



**Plainfield Congregational Church  
United Church of Christ**

Plainfield, Illinois

***Fourth Sunday of Easter;  
April 25, 2021  
“Shepherd into the World”***

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Centering                      Psalm 23**

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

**Song**

**Invitation to Worship**

One: In the darkest valley, at the banquet table; in the hard work of life, at the moments of ease; in our day-to-day reality,

***All: at times set aside— like this time, now— for worship, for listening, for paying attention; with every step we take: goodness and mercy follow us; our cups overflow. Amen.***

**Prayer**

(Mary Boyd)

Loving Shepherd, you know our names; you care for us. When we face darkness and death, walk beside us. When we hunger for your love, fill us with your presence. When we are fearful, feed us at your table. May we dwell in the house of goodness and mercy all the days of our lives. Amen.

**Invitation to Generous Giving**

The Shepherd cares for us, providing all that we need in abundance. The Shepherd calls us to love one another in truth and action. May our gifts reflect our trust in the Shepherd's care. May our offerings show our willingness to love one another.

**Reminder of Generous Giving Opportunities****Doxology****Prayer Dedication**

(Mary Boyd)

God of love, you abide with us; you provide for all our needs and guide us in your ways. Out of gratitude for your care, we bring our gifts before you. Use them for your work of caring, that all may feast at the table of abundance, walk without fear, and drink deeply from the cup of compassion. Amen.

**Joys and Concerns: Prayers of the People: Lord's Prayer****Scripture****"I Am the Gate"****John 10:1-10**

"Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers." Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find

pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

**Dare Not Venture** (Seneca)

“It’s not because things are difficult that we dare not venture. It’s because we dare not venture that they are difficult.”

**Song**

**Prayer for Scripture** (Nancy Johnson)

Holy God, Creator of Life, you call us out of our dark places, offering us the grace of new life. When we see nothing but hopelessness, you surprise us with the breath of your spirit. Call us out of our complacency and routines, set us free from our self-imposed bonds, and fill us with your spirit of life, compassion, and peace,

In the name of Jesus, your anointed one, we pray. Amen.

**Scripture** “I Am the Good Shepherd” 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.”

**To Lose Oneself** (Soren Kierkegaard)

To dare is to lose one’s footing momentarily. To not dare is to lose oneself.  
Soren Kierkegaard

**Meditation**

## **Life**

(Helen Keller)

“Security is mostly a superstition. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.” — Helen Keller

## **Affirming Our Mission**

***We the members and friends of Plainfield Congregational Church United Church of Christ seek to embody and celebrate God’s love by being a community that lives Christ’s compassion and promotes justice, healing and wholeness of life; a joyous family where all are welcome to join together to grow in faith and love.***

## **Blessing**

(St. Columba)

May our dearest Lord; Be Thou a bright flame before me; Be Thou a guiding star above me; Be Thou a smooth path beneath me; Be Thou a kindly shepherd behind me; Today and evermore.

## **Chimes**