

FAITH CIRCLES *connect*

4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER • YEAR B

1. Welcome your Guests
2. Share Food & Drink
3. Worship Song
4. Read the Sunday Gospel

JOHN 10:11-18

'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep. The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and the sheep do not belong to him, abandons the sheep and runs away as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep; this is because he is only a hired man and has no concern 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 my sheep.

And there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and these I have to lead as well. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock and one shepherd.

The Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will, and as it is in my power to lay it down, so it is in my power to take it up again; and this is the command I have been given by my Father.'

5. Personal Sharing

In the weeks before meeting today, a member of the group was invited to prepare a short, 5-7min, sharing on how this Gospel reading connects with their life and relationship with Jesus. The reflection questions below may assist in preparing for the sharing:

1. Share an experience of how you have felt Jesus' guidance and protection in your life, even if it meant not doing something or being prevented from doing something you initially wanted to accomplish. What were the circumstances and how did you feel in the end, having realised Jesus' protection and care, how did you know his voice?
2. As Jesus' disciples we too are called to lay our lives down in his service. Describe a time when you have set aside your desires or ambitions in order to be of service to Jesus. What was it like, in what ways did you feel affirmed by Jesus for taking this step and what was the result – share how you may have experienced 'new life' through sacrifice.

6. Share in Smaller groups

Once your nominated speaker has shared their story, break into smaller sharing groups to reflect on the above questions. Each person shares their experience of God since last gathering in light of the Gospel message.

1. How is everyone going?
(Consider "high/low")

2. What jumped out/touched/resonated with you from the personal sharing?
3. Have you experienced that in your life?
4. Was there another point from the Gospel that really struck you?

7. Worship & Prayer**Worship**

Singing together as a group is a vital part of each connect group gathering. Our worship draws our focus to God and all that God has done for us. As St Augustine reflected 'the one who sings prays twice'.

Play a song or hymn as a way of entering into a time of prayer. You may like to use some of the resources provided in our music guide.

Pray for Each Other

Remain in your smaller discussion groupings of 3-5 people. Invite the Holy Spirit to be present and invite group members to pray aloud for each others' needs. Enable time for people to share their prayer intentions. Individuals might like to pray for themselves or ask someone else to pray for them.

Closing Prayer

After people have had time to pray for one another in their smaller groups close the evening with a final prayer in the large group. A suggestion might be:

Loving Father, we thank you for the love and care you have for each of us. Fill us with your Holy Spirit that we may continue to draw strength from you and follow your will in all we do. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen