

Fourth Sunday in Easter
A Liturgy for use at Home

Notes:

*This liturgy may be used at home or in small groups. Feel free to adapt it as you see fit. Children present might enjoy lighting candles, reading scriptures and leading some of the prayers. Words in italics are instructions. Words in **bold** are said by all.*

Preparation

Light a candle as you read

Jesus said: "I am the door; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture" (Jn 10:9).

Call to Worship

Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;
for he is our God
and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care.
(Ps. 95)

Opening Prayer

Almighty God,
you made us and you know us;
our thoughts, desires, and intentions.
Help us to know ourselves;
renew us and lead us
so that we may more clearly reflect your
image,
and live to your glory. Amen

Confession

Merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned
against you and against others
in what we have thought and said,
and in what we have done and failed to
do.

We have turned our eyes from you,
putting ourselves first and failing to love.
Have mercy on us, forgive us,
and fill us with your Spirit,
so that our thoughts, words and actions
bring you glory. Amen

Silence

In the wonderful name of Jesus our sins are forgiven. **Amen.**

Scripture

John 10:1-11

Collect

Good Shepherd of the sheep,
by whom the lost are sought
and guided into the fold:
feed us and we shall be satisfied;
heal us and we shall be made whole;
and lead us, that we may be with you;
for you are alive and reign,
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Reflection

- *A written reflection is appended to these notes.*
- *The Sunday Sermon is online¹*

Response

- Read Psalm 23 aloud (or pray it from memory).
- Memorise Psalm 23 by heart (if you don't already know it) and pray it every morning.
- Fast (as you are able) from sunrise to noon every Thursday. At noon stop what you are doing and join the Methodists around Southern Africa as we pray.
- Ask God if there is someone you can encourage this week. (If you don't know what to say ask the Holy Spirit to help you)
- Continue the discipline of tithing as you are able.

Prayers of Supplication and Intercession

These prayers may help as you hold before God the needs our church and nation at this

¹ <https://durbanvillemethodist.co.za/category/sermons/>

time². Pray them as written or use them to lead you into your own prayers of intercession.

Children and Young People in the Church

Defend, O Lord, these your children with your heavenly grace, that they may continue as yours for ever, and daily increase in your Holy Spirit more and more until they come to your everlasting Kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord (SAPB).

We especially hold before you our own Sunday School and our Superintendent Morag as they try and meet online for the first time today. Reveal yourself to them as their Good Shepherd.

All who minister to the sick

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ went about doing good and healing all kinds of sickness and disease among the people: continue his gracious work among us in hospitals and nursing homes; and send your blessing on all who labour to Prevent suffering and to forward your purposes of love. We pray for doctors and healthcare workers of the DMC family, Bianca, Debbie, Karla, Glynnis, Gideon, Liza, Madga³; may you keep them safe and renew them each day by the power of your Holy Spirit.

Universities, colleges and schools

Lord God, bless all colleges, universities and schools; that teachers and students may be governed by a true love of learning. May they never, for lack of courage, refuse to face the truth; for personal advantage, conceal it; or, in the pursuit of power, betray it; and lead them to those depths of thought and obedience where you yourself can be made known to them; for Jesus Christ's sake.

Reflection

Door to Abundant Life.

"I am the door for the sheep", said Jesus (Jn. 10:7). Jesus promised "Whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture" (Jn 10:9). Your bible might say

At this time, we ask for you to be the Good Shepherd of all our learners, especially those who are anxious, fearful or hungry. Open the door for them to grow in true knowledge.

Our Father...

Sing or listen to a song/hymn

Benediction

And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever more. Amen

² These prayers are adapted from "My Personal Prayer Book" by Bishop Geoff Quinlan.

³ This is not a complete list. Let us know who we have left out so we can pray for you by name.

"I am the gate". But "door" is also an accurate translation⁴. Jesus is the door to abundant life. Friends, Jesus cast off his glory, he laid down his life (10:11), that we would thrive.

But it is easy to think, and live, and act as if the door to abundant life has been closed to ourselves, or to others. That's not surprising. Think about how doors function in our world:

Closed Doors

We've been in lockdown behind closed doors for over a month. In our own congregation husbands and wives are separated – uncertain when the door will open again for them to be reunited. Doors are closed to visiting sick family members. Doors to schools, closed, Doors to business opportunities & income, closed. Even the doors of the Sanctuary are closed!

