

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

14 January Harvest Thanksgiving

HYMNS: 562 437 563 169 842 890

INTROIT: Psalm 65

You receive praise in silence in Zion, O God, and vows to You will be fulfilled.
O You who hear prayer, to You all human beings will come.

Iniquitous things have been prevailing over me. You Yourself will provide atonement for our rebellious actions.

Blessed is the person whom You choose and whom You bring near, that he may dwell in Your courts! We shall be satisfied with the good things of Your house, the holiness of Your Temple.

You answer us in righteousness with awesome deeds, O our saving God, the Confidence of all the ends of the earth and of the most distant sea.

He is the One who sets the mountains in place by His strength, the One who puts on strength like a waistcloth.

He is the One who calms the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves and the turmoil of the peoples.

Those who live at the ends of the earth have been in awe of Your miraculous signs. You make the places where morning dawns and the places where evening fades shout for joy.

You have taken care of the land and have caused it to overflow. You have enriched it abundantly. The stream of God is filled with water. You are providing their grain. For that is how You have prepared it.

You have given its furrows their fill of drink and levelled off the edges of its furrows. You soften it with gentle rain and bless its growth.

You have crowned the year of Your goodness, and Your wheel-tracks drip with fat.

The pastures in the desert overflow. The hills are robed with joy.

The meadows are clothed with flocks, and the valleys are covered with grain.

They are shouting for joy. Indeed, they are singing.

Welcome to all worshipping with us!

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.

COLLECT: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new to us every morning, and, although we have in no way deserved Your goodness, You have abundantly provided for all our wants of body and soul. Give us, we pray, Your Holy Spirit, so that we may genuinely recognise Your merciful goodness toward us, so that we may give thanks for all Your benefits, and so that we may serve You in willing obedience, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

READINGS: Deuteronomy 26:1-11 Firstfruits and Tithes
2 Corinthians 9:6-15 Sowing generously.
Luke 12:13-21 The Parable of the Rich Fool

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

¹ “When you enter the land that the LORD, your God, is giving you as an inheritance and you take possession of it and live in it, ² you shall take some of the first from all the produce of the ground, which you will harvest from your land, which the LORD, your God, is giving you! You shall put it in a basket and go to the place where the LORD, your God, will choose to make His name dwell! ³ You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and tell him, ‘I declare today to the LORD, your God, that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our forefathers to give us!’ ⁴ Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down in front of the altar of the LORD, your God! ⁵ You shall make this response before the LORD, your God: ‘My forefather was a wandering Aramean. He went down to Egypt with few people and lived as a foreigner there. There he became a great, powerful and numerous nation. ⁶ However, the Egyptians treated us harshly, oppressed us and imposed severe forced labour on us. ⁷ Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our forefathers, and the LORD heard our cry. He saw our misery, distress and oppression. ⁸ The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders. ⁹ He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰ So now, look! I have brought the first produce of the land, which You, O LORD, have given me.’ Then you shall set it down before the LORD, your God, and worship before the LORD, your God! ¹¹ Then you shall be glad about all the good things that the LORD, your God, has given to you and your family, together with the Levite and the foreigner who is living among you!

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

⁶ In addition, I say this: **The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.**

⁷ Each person should give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion! **For God loves a cheerful giver.**

⁸ God can make all grace abound toward you, that you may always have all that you need in every way and may abound in every good work, ⁹ as Scripture has said: **“He has distributed. He has given to the poor. His righteousness remains for ever.”**

¹⁰ He who provides **seed for the sower and bread for food** will supply and multiply your seed and will increase what your **righteousness produces.** ¹¹ You are being made rich in every way that you may be totally generous. This is producing thanksgiving to God through us. ¹² This work,

which you are doing in serving others, not only supplies the needs of the believers but is also overflowing through many expressions of thanks to God. ¹³ By this service, by which you prove yourselves, you are glorifying God for your subordinate confession of the Good News of Christ and for your generous contribution to them and to all people, ¹⁴ while they also long for you deeply and pray for you, because of the extreme kindness that God has shown you.

¹⁵ Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

Luke 12:13-21

¹³ Someone in the crowd asked Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me!”

¹⁴ Jesus asked him, “Man, who appointed Me to be a judge or an arbitrator over you?”

¹⁵ Then He told them, “Beware and be on your guard against all greed! For a person’s life does not consist in how plentiful his possessions are.”

¹⁶ Then Jesus told them a parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What am I to do? For I have no place to store my produce.’”

