

Planning

LECTIONARY

Acts 4.5-12; Psalm 23; 1 John 3.16-24;
John 10.11-18

Context

Easter tide continues, and we move on from the resurrection appearances to encounter some of the teachings of Jesus which were preparing the disciples to develop the qualities they would need when he was no longer with them. This week we encounter the qualities of leadership, care and sacrifice embodied in the traditional image for the fourth Sunday of Easter, the Good Shepherd. In these weeks before Ascension and Pentecost, we develop a memory box in which to store the qualities encountered.

Common thread – The Good Shepherd (John 10.11-18)

The ROOTS resources this week examine one of the seven 'I am' sayings of Jesus found in John's Gospel: I am the good shepherd. We explore the commitment of the shepherd to the sheep and the leadership qualities required.

Resources for the season

Season setting p.6; Prayers and music p.8; Drama and activities p.10; Art and craft p.12.

PLUS

Take-home sheet WEB

Downloadable activities for parents and children.

Short story WEB

Another way of opening up the issues of today's readings.

Songs and music

A new commandment; Follow me, says Jesus, JP; God is the one, KS; I took my flock of sheep, SB; Jehovah Jireh, God will provide, JP, KS, SF; Jesus is our shepherd, KS; Jesus the Lord said; Jesus, thank you for the cross, KS; Lord, I want to be in your family, KS; The Lord is my shepherd, JP; The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want; There were ninety-nine sheep, KS; Jesus said to the woman at the well, SB.

More hymns and songs for this issue are listed on p.8 and on the WEB.

Archive WEB

These readings were covered on 11.05.2003 and 07.05.2006.

ROOTS resources

Don't forget to look at pp.6-13 for additional suggestions for today and in ROOTS *Adult & All Age* magazine for further ideas for the whole worshipping community.

Book

We're Going on a Bear Hunt, Michael Rosen.

Film

Peter Pan, Disney 

'Follow the leader' sequence.

Websites

www.michaelrosen.co.uk. Scroll down the bar on the right until you come to 'Bear hunt'.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Gather

Prepare the space

You will need: small stones or pebbles; toy sheep, cotton wool balls or coloured pompoms; a stick or spoon; a dark sock or fabric rolled into a ball.

- Set out the stones in a circle to form a sheepfold, leaving a narrow gap.
- Place the sheep inside the circle, the dark ball outside and the stick or spoon across the entrance.

Gathering prayer

Lord Jesus, stories are a great way to learn more about people. Help us to listen carefully and to understand, so that we can learn to be a Good Shepherd like you. Amen.

Memory box (see p.12)

A shepherd's crook

Open the Word

Based on John 10.11-18

A storytelling for all ages of children gathered around the sheepfold.

You will need: the model of a sheepfold from *Gather*.

- Create a circle of chairs or cushions, tightly spaced, with only a narrow entrance in. There should be space in the centre for the sheepfold.
- Invite all the children to gather and sit inside the circle. Look at the sheepfold and talk about how the circle of chairs or cushions acts as a wall to protect the children from danger.
- Sit or lie across the entrance into the circle. Begin to tell the story.

“Jesus, the Good Shepherd, values each of his sheep. He leads and protects us as Jacob the lamb discovers in this story. Jacob stood on top of the rock, wriggled his tail and braced himself. 'I'm the king of the castle,' he taunted as his friends butted him and tried to push him off, 'and you can't get me!' His friends tried even harder, but he managed not to fall.

'Come along, Jacob,' said his mother.

'But, Mum, I want to play.'

'I know, Jacob, but our shepherd is moving away and we have to follow.'

'We could stay with the other shepherd. Look, there he is over by that rock.'

'Yes, and he is fast asleep,' muttered Jacob's mother. 'He is not a real shepherd, Jacob. He is just a hired hand paid to look after sheep. He wouldn't take care of us as our shepherd does. Come along.'

