

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

Sunday 26 April 2026

Easter 4

Welcome to this week's Prayers and Reflections. As Eastertide continues, we give thanks for Jesus being our Good Shepherd who takes great care of his worldwide flock. As you read this week's Gospel reading, I pray that you will feel the love that Jesus declares for us. May you love being one of his sheep!

God bless,

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As you picture Jesus as our Good Shepherd, offer him your loving praise as one of his faithful sheep.



The King of love my shepherd is
whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his
and he is mine for ever.

Henry Williams Baker (1821-1877)

Prayers and Reflections
for use at home on Easter 4
Being his flock

PREPARING OURSELVES

Take a moment to be still in God's presence, and feel his love. You may wish to light a candle as a sign of God's love - here, in this room. You may also wish to have a bowl of water ready for the time of letting go. When you are ready, say this opening prayer.

Risen Lord Jesus,
as I prepare to spend this time in worship,
I invite you to come and fill this space,
and my inner stillness,
with your presence.

Amen.

LETTING GO

If you come to this time of prayer and reflection with any regrets, with things that you wish you had not said, done or been, offer them to God in the silence of your heart. And, when you are ready, reflect on the second verse of this week's hymn.

Where streams of living water flow
my ransomed soul he leadeth,
and where the verdant pastures grow,
with food celestial feedeth.

Henry Williams Baker (1821-1877)



If you wish, dip your finger into a bowl of water and make the sign of the cross on your palm.

Feel the Father's forgiveness.

Our verse points to the life in all its fullness offered to us by Jesus. It speaks of the spiritual refreshment he gives to his church – the living waters of his Spirit and the body (bread) and the blood (wine) of his presence. Contemplate some of the times when you have felt close to Jesus, our risen Lord. This is when God’s Spirit was at one with yours. What words would you use to describe this feeling? Offer your thanks and praise.

Recall too your own experiences of sharing in the meal Jesus gave to us – his Church – to remember him. Recollect this spiritual feeding as you ponder this traditional verse. It is a reminder that the bread is eaten and the wine is drunk with others. We do not dine alone. Give thanks for this fellowship and friendship.



Let us break bread together
on our knees,
let us break bread together
on our knees.
When I fall on my knees
with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.

Unknown

Jesus is generous in his giving of himself to his friends – to his fellowship of followers (the Church). We see this in the penultimate verse of this week’s hymn. It is a fellowship that has been flowing freely, non-stop, for two thousand years. We are called to pass on what we receive.

Pause to ponder this.



Thou spread’st a table in my sight,
thy unction grace bestoweth:
and O what transport of delight
from thy pure chalice floweth!

Henry Williams Baker (1821-1877)

PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER

(The Collect)

Today, this prayer is being said across our villages and the worldwide Church. Add your voice to the earthly cycle of prayer to our risen Lord who always listens to our prayers.

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.**

Our prayer for this week follows on beautifully from our reflection on Jesus as the Good Shepherd who spiritually feeds his flock. Fellowship, friendship is part of who we are his Church and as his followers. We see this so gloriously in this description of the early Church. In the weeks following the birth of the Church at Pentecost, this is how its members gathered to share in feeding and fellowship.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship,
to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Everyone was filled with awe at the wonders and signs
performed by the apostles.

All the believers were together and had everything in common.
They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.

They broke bread in their homes and ate together with
glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all people.

And the Lord added to their number daily
those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42-47

If I could travel back in time, I would love to share in the communal life, the table fellowship and the prayer and praise of the early Church in Jerusalem. I would feel at home with them. For they are so at one with our risen Lord and with each other too. All are welcome in this church family. Ponder what stands out for you in this fellowship of believers.



How might this bless the way that you live out your faith in fellowship with others (at church or at home)?

And so through all the length of days
thy goodness faileth never;
good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
within thy house for ever.

Henry Williams Baker (1821-1877)

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

The Good Shepherd and his sheep

‘Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognise a stranger’s voice.’ Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

Therefore Jesus said again, ‘Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 10:1-10

Being one of his sheep...

This is part of our Lord's passage on being the Good Shepherd. He likens himself to the shepherd who keeps his sheep safe overnight in a pen – a communal pen. It is a pen that holds multiple flocks. Each of the flocks, each of the sheep, knows their shepherd's voice. This is the voice to follow out to that day's pastures. Their shepherd will keep his sheep safe, safe from thieves and bandits, and wild animals.

It is a beautiful image of who Jesus is to us – his flock and his followers. His is the voice that we learn to love and to recognise – in our bibles, at home, at church, within our very selves (our still small voice) and when in conversation with others.

Ponder how you hear his voice. How do you listen – pay attention – notice – discern his presence at your side and in your spiritual life? Where do you see signs of his guiding your daily life? What might you be missing? Contemplate this in the stillness.

Give thanks for this precious gift of fellowship with him. This is the life in all its fullness that Jesus promised to his followers. It is a sign of your spirit working in time with his.



You're my friend and you are my brother,
even though you are a king,
I love you more than any other,
so much more than anything.

*You alone are my strength, my shield,
to you alone may my spirit yield.*

*You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.*

Martin Nystrom (b. 1956)

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OUR PRAYERS

Here are some Eastertide prayers. Feel free to add your own.

Risen Lord, you are my Good Shepherd, my guide in life.

Your words speak to my heart. You encourage me to live in fellowship with fellow followers. Receive my love. Speak, Lord, and I will listen...

Risen Lord, hear my prayer.

Risen Lord, you are the world's Good Shepherd. You teach leaders how to care for their people and for all nations. Inspire, Lord, those leaders who do not know how to solve their nation's problems...

Risen Lord, hear my prayer.

Risen Lord, you are a Good Shepherd to those who are lost in life, those who are hurting. You hear our cries for help and come to us. You carry us when we feel unable to carry on. Carry, Lord, I pray...

Risen Lord, hear my prayer.

Offer your own heartfelt prayers and praise.

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.**

PRAYER OF BLESSING

A closing prayer of blessing for this week.

Risen Lord, come and meet me where I am,

this Eastertide. Fill me with love and joy and peace,

so that I may offer your hope to others.

Bless me and keep my loved ones safe, I pray. **Amen.**