

# *Innisfail United Church*

Christians: Committed, Caring, Community

**4th Sunday of Easter**  
**April 26, 2026**



*And be with you all as usual again*

**Minister: Rev. Tammy Allan**

*Thank you for joining us today*



Wheelchair Accessible



Equipped For Hearing Impaired

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## Prelude

## Greetings and Announcements

## Land Acknowledgment

We gratefully acknowledge that we are on the ancient and traditional lands of The Blackfoot Nation, the people of the Treaty 7, and of Metis Region 3. May we cherish and care for the land and the people, as those who came before us did.

## Lighting the Christ Candle

Introit MV 21 Open Our Hearts (2X)

## Call to Worship

The simple act of gathering here is a form of pastoral care.

**God is our shepherd; God restores our souls.**

As we greet one another, we are living out the call to care.

**God is our comfort, and we are the presence of God for each other.**

May we be cared for as we worship here together.

**May we understand what it is to be the body of Christ, together.**

Let us worship in prayer and in praise.

Hymn VU 401 Worship the Lord

## Prayer of Approach

God of Easter promise, as we set aside this time to worship, we bring our troubles and our fears. May this time be like the Emmaus Road was for Jesus' friends. May it be the place where we meet the Risen One, and where hope is born anew. In faith, we proclaim that Christ has risen! In joy we celebrate. Hallelujah! Amen.

## **Time for the Young and the Young at Heart**

Book: "The Good Shepherd and the Stubborn Sheep

**Hymn** MV 126 Are you a Shepherd

### **Minute for Mission**

On Wednesday afternoons, a group of young people come together to do something simple and powerful. They talk. These gatherings are part of a mentorship and mental health program through the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK). For many of the youth who take part, it's one of the few places where they feel safe enough to share what they're thinking and experiencing.

Christine now leads these conversations as a mentor, but her journey to this moment began in a similar circle, as someone seeking support herself.

In Kenya, young people are expected to grow up fast. By age 15, they may be seen as old enough to handle life on their own. But the reality is hard—youth may not get the encouragement or support they need. Some may leave school early, often because of teen pregnancy, the need to work, or lack of access to education in general. And showing emotion—crying, opening up—can be seen as weakness.

Christine knows this reality firsthand. When struggles go unspoken, young people can feel completely alone. Youth suicide is a real and painful reality. She once carried burdens in silence, feeling the weight of expectations without a safe space to share what she was experiencing. Then she found the NCCCK mentorship program.

In those Wednesday gatherings, Christine discovered something she had been missing: a place where she could speak freely, where her thoughts and feelings mattered.

“Mental health means feeling safe enough to express your thoughts and feelings,” she now explains with the clarity of someone who has lived it. “Talking it out is the best way out.”

The support she received didn't just help her survive—it transformed her. “It's been one of my dreams to be there for someone,” she shares. That dream became her reality. Today, Christine mentors 40 young people through the UCC youth mentorship program. She brings to each session the understanding of someone who has sat in their seats, who knows what it means to need someone to listen. As a mother, she practices intentional parenting—encouraging confidence, conversation, and honesty with her own daughter. She's become the person she once needed.

Her advice to the young people she mentors comes from experience: “Embrace the support if you have someone.” Christine envisions building a community of young people who can support one another, breaking the cycles of silence that too often lead to isolation and despair.

Through her journey from mentee to mentor, she's proving that healing isn't just personal—it multiplies.

Through Mission and Service partner the National Council of Churches of Kenya, Christine and her community are creating spaces for young people to be heard and reminding them that they matter.

When we support Mission and Service, we are helping make spaces like this possible—places where listening leads to hope, and where young people don't have to face everything alone.

Let's be the community that shows up. By giving to Mission and Service, we stand with young people in Kenya and around the world, helping ensure that safe circles continue, mentors are trained, and hope keeps multiplying.

### **Scripture Reading**

John 10: 1-10

#### **The Good Shepherd and His Sheep**

**10** "Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup> The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." <sup>6</sup> Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

<sup>7</sup> Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. <sup>9</sup> I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.<sup>[a]</sup> They will come in and go out, and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

**Psalm 23**      VU 747    The Lord's My Shepherd

**Reflection**

The past 3 Sundays, our gospel readings focused on Jesus' post resurrection appearances to people that had known and loved him.

Today, and for the next few weeks, the focus moves to living out of a place of being in relationship with and serving the risen Christ. Today is known as Good Shepherd Sunday in Christian circles, and the readings carry that theme of Christ as shepherd.

I was reading a reflection on this week's gospel reading written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl Lindsay. She's a minister with The United Church of Christ, one of our partner denominations. She is the writer of some of the bible study resources we have used here at Innisfail United.

Lindsay was writing about how our understanding of metaphor and meaning evolves with time and context. She wrote of how in biblical times, the metaphor of shepherd was based on the ideal shepherd of the time, someone whose whole life revolved around careful tending of sheep – day and night – 24-7, 365, as my kids used to say. A shepherd lived a simple existence, devoted to the sheep in his charge. The sheep trusted their shepherd, and knew them by the sound of their voice.

