

GOOD SHEPHERD WINDOW AT WEST KISH



Fourth Sunday of Easter
May 3, 2020

CALL TO WORSHIP: The bells of St. John's
WELCOME ~ This is Rev. Ela Robertson pastor at St. John's Lutheran and West Kish Presbyterian in Belleville, PA. We joyously ring in our worship with the bells of St. Johns, welcoming all listeners to this service on the 4th Sunday in the Easter Season. Through the Holy Spirit, let us invite Christ into our hearts through our worship over the air waves today.

501 He Leadeth Me: Oh, Blessed Thought!

1 He lead-eth me: oh, bless-ed thought! Oh, words with heav'n-ly com-fort fraught!
2 Some-times mid scenes of deep-est gloom, Some-times where E-den's bow-ers bloom,
3 Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine, Nor ev - er mur-mur nor re - pine;
4 And when my task on earth is done, When by thy grace the vic-t'ry's won,

What - e'er I do, wher - e'er I be, Still 'tis God's hand that lead - eth me.
By wa - ters calm, o'er trou-bled sea, Still 'tis God's hand that lead - eth me.
Con - tent, what - ev - er lot I see, Since 'tis my God that lead - eth me.
E'en death's cold wave I will not flee, Since God through Jor - dan lead - eth me.

Refrain
He lead - eth me, he lead - eth me, By his own hand he lead - eth me.

His faith - ful fol-l'wer I would be, For by his hand he lead - eth me.

CONFESSION and FORGIVENESS

L: Friends, in as much as God is our shepherd, let us not fear, but confess our sin that God may restore our souls.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

All: Holy One, we confess to you and to one another that we have not always followed Christ's example. When we have been judged we have judged others, when others are needy we have hoarded, if we have felt abused, we have been abusive in return, if others have not reached out we have closed off, when others have made decisions we disagree with we have tried to turn over the cart to get our way. We have gone astray. Lead us back into your fold and guard our souls in Jesus' name. Amen.

L: Friends, the promise of our faith is that if we entrust ourselves to the One who judges justly, we need not feel threatened, for we will be returned to righteousness. By God's grace we are forgiven.
Thanks be to God. AMEN

KYRIE ~ (sung by Lisa Griffith)

P: Kyrie Eleison **Lord Have Mercy**
P: Christe Eleison **Christ Have Mercy**
P: Kyrie Eleison **Lord Have Mercy**

THE PEACE

L: Having been brought back into the safety of God's fold, let us share our peace with one another. The peace of the Lord be with you always!

C: And also with you.

Let us extend the peace, to the North, South, East and West, beyond the walls of our homes and into the world.

GREETING

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

CANTICLE OF PRAISE

Glory to God, glory to God, glory to God in the highest; glory to God, glory to God, and peace to God's people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Glory to God, glory to God, glory to God in the highest; glory to God, glory to God, and peace to God's people on earth, and peace to God's people on earth.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, our shepherd, you know your sheep by name and lead us to safety through the valleys of death. Guide us by your voice that we may walk in certainty and security to the joyous feast prepared in your house, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

LESSONS and PSALM (you are encouraged to read these in your celebrate, bulletin or Bible before the service.)

Acts 2:42-47 (read before service)

Psalm 23; refrain Ps. 23:1

1 Peter 2:19-25 (read before service)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION ~ (sung by Lisa Griffith)

Alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia, alleluia.

HOLY GOSPEL

P The Holy Gospel according to John 10:1-10

C Glory to you, O Lord.

(after the reading)

P The Gospel of the Lord. **C Praise to you, O Christ.**

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Loving God, we pray that your Holy Spirit will strengthen us to be devoted to the teachings of your Word, that through it we may hear your voice and follow it into eternal life. Amen.

