

Dear Friends,

You can keep in touch through the church websites ([www.hayesmethodistchurch.co.uk](http://www.hayesmethodistchurch.co.uk), [www.hemc.org.uk](http://www.hemc.org.uk), [www.northhillingdonmethodistchurch.org](http://www.northhillingdonmethodistchurch.org)) and Facebook:

- [facebook.com/hayesmethodistchurch](https://facebook.com/hayesmethodistchurch)
- [facebook.com/hayesendmethodistchurch](https://facebook.com/hayesendmethodistchurch)
- [facebook.com/northhillingdonmethodistchurch](https://facebook.com/northhillingdonmethodistchurch)

Each church also has a WhatsApp group. Let me know if you want more details.

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### **Here are the usual two videos again this week:**

A Methodist minister's retelling of the Gospel reading for today (John 10:1-10)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMnDzeG28DU>

And arising out of that passage, my reflection and a prayer for the week -  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckjPvulwhF4&t>  
(You can also read a version of it below.)

***Thank you to those who have subscribed to the channel. We are slowly creeping towards the magic 100, when the channel can be named something sensible rather than a random collection of letters and numbers.***

***If you haven't subscribed yet, then you can do this by clicking on the red SUBSCRIBE button on the page [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCP9o1o7wxg\\_4sroOfwtEgiQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCP9o1o7wxg_4sroOfwtEgiQ).***

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### **The Good Shepherd**

Of all the jobs in biblical times, being a shepherd wasn't one you would aspire to. You wouldn't hear a Jewish mother boasting proudly that their son was a shepherd.? Why? Because it was a dirty, smelly and downright dangerous job. You were out on the hills and in the wilderness for days at a time. You lived with the sheep, you eat with the sheep, and you even slept alongside the sheep. At night when the sheep were gathered in the pen, the shepherd bedded down as the gate in the doorway, and was literally what kept the sheep in and the wild animals out.

But alongside that, there is the rich tradition of shepherds in the Old Testament – the great King David started off as a shepherd, the psalms liken God to being a shepherd (Psalm 23).

And I think Jesus picks up on both these themes saying, "I am the good shepherd." (John 10:11)

He says, "I identify with people on the edge of society, the marginalized, the outsiders, the people who do the necessary work but don't necessarily get the respect for it." And remember the angels who invited shepherds to be the very first people to see the infant Jesus in the stable.

In these times, we have a chance to consider who we respect and value in society. Who does key work? Who are the key workers? And they are the ones who maybe we don't think of at first – the refuse collectors, the care workers, the medical staff (from the greatest to the

least) and all who support them, shop workers, delivery drivers. You know who I mean, and the list goes on. Jesus says to them, "I stand alongside you. I respect what you are doing. And I value your work." And we are invited, encouraged and even challenged to do the same. The relationship we have with them means we can function and live our lives to the full.

When Jesus says that he is 'the good shepherd', he's talking about the relationship between the sheep and the shepherd. The shepherd leads the sheep, knows each of them by name, protects them and would do anything for them. In return, the sheep know the shepherd's voice. They trust in the shepherd for food, protection and guidance. The shepherd takes the first move and the sheep follow his leadership.

The relationship is secure, rather than needing to be encouraged or nurtured. We have a shepherd who wants to love and care for us. And this positive statement is re-assuring. There's no question of splitting the good sheep from the bad. The shepherd cares for both. There's no question that the thieves will succeed in carrying off the sheep. The shepherd will care for all of them. There is both a safety and a security that comes from the sheep knowing the shepherd.

And where does this all take place? Not in the organised town or village, or in respectable society. No – this happens in the rough and tough wilderness, where there is danger and insecurity. Wherever we are, or wherever we may find ourselves – at home or somehow unfamiliar – with a new way of life and fresh challenges to face. Jesus the shepherd is there to support us, and guide us in and through it. He can't turn the wilderness into a garden, but he will be there with us. His rod and staff are there to comfort us.

In the chaos and confusion of these weeks, in these strange and bewildering times, Jesus offers us a life to be lived in all its fullness, with God and in God.

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### **A prayer for this week**

Abundant God,  
fill us up this week.  
When we are worried or happy,  
when we are with others or alone,  
when we feel tired, and  
when we feel most alive.  
Guide us home to you. Amen.

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### **A hymn for our times**

Denise Creed, a Methodist deacon in the South Holderness Circuit, has written new words to the hymn "Father, I place into your hands".

Father, I place into your hand the things I now can't do.  
Father, I place into your hands the times we're going through.  
Father, I place into your hands the world as it is now,  
for we need your courage, strength and hope.

Father, I place into your hands my friends and family  
Father, I place into your hands the people I can't see.  
Father, I place into your hands those finding life lonely,  
for I trust that you are with us all.

Father, I place into your hands all of the NHS.  
Father, I place into your hands all those now full of stress.  
Father, I place into your hands my prayers for you to bless,  
for I know you hear my requests.

Father, help me to see your face, help me to hear your voice.  
Father, help me to sing your praise and in your name rejoice  
Father, give to me peace of mind, and to the dying - rest,  
for I know how much we need you now.

Father, I want to be with you and do the things you do.  
Father, I want to speak the words that you are speaking too.  
Father, I want to love the ones that you are loving too,  
may I know that I am one with you.

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### **Dial a prayer (plus)**

A *FREE* phone service to hear a prayer and Methodist Church news was launched this week.

Listen to a prayer: 0808 281 2514  
Listen to news: 0808 281 2478

(Content is updated every Thursday evening.)

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### **Sunday on the BBC**

8.10am                      Radio 4 (93.5FM)  
*Sunday Service* – The Bishop of Salisbury marks the 800th anniversary of Salisbury Cathedral.

10.45am                    BBC1  
*Sunday Worship* from Bangor Cathedral in Wales,

1.15pm                      BBC1  
*Songs of Praise* – Kate Botley revisits uplifting stories focusing on faith and farming.

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### **Sunday Services on the Web**

- Contemporary worship from Swan Bank Methodist Church: [www.youtube.com/user/SwanBank](http://www.youtube.com/user/SwanBank)
- Worship from the ministers at Westminster Central Hall, London: [youtube.com/user/MCHWevents/videos](http://youtube.com/user/MCHWevents/videos)
- Worship from Wesley's Chapel, London (also has daily prayer at 10.00am and 12.45pm): [www.youtube.com/channel/UCUAUqhmhevz5sqhh72LIMxA](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUAUqhmhevz5sqhh72LIMxA)
- *Sthie [at home]*– from the Isle of Man, a different style of worship taking place at home: [youtube.com/andyfishburne](http://youtube.com/andyfishburne)

## **A way of reading Psalm 23**

Read Psalm 23 slowly. Try and do it aloud if you can. Leave a pause at the end of each verse. Pay attention to any words or phrases that leap out or attract your attraction.

When you've finished the psalm, leave a minute of silence. Then read it again in the same way.

Repeat a third time. Note the words and phrases that stand out and carry them with you through the day and the week.

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**10 May readings:** John 14:1-14; 1 Peter 2:2-10

Take care, stay safe and God bless,

**Rev Ken**

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