

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY

2 October 2022

The 17th Sunday after Pentecost

HYMNS: 499 4 395 201

INTROIT:

My soul waits silently for God alone. My salvation comes from Him.

He alone is my Rock and my Salvation. He is my Stronghold. I shall not stagger greatly.

How long will you people attack a person? How long will all of you be intent on murdering him, as though he were a leaning wall or a tottering stone fence?

People are planning only to force him down from his high position. They take delight in lying. They are blessing with their mouths but inwardly they are cursing.

Wait quietly for God alone, my soul! For my hope comes from Him.

He alone is my Rock and my Salvation, my High Refuge. I shall not stagger.

My salvation and my glory rest on God, my strong Rock, and my refuge is in God.

Trust Him at all times, you people! Pour out your hearts in His presence! God is our Refuge.

Surely the descendants of Adam are only breath. The sons of man are an illusion. When they go up on a pair of scales, they are altogether lighter than breath.

Do not trust in extortion or put false hope in robbery! If riches increase, do not set your hearts on them!

God has spoken once. I have heard this twice, that power belongs to God, and that mercy belongs to You, O Lord. For You repay a person according to what he has done.

Psalm 62

COLLECT: O God, our refuge and strength, the author of all godliness, by Your grace hear the prayers of Your Church. Grant that those things that we ask for in faith we may receive through Your bountiful mercy; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

READINGS:

Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4 The righteous will live by his faith.

2 Timothy 1:1-14 Your faith is sincere.

Luke 17:5-10 Jesus' teaching about faith and duty.

Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4

¹ This is the pronouncement that the prophet Habakkuk saw in a vision.

² How long, LORD, shall I keep calling for help when You do not listen? I keep crying out to You, 'There is violence!' but You will not save. ³ Why do You make me look at wrongdoing? Why do You make me stare at trouble? Destruction and violence are in front of me. There is disputing, and quarrelling arises. ⁴ That is why the Law is paralysed and justice has no successful result. For wicked people surround righteous people. That is why, when justice is issued, it is distorted.

^{2:1} Let me stand in position at my guard post! Let me take my stand on the watchtower! Let me watch to see what He will say to me and what I shall reply about my complaint!

² Then the LORD answered me: "Write down the revelation! Inscribe it distinctly on tablets, that whoever reads it may move fluently! ³ For the vision is waiting for its appointed time. It longs for the end and will not tell a lie. If it delays, wait for it! For it will certainly come! It will not be late. ⁴ Look! His soul is puffed up. It is not upright inside him. But the righteous person will live by his faith."

2 Timothy 1:1-14

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, ² to Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus, our Lord!

³ I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, when I constantly remember you in my prayers, day and night. ⁴ As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. ⁵ I recall the genuine faith that is in you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and, I am convinced, now dwells in you also. ⁶ For this reason I remind you to rekindle the charismatic gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷ For God has not given us a timid spirit but a spirit of power, love and moderation. ⁸ So, do not be ashamed to bear witness about our Lord and do not be ashamed of me, His prisoner, but join me in suffering evil for the benefit of the Good News, by the power of God! ⁹ He has saved us and has called us with a holy calling, not because of what we have done but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began, ¹⁰ but has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus. He has broken the power of death and through the Good News has brought life and immortality into the light. ¹¹ Of this Good News I have also been appointed a preacher, an apostle and a teacher. ¹² This is also why I am suffering these things. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed. For I know whom I have believed and am convinced that He can guard what has been entrusted to me until that day. ¹³ Keep as a pattern of sound Words what you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus! ¹⁴ Guard the good thing that has been entrusted to you through the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us!

Luke 17:1-10

¹ Jesus told His disciples, “It is impossible that things that cause people to stumble will not come, but how terrible for the person through whom they do come! ² It would be better for him if a large millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble.

³ “Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and, if he repents, forgive him! ⁴ If he sins against you seven times in a day and comes back to you seven times and says, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him!”

⁵ Then the apostles asked the Lord, “Increase our faith!”

⁶ The Lord said, “If you have faith like a mustard seed, you would tell this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea!’ and it would obey you.

⁷ “Which of you who has a slave ploughing or looking after sheep will tell him, when he comes in from the field, ‘Come here at once and sit down to eat!’? ⁸ Rather, will he not tell him, ‘Get dinner ready for me! Tuck your clothes up and wait on me while I eat and drink! After that you may eat and drink?’ ⁹ He does not thank the slave for doing what he has been ordered to do, does he? ¹⁰ When you have done everything you have been ordered to do, you also should say, ‘We are worthless slaves. We have only done what our duty was to do.’”