¹⁸ “Then he said, ‘This is what I shall do: I shall pull down my barns and build bigger ones and shall store my grain and all my other goods in them. ¹⁹ Then I shall say to myself, “Soul, you have many good things stored up for many years. Take life easy, eat, drink and enjoy yourself!”’”

²⁰ “However, God said to him, ‘You fool, this very night your life will be demanded of you. Then who will get the things that you have prepared?’”

²¹ Jesus said, “So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

MAN DOES NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE

Sermon for Harvest Thanksgiving, 2024

Deuteronomy 8:3

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 Deuteronomy 8:3: **Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.**

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

Dear friends in Christ,

Moses reminded the people of Israel that everything they had - and everything they were - was a free gift from God. God had made them a nation. Their forefather Jacob, a wandering Aramean, had almost become a “*perishing Aramean*” because he had to flee for his life from his brother Esau¹, elude his uncle Laban², and finally relocate to Egypt to escape the famine.³ Without the Lord’s blessing, Jacob would have never amounted to anything and would likely have died in that famine, and the Israelites would not be where they were today.

Now, God had given the people of Israel freedom from slavery in Egypt. He was giving them the Promised Land for their inheritance. God was giving them the fruit of the ground, an abundant harvest in a land flowing with milk and honey, which was a free gift from God to them.

So Moses commanded an offering of first fruits. The people were to take a portion of the best of their harvest and offer it to God – not to buy God’s favour or to grease His palms for the next go-around, but because God had already favoured them.

The purpose of these thank offerings was to keep the people of Israel focused on the truth that everything they had was a gift of God. This was because the temptations were all too obvious: they could see and handle the harvest, and it would be easy for them to neglect the truth of God’s goodness. There would be the temptation to doubt and say, “*All of this is mine because of what I have done. I don’t need God’s help because I’m perfectly capable of helping myself.*” There would be the temptation to pride, to say, “*The Lord may have gotten me started, but look what I’ve accomplished for myself since then!*” Perhaps they would be like that man in our Gospel today, who had to pull down bigger barns and build bigger ones saying,

¹ Genesis 27:41-45

² Genesis 31:17-30

³ Genesis 46:1-7

“Soul, you have many good things stored up for many years. Take life easy, eat, drink and enjoy yourself!” (Luke 12:19). Left unrepented, these sins would lead to unbelief, to saying, *“We have all that we need apart from God, so we have no need for God at all.”*

Those temptations were a real danger, for there is always a temptation to rejoice in the things of creation *far more than the Creator of all things*. So it would play out in the history of Israel. Over time, they would forsake the LORD and fail to thank Him for all of His gifts. They’d turn to other gods - not because these gods could give them anything, but because these false gods gave silent approval to whatever sins they wanted to commit. Eventually, those who had been set free from Egypt would find themselves enslaved by Assyria and Babylon.

It was not supposed to be that way. The LORD had the desire to take care of His people forever, to continue to give them daily bread, abundant harvests and all good things. Apart from Him, there was only affliction, toil, oppression and death. As His people, they could trust in His deliverance with great deeds, signs and wonders. Moses reminded the people of Israel that **“Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.”**

Many centuries later, Jesus repeated those same words while He was out in the wilderness being tempted by the Devil. Jesus was hungry, and so the Devil tempted Him, *“If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread!”* (Matthew 4:3). The hunger and the bread are the guises for the Devil’s strategy. He is saying, *“God promised all sorts of good gifts to His people. The people of God get abundant harvests, milk and honey, daily bread. Here You are, supposedly the Son of God, without even bread to eat. That doesn’t make You much of a Son of God, now, does it? Command this stone to become bread.”*

There are a couple of interwoven temptations here. One is the temptation to doubt that Jesus has His Father’s blessing. The other is to forsake His ministry of taking the place of sinners.

The more you think about it, the more you cannot separate the temptation in the wilderness from what happens immediately before it: Jesus’ baptism. Jesus has just been baptised, along with all of those repentant sinners who have gathered to listen to John the Baptist. By His baptism, Jesus has taken His place with sinners. He stands with them. He is taking their place, bearing their sins. He is now making His way to the cross to die in their place. He is doing so with His Father’s approval, for when He was baptised, His Father said, *“This is My Son, whom I love and in whom I am well pleased”* (Matthew 3:17).

