

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Purpose

For all members of the church community to explore together what Jesus meant when he said "I am The Good Shepherd".

Key Scripture

I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and they know me. John 10:14 (CEV)

Consider & Prepare

This all age worship service is the third in a series based on the "I am" statements of Jesus. It is designed to allow relationships to form and to be nurtured across the generations of your church community.

Take the time to read the parable of The Good Shepherd in John 10:1-16. Reflect on what God is saying to you as you read these verses. Consider the times that you have been aware of the voice of the Good Shepherd calling your name; when has He led you to the touch of the cool, fresh waters; how has He sustained you; when

has He offered you His protection; which sheep in the flock has He asked you to take particular care of?

Pray for the sheep in your church community and those that have not yet joined the one flock of The Good Shepherd.

This will be quite a long service. Allow a little more time than you might usually take. Consider taking a break for The Good Shepherd to feed his sheep in the middle of the service. If you need to shorten the service then we would recommend removing the 'Boo or Baa' section of the service.

You will need

- Introduction
 - ❖ Simple shepherds costume
 - ❖ Dark glasses and coat for the 'thief'
 - ❖ Prepare two helpers to be the 'thief' and the 'hired hand'
- Good Shepherd/ Bad Shepherd
 - ❖ A3 copies of Psalm 23 – enough for one per group
 - ❖ Markers/ pens/ pencils/ highlighters
- The Call of the Good Shepherd



- ❖ 6 blindfolds (as few as 3 if you have a small group)
- ❖ A few 'obstacles'
- Where do I fit?
 - ❖ You will need a small 'sheep' for each person. This could be a cardboard or felt cut-out (available from craft stores) or just a cotton wool ball each. Alternatively, you might like to include a craft session for everyone to construct their own sheep.
 - ❖ Set up a simple representation of the parable (see diagram in Appendix A). This could be done in a variety of ways
 - ❖ Drawn on a large sheet of butcher's paper
 - ❖ Created out of felt on a table
 - ❖ Painted a mural on the wall
 - ❖ Lay out large sheets of coloured fabric

on the floor

Song Suggestions

Baa Baa Do Baa Baa (Colin Buchanan)

Shepherd – Bethel Music

Safe in Your Arms – Martin Smith and Chris Tomlin

Saviour, Like a Shepherd Lead Us – Dorothy Thrupp

Psalm 23 – Stuart Townsend

He Knows my Name – Paul Baloche

He Will Carry Me – Mark Schultz

Introduction – John 10:1-16 (CEV)

Outline/ Key Components

Introduction	John 10:1-16 (CEV)	Drama
Good Shepherd/ Bad Shepherd	'Baa' or 'Boo'	Exploring
Link		
The Call of the Good Shepherd		Doing
Link		
Recognising the voice of the Good Shepherd		Teaching
Where do I fit?		Reflection
Benediction		

Introduction

John 10:1-16 (CEV)

Enter dressed as a shepherd. Whistle as you wander around a little until you have gained some attention. Pretend to notice that the congregation is present.

Oh, there you are, good morning! I was just out looking for you all. What lovely little sheep you are. I hope you have all enjoyed munching on delicious green grass this morning. Now I want you to rest a little while I tell you all a story.

Once, when Jesus was talking to some important leaders, He told them a story. It was a story about sheep and shepherds. This is what he said...

I tell you for certain that only thieves and robbers climb over the fence instead of going in through the gate to the sheep pen. ²⁻³ But the gatekeeper opens the gate for the shepherd, and he goes in through it. The sheep know their shepherd's voice. He calls each of them by name and leads them out.

Call the names of some of the children and ask them to follow you

Begin to walk around your space with the children following.

⁴ When he has led out all of His sheep, he walks in front of them, and they follow, because they know His voice. ⁵ The sheep will not follow strangers. They don't recognize a stranger's voice, and they run away.

Deepen your voice and tell the children following you

that they should run away from strangers.

Have someone sneak out the front with dark glasses and a turned up collar.

Point to them and say...

⁸ Everyone who came before me was a thief or a robber, and the sheep did not listen to any of them.

Point to yourself...

⁹ I am the gate. All who come in through me will be saved. Through me they will come and go and find pasture.

Point to the 'thief'...

¹⁰ A thief comes only to rob, kill, and destroy.

Point to yourself...

I came so that everyone would have life, and have it in its fullest. ¹¹ I am the good shepherd, and the good shepherd gives up his life for his sheep.

Hired hand wanders in carelessly and yawns...

¹² Hired workers are not like the shepherd. They don't own the sheep, and when they see a wolf coming, (*Hired hand pretends to see a wolf and runs out*) they run off and leave the sheep. Then the wolf attacks and scatters the flock. ¹³ Hired workers run away because they don't care about the sheep.

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and they know me. ¹⁵ Just as the Father knows me, I know the Father, and I give up my life for my sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep that are not in this sheep pen. I must bring them together too, when they hear my voice. Then there will be one flock of sheep and one shepherd.

Take off your shepherd headdress and continue...

This story that Jesus told was a type of story, called a parable. A parable has special meaning. If we look at it closely we can begin to understand what the story is really about.

Who do you think each of the characters represent?

Name each character/ group of characters and allow time for responses.

- Shepherd – Jesus
- The Sheep that are following the Good Shepherd – People who are choosing to listen to Jesus and follow Him

- The Sheep that are not following the Good Shepherd – People who do not know the voice of Jesus and do not follow Him
- Gate – Jesus (*Sometimes the sheepfold would not have a gate in the walls. The Shepherd would lie down and sleep in the gap between the walls to keep the sheep safe. When we came in through the gate we are saved.*)
- Thief, robber – Things or people that stop us from following Jesus
- The hired hand – Things or people that we might try to follow for a while that let us down when trouble comes
- Wolf – Times of trouble or danger that can get in the way of us following Jesus

In this story, Jesus said that He is The Good Shepherd. Today we are going to explore together what He meant when He said this and why it matters.

Good Shepherd/ Bad Shepherd – 'Baa' or 'Boo' (Exploring)

I wonder what it means to be a **good** shepherd.

Ezekiel 34 tells us about bad, worthless shepherds and Psalm 23 tells us some more about The Good Shepherd. I have taken some of the things that these verses tell us about shepherds and mixed them up. I want you to listen carefully. If I say something that a worthless shepherd might do then I want you to say 'boo'. If I say something that the Good Shepherd might do then you can be a happy sheep and say 'baa'.

Ignore the sheep

Don't take care of the sheep

Give the sheep everything they need

Let the sheep rest when they are tired

Never protect the weak sheep

Don't heal the sick sheep

Help the sheep to find good fresh grass

Don't bandage the sheep that are hurt

Love the sheep

Let the sheep wander off

Take the sheep to cool, clean water

Never look for the sheep that are lost

Cruel to the sheep

Keep the sheep safe

Mean to the sheep

Refuse to watch the sheep

Treat the sheep kindly

Stay with the sheep in dangerous places

Feed yourself but don't feed the sheep
Protect the sheep from wild animals
Let wild animals attack the sheep
Give the sheep a safe place to live forever

In groups, take an A3 copy of Psalm 23.
Read each verse together. Write or draw pictures near each verse to show how you have seen Jesus being the Good Shepherd in your life or in the life of another 'sheep'.

For example,
You, Lord, are my shepherd. I will never be in need.
Psalm 23:1

You might draw pictures of your family, your home or your favourite food.

Link

The Good Shepherd, Jesus, is always with us; he takes care of us and gives us the things that we need. He protects us when we follow Him. How can we follow Jesus the Good Shepherd? First we must know His voice. I need six volunteer sheep and six volunteers who think that they might make good shepherds. *If you have a small group you can use as few as three shepherds and three sheep. Do NOT let the sheep know yet who will be their shepherd.*

The Call of the Good Shepherd (Doing)

Blindfold volunteer 'sheep'.

After the blindfolds are on, assign a sheep to each shepherd by pointing to them. It is important that the sheep do NOT know which shepherd they belong to.