MESSAGE ~ *The Good Shepherd in all of us* Rev. Ela J. Robertson

This 4th Sunday after Easter is the Sunday when we often find Psalm 23 in the lectionary readings along with New Testament selections where Jesus is portrayed as a shepherd, the Good Shepherd. It is a time to focus on prayer and reliance on God. There are stained glass windows portraying the shepherd and the sheep in both the West Kish and St. John's sanctuaries. It is an image that even a three or four year old can point to and say "that's Jesus!" It is no coincidence, perhaps, that these readings of the shepherd fall during lambing season in rural areas like Big Valley. There's a place close to Belleville where the new lambs and goats and their respective parents congregate on a small cliff face that could easily pose as a backdrop for a 1st century bible story. You can sometimes see a rambunctious new lamb scampering up the rocks and finding itself on a low jutting precipice not sure how to get down, bleating "what now, where do I go, how'd I get myself into this, I'm stuck, help me!" The shepherd, the good shepherd, hearing its voice would climb up, gently shoulder the lamb and carry it down to safety.

As the Psalm says he would lead the sheep to green pastures, not just a place of rest or a vision of heaven but a place that offers an assurance of nurturance, a place to be fed; and to still waters, not a roaring current where a thirsty sheep could easily lose footing and be swept away but still waters, an oasis, a pool for life giving water.

It's useful to understand that through history and across cultures there are basically two styles of shepherding. One is usually known as the western method. Out in California it looks like a western, ranch hands on horseback and yipping protective sheep dogs coming behind the herd of nameless sheep, corralling them forward towards the fields or pens where they'll be fed.

The other is generally known as the Eastern method. It is still in practice today as it likely was in Jesus' time, where the lone shepherd leads the sheep, where their voice urges them forward, where the rod and staff keep them from going off the path or too far off on their own. We hear Jesus describe this in John 10:3 and 4 "...the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow ..because they know his voice." Another practice apparently was to lay down at the foot of the gate. Thieves or preying animals would be detected, keeping the sheep safe through the darkness. Through the night, the shepherd becomes both gate and gatekeeper, safekeeping who or what will go in or out. During the day the shepherd leads them, calls them, attends to their needs, and gets to know them.

I've been trying to honor stay at home precautions so I work at home and go in to the office just once a week. Kelly, our office administrator and 'you name it person' at St. John's goes in every day to, among other chores, tend to the Day Care pet turtle. With the school closed, it has like us, been in isolation. Kelly says, and I believe it's true, that 'LJ', the turtle, who likes to lay at her feet, also knows her voice. LJ seems to know her as the shepherd who will open its pen and let him out for a slothful scamper, feed him and will always be there for him.

One of the first things I hoped for when we found ourselves in the new Covid-19 reality was that both churches would activate a Good Shepherd list. LJ, the turtle wasn't on the list but got lucky I guess. Each member of Session, Council or Deacons adopted a number of the members to shepherd, to check in on, to call and talk with, even hear their bleats and blahs, share how things are going with them, hear prayer requests to forward to the pastor or just pray with them right there.

The reports I hear from these interactions are that the 'sheep' have been offering as much inspiration, optimism, spiritual encouragement as the 'shepherds.' All who are followers are also leaders, also shepherding. This is the way a congregation should be and never more true than now.

This can be a time of dark valleys; we can carry hope and see the light at the end of the tunnel but don't know how long the tunnel is. We need to be walking this journey with the support of others and leaning together on God.

While the Covid crisis has been the impetus for more on-line and phone call interactions we can't let it be a smoke screen for the diversity of human challenges - physical, emotional, financial and spiritual - that are ever present and even complicated by this situation

The staff and faculty at Pittsburgh Seminary have put together a list made available through the ELCA called "Praying with others through the Challenges of Life." As shepherds, knowing a person's name also means hearing or sensing what their challenges are and opening the gate to listening and prayer. I would like to read through these with a few comments. While I do, I would like each of you to listen for topics that have been issues of concern for you and those near to you, or those you shepherd. Listen also for issues of concern and mission that you hold close to your heart. Let each topic, like a droplet falling into a pool, reverberate with a prayer to God for yourself and others.

I will start with those at the front of our consciousness in this time:

- ◆ Crisis, National issues and tragedies; Uncertainty about the Future;
- ◆ Anxiety Financial distress; Job loss; Discouragement; Depression; Internet abuse
- ◆ Illness and Healing; Family problems; Bereavement; Personal tragedy; Suicide
- ◆ Pregnancy issues; Discernment; Adoption
- ◆ Relationships strained and broken; Forgiveness; Anger and violence; Abuse suffered;
- ◆ Homelessness; Incarceration; Injustice; Oppression; Persecution; Prejudice
- ◆ Conflict and control; Mental illness; Murder and terrorism; Sin; Temptation
- ◆ Global Church issues; Doubt/Uncertainty about Faith; Dying without knowing God

The shepherd knows the sheep, knows the dangers they face, protects them, guides them on the right path, replenishes them with green pastures and still, baptismal water.

