

20th September, 2026

The paper-version Service



St Andrew's
Church



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks
Responding to God's Love



To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn:

By grace alone somehow I stand
Where even angels fear to tread
Invited by redeeming love
Before the throne of God above
He pulls me close with nail-scarred
hands
Into His everlasting arms
When condemnation grips my heart
And Satan tempts me to despair
I hear the voice that scatters fear
The Great I Am the Lord is here

Oh praise the One who fights for me
And shields my soul eternally
Boldly I approach Your throne
Blameless now I'm running home
By Your blood I come
Welcomed as Your own
Into the arms of majesty

Behold the bright and risen Son
More beauty than this world has known
I'm face to face with Love Himself
His perfect spotless righteousness
A thousand years, a thousand tongues
Are not enough to sing His praise
Boldly I approach Your throne
Blameless now I'm running home
By Your blood I come
Welcomed as Your own
Into the arms of majesty

This is the art of celebration
Knowing we're free from condemnation
Oh praise the One, praise the One
Who made an end to all my sin

Boldly I approach Your throne
Blameless now I'm running home
By Your blood I come
Welcomed as Your own
Into the arms of majesty.

The Sermon by Rev Howard Wright

Read Ephesians 4:1-16 & Matthew 21:42-44 – God's foundation and pinnacle

The Church is God's plan; it is his primary instrument for revealing his glory, that is, revealing His Kingdom. The Church is God's, it's not 'ours'. He is in charge. And, the Church is built on Christ – and his teaching. Read Ephesians 2:19-22.

And we are all invited in to play our part. Read 1 Peter 2:4–6.

We are living stones, lining up from Jesus to be built together for God's glory – we are all part of the building – a temple – the habitation of God which shines with his glory.

What kind of bricks are we? Derek Copley, former principal of Moorlands Bible College wrote a book called 'Building with Bananas', in which he relates a conversation with a builder complaining that the bricks he was building with were especially mishappen. Derek said that as a pastor he could relate as people all come in different shapes and sizes in their temperament and character.

Jesus is seeking to make us the right shape and we are works in progress – Read 2 Corinthians 3:18.

God gives us the Holy Spirit to be both the cement which holds us together and the power for inward transformation- Read Galatians 5:22-23. Note, in the latest version of the NIV bible, the word 'patience' has been changed to 'forbearance'. I wasn't very impressed by this until I checked what the difference between patience and forbearance was: 'Forbearance: A *specific form of patience focused entirely on interpersonal provocation. It means holding back anger, refusing to retaliate, and tolerating insults, foolishness, or mistreatment from others.*'

I'll stick with forbearance from now on! We need a lot of this in the church – as we love one another.

Our Ephesians 4 passage reminds us of the unifying and empowering work of the Spirit in the church's construction. We are to live in love with God and each other. We are to receive God's gifting and use our gifts so that the church is built – each reaching maturity – and all for the glory of God.

God wants to use us, let's be available usable for building. He is the architect and master builder. The Church is for God's glory – it's about him. If it's not for God's glory, it's not a church! If it's not built his way it's not the church

We are to build well and properly, the alternative is to build on sand – such buildings don't stand – Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 and Matthew 7:24-29.

The Church will stand, see Matthew 16:18. But the things of the earth will be shaken – read Hebrews 12:26-27. We live in an age of shaking and uncertainty. Wars, global warming and the most dramatic El Nino of human history, rising prices, and most recently words of warning about AI's capacity to kill us all. BUT God and his church are unshakeable. Christ is the foundation, our cornerstone, our redeemer, winning our salvation through his death upon the cross and this is assured through his resurrection – and one day he will come again to bring all things completely under him.

The church will remain, we are the bride of Christ – as we'll consider next week. The foundations of this earth, money, sex, and power, will be shaken and ultimately fail – like the woman, Babylon, in Revelation. A rejection of Christ as the cornerstone results in disaster for all who fall on it or upon whom it falls. But God and his people will stand forever!

What a privilege to be part of this call – to be picked by God to be part of his building and glory. Let's join in in prayer and action. Lord your kingdom come and your will be done.

16th Sunday after Trinity: O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear the prayers of your people who call upon you; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

The Lord's Prayer: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.*

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, St Andrews and The Good Shepherd, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

At the Church of the Good Shepherd:

- Tea and Chat and Bowls: 21st October at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: September 23rd and 28th October at 10.30am in Church Hall.
- Harvest Tea & Praise: Sunday, 4 October 3:00 – 4:30pm.
- The Community Cupboard, 2:45pm every Thursday in Church.

For Further information:

This paper and all parish details are on the website at
<https://www.parishofmedsteadandfourmarks.co.uk>