



# The United Church of Bethel

An Open, Affirming Congregation of the UCC/UUA

April 25th, Fourth Sunday in Easter, 2021

Tom Harty – Pastor

Becky Kondi- Keyboard & Vocals, Larry Nobile – Guitar & Vocals,

Seth Stoddard Technical Director

◆= Please Stand If you Are Able

All Prayers and Service Music are Found in the Folders in the Music Racks

## Centering & Prelude

## Welcome & Announcements

## Introit

## Greeting and Responsive Call to Worship

L The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**P And also with you.**

L Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to the Lord**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God  
**It is right to give him thanks and praise**

With grace flowing, the poet sings the opening lines of the famous prayer,  
“The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.”

**We hear the Psalmist’s contentment and wonder about our own.**

Settled on the ground, with grass tickling their toes, the psalmist rests,  
“God makes me lie down in green pastures.  
She leads me beside still waters. She restores my soul.”

**We hear their deep need for rest  
and wonder about our own.**

With a deep sigh, the psalmist declares,  
“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me.  
You prepare a table before me. You anoint me. My cup overflows.

**We recognize their bold courage  
and wonder about our own.**

Remembering God’s faithfulness, the psalmist finds words to carry with them,  
“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.”

**We hear their faithful trust  
and wonder about our own.**

Holy Spirit of Rest and Renewal, in this time of worship inspire us with words both  
ancient and new so that we may find the words that connect us to You.

**Amen and amen!**

## .Invocation and Lord’s Prayer

## ✦ Hymn NCH 497 Guide My Feet

### Prayer of Confession

Holy One, we hear the comforting ancient poetry of the psalmist but wonder, is it true?  
**Will you really provide for what we need?**

Will you bring us to a place of rest?

Will you protect us from enemies, even when they share our dinner table?

**We confess that rather than being only filled with holy wonder, we are also filled with skepticism at the ancient words.**

We can quickly tally up the times we didn't feel provided for or protected from danger.  
**We count the times we could not catch a break when we desperately needed it.**

So Holy One, shepherd our busy minds back to the here and now,  
help our spirits forgive the grudges we hold,  
and invite us to experience You as truly present.

**In these moments of quiet, offer us rest for a moment.**

### Words of Assurance

Beloved People of God, there is wisdom in our questions, but God is steadfast. God's presence is unwavering and will accompany us through every terrifying valley. God's spirit is unshakeable and will sit with us even in the presence of formidable foes. God's love is relentless and will offer us goodness and mercy all the days of our life.  
**Amen and amen!**

## Passing of the Peace

**First Reading:** Acts 4: 5-12

### Psalm 23

*Refrain: God restores my soul and leads me in right paths*

## ✦ Gloria Patri

**Epistle:** 1 John 3:16-24

## Choral Anthem

✦ **Gospel John 10-11-18**

✦ **Hymn NCH 476 My Life Flows On In Endless Song**

## Sermon

## Joys and Concerns

### Pastoral Prayer

*Choral Response: Hear Our Prayer O Lord.*

## Offering

✦ **Doxology & Prayer of Dedication**

✦ **Hymn NCH 489 I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say**

## ✦ Choral Benediction

**Postlude** (Please remain seated for a period of quiet meditation and appreciation for the music our worship team provides.)

## FIRST READING

Acts 4:5–12

5 The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, 6 with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. 7 When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, 10 let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. 11 This Jesus is

‘the stone that was rejected by you, the builders;

it has become the cornerstone.’

12 There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.”

## PSALM

Psalm 23

**R: God restores my soul. and leads me in right paths**

1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures;

he leads me beside still waters;

3 he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths

for his name's sake.

4 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.

5 You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

6 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.

**R: God restores my soul. and leads me in right paths**

### **EPISTLE READING**

1 John 3:16–24

16 We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. 17 How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

18 Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. 19 And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him 20 whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. 21 Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; 22 and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

23 And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. 24 All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

## GOSPEL

John 10:11–18

11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 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. 13 The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 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. 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. 18 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.”

*Whoever you are, Wherever you are on life's journey, You are welcome here.*

*Our Faith is 2000 Years Old; Our Thinking is Not.*

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