

Sunday 21st April 2024: Fourth Sunday of Easter

For use by the Central Norfolk Circuit at 10.30 am or other suitable time.



StF 295 H&P 250 'Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks' by Donald Fishel (b. 1950)

Opening Prayer

Think of the past week and say both 'thank you' and 'sorry' to our loving God.

Psalm set for today: Psalm 23

StF 479 H&P 69 'The King of love my shepherd is' by Henry Williams Baker (1821 – 1877)

Gospel reading set for today: John 10 v 11 – 18

To think about

This fourth Sunday of Easter (in each of the years of the 3 year lectionary cycle) always has the 23rd Psalm and readings from John 10. What does the imagery of the shepherd with their sheep add to our knowledge about God and about God's activity in Jesus?

Reading from Acts of Apostles set for today (instead of the Old Testament): Acts 4 v 5 – 12

Message from a Circuit Friend

"By what power did you do this?" This is the question that Peter and John were asked by the High Priest of Jerusalem and other important people of the time. The two disciples had been preaching about Jesus, had drawn a large crowd, and had healed a beggar who had been crippled since birth. Because of their actions, they had been imprisoned overnight and were then brought before the High Priest to explain their actions. As was typical of the confidence and strong faith of the disciples after Jesus' resurrection, they answered the question with courage and total conviction. "If we are being held to account for an act of kindness shown to a cripple, and are asked how he was healed, then know this – it is by the name of Jesus Christ, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man was healed"

The power of the disciples' answer, and the presence of the healed man, eventually led to the disciples being let go. Even threats from the hierarchy about stopping their preaching fell on deaf ears. There seemed nothing the authorities could do to stop them.

There has often been a clash between those in authority and the believers in Jesus - a secular power versus a spiritual power. Examples abound; the Primitive Methodist church began after restrictions placed upon some believers by the established Wesleyan church caused friction. Many dictators have tried to kill off the Christian churches, or to bend them to their own ways. Even today there are regular attacks on the bishops in the House of Lords when they criticise or even hold up legislation the government wants to pass. 'The church should stay out of politics' is a phrase often heard.

What we see in the book of Acts is a clear example that our spiritual beliefs, based on the words of Jesus, cannot necessarily be limited to the morals or secular laws of the time. As Peter and John say later in Chapter 4, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God".

John Hull (Local Preacher and member of Beetley Methodist Church)

StF 418 H&P 465 'We have a gospel to proclaim' by Edward Joseph Burns (b. 1938)

Prayers of Intercession

We pray for our world... for the church... for our communities... for our families & friends...

Offer to God your offertory for the week, and say the Lord's Prayer...

StF 736 H&P 678 'In heavenly love abiding' by Anna Laetitia Waring (1823 – 1910)

May the blessing of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us, and all those we love, this day and always, Amen.

District News: A delegation from the East Anglia Methodist District (including our District Chair, Rev Julian Pursehouse, has been in Zimbabwe for ten days returning on Thursday this last week. There are photos on the District Facebook page – just search for East Anglia Methodist District on Facebook. Our District is now 'twinned' with Harare West District in the African country and our Circuit is being linked up with a Circuit in Zimbabwe. More details when we have them.