

# FAITH @ HOME

Week of May 12, 2019

Fourth Sunday of Easter

## ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

**READ:** Psalm 23

**REFLECT:** Over the next several weeks, we'll be hearing a lot about sheep and lambs and shepherds in our gospel lessons. Sheep are funny animals, incredibly stubborn and utterly defenseless—much like toddlers and other small humans. We are the shepherds of the little ones we love, and following Jesus' example of protecting his flock, finding lost lambs, and knowing just the right way to call us back into the fold. This idea of sheep and shepherds is a wonderful way to draw children into the story of God. As you read through this beloved psalm with your littles, take some time to help them into the story—God is our good shepherd, and we are God's sheep. And in families, parents are shepherds and children are sheep.

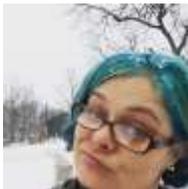
Psalm 23 is one of the most comforting, often-quoted psalms. We read it during hard times, when our hearts are troubled, when we feel afraid or need to be reminded of God's saving, life-giving presence. Introducing this psalm to a child is a wonderful way to begin encouraging their trust and faith in God's goodness and protection in their lives. It may be especially helpful for anxious children or little ones who struggle with sleeping at night.

Think about the following questions when you are reading through this psalm, and stop to talk about these things with your child while you read it to them.

- What does this psalm look like in the life of your family?
- Where are the grassy pastures and restful waters you lead your children to rest and drink from?
- How do you remind your children they are safe with you, even when the world can be scary?  
How does love and goodness pursue your child?

**RESPOND:** If you are a parent, consider reading this psalm and talking through it during your bedtime routine. If you are a non-parent caregiver, you can help set a quiet mood for reading and reflecting on this story by allowing little ones to cozy up with their lovies or bring in some soft sheep toys to cuddle while you talk.

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: RACHEL JONES



Rachel Jones is the associate editor for Forward Movement. She and her husband live on a farm with a dog, too many cats, several rabbits, and a flock of very opinionated chickens.

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## ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

**READ:** Revelation 7:9-17

**REFLECT:** Have you ever been to an amusement park? Or a carnival? Or the zoo? If you have, you will most likely see many different people! I didn't mention school even though I know that there are many children at your school. I only mentioned places where you can have nonstop fun. Our reading depicts a multitude or, a great number of people praising and worshipping God. People from all over the world can have nonstop fun praising God our Creator.

**RESPOND:** When you are playing, do you feel a sense of joy and wonder? Practice feeling that same joy and wonder when you are at church.

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: IMANI DRISKELL



Imani Driskell is the Director of Children's, Youth, and Family Ministries at St. Michael's-in-the-Hills Episcopal Church in Toledo, Ohio. Imani was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York and is a bagel and pizza enthusiast. She enjoys learning, teaching and speaking about Faith Formation. Her favorite novel is *The Living is Easy* by Dorothy West.

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## ADULT AND YOUTH

**READ:** Psalm 23

**REFLECT:** Many of us have grown up memorizing Psalm 23; it's a scripture we hear often in church, but have we truly learned the meaning behind Psalm 23 and how we can apply it to our life? The essence of Psalm 23 is finding rest in Christ in the midst of chaos. It's a reminder that no matter what obstacles stand in our way, Christ is with us. He is there to bring peace to our weary souls. He is there to bring us joy in the midst of sorrow. He is there to lead us through valleys and the darkest places. There is no place of pain or despair in your life that Christ can't reach. There is no amount of shame or mistakes that you've made that can keep you from His mercy and love. The rest and love David speaks of in Psalm 23 is accessible to all of us.

**RESPOND:** Write down Psalm 23 in your journal or somewhere you can see it daily, and then write down a list of the areas of life you'd like to find rest in (these areas could be school, work, family, etc.)

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: FAITTH BROOKS



Faith is the Communication and Programming Director for Legacy Collective. She engages in community organizing and activism. Her passion makes her a relentless spokesperson for racial reconciliation. She is a social media strategist and blogger who writes at [Faitthbrooks.com](http://Faitthbrooks.com).

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## ADULT AND ADULT

**READ:** Psalm 23

**REFLECT:** The words of this Psalm were written by David and they come from his experience as a shepherd. Though Psalm 23 has been comforting for many generations of believers, sometimes the language is beyond our understanding. Nevertheless, we can find peace in the words as we relate them to the care God gives to us.

David understood the hard work that goes into caring for the sheep. When he wrote this psalm, he saw the Lord as his shepherd doing everything necessary to keep him safe and satisfied. Though we have not experienced that type of life, we can know that Jesus will be true to His Word and that He will keep us through the cold of winter and the heat of summer. He will care for the fields so that we will not harm ourselves or get lost because we have gone looking for greener pastures. He will be with us as He guides our paths into places where we will find everything we need to sustain our lives. He will protect us from the things that seek to bring us harm. He will keep us safe with His rod and staff. In Him we will find comfort, peace, joy and life. Jesus is our shepherd, we shall not want for anything.

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd." He knows each of his sheep and we know His voice. He cares for us through the cold of winter and the heat of summer. He ensures we are safe and have plenty of food and water to sustain us. He was willing to lay down His life for His sheep.

**RESPOND:** God provides all we need. Think about each line of Psalm 23. How has God fulfilled each of those needs in your life today? How has God comforted you? How has God given you peace, joy and life?

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: PEGGY HOPPES



Peggy Hoppes is a writer, artist, photographer and crafter; her creativity reflects her faith. She is married with two grown children. She began writing "A WORD FOR TODAY," a devotional, in August 1999 which can be found at <http://www.awordfortoday.org>. Peggy teaches a Bible class at her church and has led workshops. She has published several books. Peggy shares her gifts to build up the church, to help Christians grow as disciples with living faith, and to be a witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the world.

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