

A Sermon for Easter IV– Yr.B  
St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Greenville – May 3, 2009  
Text: John 10:11-18

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*In gratitude I acknowledge the reflections of The Rev. Mary H. Ogus*

'I know my own and my own know me.' We come together this morning as an Easter people, called by Jesus, to **call** his own, **each** by name, often quietly, **into his** abiding love. Through the voices personal and detailed, of those who gather to be his Church, he calls his own to him. Many in the world listen for that voice, sometimes discovering their own true names for the first time.

This week I will celebrate 16 years as a priest in the Episcopal Church. It seems unreal to me that so much time has passed since that bright Saturday inside the sanctuary of what is now known as 'the chapel' at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church. A church in this town, born thru prayerful listening by a group of people from, St. Paul's, this parish. It is not uncommon for us to hear those ordained or seeking ordination speak of a 'call' to ministry.

It is a term familiar to many of us who labor in this world of church; we learn to listen together for the call. Whether called to be a priest, deacon, senior warden, educator or someone newly confirmed – we all have opportunities to be a part of the Easter people drawn together by God's love.

I was ordained on the feast day of Dame Julian of Norwich. She was a woman who **heard her true name** as she sought God through her pain and illness. During wars and plagues she comforted and counseled many who passed by her window in the church of Norwich, England. It is thought she was one of the first women whose writings were published in the medieval ages. Her reflections gave words to a God of nurture. They speak of a God who mothers – a God who gave birth and form to all of creation.

In today's Gospel – we hear very particular words concerning the care given by the great shepherd to those who faithfully listen for his voice. 'I know my own and my own know me.'

Thankfully during my discernment for ordination, others listened with me. Thankfully, because to this day, I still wonder about hearing God's voice. What does the voice of God sound like? Do each of us to hear that voice in the same way? Do each of us hear that voice in the same way?

I think we know the answer to this question. We hear the voice and feel the spirit of God in very different ways. Because of this truth, we know the importance of sharing what we hear together as a community – prayerfully, with great care and patience.

For those of you who love radio, NPR fan that I am, you may be familiar with a great storyteller named, Garrison Keillor. In one of his stories about that wonderful make-believe place called 'Lake Wobegone', he talks about the **summer song** that could be heard throughout the neighborhood as children were called home for dinner or bed. You know that song we all heard as children, the song of our names that only our mothers could sing standing on the front porch – 'Carolyn, Allison, Phillip'. Those were our songs in the Craig family, when we heard them we knew it was time to turn toward home. I am sure some of you may remember your own. In my imagination, God's call to us is like those 'songs' – as limitless and diverse as music allows.

So how do we, the faithful community of St. Paul's hear the sound of our call? How do we listen for that voice? It is in this place thru personal and corporate prayer; we listen for God's voice. It is in this place thru the reading of scripture, worship and the sacraments; we listen for God's voice. It is in this place thru the sharing our lives with one another and responding to the needs of others placed before us, we listen for God's voice.

Throughout these ways of listening a common thread is found. God's voice comes to us most often in the community of faith and it is in that community that we have the sense of being known.

### I KNOW MY OWN AND MY OWN KNOW ME

Intimacy lies at the heart of the Christian gospel. Intimacy with God. Intimacy with other believers and intimacy with oneself. The community of the Resurrection, especially as illustrated this morning, bases its life on the sacred intimacy it shares with the Good Shepherd who gave his life for all.

So– can our faith communities be the safe places where we can be known? Can they be the places where we are accepted and nurtured when we have shared our grief and our joys, our fears and our dreams?

We're talking about a place as familiar as our own front porch. It is that place of transition – from home to the world and back home again. From our 'porch's' edge we must look out into our streets, into our communities. That view from front porch of St. Paul's is where we learn most about God's call.

This is the challenge before us – it is difficult to listen together if we are not willing to know one another and be known. In the act of listening we learn how we are to *follow the Great Shepherd*.

As today's collect reminds us – God calls us each by name. We hear the music of that call in worship and in work, with our hands and with our ears; we hear it in our trials and in our dreams, surrounded by community and alone on our knees. In all of our diversity, may we listen closely to one another and together learn to follow God's call in faith. AMEN.