Good morning children.

I hope you are all well and that you have been enjoying the lovely weather that we have been having recently and that you have been able to get outside for your daily exercise with your family. Whether it has been a walk, a bike ride or maybe some of you have been running.

What have you noticed while you have been outside?

I have noticed that all the trees are now getting their leaves and the birds are very busy singing and flying from branch to branch. There is one bird that sits right at the top of a tree in my garden singing. They are also busy collecting sticks and other nesting materials for building their nests and they are busy looking for food too as soon they will have lots of babies to feed. There is a little robin that comes down to the ground where I have been digging looking for insects and worms in the soil that I have just turned over.

If you have been able to walk near the fields, you will probably have noticed the sheep with their baby lambs. Have you listened to the noises that they make?

The lambs and their mothers call to each other so that they know where they are. A sheep looks out for her lamb to make sure that it is safe.

The Bible story this morning is also about sheep.

Do you know what a person is called who looks after sheep? Yes that's right they are called a shepherd.

Shepherds are also busy at this time of year making sure that their sheep and their lambs are kept safe.

This morning's Bible story tells us about Jesus as the Good Shepherd.

If you lived at the time of Jesus 2000 years ago and you were a shepherd, you had to be very brave and strong. The shepherd had to protect his sheep from wild animals like wolves and hyenas. You would have had a big club to frighten the wild animals away and a sling with which you would have thrown stones to frighten them off. It was even more dangerous when there were robbers about. Sometimes the shepherd had to risk his life for his sheep.

Because most robbers and wild animals waited until it was dark, the shepherd often put his sheep in a sheepfold to keep them safe.

A sheepfold was usually a circular wall of stones with enough room on the inside for all of the sheep. On the top of the stones the shepherd would put prickly branches to stop anyone climbing in. All the sheep went through the opening in the circle. There was no proper gate to lock but the shepherd sat or stood in the opening and was ready to chase off anything that would harm his sheep. The shepherd was the gate and only when he moved could the sheep get out or someone get in.

Jesus tells us that he is the Good Shepherd, he is the gate that gives us access to God. Jesus cares for us, each one of us. He cares for you and for me. He loves us and he knows our names. We are like his sheep. He calls to us and asks us to follow him. Jesus loves us and wants to protect us and keep us safe.

What do you love and care for? Have you got a pet? A dog, a cat, a rabbit Or have you been sowing seeds or planting things in the garden? Our mums and dads care for us, they look after us and keep us safe.

Jesus also wants to protect us and keep us safe.