Christ lives and knows each one of us by name, knows each challenge we face. Christ died so that we may know joy abundantly. As disciples, we hear his voice and follow. We too become shepherds, listening to one another and with faith, placing our own and other's burdens upon the shoulders of God in prayer. Thanks be to God. Amen

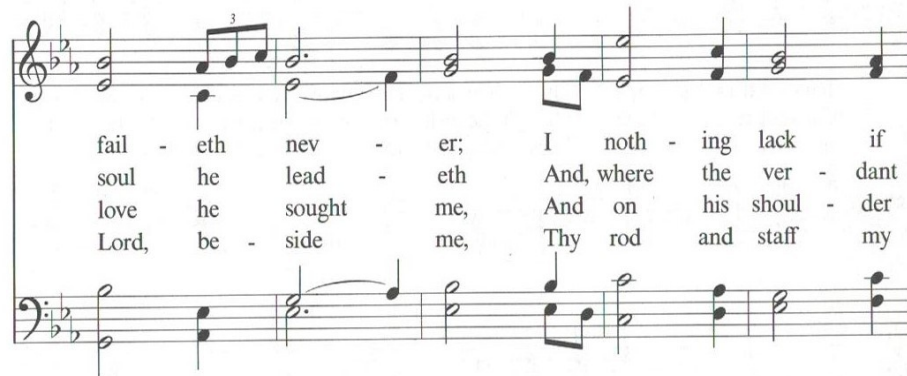
HYMN ~ "The King of Love, My Shepherd Is" vs. 1,4,6

The King of Love My Shepherd Is

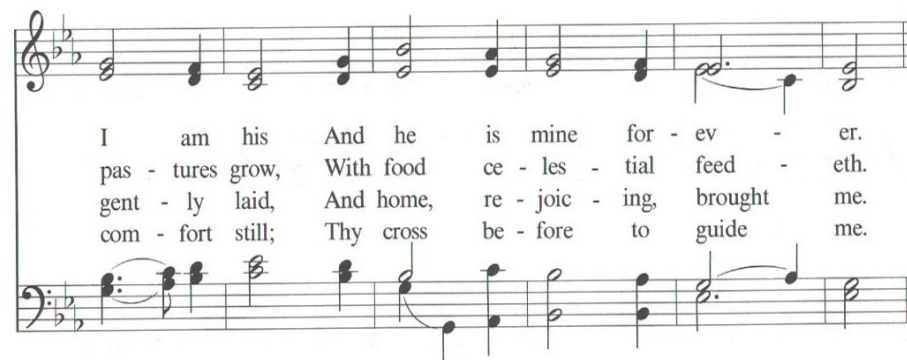
456



1 The King of love my shep - herd is, Whose good - ness
 2 Where streams of liv - ing wa - ter flow, My ran - somed
 3 Per - verse and fool - ish oft I strayed, But yet in
 4 In death's dark vale I fear no ill, With thee, dear



fail - eth nev - er; I noth - ing lack if
 soul he lead - eth And, where the ver - dant
 love he sought me, And on his shoul - der
 Lord, be - side me, Thy rod and staff my



I am his And he is mine for - ev - er.
 pas - tures grow, With food ce - les - tial feed - eth.
 gent - ly laid, And home, re - joic - ing, brought me.
 com - fort still; Thy cross be - fore to guide me.

5 Thou spreadst a table in my sight;
 Thine unction grace bestoweth;
 And, oh, what transport of delight
 From thy pure chalice floweth!

6 And so, through all the length of days,
 Thy goodness faileth never.
 Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
 Within thy house forever.

OFFERTORY (you may submit your offering by mail, drop it off at the church or include it your automatic bill paying program from your bank.)

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Merciful God,

Our ordinary gifts seem small for such a celebration, but you make of them an abundance, just as you do with our lives. Amen

Special Music: *"The Lamb"* by R. Vaughan Williams

Lisa Griffith, Bill Cullingford

Enjoy this music as you read the Apostles Creed and gather for prayer.

