

Shepherding God

So often we romanticise and domesticate the image of a Shepherd so it becomes a kind of benign, vaguely comforting image which lacks any grit. This is an attempt to explore the image of God as shepherd and to explain and reclaim it for those of us who have very little experience of farming or rural life.

What do we mean when we say God is like a shepherd?

A shepherd is rough and rugged,
calloused from the wind and rain
but has a heart as gentle as the spring flowers.

What do we mean when we say God is like a shepherd?

A shepherd is practically dressed and plain spoken
Smells of the hillside mud and the lanolin oil of a fleece
Down to earth, messy, incarnate.

What do we mean when we say God is like a shepherd?

A loner striding out, comfortable with their own thoughts
Intimately knowing every rock and every valley
Yet longing for the company of others in the pub on their return.

What do we mean when we say God is like a shepherd?

A teller of stories and singer to the wind
A face etched with painful memories and laughter lines
Wisdom ingrained in hands that tend and heal.

What do we mean when we say God is like a shepherd?

A shepherd has a job to do and gruffly protects the sheep
Looking out for dangers of terrain, wild animals and disease
Yet gently acts as midwife and nurse to the lambing of spring.

What do we mean when we say God is like a shepherd?

Who endlessly counts the sheep and knows each one
And when one is lost, searches and searches and searches again
Returning with the sheep safely carried in strong arms stretched wide.

Shepherding God

We are sorry when we go wandering off in our own direction

We are sorry when we take you for granted and do not stop to say thank you.

We are sorry when we think only of ourselves and not of others

Shepherding God

Forgive us and find us and hold us safe in your embrace

Thank you that you care for and know each one of us

And teach us your ways so we may be shepherds to those around us.

© Clare McBeath and Tim Presswood, 2009