They ran to follow the good shepherd, across the side of the mountain. The shepherd watched Jacob, smiling to see him so happy, and when Jacob misjudged his jump and fell, the shepherd gently picked him up.

The shepherd led his sheep to a cool stream, and they drank thirstily and then rested under the trees. If any sheep wandered away, the shepherd softly called them back.

Towards evening, the shepherd tapped his crook on the ground, signalling the sheep to move on up the valley.

Jacob's mother said, 'Hurry up, Jacob, we have to be in the fold before it gets dark. We don't want to be on the hillside if a wolf is around.'

'I'm not frightened of a silly old wolf,' Jacob retorted, but followed the shepherd up the hill.

They all went into the fold, snuggling together under the dark sky, which shone with bright stars in the cold night.

Jacob was nearly asleep when, suddenly, he heard a loud howl which sent shivers down his back.

'Mum, what is that? I'm scared!' he bleated.

'Shhh,' said his mother, 'it is a wolf, but you must not worry. Our shepherd won't let the wolf near us.'

'But what if he is asleep?' said Jacob.

'He is lying in the gap, across the entrance. He will protect us. The wolf will have to pass him to get to us, and he would rather die than let that happen. So go to sleep and don't be afraid. Our good shepherd is always ready to lay down his life for his friends.'”

Discuss with the children what the good shepherd did for his sheep, and make the link to Jesus being the Good Shepherd. They might like to re-tell the story using the sheepfold.

Other ways of opening the Word are on p.16 and on the WEB.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Talk about

These are discussion points, with no right or wrong answers. Rather, use them as a way of opening up a conversation to enable the children to express their ideas.

■ This story shows us how Jesus exemplifies loving leadership. Discuss with the children: *How do you think the shepherd in the story is a good shepherd?*

How did Jacob and his mother feel about him?

How might the shepherd lay down his life for his sheep?

What do you think is meant when Jesus is called the Good Shepherd?

How did Jesus lay down his life for us?

■ There are good shepherds in our world today. Discuss with the children:

Are there people in your life who are good shepherds?

What do we need and who gives us those things?

Whose voice do you know and follow?

Do you listen to different people in different situations?

■ The shepherd lays his life down for the sheep. Jesus lays his life down for us. Talk about what it means to lay something down – to give it up, to sacrifice something. Discuss with the children:

Who would you be prepared to lay down your life for?

Who needs us to be their shepherd?

What would you be prepared to give up for other people?

Table template [WEB](#) for 'Lay down your life?'

Column A	Column B	Column C
We may lay down	for	when they are
a computer game	Mum	afraid
watching television	teacher	celebrating
laziness	baby	unhappy
playing football	new child at school	busy
reading a book	friend	hungry
a favourite toy	pet	upset
wanting to win	God	tired

Respond to

Follow the leader

- Ask the children to stand in a circle.
- Appoint a 'leader', who stands in the centre of the circle.
- The leader should perform an action and the group should copy them. They might include actions such as 'give food to the hungry'; 'pray to the Father'; 'talk with my friends'; 'heal the sick'; etc.

Whose voice?

- Ask the children to stand at one end of the room, facing the wall.
- Three people (leaders or children) stand at the opposite end of the room where the children can't see them.
- One of the three calls out, 'Follow me.'
- On the count of three, the children turn around and point to the person whose voice they think it was.

With older children you could provide blindfolds and ask them to work in pairs. One of each pair is blindfolded and has to follow the sound of their partner's voice.

Lay down your life?

A discussion about sacrifice.

You will need: to copy the table [WEB](#) and cut out each cell, producing a set of slips separated into columns A, B and C.

- Give each child, or group, a set of the three piles of slips.
- Invite the children to decide what they may be prepared to give up ('lay down') for whom and in what circumstances.

We're going to follow Jesus

A prayer with actions, along the lines of *Going on a Bear Hunt*.

Chorus:

Come on and follow Jesus. > BECKON TO OTHERS
It's not going to be easy, > SHAKE A FINGER
but we've got his words with us,
> LOOK AT OPEN PALM AS IF READING
so we will be OK.