Words to 'The Lamb' by R. Vaughn Williams

Sung today by Lisa Griffith, accompanied by Bill Cullingford on oboe

Little Lamb who made thee,
 Dost thou know who made thee?
 Gave them life and bid them feed
 By the stream and o'er the mead.
 Gave thee clothing of delight
 Softest clothing wooly bright.
 Gave thee such a tender voice
 Making all the vales rejoice .
 Little Lamb who made thee?
 Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb I'll tell thee.
 He is called by Thy name.
 For He calls himself a Lamb.
 He is meek and He is mild.
 He became a little child
 I a child as thou a lamb
 We are called by his name.
 Little Lamb God Bless Thee,
 Little Lamb God Bless Thee. RVW

Please read the APOSTLES CREED at home- Proclaiming our Faith
APOSTLES CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into Hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS of the CHURCH ~ *see celebrate insert and our updated prayer request list on the back of the bulletin.*

THE LORD'S PRAYER *(at home)*

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

CHARGE

Devote yourself to the teachings of the gospel, to your prayers and to our worldwide Christian fellowship day by day, for they will lead you to a glad and generous heart.

BLESSING

May the God who calls us by name lead you out to green pastures and lead you in to the safety of Christ's fold.

Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit,
bless you now and forever. Amen.

We conclude and sign off with our last Hymn

HYMN ~ "Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us" All 4 verses

Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us

481

1 Sav - ior, like a shep - herd lead us; Much we need your ten - der care.
2 We are yours; in love be - friend us, Be the guard - ian of our way;
3 You have prom - ised to re - ceive us, Poor and sin - ful though we be;
4 Ear - ly let us seek your fa - vor, Ear - ly let us do your will;

In your pleas - ant pas - tures feed us, For our use your fold pre - pare.
Keep your flock, from sin de - fend us, Seek us when we go a - stray.
You have mer - cy to re - lieve us, Grace to cleanse, and pow'r to free.
Bless - ed Lord and on - ly Sav - ior, With your love our spir - its fill.

Bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, You have bought us; we are yours.
Bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, Hear us chil - dren when we pray.
Bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, Ear - ly let us turn to you.
Bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, You have loved us, love us still.

Our worship team this morning includes, John Boring - lector,
Lisa Griffith - soprano as our cantor, John Haubrick at the organ, and
William Cullingford, recording tech and special music on oboe and
Celtic whistle.

Parts of our liturgy today are adapted from Kimberly Bracken Long.
Feasting on the Word Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1:
Advent through Pentecost Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.
and the ELCA from the Book of Common Worship.

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Please remember in prayer ~ Jane Cullen, Mary Byler (at VV, mother of Jay Byler), Audrey Michael, Sally Shingler (in VVH), Donna Snook (in a nursing facility under Hospice care) sisters of Lucy Magda, Kim Aumiller, Ev Young, Samantha Smith, our members ~ Betty Harmon (Elmcroft), Carol Yoder, Diddy Cleck, Betty Smith, Nancy Aumiller.

Pray for sons and daughters of people in our parish who are active in chaplaincy, as teachers, as hospital workers, in law enforcement and National Guard – at risk, yet serving the public in this crisis.

We have known for generations what an impact a person can have in our lives, in positive ways through their teaching, kind gestures and words, attentiveness to our needs, on our health and the health of our community.

We continue to air our Sunday worship at 10:30am on radio stations AM 670 or FM 92.9 or biglewie.com. Scroll down and click on 'Listen'.

St. John's is ringing its bell (approx. 10:15am) every Sunday morning before our radio worship service begins. Open a window or step outside and listen for its beautiful toll.

Church office hours ~ 8:00am – 1:00pm Monday's and Thursday's. Your offering can be mailed to P.O. Box 5716 or place it in the mail slot found in the side door leading into the coatroom area off the narthex.

An ecumenical group is gathering in their cars at Lewistown Hospital once a week to pray and offer encouragement to the hospital workers. A leader of the group will collect donations of goodies, etc., for hospital staff. These cannot be homemade, only individually wrapped items. If anybody would like to donate money or items to this drive, they can be dropped off in the library or church office.

