

## **Feeding the Sheep**

St. James of Jerusalem Episcopal church gave new meaning to the church's mission statement of "Feed My Sheep" during its recent Holy Week. The church, which annually donates thousands of pounds of fresh produce to local food distribution centers, hosted over 200 sheep from Hanski Family Farms, Paradise, Ca , to graze open land and control weeds.

The beautiful pastoral scene offered a relaxing, soul-restoring moment while also breathing life into the church's theme from the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm of "lying down in green pastures restoring our souls." Under the guidance of the Hanski Family Farms pros and herding dog Scrappy, the sheep worked the fields section-by-section naturally reducing the grass and weeds. During the sheep's residency at the church, three lambs were born. Observing the babies and their mothers was perfect for the Christian Church's most Holy week.

Feeding the sheep and maintaining the property is part of the Episcopal Church's efforts to achieve carbon zero goals. It is an essential part of the church's agrarian ministries. The church, located on South George Washington Blvd., has approximately three acres of unused property that requires weed control to support fire protection and its community garden.

The church considered the options of chemically killing all vegetation, mowing the tall weeds and releasing fossil fuel emissions, or having sheep eat the weeds to stimulate new growth to pull carbon dioxide from the air and return it to the soil. The church decided to use the sheep which did a terrific job both reducing the weeds, and fertilizing and breaking-up the soil in their garden space.

St James' collaboration with Hanski Family Farms is expected to increase the garden's productivity. The harvest is shared with several local food distribution centers including Mother Hubbard's Cupboard at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, the Christian Assistance Network, and the Yuba City Salvation Army.

For more information concerning weed control using sheep, contact Hanski Family Farms at 530-990-1237 and ask for Swede Hanski or his Wife Stefanie. For more information about St. James ' Feed The Sheep programs, contact the church at [stjames@succeed.net](mailto:stjames@succeed.net) or leave a message at 530-673-1790.