



Weekly News

Sunday 8th May 2022

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Knowing, loving and following Jesus

Parish Church of St Richard

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Worship at St Richard's

Masses this week will be celebrated in church and Sunday's Mass will be live-streamed onto the St Richard's Facebook page. During the week, the church will also be open most days for private prayer.

Tuesday 10 th	Mass	11:00
Wednesday 11 th	Mass	19:00
Thursday 12 th	Mass	11:00
Sunday 15th	Mass	10:00

Fifth Sunday of Easter

APCM

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) and meeting to elect churchwardens will take place after Mass on Sunday 22nd May in church. If you are interested in joining the PCC, please contact Fr Chris.

Craft market and plant sale - Saturday 14 May

Help wanted! The Haywards Heath Craft Market is fast approaching, and help is needed in the following areas:

- Donate items for our 'vintage items' stall
- Donate plants to be sold
- Donate items for the raffle
- Donate small toys for the Toy Tombola
- Help moving pews
(on Thursday 12th and after the market)
- General help on the day
- Display posters in local shops and supermarkets
- Display a card in your car

Please use the sign-up sheets in the South entrance or speak with Carolyn, Mary, Mel or Fr Chris.

Of your charity, please pray for, those in need:

Mimi Palmer, Una Wade, Christopher Grimwood, Shirley Swyer, Brigid Brand, Alistair Bucke, Ann Eastall, Fr Kevin Eastall, Colin Hill, Gordon Priestley, Sheila Jobson, Jean McCarthy, Tony Dawson, Maria Firth, Gary Firth, Karen Guy, Suzy Rumbold, Len Griffin, Fr John Gayford, Baby Isaac, Baby Nyle Mahmoud, and Becky.

Those who have died recently: Terry Littlewood and those whose anniversary falls around this time

of year: 9th) Edward Ferguson (pr), Lily Mably, Leslie Williams, Donald Grimwood, 10th) Isobelle Sargent, 11th) Ivy Pearson, 12th) Fred Venables, Peggy King, Ivy Denny, 13th) Stanley Barrie, Beverley Harness, Joan Allen, 14th) Sheila Prosser, Charles Houghton, Joyce Ling.

*If you would like anyone added to the prayer list, or would like someone prayed for, but **not** added to the list, please submit your prayer details using the form on the website www.strichards.co.uk/prayer.*

Forthcoming events

Sat 14 May	11:00	Haywards Heath Craft Market @ St Richard's
Tue 17 May	14:00	Memory Moments Café
Sat 21 May	16:30	Messy Mass
Sun 22 May	11:00	APCM
Sat 4 Jun	14:00	Memory Moments Café – Queen's Jubilee
Sun 5 Jun	12:00	Pop-up café in Victoria Park
Sat 11 Jun	16:30	Messy Mass
Tue 21 Jun	14:00	Memory Moments Café
Sat 25 Jun	16:30	Messy Mass
Sat 2 Jul	14:00	Memory Moments Café
Sat 9 Jul	16:30	Messy Mass

Foodbank donations

The church will be open to take donations for the Foodbank on Tuesday at 10:00 – 12:00 and Friday 14:00 – 16:00.

200 Club – April

The winning 200 Club numbers for April are:

3rd Prize – #26 – Wincy House

2nd Prize – #23 – Michael Ockford

1st Prize – #112 – Melina Leppard

Congratulations to the winners.

Ric's Bench

Ric's Bench sessions this week are on:

Monday 19:00 – 21:00

Friday 14:00 – 16:00

Please do come along for a cup of tea or coffee.

Fr Chris' Sermon – 8 May 2022

It being Good Shepherd Sunday, it is little wonder that the majority of our readings and prayers this morning feature shepherds and sheep. In last week's gospel reading Jesus alluded to his role of shepherd, when he instructed Peter to follow him and feed and tend *his* lambs and sheep.

He appointed Peter to be chief shepherd, pastor of his flock. Pastor in Latin means shepherd. Today, Bishops, by way of the Apostolic succession, are charged with being our shepherds. They are there to look after and pastor their flock given to them by divine order. Us priests and deacons are called to share in this pastoring ministry to help lead and care for God's sheep. So, we are shepherds too. This image of clergy as shepherds reminds me of a mildly amusing story of a young priest teaching Psalm 23 (The Lord's my shepherd) to some young people. He was explaining that they were sheep who needed guidance. And he asked, "*If you are the sheep, then who is the shepherd?*"— he was expecting them to say that he was the shepherd. Instead, a young boy declared: "*Jesus is the Shepherd.*" The priest, caught by surprise, said to the boy, "*Well then, who am I?*" The boy frowned thoughtfully and said, "*I guess you must be the sheep dog.*"!

