

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year B – Fourth Sunday of Easter**  
**Lesson Plans for Younger Children**

**Scripture: John 10:11-18**

**Background:** Easter - the unearned gift of grace. The reflective season of “going in” that Lent provided (no matter what disciplines we undertook, nor even how well we attended to them) explodes on Easter. Of course, we cannot “figure it out.” How comforting, then, to have these scriptures, showing first how the disciples struggled to grasp what had happened and then stories of Jesus before the crucifixion, which are written in the light of the Resurrection.

As Easter people we know, as Paul said, that nothing, not even death, shall separate us from the love of God. We are people who expect life out of death. And so, in Eastertide we celebrate the wonder and prepare ourselves to take the awesome message out into the world on Pentecost.

**A Notation for this Week’s Gospel**

For the rest of the Easter Season, we have stories Jesus shared before the crucifixion. Now, in the light of the resurrection, they take on a powerful new value. Jesus is portrayed as the Good Shepherd. Even though sheep are not part of our lives like sheep were for the people who first heard these stories, we can resonate to the concept of a shepherd who knows his own and whose own know him. We belong to this shepherd. Yet, if, as Jesus tells us, he has other sheep that are not of this fold that he must bring also, we have work to do – work given to us by the Good Shepherd.

**Theme: The Good Shepherd**

**Before Class:** If time and other resources permit, acquire cotton (the cotton that comes in rolls is best, large cotton balls will also work), a package of chenille stems (white, black, or even brown), bright construction paper folded in half, crayons, and glue or glue sticks. You may want to have a lamb stuffed animal. Note: the rest of the stories we have in the Easter season come from before the crucifixion and resurrection. The timeframe will not be important to the children, so you may not even want to mention it.

**Beginning:** Greet the children by saying: “Peace be with you.” See if any of them remember who also said this to people. Listen for what is going on in the lives of the children: what there is to celebrate, what might be a concern.

**Praying:** Thank you, God, for this new day. Thank you for the people you send to take care of us. Amen.

**The Story:** (Before you begin the story, put the lamb stuffed animal or a piece of the cotton in your hand.) Tell the children Jesus wanted the people to know that he loves them and he wants to help take care of them. Lots of the people he was talking to had sheep that they took care of. Have any of you ever patted a sheep? Ever seen one?

Let's pretend that this stuffed animal (or piece of cotton) I am holding is a real sheep. I am holding it – gently – in my hand. I am pretending that I am Jesus and I am loving this little sheep. I will hand our sheep on to the child next to me, and that child can hold it and pretend to be Jesus loving the sheep. We will take turns until each of us gets to hold the sheep.

Jesus told the people that he would not run away and leave the sheep all alone. Jesus said he would protect the sheep from any creature that might hurt the sheep. And Jesus said there were lots of other sheep that needed to come be with Jesus. Jesus told the people that his sheep can recognize his voice when he calls them and he recognizes their voices when they call him.

You can read the story from a Children's bible if you wish.

**Lost and Found:** Tell the children you are going to play a game of "Lost and Found." They may recognize it as hide and seek. The difference is that the children will hide, pretending that they are lost. One child will pretend to be a lost sheep and go hide. One child will pretend to be Jesus and go find the child. The "sheep" that is hiding needs to keep making very soft sheep sounds ("baa, baa, baa") so Jesus can find the lost sheep. When Jesus finds the sheep, another child gets to be the sheep and another gets to be Jesus. Keep going until each child gets to play both parts. If weather permits, and your grounds comply, it would be good to do this outside.

**Easter Activity:** Continue the Easter project started on Easter 2. Make sheep to take home and to decorate our Easter tree or Easter mobile.

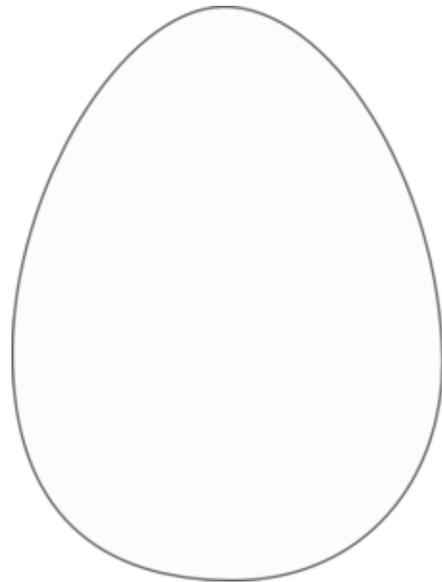
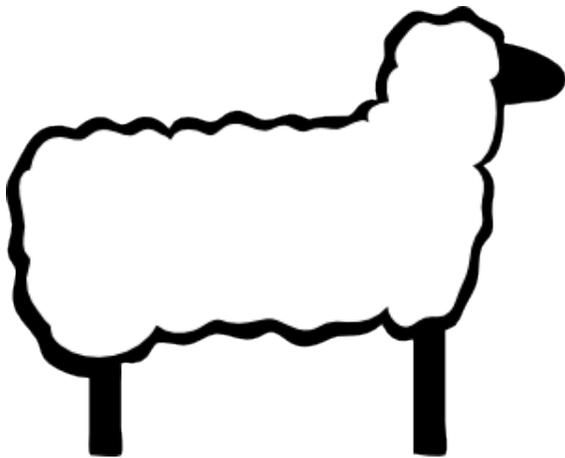
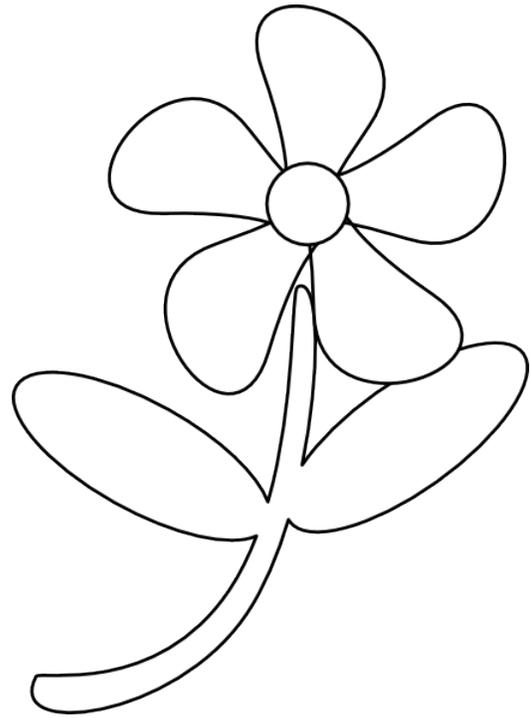
You can have the children color the sheep or have them create their own. Each sheep will need a piece of cotton and chenille stems (one stem cut in fourths makes four sets of legs - enough for two sheep). Twist one stem length around the cotton to form the neck. Bend both ends of the stem about a quarter of an inch -- to form the feet. Twist another stem length around the cotton to create the back legs. And, bend both ends of the stem to form the back feet. Children's imagination will transform these little lumps into sheep. Allow time for the children to play with the sheep – getting lost, getting found. And be sure to add some of the sheep to your Easter tree or Easter mobile.

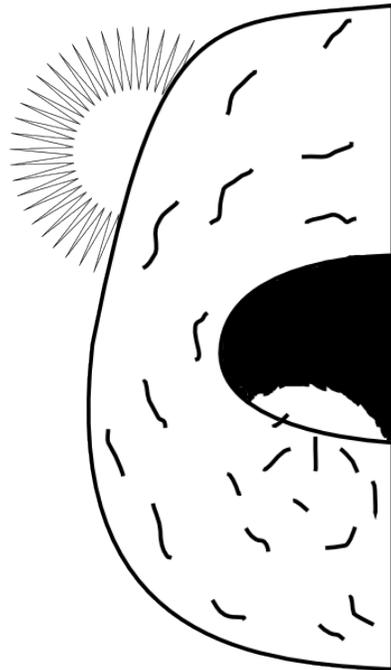
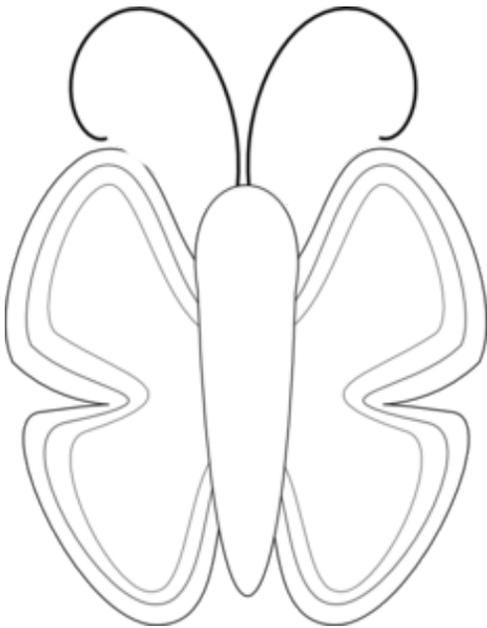
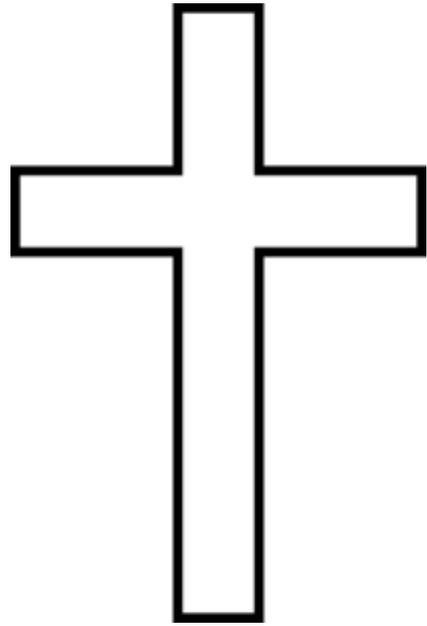
**Getting Closure:** Gather the children into a circle as they hold their sheep. You hold a sheep, too, as you invite the children to comfort the sheep they are holding and tell the sheep that Jesus loves all the sheep and all the children.

**Closing Prayer.** Thank you, Jesus, for letting us know that we are your sheep and you love us. Amen.

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**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year B – Fourth Sunday of Easter**  
**Lesson Plans for Older Children**

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**Background:** Easter - the unearned gift of grace. The reflective season of “going in” that Lent provided (no matter what disciplines we undertook, nor even how well we attended to them) explodes on Easter. Of course, we cannot “figure it out.” How comforting, then, to have these scriptures, showing first how the disciples struggled to grasp what had happened and then stories of Jesus before the crucifixion, which are written in the light of the Resurrection.

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For the rest of the Easter Season, we have stories Jesus shared before the crucifixion. Now, in the light of the resurrection, they take on a powerful new value. Jesus is portrayed as the Good Shepherd. Even though sheep are not part of our lives like sheep were for the people who first heard these stories, we can resonate to the concept of a shepherd who knows his own and whose own know him. We belong to this shepherd. Yet, if, as Jesus tells us, he has other sheep that are not of this fold that he must bring also, we have work to do – work given to us by the Good Shepherd.

**Theme: The Good Shepherd**

**Before Class:** You will need copies of the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) and Bibles or copies of the scripture. Choose the translation of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm you prefer (p. 613, or p. 476 for the older translation).

**Beginning:** Tell the children that Jesus looked for examples that his followers would easily recognize. And so Jesus often told stories about sheep. Our job when we read stories Jesus told is to see what the stories say to us in our lives.

**Opening Prayer:** Ask the children to find the translation of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm in the BCP that you prefer to use today. Invite them to read it along with you as your opening prayer.

**The Story:** Ask the children to find John 10:11 in their Bibles. Invite someone to read or go around the circle, having each child read a sentence.

**Reflection Questions:**

- What is a hired hand? (Someone paid to do a job and with no say as to how it is done.)
- What is the difference Jesus makes between the Good Shepherd and the hired hand? (When things get too hard, the hired hand will not stick around.)

- Jesus says he knows his “own” and his “own” know him. (Sheep recognize the voice of the person who takes care of them. Do any of you have a dog that will come when you call the dog? Sheep are like that.)
- Who are some of the people we listen to and who take care of us?
- Who are some of the people who listen to us and who we take care of?

**Activity:** Create a poster of a silhouette of Jesus with sheep. Label each sheep with the name of someone Jesus takes care of. Have the children add as many sheep as they need, or create additional posters.

**Getting Closure:** If time permits invite the children to offer suggestions for how we can help Jesus bring those other sheep into our circle. Who might those other “sheep” be?

**Closing Prayer:** Continuing with the prayers found in the *Book of Common Prayer* (p. 383), today we look at “the welfare of the world.” Invite the children to consider what things would be included (e.g., the natural world, the places animals and birds live; the social world, people with insufficient food, no jobs, or victims of wars and natural disasters). Develop a prayer with the children and say it together.

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### **John 10:11-18**

<sup>11</sup>“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup>The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. <sup>13</sup>The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. <sup>14</sup>I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, <sup>15</sup>just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup>I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. <sup>17</sup>For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. <sup>18</sup>No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

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**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year B – Fourth Sunday of Easter**  
**Lesson Plans for Adults**

**Scripture: John 10:11-18**

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**Theme: The Good Shepherd**

**Before:** You will need copies of the scripture or copies of the bible and the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP). You may choose to open your class with prayer by inviting the group to read with you the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. Select the translation you think will resonate best: BCP, p. 613, or the more traditional translation BCP, p. 476.

**Beginning:** Jesus frequently uses sheep as his illustration – an image that worked well for his culture. Our task is to see how it speaks to us today.

**Opening Prayer:** Invite the class to read the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm from the BCP. At the close of the reading, say “Amen.” Allow a moment of silence and then ask if anyone has a response to share.

**The Scripture:** Before reading today’s passage, invite the class to notice what the illustrations said to the people listening to Jesus – and what they may be saying to us as we listen today.

**Reflection Questions:**

- What stood out for you in today’s reading?
- What are the “wolves” in our lives that may “snatch and scatter” us? (If examples do not come quickly, you could offer: skewed priorities, inappropriate activities, etc.)

- To what extent are we confident that Jesus knows us and that we know Jesus? (What signs of each do we see in our lives?)
- Who might be the “other sheep” that Jesus must bring? What might be our responsibility in helping Jesus bring them in?
- Verses 17 and 18 change the tone. How might the institutional leaders have heard what he was saying? (As yet another sign that Jesus was a threat to their ways.)
- In hindsight, what do we understand Jesus to be revealing? (The Resurrection and the deep relationship between Jesus and the Father.)

**Getting Closure:** Much in our lives may appear to be spinning out of control. If during our time together today, we have shared concerns, perhaps we could also commit to praying for each other so we are being fellow sheep for each other – following the Good Shepherd.

**Closing Prayer:** Pray, specifically, for concerns that came up in the discussion. Or close simply by reading, together, again, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm.

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