

Sunday, April 26, 2026  
Digging In: Preparing, Planting, Nurturing, Weeding  
Easter 4

Opening Responses

Loosely based on Psalm 23 by Rev. Darryl Macdonald

God takes care of me like a shepherd cares for sheep.

**I have everything I need to live.**

There is fresh of water to drink.

**There are fields of good food and places to rest.**

Even when things are not going well, God's compassion helps me through.

**I feast on God's abundance even with those I call my enemies.**

I am anointed as sacred.

**Goodness and mercy are my footfalls, and I find myself at home with God.**

**Song**

Many Are The Lightbeams **VU588**

A Time of Centring

Take this moment to centre yourself deeply in the love of God

and prepare yourself for an encounter with the Holy.

Begin with your breath.

Feel the air pass your nostrils and glide down your throat to fill your lungs.

Drop you diaphragm and let your belly and back expand.

Notice the rhythm of your breathing, and the spaces between you breath.

The air you breathe is sacred for it is the breath of God.

Your body is sacred for it manifests the Holy One in substance and form.

Be aware of your body and how you are sitting.

Let your hands fall open and your feet feel grounded.

Ask of God what you need at this moment and give space for the response.

Take some time to reflect on your relationship with God, the world, your sacred centre.

Honour your connection to God's creation.

Offer something of yourself.

Be open to receiving God's gift to you this day.

Now, return to your body.

Imagine there is a light the softly glows from your heart, through your limbs and head,  
and radiates out into the world, connecting with people, animals, fish and birds,  
with water, soil and even rock, and give thanks to God for the experience of life.

**Song**

Psalm 23 - The Lord's My Shepherd **VU747**

## Scripture

Acts 2.14a, 36-47 New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition.  
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But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, 36 “Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.” 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” 38 Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” 40 And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” 41 So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 All who believed were together and had all things in common; 45 they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 Day 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, 47 praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

## Another Voice

*by Richard Wagamese from Embers*

From our very first breath, we are in relationship. With that indrawn draft of air, we become joined to everything that ever was, is and ever will be. When we exhale, we forge that relationship by virtue of the act of living. Our breath commingles with all breath, and we are a part of everything. That's the simple fact of things. We are born into a state of relationship, and our ceremonies and rituals are guides to lead us deeper into that relationship with all things. Big lesson? Relationships never end; they just change. In believing that lies the freedom to carry compassion, empathy, love, kindness and respect into and through whatever changes. We are made more by that practice.

## Song

In Loving Partnership We Come **VU603**

## Reflection

Planting Community

## Offering Time

On Wednesday afternoons, a group of young people come together to do something simple and powerful. They talk. These gatherings are part of a mentorship and mental health program through the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK). For many of the youth who take part, it's one of the few places where they feel safe enough to share what they're thinking and experiencing.

Christine now leads these conversations as a mentor, but her journey to this moment began in a similar circle, as someone seeking support herself.

In Kenya, young people are expected to grow up fast. By age 15, they may be seen as old enough to handle life on their own. But the reality is hard—youth may not get the encouragement or support they need. Some may leave school early, often because of teen pregnancy, the need to work, or lack of access to education in general. And showing emotion—crying, opening up—can be seen as weakness.

Christine knows this reality firsthand. When struggles go unspoken, young people can feel completely alone. Youth suicide is a real and painful reality. She once carried burdens in silence, feeling the weight of expectations without a safe space to share what she was experiencing.

Then she found the NCCCK mentorship program.

In those Wednesday gatherings, Christine discovered something she had been missing: a place where she could speak freely, where her thoughts and feelings mattered. “Mental health means feeling safe enough to express your thoughts and feelings,” she now explains with the clarity of someone who has lived it. “Talking it out is the best way out.”

The support she received didn't just help her survive—it transformed her. “It's been one of my dreams to be there for someone,” she shares. That dream became her reality.

Today, Christine mentors 40 young people through the UCC youth mentorship program. She brings to each session the understanding of someone who has sat in their seats, who knows what it means to need someone to listen. As a mother, she practices intentional parenting—encouraging confidence, conversation, and honesty with her own daughter. She's become the person she once needed.

Her advice to the young people she mentors comes from experience: “Embrace the support if you have someone.”

Christine envisions building a community of young people who can support one another, breaking the cycles of silence that too often lead to isolation and despair. Through her journey from mentee to mentor, she's proving that healing isn't just

personal—it multiplies.

Through Mission and Service partner the National Council of Churches of Kenya, Christine and her community are creating spaces for young people to be heard and reminding them that they matter.

When we support Mission and Service, we are helping make spaces like this possible—places where listening leads to hope, and where young people don't have to face everything alone.

Let's be the community that shows up. By giving to Mission and Service, we stand with young people in Kenya and around the world, helping ensure that safe circles continue, mentors are trained, and hope keeps multiplying.

**Offering Song**

Are You A Shepherd? **MV126**

Prayer of Intercession

by *Christian Maclean* from Holy Ground

God of place and of history

We pray for the broken and torn fabric of the earth as it yearns for healing.

**Jesus, who walked with farmers and fishers  
and sat in village kitchens,  
walk with us now.**

We hold before you those who have the privilege and responsibility of working on the land and those who struggle to make a living.

**Jesus, who walked with farmers and fishers  
and sat in village kitchens,  
walk with us now.**

We hold before you those whose relationship with the earth is ruptured; through conflict, poverty, stunted opportunities, and environmental degradation.

**Jesus, who walked with farmers and fishers  
and sat in village kitchens,  
walk with us now.**

We hold before you rural communities  
where people feel isolated, marginalised and powerless  
in the face of distant economic and political forces;  
and we remember especially those who have lost all hope.

**Jesus, who walked with farmers and fishers  
and sat in village kitchens,  
walk with us now.**

We hold before you those whose policies affect the land, the earth and all of our lives;  
and we pray that those in positions of power, in particular the leaders of wealthy nations, will  
have the courage and vision to make hard decisions.

**Jesus, who walked with farmers and fishers  
and sat in village kitchens,  
walk with us now.**

Prayer Circle

*Free prayers for those who need our prayers*

Alan, Angela, April, Barbara, David, Dot, Jim, Judy, Karen, Levi, Linda, Loidi, Mark, Nancy, Rona,  
Ronda, Rudy, Russell, Shannon, Shawn, Valerie

God of the sheltering wings, hear these prayers today and fill us with your Spirit.  
That we may live in peace with the earth and with each other.  
That your Kingdom may come.

The Lord's Prayer (A Paraphrase) VU916

**Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,  
Source of all that is and that shall be.**

**Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven:**

**The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!**

**The way of your justice be followed by peoples of the world!**

**Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!**

**Your commonwealth of peace and freedom**

**sustain our hope and come on earth.**

**With the bread we need for today, feed us.**

**In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.**

**In time of temptation and test, strengthen us.**

**From trials too great to endure, spare us.**

**From the grip of all that is evil, free us.**

**For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever.**

Song

Spirit, Open My Heart **MV79**

Closing Responses

*by Rev. Darryl Macdonald*

The soils cry out: "I am sacred!"

**God calls us to listen and get our hands in the dirt.**

The plants cry out: "I am sacred!"

**God asks us to get along with our companions in life.**

The planet cries out: "I am sacred!"

**God encourages us to do the same.**