> SMILE AND MOVE ARMS AS IF WALKING

Verse one

Uh Oh!

Mum's sweeping the front yard.

> PRETEND TO SWEEP THE FLOOR

Should we walk past her? > WALK ON THE SPOT

Do we have to help her? > FINGER AGAINST CHEEK

I don't know! > HANDS OVER EYES

But what would Jesus do? > HANDS DOWN,

PALMS OPEN

Repeat chorus

Verse two

Uh Oh!

Bullying in the playground. > POINT FINGER

We don't like it. > SHAKE FINGER

Can we ignore it? > FINGER AGAINST CHEEK

I don't know! > HANDS OVER EYES

But what would Jesus do? > HANDS DOWN,

PALMS OPEN

Repeat chorus

With a little help, the children can add more verses suggesting the problems they face.

Finish with

We followed Jesus. > WALKING ACTION WITH ARMS

It wasn't easy, > SHAKE FINGER

but he helped us out > READ BOOK IN PALM

OF HAND

and we made it through the day. > RAISE ARMS

Send out

Give each of the children a copy of the *Take-home sheet* [WEB](#) and invite them to gather together.

Pray together

Dear Jesus,

as we go out to try to be good leaders,

help us to follow you closely and always listen to your voice.

Amen.

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Websites

The good shepherd: flickr.com and type 'shepherd and sheep' into the search box.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Gather

Gathering activity

Find a simple but interesting activity that needs to be taught. This needs to be relevant to your young people and the space and time you have, e.g. origami, juggling, knitting, sewing, a card trick, or cooking.

This might be a way of involving another member of the congregation in your work with young people. You could ask someone in the church who has a particular skill to come to teach the young people.

- One person should be the teacher.
- Provide the resources or equipment needed.
- Group members should do only what the teacher shows them how to do.

Gathering prayer

Lord God,
as we explore what it means to lay our life down for others,
help us to hear what you are calling us to do in our lives.
Amen.

Open the Word

Based on John 10.11-18

Provide copies of the Bible reading – either from a Bible or the retelling offered here.

“Jesus said, 'I am the Good Shepherd.' The Good Shepherd puts the sheep before himself, sacrificing himself if necessary. It's more than a job. Someone who is hired is not a real shepherd because the sheep mean nothing to him. A hired man who sees a wolf come will run for it, leaving the sheep to be attacked and scattered by the wolf. He's only in it for the money. The sheep don't matter to him.

'I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own sheep and my own sheep know me. My sheep will follow me and I put the sheep before myself, sacrificing myself if necessary. I have lots of sheep. I need to gather and bring them, too. They'll also recognise my voice.'

Then it will be one flock, one shepherd.

'In the same way, the Father knows me and I know the Father. This is why the Father loves me: because I freely lay down my life. And so I am free to take it up again. No one takes it from me. I lay it down of my own free will. I have the right to lay it down; I also have the right to take it up again. I received this authority personally from my Father.'”

Being a follower – inspire us!

You will need: newspapers and magazines (teenage/sport/gossip ones); sheets of paper to stick to or draw on; glue.

Tip: don't forget to have a quick look through the papers and magazines and take out anything that is not appropriate for your session.

- Ask the young people to work in groups to cut, rip out or draw two or three people who inspire them, or whom they would like to be like in the future.
- Invite the young people to share with other members of the group the people they have chosen, and why.
- Ask the young people to work in groups to draw an outline of a person on the paper and to write down what they see the qualities of a good leader or role model to be.
- Explain that Jesus inspired many people by his words and actions. This can be seen in today's passages.

Lead us to follow your paths

A discussion about leadership.

You will need: a roll of lining paper or a flip-chart sheet; marker pens.

