your wisdom, you have endowed us with incredible passion, unfathomable creativity, and the capacity to love you and each other. Praise be to you, O God.

Hear our prayers for your blessing. Bless those new to life and those new to death. Bless the tired and the hungry, the lonely and those who sit in darkness. Bless those here with us, and those who are not. Those who we remember that have gone before us into your safe keeping, those whom we desperately miss. Bless those who rejoice greatly this day. Those who are lifted by awe and wonder. Bless, O Lord, all your people and all your creation. Bless our endeavors to bring your love to others. Bless our ministries that bring the love and peace of Christ to those who struggle, who wander, who are lost and alone. Bless us in our endeavors to be a faithful community above all else, that our understanding of you and your Christ, may inform our leadership, that we may be good shepherds of what you have entrusted to us. Bless now these our private prayers as we come before you. (personal prayer time and meditation)

O God bless our congregation, and in your blessing, may we come to know your Christ as our shepherd, our protector, our comforter, and our friend. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 23

This morning's first reading is perhaps the most familiar and fondest text in the entire bible. It is used by both the Hebrew and Christian community in worship and personal devotion. It has been put to music on countless occasions by composers such as: Bach, Schubert, Vaugh Williams, Duke Ellington and even more contemporary writers like Bobby McFerrin and Pink Floyd. Written by King David, this text has also been used in movies; from Elephant Man to Titanic, the 23rd Psalm has been recited in no fewer than 25 Hollywood productions. More importantly, it has become the one bible text most Christians learn by heart.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil:
for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me
in the presence of mine enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil;
my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy
shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.

Scripture Reading: John 10:11-18

Our Gospel text for today takes place as Jesus leaves the temple in Jerusalem to return to the Mount of Olives. As he walks through the city, he finds a man born blind. Jesus heals the man and moves on. The man, whose sight has now been restored, finds himself in a difficult situation as he is confronted by the Pharisees in the temple. After a short discourse he is thrown out of the temple and eventually he meets Jesus again. As Jesus speaks to the man born blind, he also teaches his disciples and those who have gathered around him. Our Gospel Lesson is a part of that conversation.

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.

After the reading, you may reflect on these passages.
The sermon for this text may be seen in this week's video.

Sermon: *All We Like Sheep*

Benediction

Nancy C. Townley

*The Good Shepherd leads us forward,
from this place into the world
to serve God's people and
to witness to God's love in all that we do.
Go in peace and God's peace will go with you. Amen.*