In our modern-day agricultural world, how we see a shepherd is simply not the same. Lindsay asked the question of what metaphor we might use today to represent that idea of a vocation and calling related to compassionate care. Her words: "Where do we find that commitment and companionship today?"

<https://www.ucc.org/sermon-seeds/weekly-seeds-by-the-gate-2/>

The first thing that came to mind for me were the care givers my family encountered as my dad journeyed with dementia and congestive heart failure, and together my parents tried to stay in their home for as long as they possibly could. That became a possible and realistic option because of the commitment and compassion of some wonderful caregivers.

When the time came that they really needed to live where dad could get more care, again, the staff at the residence they chose to move to were so much more than staff. They became a part of my not only parent's circle of companionship, but me and my siblings circle, as well. We trusted them with my parents' care.

They were companions on the journey with us. As I said last week – companion is the root of the word *companiono*, which is bread in Latin. With that in mind, being a companion is about being bread, metaphorically, that sustains body and soul. Those care givers became that for my family, in so many ways.

This is, in the United Church calendar, a day also to recognize camping ministries. That is certainly another place in our church world where that metaphor of the Good Shepherd is fitting. Go to any United Church camp and connect with the camper and the leadership. From the people that cook the meals, to those who steward the property, to the junior leaders, senior leaders and directors, there's certainly a lived commitment to that ministry and to being companions with children and youth on their journeys of faith development. There's also an aspect of mentoring youth and children along the shared

journey of being faithful stewards of the earth.

Companions on the journey, some who return summer after summer, to care for and nurture kids.

This gospel passage falls just after the story of the healing of the man who was born blind – something that contributed to the religious authorities questioning the authority that Jesus had. The reading begins with Jesus speaking about entering the sheepfold by the gate, and he names himself as the gatekeeper.

Context matters here. We often connote that term ‘gate keeper’ with someone who is controlling, and who uses their power to decide who is in and who is left out, in less than kind or helpful ways.

I read something this week that put this in a different light. The SALT commentary writes of the gate being the vehicle for safety, as the shepherd leads the sheep through it to the sheepfold to be protected from night time threats, such as predator animals. The shepherd leads the sheep through the gate again in the morning to feed on nourishing pastures, while being watched over and protected by the shepherd, keeping them from going astray and being lost. It’s about the abundant life that Jesus spoke about.

<https://www.saltproject.org/progressive-christian-blog/2020/4/27/abundant-life-salts-lectionary-commentary-for-easter-4>

Jesus’ reference to himself as the gate is about being the kind of shepherd that the Psalm speaks of, too. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. That shepherd offers protection and care, and meets the need of the flock for grazing, for food and fresh water. It is about abundant life.

It's about companionship and guidance, safety and security for the journey.

So, what does abundant life look like today for us today? It's not about the size of one's bank account. It's about relationship, and companionship. It's about the common good for all. It's about seeking out the lost one, so that they can be included in the circle of care that the ninety-nine enjoy. Not even one should be left behind, left out, or marginalized.

Ideally, it's about things like those who are supported by our social safety networks, such as AISH (soon to be ADAP) having enough to thrive and flourish, without compromising their dignity and self-worth. It's about school children with special learning needs having the supports they need, so that everyone in the classroom can learn together and flourish in a safe and welcoming atmosphere. It takes us back to those in our world, like those camp leaders and personal caregivers that come into our lives through home care and seniors residential living, and other avenues of care, that nurture and support others with compassion and heart.

There are too many stories of leaders in roles of authority misusing their power, and gatekeeping in a way that does not honour the value of each member of society. There are too many stories and situations that create division among people from diverse walks of life, instead of striving to draw people together for the common good.

As I did last week, I must ask where we find hope in our world today? I find hope in the grass roots community action in Olds, as a diverse group of people stand together to develop better awareness of the implications of a

massive data centre possibly being developed across the street from residential housing. It's a development that will take up hundreds of acres of viable farm land.

I find hope in the appreciation shown by elders every time we go to the seniors' residences in Innisfail to share in worship or visit over ice cream. I add my great appreciation for those ministries being something done in community – I never go alone; Joanne and our pastoral care team are another example of shepherds of our time, offering compassionate care and companionship with every visit.

I find hope knowing there is a team of volunteers from our church that share in the community endeavour to go to the school and serve toast to hungry kids, letting those kids know they matter. There are so many places in this community where people are reaching out, to nurture, to care, to share that the abundance of life may be for everyone, not just the few.