In the Bible, kings liked to give themselves the title Shepherd, to show that they cared for the flock as a good shepherd should, but prophets like Ezekiel found them to be sadly lacking and more interested in themselves: "*Thus says the Lord God, I am against the shepherds; and I will demand my sheep at their hand, and put a stop to their feeding the sheep; no longer shall the shepherds feed themselves.*"

And a little later, the prophet declares that God Himself would be the Shepherd of Israel, to rule His people with fairness. When he proclaims: "*The Lord God says: 'You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God'*".

This image of God as the shepherd of his people, is a recurring motif throughout the Old Testament. And it continues in the New Testament, for example just before the feeding of the 5,000, Mark tells us: "*As Jesus stepped ashore, he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd*".

In Jesus' parable of the lost sheep, found in Matthew and Luke's gospels, the caring shepherd who will not allow even one of his flock to be lost, is there symbolizing God. But, it is only in John's gospel where Jesus is explicitly called a "*shepherd*". And it is a title he gives himself; "*I am the good shepherd*". The majority of Chapter 10 of John's gospel is given over to this image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. We hear a different section of it on this 4th Sunday of Easter, over the 3 lectionary years.

As an aside, it is interesting to note how in Art of a certain period, the two separate stories of the lost sheep and the good shepherd are somewhat confusingly brought together, to create the iconic image of Jesus carrying a sheep across his shoulders.

In John, Jesus says "*I am the good shepherd*". But in the writing of John, Jesus is also called a lamb. At the beginning of the gospel, we hear John the Baptist say: "*Here is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*" when he sees Jesus. What a paradox this presents us with? Jesus is *both* a shepherd and a lamb, made even more puzzling by the fact that in the reading from the Book of Revelation we heard earlier, John uses the two descriptors in the same sentence: "*because the lamb who is at the heart of the throne will be their shepherd*".

In isolation, this phrase sounds like an answer to some bizarre conundrum or riddle.

How can a lamb be a shepherd? On the face of it, it just doesn't make any sense. But then, neither does much of scripture: the virgin birth, bodily resurrection, a God that is both 3 and 1, etc. etc. Christianity is full of paradox, with seemingly impossible and contradictory elements.

Actually, I think, paradox is an essential part of Christianity. Without paradox, everything is too logical, and easy to understand. And that which we understand, we feel in control of. And when we are in control, our need for God becomes less apparent. And then it's one short step to us replacing God with our idea of what god should be like: God made in our image. Humans are fundamentally inquisitive creatures, that is the way God made us and it's one of the things that sets us aside from the rest of the animal kingdom. If we have all the answers, there is nothing else to search for, and we will become less than human, certainly less than the human made in God's image.

Sylvia Dunstan, the writer of our post communion hymn, which is entitled Christus Paradox, highlights many of the paradoxes of our faith, but my favourite line is "You, the everlasting instant". But coming back to, and trying to make some sense of, that paradoxical image in the Book of the Revelation: "*the lamb who is at the heart of the throne will be their shepherd*" The Lamb is a symbol of powerlessness, but look at where he is positioned, he stands *at the heart of the throne* and the throne is a symbol of power.

This the final image given to us by the New Testament. My power, says the God who speaks in the New Testament, is made perfect in weakness. The Lamb who is to be our Shepherd, according to this picture, is not one who will lord it over us and make their decisions for us. Or, as is the way of the world, get his way by pulling strings. The good shepherd, that is, good in the sense of the right one, is the one who pours out his life in service. Who is completely, the man for others. And whose leadership is one of example – offered to us all to follow. The irony is that while the Church of England seems increasingly intent on jettisoning this style of leadership, in favour of last century business management techniques, forward looking organisations are exploring ways to adopt models closer to a servant leadership. But surely the Church, so long as she is truly being the Church, should expound no other kind of leadership but that of loving service. Because our head shepherd is "*the lamb who is at the heart of the throne*"