FAITH FOR LIVING IN COMMUNITY**Sermon for the 17th Sunday after Pentecost, 2022****Luke 17:1-10**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel from before, Luke 17:1-10: ¹ **Jesus told His disciples, “It is impossible that things that cause people to stumble will not come, but how terrible for the person through whom they do come! ² It would be better for him if a large millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble.**

³ **“Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and, if he repents, forgive him! ⁴ If he sins against you seven times in a day and comes back to you seven times and says, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him!”**

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⁶ The Lord said, “If you have faith like a mustard seed, you would tell this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea!’ and it would obey you.

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Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Looking at the words of our text today, it would seem that we have lots of words of wisdom from Jesus that are strung together rather loosely. First, Jesus says something about how terrible it is for the one who causes another to sin. Then there’s something about forgiving your brother. Then there’s a request about increasing our faith and Jesus’ response about faith like a mustard seed. Finally, there’s something about unworthy slaves who only do their duty.

All this could sound like Jesus is giving general teachings pieced together without rhyme or reason, but if we look at this text more closely, we shall see a more *logical reason* for Jesus’ words that ties them all together. Looking closely, Jesus gives us wise words on what living together as a church community really means, and faith for living in such a community.

Faith for living in community. That’s what we need to have to live in the way that Jesus describes, for it is a life in community that Jesus calls His disciples to. This begins to become apparent when we hear the first couple of verses here. Jesus says, **“It is impossible that things that cause people to stumble will not come, but how terrible for the person through whom they do come! ² It would be better for him if a large millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble.”**

Jesus is telling us here to be aware of how our own lives and conduct may have a negative influence on others in the Christian community. We must be careful that we do not lead others astray by what we say and how we live - be careful that we are not causing others to stumble and fall, even to fall away from the Christian faith. This is saying that we are part of a community, and our words and actions might

have consequences in the lives of others. This can be for the good, or it can be for the bad, but in either case, we are part of a community and are called to be attentive to our role in it, and what impact we do have on others.

There is a stern warning here about causing people to stumble, that is, to fall into sin. Jesus says, “**how terrible for the person through whom they do come!**” The word here that’s translated as “**cause people to stumble**” is the Greek word “*skandala*.” It’s where we get our word “scandal.” How terrible for the person through whom these scandals come! Now, the meaning of this word “*skandala*” is not just public scandals that make the newspapers and that sort of thing - although it could include that. But the word here could be anything that causes someone else - particularly a weaker or less mature Christian - to stumble and fall in their Christian faith. Jesus is concerned that we do not do anything that would cause another Christian to stumble and fall and perhaps even *lose their faith*. Our words, our actions, our examples - these can and do have an influence on others. Christ would have us be mindful of that fact because He has placed His disciples in the community of His church.

This life in community comes through in the next thing that Jesus says: “**Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and, if he repents, forgive him! ⁴ If he sins against you seven times in a day and comes back to you seven times and says, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him!**” Here is the need for forgiveness, mutual forgiveness, if we live together in Christian community. You see, the closer you live in relationship with other people, the more occasions will arise when we hurt one another and sin against one another, and so, there will be more opportunities for us to forgive the brother who sins.

Do you see how Jesus wants us to be *attentive* to our life in community, that this is to be a high priority for us His disciples, including how we care for one another spiritually? We just won’t make it as a family, as a church, *unless we learn how to forgive one another*. Everything breaks down where there is no forgiveness. The alternative is to withdraw and keep to ourselves, keep our distance, and not let other people get too close. But that is no answer. No, Christ has placed us in His community called the church, and we are to share our life together in community. This is abundantly clear in our text.

Living in community. In our society, we may not think too much about that when we think about church. Our culture is not attuned to think that way, and even church members may think about their membership just in terms of “me,” the individual: What am “I” getting out of church? It’s like we’re a bunch of individuals who

happen to show up at the same place occasionally on Sunday mornings, where we come and sit in our pew for an hour or so, and then we leave without having much interaction with those other people. But that is not the biblical picture of the church. No, we are a family. We are meant to live in community, caring for one another and building one another up in the faith.

