

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



April 30, 2023

## WELCOME

*offering it and feeling it*

by Drew Downs

As a young adult, I appreciated the welcome. I just never took advantage of it. The churches and cathedrals I'd wander into or attend regularly would always have a coffee hour. It's just not what I wanted. At least not what I *always* wanted.

Invitations from the priest were exactly that. Invitations. I nearly always declined them. *I'm just there for the service*, I'd think. When people welcomed me and insisted I go to

coffee hour, I was slightly more inclined. But if someone engaged with me and walked me to coffee hour, then I'd stay.

I never felt *unwelcomed*. And yet sometimes I really felt *welcomed*.

We all have different visions of what is welcoming; full of expectations. I suspect, however, that welcome is less the question than engagement and connection.

# EASTER

2023

## WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

### Needs Collection

On Palm Sunday, we emptied the shelves in our outreach room to send to Sullivan for the tornado disaster. We need your help refilling them. We have a list of items for each Sunday during the Easter Season. Our gifts will be brought to the altar during the offertory and blessed. Don't want to shop? There are envelopes at the back of the church for monetary donations. Need more information? See Sandy Bush or Deby Veach

**Sunday, April 16:** Toilet Paper and Paper Towels

**Sunday, April 23:** Shampoo, Conditioner, new hair brushes, new combs, razors, shaving cream/gel

**Sunday, April 30:** Individually Wrapped Toothbrushes, Full Sized Tooth Paste, Soap, Wash Cloths, Feminine Hygiene

**Sunday, May 7:** First Aid Kits (Around \$1 at Wal-Mart or Dollar Store) Travel Size Tylenol, Ibuprofen, Advil; Hydrogen Peroxide, Antibiotic Ointment, Small Boxes Band-Aids

**Sunday, May 14:** Small Containers of Laundry Soap, Small Containers of Fabric Softener (Smaller Container-Find at Dollar Tree), Dish Soap

**Sunday, May 21:** Bug Spray, Sun Block, Baby Wipes, Dry or Canned Dog and Cat Food, Mens and Ladies Athletic Socks

With love,  
Drew

# EASTER

2023

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## FOR SUNDAY

*Fourth Sunday of Easter*

April 30, 2023

### **Collect**

O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people: Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name, and follow where he leads; who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

### **Reading**

John 10:1-10

Jesus said, "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."

# EASTER

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## Reflection

Jesus compares himself to a shepherd. Then to the gate. We *could* choose to find this switch confusing. Rather than acknowledge that Jesus was rabbi, not a shepherd and human, not a gate.

Of course, we know that. But I've also found that we can get really stuck on metaphors. We easily associate Jesus with the Good Shepherd. Less so with the gate.

Jesus, of course, is using analogy to instruct. In one sense, speaking to the way he *leads* and in another the way he *protects*. And it is to that protection metaphor I'll draw our attention.

Gates are an interesting concept. Seen one way: they provide an entrance. We put a gate as an access to a fenced-in yard. Without the gate, no one gets in.

Seen another, however, is that the gate is part of the fence and provides a barrier. When closed, the gate becomes the fence. Thus protecting sheep from wandering off or wolves from wandering in.

I think we all get what Jesus is saying about protection. But I know some struggle with further implications of the analogy. About how the gate might restrict access for some sheep who want in. Or for those former wolves who are now sheep (a concept that can only make sense in Jesus-speak).

While these are valid concerns, they are ultimately assuaged by Jesus's constant refrain about how *open* the gate is. How just a judge he is. How forgiving and merciful he is.

And, I think, even more to the point, how just and forgiving and merciful we are to be, too. So that everyone might feel welcome to the backyard barbecue.

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ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
215 N. 7TH ST TERRE HAUTE IN 47807  
812.232.5165

STSTEPHENSTH.ORG

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