- On the paper, draw a large shepherd's crook. If you can make this life size, so much the better.
 - Invite the young people to think about the qualities of a leader and to write these down around the crook.
 - Invite the young people to think about the qualities of a shepherd and to write these down inside the outline of the crook.
 - Invite the young people to think about the qualities Jesus shows us and to circle any of the words that apply to him.
- Discuss the image of Jesus as good shepherd and think about a contemporary title he might have, e.g. Jesus the good share-trader.

Other ways of opening the Word are on p.14 and on the WEB.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Talk about

- Jesus the Good Shepherd was prepared to lay down his life for his sheep.

What does it mean to lay down your life for others?

What does it mean to follow Jesus, the Good Shepherd?

- The good shepherd leads his sheep.

Are there qualities in some people that mean you are willing to follow them?

How do other people follow you lead?

What responsibility does leadership bring?

This section focuses on Christians from other countries who lay down their lives for their faith.

You will need: stories of people standing up for their faith: www.jesusfreaks.net or www.cassiebernall.com ^{WEB}; Bibles or copies of the Bible reading.

- Divide the group into twos or threes. Give each small group a copy of the passage and some of the stories from the websites to look at.
- Ask the young people to read the passages and the stories and to write down or talk about how they think the stories relate to the Bible readings.

What would you do (honestly) if you were faced with these situations?

What did you think about the stories? How did the stories make you feel?

Explore the young people's thoughts, guiding the discussion where needed.

How do you think you could lay down your life in the coming weeks, without going to the extreme of the ultimate test?

Is there a passage or example that you try to follow in the way you live your life?



Respond to

Follow the leader

A game to remind us to follow the right leader.

You will need: blindfolds.

- Divide the young people into pairs. One from each pair should be blindfolded.
- The 'seeing' partner should stand at the opposite side of your space from their partner.
- The 'seeing' partners should call to their blindfolded partners, who should then follow their voices until they meet at the opposite side of the room.
- With everyone speaking at once it is difficult to hear the voice you are listening for.

Reflection and discussion

An opportunity to think about how Jesus laid down his life for everyone and that we should follow his leadership.

You will need: Prepared forms; pens; and envelopes.

- Create a simple form with a Bible verse and the words:
I commit to do (insert an action) ...
for (insert a person's name) ...
- Enter into a time of worship appropriate to your group. This can be as simple as inviting them to sit in a circle, with music in the background, or singing. This is a reflective exercise, so choose music and create the environment appropriately.
- Laying down your life for others means doing things for people that you might not normally do. Explain that this next activity is between the young people and God.
- Invite the young people to think of someone in one of their communities (school, church, social network) whom they don't really get on with.
- Ask them to write that person's name at the bottom of the paper and then to write down three things that they are going to do for them, secretly.
- Ask the young people to put their paper in an envelope.
- Explain that you will then enter into a time of prayer, and the young people will be asked to commit these actions to God and then the envelopes will be placed at the cross (or centrepiece).

- Explain that after the prayer time the envelopes will be taken by a leader for the week (they will not be looked at), and then they will be handed back after one week – or month – so they can check whether they have done the actions or not.

Prayer time

A time of commitment and covenant.

You will need: a cross and a bowl or basket.

The placing of the envelopes at the cross acts as a commitment or covenant, and the handing back of the envelopes acts as an accountability exercise.

- Set the cross in the centre of the group, with the bowl or basket at the foot of the cross.
- Start the prayer time with the following prayer:

*Jesus,
we want to follow your example by laying down our lives for others.*

As we commit to do these things for others, help us to live up to our promises to you.

Amen.

- Invite the young people to place their envelopes in the bowl at the foot of the cross. When all the young people have placed their envelopes, finish with the following prayer:

*Lord Jesus Christ,
give us the strength to complete these acts of kindness, in your name.*

Amen.

Send out

*Lord God,
we thank you that you laid down your life for us.*

Help us to follow your example, to act responsibly and to encourage others to follow you.

Amen.

Don't forget to look at pp.6–13 and pp.14–15 for additional ideas.