So how is it going for you with your life of community, with your life of forgiveness? Have other people hurt you? Have you hurt other people? Do you find it hard to forgive and seek reconciliation? Do you take the initiative to restore a good relationship, or do you just sit back and stew in your juices? When you see a brother or sister in Christ going off track, do you just ignore it and block it out of your mind? Or do you do the risky thing and try to help that person to come to repentance? You see, our failure to pursue forgiveness and reconciliation and repentance and restoration leads to bitterness, broken relationships, and conflicts in our family and in the church - and if you just stay within yourself and your own resources that you can muster up on your own, *that will always be the case.*

That's what the disciples are sensing as they hear Jesus giving them these instructions. They can sense that this is a tall order, this calling to live in community: to be attentive that their words and deeds do not mislead a brother or sister and cause them to fall; that when a brother does sin, they do what they can to lead him to repentance and then forgive him and keep on forgiving him. The apostles realised that this life in Christian community goes beyond what they can accomplish on their own, and so the apostles asked Jesus: **"Increase our faith!"**

Maybe that's your prayer, too, when you realise you have a hard time living as a Christian in community. *"Increase my faith, Lord! I need help!"* Yes, and so do I. I have hurt others. Others have hurt me, and I am too often reluctant or shy or lazy or afraid when it comes to taking the initiative to restore what is broken. I feel helpless when what I do try doesn't work. *"Increase my faith, Lord! I need help!"*

But listen to what Jesus says in response to this plea: **"If you have faith like a mustard seed, you would tell this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea!' and it would obey you."** The point being, even the tiniest amount of faith, if it is true faith in God and in Christ - even faith the size of a tiny mustard seed is able to accomplish amazing things that otherwise would be impossible. Things like forgiving a brother or sister in Christ and caring for our fellow Christians, and living in community as the church. A mustard seed is a very small seed, just about the smallest seed the people of that culture would use, and

yet, that little mustard seed, when it grows and blooms, produces a pretty sizable result. So it is with faith in Christ. It may seem small, *but it can do mighty things*.

And this is the faith that we have! We do have faith in Christ! So life together in the church is not beyond the reach of any of us. We all have the capacity to love as the new person we are in Christ. Here's how it goes: God loves and forgives us because of what Christ has done for us. God has gifted us with the Holy Spirit in baptism, making us God's children, giving us the gift of faith, and giving us new power to love and forgive others. The Holy Spirit calls us into community; He has brought us into the church. We do have faith, and that includes faith for living in community.

To be sure, God would have our faith be strengthened and nourished, and that is *why* we come to church every week. This is where community begins and always returns - to the Divine Service. Here, Jesus Christ rules through His means of grace, the public exercise of which He has committed to the office of the ministry in the congregation. Just as little as the body may be without a head, so the local church has its head in Christ, who functions through the public administration of the Word and Sacraments. But our life as church then continues as a Monday-through-Saturday thing, too. Love and care and forgiveness are ongoing.

“If you have faith like a mustard seed, you would tell this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea!’ and it would obey you.” To have a deeply rooted mulberry tree uproot itself and throw itself into the sea - well, as impossible as that seems, if God really wanted you to do that, you have the faith to make it happen. Because faith isn't about you, it's about *God*, and with God, *all things are possible*.¹ Now last I checked, I couldn't find a commandment for us to throw mulberry trees into the sea, but God is interested in us loving and caring for one another. So, when God calls us to live in community and forgive our brother his sins, He will enable us to do it. If He can give us the faith to toss a mulberry tree into the sea, He can equip each one of us to love and forgive people.

After all, just look at what God has already done: He has tossed our sins into the depths of the sea! That's what the Bible says. In the last verses of the prophet Micah, it says: *“Who is a God like You? He forgives wrongdoing and passes over the transgression of the remnant of His inheritance. He has not retained His anger for ever, because He delights in mercy.”*¹⁹ *He will have compassion on us again. He will*

¹ Matthew 19:26

overcome our wrongdoings. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” (7:18-19).

Did you hear that? The Lord casts all our sins into the depths of the sea, never to be dredged up again! What wonderful, good news this is! Our consciences are clear. The slate has been wiped clean. All our sins have been cast into the depths of the sea, drowned in the waters of Holy Baptism. This is what the death of Christ our Saviour has accomplished, something we could never do. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has won the forgiveness of our sins and the sins of the whole world. “*Father, forgive them,*” He prays for us. Jesus also teaches us to pray, “*Father, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.*” The cross of Christ is all about forgiveness and reconciliation, and restoration. The Christian church is all about forgiveness and reconciliation, and restoration. God has reconciled us sinners back to Himself. He raises us from the deadness of sin and unforgiveness and ‘isolatedness’ by raising us up with Christ in Holy Baptism and placing us in His family, the church. This is where we have brothers and sisters all around us to put into practice the love and forgiveness and care we have learned from God. This is our calling, and the faith God gives us enables us to do it.