Send the shepherds to the opposite end of your space.

Each 'shepherd' must guide their own 'sheep' safely through the obstacle course by calling out directions. All of the shepherds will be calling out at once.

The shepherds must NOT call the sheep by name or identify who they are shepherding.

The sheep will not know which voice to follow.

Instruct the sheep to keep their blindfolds in place when they reach the shepherds.

The shepherds may now touch their sheep on the shoulders and tell them their name.

Keep the blindfolds in place. The shepherds will lead their sheep to the starting point again, they can talk to them on the way so that the sheep become familiar with their shepherd's voice.

Repeat the activity now that the sheep know which voice to follow.

Ask the 'sheep':

- How was the experience for you?
- What worked well?
- When was it hardest to hear your 'shepherd'?
- When was it hardest to trust your 'shepherd'?
- What did you enjoy?
- Were you able to recognise the voice of your 'shepherd'?
 - ❖ If 'no' – how would things have changed if you could have recognised his/her voice?
 - ❖ If 'yes' – how would things have changed if you had been unable to recognise his/her voice?

Link

The Good Shepherd tells us that the sheep will recognise His voice. This means that when he calls them they can follow. In the time when this parable was written shepherds often sheltered together at night, each with their own flock of sheep. In the morning, when it was time to take the sheep out to find grass and water, the shepherds would each call out to their sheep. The sheep would recognise the voice of their own shepherd and know which one to follow.

Remember, that this story was not really about sheep and shepherds! It was about Jesus and the people who choose to follow Him.

If we are going to follow Jesus then we need to learn to recognise His voice.

Recognising the voice of the Good Shepherd (Teaching)

Job 33:14 – God speaks in different ways, and we don't always recognize His voice.

How can Jesus speak to us; how have you heard the voice of Jesus? *Invite responses.*

- The Bible mentions lots of times where people heard God's voice 'out loud'.
- In creation
 - ❖ 1 Kings 19:11-13 – In a gentle breeze
 - ❖ Psalm 18:13 – Lord Most High, your voice

thundered from the heavens, as hailstones and fiery coals poured down like rain.

- Through other people
- Through Scripture
- In dreams
- A small voice inside our mind

The problem is, how do we know if it is just a breeze, just a dream, just another person speaking, just a thought we might have had OR the voice of Jesus leading us?

We have been given plenty of information about who Jesus is in the Bible. Jesus will only ever ask us to do things that fit with who He is.

His words will always be

- Loving
- Kind
- True

If we keep on listening for the voice of Jesus, the Holy Spirit will help us to hear and know His voice and we will be able to confidently follow Him.

I wonder what the Good Shepherd has been saying to you lately?

Where do I fit? (Reflection)

Hand out small cardboard 'sheep' or have them available in a central location.

Display a simple representation of the parable (see diagram in Appendix A). This could be done in a variety of ways. For example, drawn on a large sheet of butcher's paper, created out of felt on a table or painted on a mural.

I wonder where you fit into this parable...

- Following Jesus The Good Shepherd wherever He leads you
- Feeling safe in the sheepfold
- Out enjoying the green grass and feeling like Jesus The Good Shepherd has given you everything you need
- Feeling tired and in need of refreshment, taking a break by the cool, fresh water
- Lonely and wandering on your own

- Near the thief, feeling like something is getting in the way of you following Jesus the Good Shepherd

- Feeling like you have been following the hired hand and have been let down

- In a place of danger with the wolf close by

Invite each person to some and place their sheep where they feel they fit in the picture today or where they would like to be. Remind everyone that:

- there is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer
- it is okay to be honest about where you are
- if you are not where you want to be you can ask Jesus to help you recognise His voice and follow Him
- you might like to ask another 'sheep' to help you

Benediction

Say the following prayer, one line at a time, and invite everyone to 'Baa' at the end of each line if they agree with it...

Jesus, You are The Good Shepherd.

We want to be your sheep.

Help us to recognise your voice.

Help us to follow your voice.

Protect us and lead us every day.