As we are recording music for hymns we have not been able to have someone actually sing them. We hope in the near future, with social distancing, to record at the organ here at St. John's. Anyone willing to sing the hymns can contact Pastor Ela or John Haubrick.

The denominational leaders are advising churches on possible *stage yellow* transition plans, and our council/session will be discerning how best to proceed at our May meeting. Pastor would really like people to let us know your personal thoughts on whether or when you would feel safe gathering together for worship in the sanctuary. Please let your Good Shepherd know when they contact you again.

Help people and ministries affected by COVID-19

GIVE THROUGH YOUR CONGREGATION

Make checks payable to your congregation; write your designation ("ELCA COVID-19 Response Fund") in the memo line.



Celebrate

Fourth Sunday of Easter

May 3, 2020

Today is sometimes called "Good Shepherd Sunday." Jesus is called the "gate" of the sheep in today's gospel. The risen Christ opens the way to abundant life. He anoints our heads with oil and guides us beside the still waters of our baptism. Each Sunday he spreads a feast before us amid the world's violence and war. We go forth to be signs of the resurrection and extend God's tender care to all creation.

Prayer of the Day

O God our shepherd, you know your sheep by name and lead us to safety through the valleys of death. Guide us by your voice, that we may walk in certainty and security to the joyous feast prepared in your house, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading

Acts 2:42-47

Today's reading is a description of life in the community following Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out on God's people. The new community is sustained in worship and fellowship, shares what they have, and ensures that everyone has enough.

[The baptized] devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

⁴³Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵they would sell their possessions and goods and

distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.



The LORD is my shep-herd; I shall not be in want.

The LORD ¹ is my shepherd;

I shall not ¹ be in want.

²**The LORD makes me lie down ¹ in green pastures
and leads me be- ¹ side still waters.**

³You restore my ¹ soul, O LORD,
and guide me along right pathways ¹ for your name's sake.

⁴**Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I shall ¹ fear no evil;**

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff, they ¹ comfort me. R

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence ¹ of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is ¹ running over.

⁶**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days ¹ of my life,**

and I will dwell in the house of the ¹ LORD forever. R

Second Reading

1 Peter 2:19-25

Doing the right things does not guarantee that one will not experience difficulties, hardships, rejection, or even suffering. Here Christ is presented as the model for our path of endurance and loyalty to God, particularly amid adversity.

It is a credit to you if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. ²⁰If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. ²¹For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.

²²"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

²³When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. ²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

Gospel

John 10:1-10

Jesus uses an image familiar to the people of his day to make a point about spiritual leadership. Those who listen to Jesus are led to abundant life.

[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. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know

the voice of strangers." ⁶Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places in praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

Shepherding God, we thank you for the educational ministries of your church. Enrich the work of teachers, professors, mentors, advisors, and faculty at colleges, seminaries, and learning sites (*local colleges and seminaries may be named*). Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Creating God, we praise you for those who maintain and operate farm equipment, for those who plant and harvest crops, for local farmers' markets, and for those involved in agriculture of any kind. Strengthen their hands as they feed the world. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Guiding God, no one should be in want. Bid the nations to return to your paths of righteousness and inspire our leaders to walk in your ways, so that all may have the opportunity to

live abundantly and sustainably. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Comforting God, you carry us tenderly. We pray for those who walk through dark valleys overshadowed by anxiety and overwhelmed with suffering (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Nurturing God, you desire justice for the hungry. Bless advocacy work, food pantries, and feeding ministries in our congregations (*local ministries may be named*). May none of our neighbors lack for basic needs. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Everlasting God, your beloved have heard your voice; you have called them by name and guided them to your side in death. We thank you for their lives of faithful witness. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

With bold confidence in your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into your eternal care; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Preparing for Next Week

Monday (commemoration of Monica, mother of Augustine, died 387) Psalm 100. **Tuesday** Hebrews 13:20-21. **Wednesday** Jeremiah 23:1-8. **Thursday** Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16. **Friday** (commemoration of Julian of Norwich, renewer of the church, died around 1416) Exodus 3:1-12. **Saturday** (commemoration of Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, renewer of the church, hymnwriter, died 1760) Jeremiah 26:20-24. **Fifth Sunday of Easter** Acts 7:55-60; Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16; 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14.

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13 of 15
Tracks 1 and 2