Finally, one more thing to complete the story today. It’s this last saying of Jesus about the “**worthless slaves**” who “**have only done what our duty was to do.**” That’s us. We don’t merit any special favours from God for passing on the forgiveness God has first extended to us and also empowered us to do - that’s just normal duty in the Christian church. We’re simply doing what we’ve been commanded to do. But the amazing thing is, God is so gracious that He does invite us unworthy servants to come and recline at table, as His special guests. Our Lord invites us to His table, where we receive the very body and blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and this feast points us ahead to the eternal, heavenly feast to come, the wedding feast of Christ in His kingdom, which has no end.

Dear friends, the faith God gives us is faith for living in community, but it is also faith that will have its outcome in the resurrection at the Last Day and the family of God in community made perfect, no longer afflicted with sin, community perfected in peace and joy and everlasting fellowship. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we praise You for Your wisdom, power, and holiness. But, above all, we worship You for Your goodness and forgiving love to all who call on You. You have changed us from enemies into friends through the sufferings and death of Your Son, who became a human being for our sakes. We are Your children, and come to You confidently in His name with our prayers and requests.

Give us an awareness of Your majesty and power, and that holy fear of You that is the basis of all true wisdom. Continue to supply our daily needs, giving us life and breath, health and contentment, and protection from every kind of danger to body and soul.

Especially look with mercy on our moral and spiritual weakness. By Your Holy Spirit free us from the evil from which we cannot free ourselves, and give us new life through faith in Jesus Christ. May Jesus speak His word of forgiveness to us, and become the ruler of our consciences, the focus of our wills, the centre of our motives, and the Lord of our lives. Let Christ's love for us fill Your Church. Enable all Your people to know more of the vastness of that love, although it can never be fully known. In its power may they love one another in the family of faith, show loving sympathy to all in need, and offer forgiveness to all their enemies. Fill us with such love for each other that we may avoid placing any obstacle that would cause a brother to sin against his over-scrupulous conscience.

Show the nations of the earth the fullness of Your goodness and grace, that they may turn to You, the only true God, and find salvation in Your Son Jesus Christ. Lord, You have been gracious to our land. Continue to bless us, that more and more may turn from evil, come to faith, and be made rich by Your gifts.

We earnestly pray for Your favour and blessing on our land, on His Majesty the King, the Governor-General and Prime Minister, the Governor and Premier of our State, our parliaments and courts, and all others in public service. Fill them all with Your light and truth so that they may carry out Your will and serve for the true good of all. Bless all whose words and actions exert a good influence in our community so that peace and happiness, truth and justice, piety and true reverence of God may flourish and endure.

We pray also for a special measure of Your blessing on those who sorrow or mourn, those who suffer pain or sickness, and those who face temptation or danger. Because we ourselves deserve Your chastening and discipline, help us to receive in patience and humility whatever You send in our lives, knowing that You are lovingly preparing us for eternal fellowship with You.

O Lord, You are able to do so much more than we can ever ask for or even think of. Hear these prayers, and provide all our other needs, in the name of our blessed Redeemer and Lord Jesus Christ, who, together with You and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

If You Watched the Queen's Funeral, Try Going to Church for Yourself²

Apparently 4.1 billion people watched funeral of Queen Elizabeth II on television, making it the most-watched broadcast of all-time. 4.1 billion people. That's pretty interesting. As one Facebook poster said, "That...63% of the world's population were glued not to a runway or an awards show or a lip-syncing boy band being obliterated by light effects, but to Anglican chant, the strains of Howells, Weir, Parry, and Harris; not to words like "you hoes be trippin'," but to "My soul, there is a country" and "The day thou gavest" and the Kontakion. I'm not sure it means anything for the era to come, and there was surely a celebrity draw here, but I must say I'm pleasantly surprised. I hope something sticks!"

I hope so, too. The world could use more of it. So could the church.

I'm sure a good percentage of those billions watched out of little more than curiosity, others out of a more general Anglophilic tendency that has little to do specifically with an interest in the church.

But I noticed more than a few on social media talking about the elegance of the liturgy, the sublime music, and the beauty in the solemnity of the occasion.

If that's you, try going to church this weekend.

I don't mean just any church.

Go to one of those liturgical churches. They aren't as common as they used to be, but they're still around. While the atmosphere of Westminster Abbey is hard to replicate, you might be surprised how close churches within driving distance of you can come.

