

13th September, 2026

The paper-version Service



St Andrew's
Church



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks
Responding to God's Love



To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn:

What can wash away my sin?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

What can make me whole again?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

O precious is the flow

that makes me white as snow;

no other fount I know;

nothing but the blood of Jesus.

For my pardon this I see:

nothing but the blood of Jesus.

For my cleansing this my plea:

nothing but the blood of Jesus.

O precious is the flow

that makes me white as snow;

no other fount I know;

nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Nothing can for sin atone:

nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Naught of good that I have done:

nothing but the blood of Jesus.

O precious is the flow

that makes me white as snow;

no other fount I know;

nothing but the blood of Jesus.

This is all my hope and peace:

nothing but the blood of Jesus.

This is all my righteousness:

nothing but the blood of Jesus.

The Sermon by Rev Howard Wright

Read Exodus 19:3-13 & Matthew 16: 13-19 – God’s Plan

If not already, do read/listen to last week’s sermon.

The Church is a gathering (*ekklesia* = assembly) of God’s people. The Greek word, *ekklesia*, is used just once in the Gospels, but 114 times in the rest of New Testament, most of which refer to *the church*.

The church today is God’s primary instrument for revealing his glory, that is, revealing His Kingdom. It is, in its gathering, such a representation of God’s glory that it is called the body of Christ, that is, in its collective it is the likeness of Christ made visible – this is a high calling indeed.

And, it is, in its future, to be so united with Christ, in such a close relationship with God, that we are called Christ’s bride – radiant and made perfect.

So, what is God’s plan for The Church?

Last week we reminded ourselves of the purposes of God to bless this world and its people. He calls out to all people in creation – ‘go fill the earth and subdue it.’ In creation God says, this is good. Upon the creation of humankind he say this is very good, and in his command to go and subdue, he is saying, go make it better. That is, continue my creative work.

After the first few of many human failures, God introduces the next part of his plan of salvation and he picks out Abraham. Read Genesis 12:2-3. God offers a special role and status to Abraham and his descendants. There is privilege with responsibility.

This promise is outlined in more detail in Exodus 19 (Read verse 5-6). Here God offers an extraordinary gift of his extraordinary presence. As he walked with Adam and Eve, so he offers to walk with his people – read Leviticus 26:11-13. The promise of his love and relationship is reiterated with Ezekiel’s prophecy – read Ezekiel 37:25-28.

And these themes are echoed again in the New Testament. The promises of the Old Testament apply to us today as the children of Abraham, the children of the promise – see Galatians 3.

These promises apply to us as individuals – see 1 Corinthians 6:19. And, as a community – see 1 Peter 2:4-5. The promises, both the privileges and responsibilities, are no longer geographically limited to a place or limited to a single biological race, but to a spiritual people, the adopted family of God – the Church!

So what is God's plan for his Church today?

The Church is built on Jesus – the truth – and it is unbeatable – read again Matthew 16:16-18. The Church is a body with Christ as the head – see 1 Corinthians 12:27 and Ephesians 1:22-23. We each have a unique and important part to play, but we all come under Christ's leadership and authority. As we shall take time to study later in this series, we are also the bride, his family, with us as his children..

The Church is a place of teaching about Jesus, fellowship, remembering Jesus (breaking of bread), and Prayer. Alongside these fundamentals the church is a place that inspires awe with signs and wonders, a community without need, a community of joy, praise, and it is to grow – see Acts 2:42-47.

As the bride, we await Christ's return and our physical resurrection and inheritance as children of God, embraced in the love of God, living out the amazing purposes of God forever.

But in the meanwhile we are play our part – to be a part of God's great plan.

Be praying, talking to God and others whose wisdom you respect. Review and seek your place in God's gathering and be praying for the flourishing of God's Church, local, national, and Global, and seek to be an answer to your own prayers.

15th Sunday after Trinity: God, who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit upon your Church in the burning fire of your love: grant that your people may be fervent in the fellowship of the gospel that, always abiding in you, they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

The Lord's Prayer: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.*

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, St Andrews and The Good Shepherd, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

At the Church of the Good Shepherd:

- Tea and Chat and Bowls: September 16th & October 21st at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: September 23rd at 10.30am in Church Hall.
- Harvest Tea & Praise: Sunday, 4 October 3:00 – 4:30pm.
- The Community Cupboard, 2:45pm every Thursday in Church.

For Further information:

This paper and all parish details are on the website at
<https://www.parishofmedsteadandfourmarks.co.uk>