

APRIL 21, 2021

AGAPE FROM AFAR

Adjusting to life amidst Coronavirus

A WORD
FROM
PASTOR
JILL

As a way to remain connected during this time apart, I will be putting together a weekly newsletter with a reflection based on the upcoming Sunday scripture passage. I hope that by taking a few moments to reflect on the Word of God and pray, we can feel grounded and connected to God and to one another during this uncertain time. *-Pastor Jill*



The scripture for this week is John 10:11-18. In this passage, Jesus describes himself as the Good Shepherd. While many people find comfort in the image of Jesus as a shepherd, in our modern society it is hard to relate to this agrarian metaphor. In Jesus' time a shepherd was not a desirable career because it was a dirty job with long hours away from home while grazing on other people's property. Do you find comfort in Jesus calling himself a Good Shepherd? What other names for Jesus remind you of the love and care a shepherd offers to their sheep?

Reflect more on this passage on the following pages.



Read the passage:

John 10:11-18

“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.”





Reflect:

1. What is the difference between the Good Shepherd, the hired hand and the wolf?
2. Jesus describing himself the Good Shepherd, reminds us of Psalm 23 (The Lord is my Shepherd). Do you remember the first time you heard Psalm 23 and what it meant to you then? What does it mean to you now?
3. In our society, what role would be the equivalent of a shepherd (someone who looks after vulnerable creatures)?
4. What is this passage calling you to do today? This week?

Pray:

Shepherding God, when we are heading toward the wolves, lead us back into your loving arms. Amen.



Beginning this Sunday, April 11, fifty people (including staff & volunteers) may gather in the sanctuary, another 50 people may watch the service live-streamed in Hatfield Hall. Worship will continue to be available online to watch from home. or

Before Coming to In-person Worship:

1. If you have any symptoms or have been in close contact with someone with Covid within the last 14 days, we ask that you watch worship from home.
2. Sign up ahead of time on the online pew pad to assist with contact tracing. Everyone (including staff and volunteers) needs to register online (link emailed on Fridays), by phone (630-620-2630 x210), or in person on Sundays.
3. You may access the bulletin on your device ahead of time or print it out at home and bring it with you.

Arriving at Worship:

1. Doors will open at 9:45. Plan to arrive by 10:10 so everyone may be seated.
2. You must wear a mask covering your mouth and nose.
3. You must sanitize your hands and have a temperature check before entering the building.
4. To maintain social distance, you will be directed when to enter the sanctuary or Hatfield Hall and will go directly to your seat and be seated.
5. Seating in the sanctuary and Hatfield Hall will be socially distanced and will be filled from the front to the back.
6. Members of the same household will be seated together.

During Worship:

1. Worship will be 30-40 minutes long.
2. Music will be instrumental and there will be no congregational singing.
4. Children will remain with their families or go directly to Sunday School.
5. Offering will be collected by the doors.
6. Worship responses will be call and response or viewable on the screen.
7. Dismissal at the end of the worship will be by household.
8. Restrooms will be available, but to maintain social distancing only one person may occupy the restroom at a time.

After worship:

1. Congregating in the building will not be permitted.
2. Weather permitting, outdoor coffee hour may be held.

We will continue to reassess and make adjustments as we determine how best to move forward. While worship will look different, we know that the Spirit of God will be present as we gather together in this new way and as many continue to join us virtually, too.