You may have to do some research. Some churches in the Anglican Communion and other liturgical traditions don't put much care into their worship these days. You might find some dude with a six-string Ovation and an untucked shirt at some of them, playing the Jesusy Hot 100 favourites just like at that pop-worshipping Baptist church down the street. They've been told, just like the rest of us, that he's the key to reaching young professionals and families with kids. He isn't, but you can understand why they're trying.

At others, you might find that liturgical dance and silly modern pseudo-liturgies have taken the place of the timeless words you heard at the Queen's funeral. Keep on looking.

² An article that appeared at www.patheos.com.

These days, many others have replaced the Gospel of Christ with a works-based “do better” substitute and lots of talk about identity politics. They can’t really tell you what is distinctive about Christianity, but hey, all are welcome.

But other churches exist. They used to be the norm. They’re a little harder to find now. But they exist. These churches are committed to preaching the gospel, and they do it through more than a 45-minute self-help sermon and a pop-concert with vaguely spiritual lyrics. They employ fantastic musicians who know how to serve the liturgy with their craft. See, the Queen’s funeral was not a service designed for a monarch, but to reflect the beauty of a holy God. The “otherness” you might have felt watching it is inherent and intentional in its centuries-old design.

Liturgical worship rejects the pervasive idea that casual demeanour and extemporaneous speech are more sincere and authentic. Christians throughout history have known better. As my friend Les Lamkin once wrote, such worship is nothing but “worship of our psychological selves. We have sacrificed the great Creeds and Confessions of the church for the sake of ‘meeting the needs’ of the congregants. We have sacrificed depth and beauty to the gods of relevance and sensuality.”

So, if you were intrigued by worship designed to reflect the beauty of holiness, I’d encourage you to go look for it in your own area. Look for a church that is intentionally NOT trendy, modern or contemporary. Go look for the “otherness,” a place where there is no attempt to domesticate the transcendence of God into cultural relevance.

Let me know what you find.

A tentative plan has been set for a concert to be held at Bethlehem Toowoomba (for more info on the concert, see announcement below). The following is the program:

Sunday, 20 November.

9.30am AELC HC service at Bethlehem Toowoomba.

Shared lunch and fellowship after service

12.30pm Concert Cup of tea after the concert

Renovation work has commenced on the church hall in Toowoomba. Once work is completed (which should be in a couple months, depending on weather etc), Bethlehem Toowoomba would like to hold a concert, in thanks to all who have supported the project. Therefore, they are looking for items. If you as an individual, or even as a group, would like to perform (skits, jokes, musical items, singing, anything!!), please contact Barry Zischke on 0427 600073, or bjzisc@gmail.com.

Welcome to all worshipping with us today!

Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.

Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaalc@gmail.com.

Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

COMING SERVICES

**PLEASE ALWAYS CHECK YOUR BULLETINS FOR ANY UNEXPECTED CHANGES –
THEY CAN HAPPEN!!!**

9 October 18 Pentecost	16 October 19 Pentecost	23 October 20 Pentecost
8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am LOWOOD HC	8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am MARBURG LR	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC Harvest 9.00am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC Harvest 9.00am LOWOOD LR
Sunday, 9 October		
READINGS: Ruth 1:1-19a;	2 Timothy 2:1-13;	Luke 17:11-19
HYMNS: 172 241 159 (847 789) 451		
Sunday, 16 October		
READINGS: Genesis 32:22-30;	2 Timothy 3:14-4:5;	Luke 18:1-8
HYMNS: 422 136 425 (308 842) 405		

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wednesday, 5 October, 10.00am. Women's Guild at Ian & Julie Muller's home, 50 Woolshed Creek Road, Summerholm. Opening devotion: Margaret. Choose a Bible Verse from Exodus chapters 29-32. Item of interest: A board game.

Please take home with you today the latest copy of the Parish Newsletter.

OCTOBER BIBLE STUDIES:

Sunday the 2nd, after service at Toowoomba.

Friday the 21st, 7.30pm at Greenwood.

Thursday the 27th, 10.00am at Lowood.

Friday the 28th, 7.30pm at Oakey. (Oakey/Aubigny combined)

TOOWOOMBA HALL PROGRESS:

As work continues on the hall renovation at Bethlehem Toowoomba, a couple unexpected costs have arisen (as can be expected). The hall needed rewiring and termite damage has been exposed. The cost to remedy these issues have added roughly another \$13,000 to the final cost, which will be around \$113,000. So far, \$100,000 has been raised, leaving a shortfall. If anyone would like to help with these costs, please consider making a donation, or a loan to Bethlehem. Contact the chairman, Barry Zischke on 0427 600 073.