Slammed Doors

Over the years, we have probably used the phrase *"the door was slammed in my face"* more than the metaphor *"Jesus is the door"*!

It is painful to have the door slammed in one's face. Earlier this year I tried to share a point of view with folk who I thought cared. The door was slammed in my face. I think my fingers got trapped, metaphorically speaking, it still hurts!

Secure Door.

Sometimes we want the door closed. The last thing we say to each other before bed is *"are the doors locked"*. (My family have to ask me that 2 or 3 times because, in the past, I have forgotten not just to lock the front door but have left it wide open overnight!)

Open Door

Other times we tell our children to *"work hard it will open many doors"*.

So, we go through life resenting closed doors, hurt by slammed doors, fearful of unlocked doors and working hard to open doors.

Jesus the Door

Friends, there is a door we cannot open no matter how hard we work: the door to abundant life. That's why Jesus told the Pharisee, Nicodemus, *"unless you are born again you cannot enter the kingdom of God"* (Jn. 3ff). We only enter abundant life in God's Kingdom if God opens the door. Through Christ, God has opened the door! To life. To abundant life.

It is quite normal to contend with doubts in times like these when so many doors are closed. I think this will help - I've been reading a series of lectures by Karl Barth, the theologian, in preparation for an online course. In his lecture "Faith as Trust" he says this "*Everyone who has to contend with unbelief should be advised not to take his unbelief too seriously*"⁵.

Isn't that wonderful! Friends, God, through Christ, has opened the door. We don't have faith because we worked at it. Abundant life doesn't depend on our faith. We believe because God opened the door. He revealed himself to us. As Barth says, faith is a gift and, if we have even as much as a mustard seed, the devil has lost his game! Amen?

Every day, Jesus is leading people into abundant life. I met someone walking into abundant life on Friday. M.E.S, an NGO we partner with, sent Albert and his team to clean up a pile of rubbish left by folk seeking refuge at DMC. Albert told me that 5 months ago he was on the street, homeless. MES gave him an opportunity to work. He stuck at it. Now M.E.S employee him. In

⁴ In most places the Greek word is translated as "door".

⁵ Karl Barth, Dogmatics in Outline, pg 22.

addition, he mentors and cares for around 20 men who used to be homeless. As he told me his story he'd pause and say, "*with God's help*". He knows that God, in Christ, opened the door.

We don't take our unbelief too seriously. But because we *do* take faith seriously, we must know Jesus has closed the door to the thief who comes to kill and destroy.

Closed Doors.

Jesus declared "*I am the door*" just after a man, thanks to Jesus, had the Synagogue door slammed in his face! He was thrown out.

He'd been born blind and people thought God had shut the door of blessing on him. Jesus closed the door on that idea of God by healing the man. Jesus healed on the Sabbath. That angered the religious leaders because it robbed them of power. They feared people would follow Jesus, ignoring burdensome rules. So, they threw the healed man out of the Synagogue.

Not everyone is as open to God as God is to us. Jesus closes the door to the idea of entering enter the Kingdom on our own terms, for our own glory. He said, "*For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.*" It's not popular to say this. But Jesus wants us to know that, with him, we are safe – he has shut the door on all that is devious, corrupt, underhanded, harmful and hateful. Those who act in the own interest for their own desire, whether in the church, or in government, or business remain blind to the open door.

If we follow Jesus faithfully, we will likely face persecution of one form or another.

But even then, the door to abundant life, is open. Think of the man born blind. He was healed...that opened all kinds of doors. But best of all Jesus opened the door to live as a follower of Jesus. The last we see of him he said "*Lord, I believe*" and worshiped Jesus. The door was opened to a life lived in partnership with Jesus.

Conclusion

My chat with Albert reminded me how abundant life doesn't only mean provision and protection. Sure, Albert is sincerely grateful for food and shelter. But his eyes really lit up when he introduced me to the men whom he calls brothers. They once lived on the street. By God's grace Albert's been able to point them to the open door of Jesus. He shares all he has with them. We too are given the joy of pointing others to the open door.

Friends, we cannot open the door – that's God's gift to us. But we can work each day at stepping through the door, listening to Jesus voice, and following him in the way of love. Amen.