

From Fr Simon,

Dear all

Jesus told us that he is the Good Shepherd; the sheep come to him because they know his voice.

Mary in the garden on Easter morning knew his voice. It was when Jesus called Mary's name that she recognised him.

Jesus' voice is heard in scripture, in Holy Communion, in baptism, in prayer, in The Church (even when we are dispersed); but his voice may also be heard in the unexpected, in the stranger, in times of fear. It can be heard in the beauty of creation and in the wonder of the universe. In the silence of the moment and in the roar of applause for keyworkers. In the peace of contentment and in the angst of frustration.

The key to recognising Jesus' voice is to be familiar with it. The more time spent with Jesus the more familiar his voice will be. So keep reading the bible, keep praying, keep spending time deliberately and consciously with Christ. Then you will find that you will hear and recognise the voice of the Good Shepherd even when you are not expecting to.

Jesus also warns against false prophets and false voices. If we simply look for God in the bird song and all these other places, then we are likely to be looking for our own idea of God rather than the real thing. The real Good Shepherd doesn't only comfort us and keep us safe, he also disturbs, and disrupts and challenges us.

In these isolating times your usual routines, disciplines and supportive gatherings are taken away from you, but hold fast to the faith. Faith not just as a belief or a feeling, but a commitment to getting to know God more in scripture, prayer, reading and the traditions of the church so that you may recognise the voice of the Good Shepherd from among all the other voices and noises that assault us.

And I look forward to the time when we can gather once more, as a church, to listen to his voice together.

Christ is risen, he is risen indeed.

Alleluia!

Notices

All services in public places are cancelled until further notice. But Fr Simon conducts worship from the vicarage which is live streamed on the churches' Facebook pages and websites. These are also available for later viewing.

Sundays 10am, Holy Communion, both churches (the order of service, with full words, is usually available on the website).

Mondays and Wednesdays 9am Morning Prayer, and Tuesdays 6.30pm Holy Communion on St Mark's facebook and website.

Tuesdays and Thursdays 9am Morning Prayer on St John's facebook and website.

The order for morning prayer can be found here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer>