

Worship at Home—3 May 2020

Dear Friends of Currie Kirk. Please get in touch with the Kirk Office (451 5141) if you need anything. We have friends willing to listen, shop, walk a dog, fix a garden. Website: <https://www.curriekirk.org/> or <https://www.facebook.com/CurrieKirk/>

Opening Prayer

Loving God, our Saviour, Shepherd and Guide
Wherever we go, You are with us
Wherever we stray, You seek us out
Whenever we call to You, You hear us.

You are our promise and our hope
Our place of rest and peace
You comfort our tears and provide security in the storm
Whoever we are, You accept us
Whatever we do, You love us
Whenever we fall, You lift us up.

And so we praise you faithful God
That You bless us anew each day
With Your grace and goodness
And that you lead us by your hand
To a place we can call home.

Amen

The Scripture Readings are taken from Psalm 23 and John 10: 1-10

The incorrect address was given for the death of Margaret Donaldson in last weeks Worship at Home. It should have read 204A Lanark Road West, Currie—we apologise for any stress that this may have caused.

It is with great sadness that we have to intimate the death of :

Phil Hutchison, 67 Muir Wood Crescent

Please pray for the family



Meditation on John 10: 1-10—The Good Shepherd

This week on Radio 4's Start the Week, two psychologists were chatting about human behaviour. What makes different people respond in different ways to different situations at different times? I was fascinated.

Catherine Sanderson discussed her book, "The Bystander Effect." This was new to me. The Bystander Effect, (known as Bystander Apathy) has been recorded by experiments. For instance, if a woman shouts for help, it would seem that the more bystanders there are, the less likely that anyone in particular will help. There are many reasons for such inaction including lack of confidence, devolved personal responsibility and not least fear of embarrassment.

David Halpert discussed his book, "Inside the Nudge Unit: How Small Changes Can Make a Big Difference." What is the Nudge Unit you ask? Well, it is the nickname for the "Behavioural Insights Team" which gives advice to inform policy and improve public services.

Halpert believes it is easy to overcome the "Bystander Effect" by giving people a nudge in the form of clear, specific, simple instructions on how they are meant to respond to a situation. This removes the ambiguity and enables people to feel both personal and collective responsibility. For example, his team simplified the Organ Donation opt-in campaign which increased willing donors by 30 percent. Halpert believes Bystanders can be converted to Upstanders!

Halpert's team was tasked by the Cabinet's Advisory Group for Emergencies to provide effective slogans and instructions to help with the Pandemic . . . Wash your hands to Happy Birthday twice? Yes, it was them. How about this simple slogan!

"Stay Home, Save Lives, Protect the NHS."

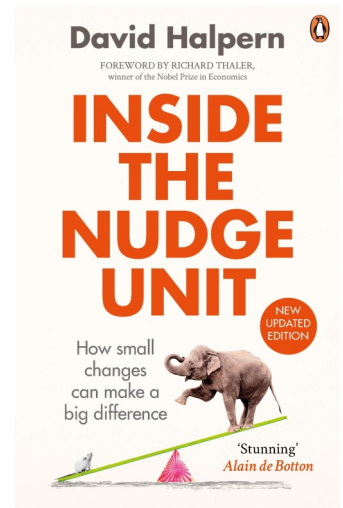
It wasn't Boris, it was the Nudge Unit. Simple, specific and clear ways to do our bit, to be Upstanders, not Bystanders in a time of need.

Jesus was clearly ahead of his time in the realm of behavioural psychology. When he instructed his followers to love their neighbour, someone asked the cheeky question, "Who is my neighbour?" and he told the story of the Good Samaritan . . . whilst the holy priest and Levite were mere bystanders, the unlikely Samaritan was the upstander—going above and beyond to respond to a crisis.

Christians are NOT bystanders. We are Upstanders. More than any Nudge Unit, Jesus said and did things which have shaped his followers' behaviour for centuries. Apathy isn't an option in the Christian faith. Whilst some religions such as Buddhism seem to go to lengths to avoid suffering, Christianity faces the realities of human life head on, but with great faith and, more importantly, hope. Christ taught his followers to show compassion to all who suffer—in Matthew 25: "*When I was hungry you gave me food, when I was naked, you clothed me, when I was ill, you visited me.*".. Christians are not bystanders. We respond with love and this is very much true of Currie Kirk.

Another of the Bible's simple, specific images of our commitment to care is the Good Shepherd—our scripture for this week. Throughout the Bible God is often referred to as a caring, protective Shepherd who cares for the deepest needs of the Sheep, even when they/we are wayward or get lost. God, our shepherd goes to lengths to find us and nourish us.

Here in Currie, we are lucky to see new-born lambs and sheep in the fields and local shepherds will tell you that it is true, the sheep do know their shepherd's voice, because that is the voice of safety and protection. So Jesus' image was spot on with the popular culture of his day.



In John 10, Jesus defines himself as the Good Shepherd. Shepherding was a vital occupation in Jesus' day. That said, the role of a shepherd, was considered to be a lowly one. Shepherding was fraught with danger because shepherds had to defend their sheep from thieves as well as wild animals. (I was shocked to hear about the Collie sheep dog puppies that were stolen last week from a farm in East Lothian—but equally so uplifted to see that they were all found and returned to their home and that a culprit was arrested!)

In our scripture, Jesus explains that the Good Shepherd is different from the hireling. The hireling (Let's call him a bystander) runs away at the first sign of danger. But the Good Shepherd (Let's call him our Upstander) lies down in front of the sheep-gate, literally putting his life at risk for the sake of the sheep. During the day the sheep can wander but at night, he has the task of keeping them safe from danger and he is more than willing to put himself at risk to protect them.

Whether you have ever been on a farm or seen a sheep or not, this is a story that brings into focus the realities of our time. For we cannot deny that men and women are putting themselves at the proverbial sheep's gate to protect and save others. They are laying down their lives and putting themselves at risk . . . and some have died doing so. The pictures of the NHS or care home staff, the bus drivers and other front-line workers who have died are sombre, sobering, humbling.

Last Tuesday at 11 am the nation held a minute's silence and it brought it all home. Indeed it brought the suffering of others into our own homes, where we have to stay and where we feel protected as we try to do the right thing. Wherever we are or whatever our circumstance, we care and God has placed this ability to care in our hearts so that we always feel the need to respond, even if, with nothing else but silence.

I confess, I have never been a good bystander. Recently in Lidl, a mother with two young children was distressed. Her youngest, was screaming her lungs out and lying on the floor. The mother started shouting at her and with a few swear words, screamed that they would have to go home with no food. "We have to go home, I can't cope with this." The older sister was cowering with embarrassment behind the shopping trolley. Other customers kept a wide berth and rolled their eyes. I got my keys out a few feet away and started jingling them in front of the toddler and I said "Hey, you are so beautiful and It's ok, it's ok!" (Oh the art of distraction!) I said to the mother, "This is so hard, I had three under three a long time ago. I remember tantrums in supermarkets, you are doing fine, can I help you? I can take the shopping list . . . what do you need". Things calmed a bit. The sister looked upon me with distrust, but the mother calmed somewhat and got her shopping done.

I didn't make new friends, just wanted to show humanity. I was glad not to have my own kids with me. They would have begged me to walk away. They are teenagers, so easily embarrassed when I stop or talk to people. I used to be embarrassed like them, and I don't know when I lost that—but I think it might have had to do with growing into my faith and into my own skin and sense of calling as a child of God.

When Peter had tried to be a bystander (as he denied Jesus three times before the cockerel crowed) . . . Jesus forgave him and entrusted and blessed him to become an amazing Upstander of Christian leaders. Jesus tasked Peter with the question: "*Do you love me? If you love me feed my sheep*". Jesus is the Good Shepherd but he hands on the mantle of Shepherding to all of us.

Most importantly though, we need to remember that we always have the Good Shepherd with us. He calls us to discipleship, he calls us to care, but we are never ever alone. For he leads us to green pastures and even in the midst of an enemy like Corona Virus, he anoints our heads with oil and prepares a table for us. He is with us as we live each day and even through the passage of death too.

Deep in our bones, we know and feel our calling to care and so we act accordingly. But we must also know that we have a Divine protector, a Shepherd who cares deeply and abides with us and is willing to lay down at the gate of our lives in all the hours of day or night. For this we give thanks. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer

Lord, You are our shepherd.
We thank You that You offer us rest and refreshment
through Your Word.

We thank You that those times when we are afraid
we can trust that You watch over for us.

You have given us so much of Yourself
in Your abundant love and grace.

We thank you for your blessings to our lives
Good Shepherd, lead us where you will



May we follow you, our Shepherd to open the gate
to visions of a better world for all.

For there are many who hunger; who are left out in the cold.

We think of those who are homeless or displaced,
Those who are exploited, those who are poor.

We pray for all who hold positions of responsibility and leadership

That they may be led by your Spirit to make wise decisions to create a
humane and caring world.

Good Shepherd, lead us where you will

There are many who cannot enjoy
the beauty and mystery of creation.

We think of refugees and those living in war-ravaged lands.

There are many who yearn for rest
in lives which are restless and hard.

Teach us to walk alongside others in their pain and suffering,
To do and give what we can.

Good Shepherd, lead us where you will



We think of those who work long hours to care for the sick

Or to serve in shops and front-line jobs

There are many who are fearful for themselves and for others.

We pray for those confined through illness or self-isolation.

And for families coping with young children at home,

Trying to teach and parent them

Lord God, shepherd all Your people on their different journeys

with their different joys and struggles.

Good Shepherd, lead us where you will

Amen.

Blessing

You are sought,
seek peace.

You are loved,
love justice.

You are protected,
protect the weak.

You are safe,
save the lost.

You are chosen,
choose life.