In that reaching out, in those acts of caring and companionship, is love, and life abundant. I that reaching out, is a living out the call to follow in the way of the Good Shepherd, who came that we all might have life abundant. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**Hymn** TLUS 142 As a Parent Holds a Child

**Offering** VU 538 For the Gift of Creation

**Offertory Prayer**

**O God, with grateful hearts we ask you to bless the offerings we bring today. Our gifts flow from gratitude for your presence in our lives. In our times of green pastures and still water, in our times in the valleys of grief and exhaustion, you are our shepherd and with**

**you we shall not want. Amen.**

### **Prayers of the People**

Shepherding God, we are so grateful for your presence among us, for your guidance as we journey life's paths. We pray that we may follow in your way of opening gates that lead to abundance for all.

We hold in prayer all those that are affected by the rising prices related to the effects of the war in the Middle East, for those in countries facing fuel shortages that will impact travel, access to electricity and delivery of goods. We can only imagine the stress of wondering when the lights will go out, when the fuel will be rationed.

Along with that, we pray for peaceful resolution to that war, and to others in our world, such as in Sudan and Ukraine and Russia.

We give thanks to those who truly do work for peace and justice, and pray that we may also find ways to be agents of peace, even in our own corner of the world.

As we prepare to go from here into the week ahead, we hold in love those on our community prayer list:

We pause to silently reflect on the prayers of our hearts, of joy or concern. With hearts of gratitude, we knit our voices together, sharing the prayer Jesus taught us.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Hymn** VU 703 In the Bulb There is a Flower

### **Words of Departure**

Let us go into the world to live for the risen Christ, as the risen Christ lives in us. May the God of hope fill us with joy and peace, this day and always. Hallelujah, Amen!

**Sung Blessing** MV 221 I am Walking a Path of Peace  
(2X)

## Postlude



## Announcements

**Tues. Apr 28** – Sundae Social at Autumn Grove – **2:00 pm**

Memorial Service for Darwin Baker will be on **May 4, 2026 at 2:30pm** at St. Albert Funeral Home. There will be a summer Celebration of Life in the Innisfail/Spruce View area, date to be confirmed.

**May 5-26** – Rus and Joanne away

**Wed. May 6** – Pastoral Care Meeting – **1:00 pm**

**Sat. May 9** – **Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser** – Innisfail United Church – 8:00-11:00 am. (Preserving Our Past, together! Historical Village)

**Sun. May 10** – Communion Service – **10:30 am**

**Sun. May 10** – Mother's Day

**Thurs. May 14** – Men's Breakfast – **9:00 am** – Persian Restaurant

**Mon. May 18** – Victoria Day

**Tues. May 26** – Sundae Social at Sunset Manor – **2:00 pm**

**Fri. May 29** – Ladies Night Out - **TDB**

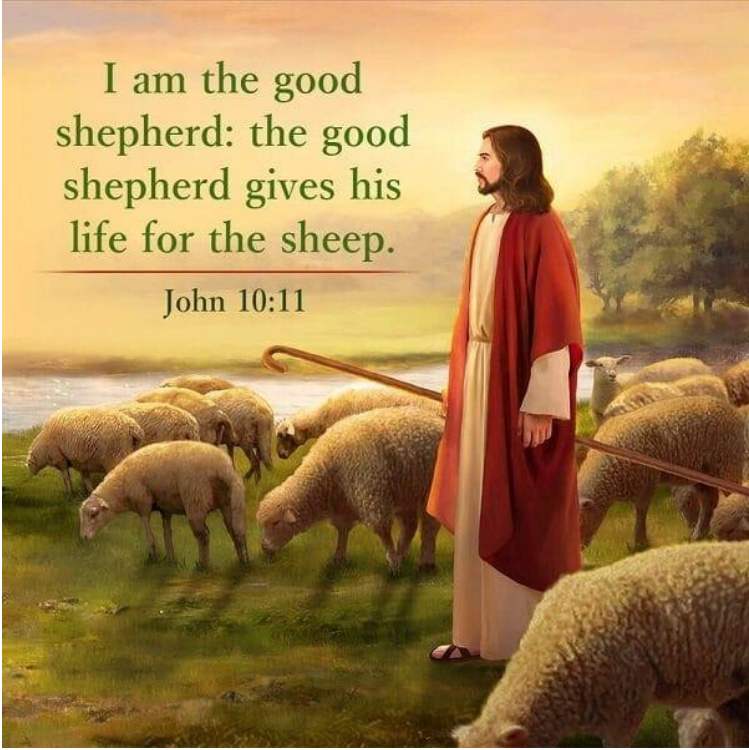
Grief and Loss Support Group will be meeting on the last Thursday of the month: **May 28, June 25 at 4:00 pm**

**Rolling Out 'Toward 2035' in Chinook Winds Region Survey – is now available online**

<https://chinookwindsregion.ca>

I am the good  
shepherd: the good  
shepherd gives his  
life for the sheep.

John 10:11



"It is the duty of a good shepherd to shear his sheep, not to skin them." "Without tradition, art is a flock of sheep without a shepherd. Without innovation, it is a corpse." "A good shepherd always feeds his sheep first, even when he himself is hungry."