

# Lambing Service



*All Hymn numbers taken from Hymns Old and New (HO&N) (New Anglican Edition, 1996) or Seasonal Worship from the Countryside (SWC)*

*This service would be suitable for other occasions during the year where shepherds meet, such as at sheep dog trials.*

*The 'wisdom of the ewes' in the prayers refers to the good sense and innate knowledge that upland sheep at least are endowed with: they are said to be 'hefted' to their territory, knowing its boundaries, where to find water, which places are dangerous and which provide shelter and safety. This knowledge is imparted to their lambs, so they can pass it on in their turn. If sheep have to be brought in from outside, they have no local knowledge and there are more accidents and casualties. At first, the owner has to spend time every day rounding them up and bringing back any that have strayed - perhaps rather like the shepherd in the Parable of the Lost Sheep!*

## Welcome

**Hymn** The Lord's my shepherd (HO&N 490)

Let us confess the faults and failings in our lives:

**Eternal God, our Guide and Shepherd,  
we strayed from your ways like lost sheep,  
We have not always loved our neighbours;  
we have not always been good stewards  
of the land and creatures in our care.  
We trust in your son, Jesus Christ,  
who on the cross took on himself  
the sins and failings of us all.  
Give us grace to amend our lives,  
and faithfully follow in your ways. Amen.**

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent,  
have mercy upon you,  
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,  
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,  
and keep you in life eternal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

**Hymn** 'In heavenly love abiding' (HO&N 246) or 'Great God of all creation' (page 37 SWC)

**Reading** (Isaiah 40: 9, 11; Author's own version)

*Isaiah says the Lord is near and is a shepherd to his people*

You who bring good tidings to Zion  
go up on to a high mountain,  
You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem,  
lift up your voice with a shout,  
lift it up, do not be afraid;  
say to the cities of Judah:  
Behold your God! Behold the Lord!  
He looks after his flock like a shepherd,  
he picks up the lambs in his arms,  
and gently leads the pregnant ewes.

*There are two alternatives for the next hymn and reading. The first is the hymn 'Father hear the prayer we offer' with the 'Good Shepherd' reading; the second is the hymn 'There were ninety and nine' with the reading 'The Lost Sheep'.*

**Hymn** Father, hear the prayer we offer (HO&N 120)

**Reading** (John 10: 14-16 NIV)

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me - just as the Father knows me and I know the Father - and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

*Or*

**Hymn**

There were ninety and nine (page 36 SWC)

**Reading** (Luke 15: 3-7 NIV)

Then Jesus told them this parable, 'Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep". I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.'

**Prayers**

For the friendship and support of our communities,  
for the beauty of hills and valleys

**We thank you, Father.**

For the changing weather and seasons,  
the dawns and sunsets and the starry nights:

**We thank you, Father.**

For the fields and pastures  
which provide food for our flocks  
and water from stream or river:

**We thank you, Lord.**

For our ewes, with their own wisdom;  
for their strength and care as mothers:

**We thank you, Lord.**

For lambs, for the miracle of their birth,  
and for the bounding joy of their young life:

**We thank you, Lord.**

We pray that our lambs may be free from sickness,  
and safe from attack by animals and birds:  
Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

We pray that all who care for the sheep  
may be given wisdom and endurance  
and may receive a just reward for their work:  
Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer.**

**Hymn**

'Thine for ever! God of love' (HO&N 504)

**An Address may be given or a Poem read (see end of service)**

**Hymn** 'All creatures of our God and King' (HO&N 9) *or* 'O Lord my God' (HO&N 380)

**Final Prayer**

O Creator God,  
who has made us to live together,  
to love one another  
and to love the land on which we live:  
we pray for ourselves,  
that we may have the grace to preserve,  
for those who come after,  
the beauty of our landscape  
the traditions of our people  
and the strength of our local community.

**Amen.**

**Blessing**

The God of peace  
who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ,  
that great shepherd of the sheep,  
make you perfect in every good work to do his will.  
And the blessing of God almighty,  
be among you and remain with you always.

**Amen.**

*from Seasonal Worship from the Countryside pages 32-35  
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