The Israelites, the people of God, had enjoyed the protection of the One who had delivered them from Egypt with great deeds of terror, with signs and wonders; now,

here is Jesus, afflicted by the Devil while He's weak and alone. As the Son of God, He should have everything; as the Saviour who stands with sinners to save them, He's got nothing.

So the Devil tempts Him, "*Are You sure You're the Son of God? And if You are, are You sure You want to continue on this path of standing with sinners, saving them?*" All that Jesus sees and feels at that moment would argue against His sonship and ministry. But Jesus doesn't go with what He sees and feels at the moment. He goes with what He has heard. He has heard His Father say, "*You are My Son whom I love,*" so He knows who He is. He has heard His Father say, "*In You I am well-pleased,*" so He knows His calling as Saviour has His Father's blessing. When it comes to proof, God's Word trumps bread. So Jesus repeats the Word He once spoke to Moses: "**Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.**"

For now, the Devil departs, and there will never be a time when Jesus is more obviously taking the place of sinners than when He's on the cross, forsaken by God and condemned for the sins of the world.

We are tempted, too. And many of those temptations will result from the Devil's whispers about the things that we have or don't have. Everything that we have is a gift from God. There is nothing that we would have without His blessing, nothing we possess had He not spoken to give it to us. When the Israelites brought their first fruits to the Lord, they were to recite a response that began, "*My forefather was a wandering Aramean*" (Deuteronomy 26:5).

The purpose was that they acknowledge that all they had was undeserved, given by God. We often begin our service by saying, "*I, a poor helpless sinner, confess to You all my sins, and repent of all the evil I have done. I have deeply displeased You and deserve Your punishment in time and in eternity.*" With those words, we also confess that everything we have is an undeserved gift from God.

The Devil will use all sorts of "daily bread" of gifts to tempt us to believe that we do not belong to God, don't want Him or don't need Him. Where we lack and do not have the things that we would like, the Devil will tempt us, "*Are you really sure that you're a child of God? If you were, shouldn't you have more good stuff? Maybe you're not a child of God at all.*" Where you suffer affliction or infirmity, the devil will whisper, "*Some God this is. Not only doesn't He give you much in the way of good stuff, but He's also loaded you down with all sorts of bad. Maybe you ought to think about dumping God and setting out on your own.*" Or when you enjoy a time of prosperity and wealth, the Devil will try to woo you all the way to hell, saying, "*Look at all you've done! Look at all you've gotten for yourself! Who needs God with all of His annoying laws and His talk about sin and grace? Enjoy what you've got! Who needs Him?*"

Every satanic temptation has one goal in mind: to destroy our faith by leading us to doubt God, hate God or see no need for God. The Devil knows the value of material things for temptation: we can see the things we have. We can't see our Saviour, and a thing in the hand seems so much more real than a Saviour we are called upon to trust by faith.

But to all of these temptations, we can respond with our Saviour: **“Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.”** Far beyond the temporary things that we see and have, we know that the Word of the Lord is sure.

By the Word of the Lord, we know that Jesus has taken His place with sinners for us. He was tempted in the wilderness and resisted it perfectly so that He may give us the credit for His perfect obedience. That Word declares to us that Christ has died in our place, for all of our sins, so that we can be certain that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The Lord speaks His Word directly to us. We can be sure that we are His children, enjoying His favour, because He has said so to us with the words, *“I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”* As the Father called Jesus His beloved Son at His baptism, so He declared us to be His beloved child when we were baptised. The Lord speaks His Word to tell us that His favour for us hasn't changed: we hear Him say it is so when He declares, *“I forgive you for all of your sins.”* And as long as we are in this wilderness, we know that we are not forsaken. The Lord is with us. The Lord is near to us. He is as near as His Word. He is so near as to give us His own body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins.

Make no mistake: this work of the Lord in His means of grace is far greater than the great deeds, signs and wonders that He performed to free His people from Egypt; for by His Word, He has freed us from sin, death and hell.

Everything we have is a gift from God. An undeserved gift. As long as the Devil tempts, that's a tough truth to confess. But we live each day knowing that we are children of God, who delights to give us all sorts of good things; and whether it is given to us to be a stewards of much or little in this life, we have the Word of the Lord. That is why we live, for we have been forgiven for all of our sins. Amen.

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

PRAYER FOR HARVEST THANKSGIVING

God our Father, You have created the universe in great wisdom, and sustain it by Your powerful word. You are good to everyone, and have compassion on all that You have made. We enter Your house of prayer with thanksgiving, and come before You with songs of joy. We thank You for the many blessings and joys You lavish on our lives. We thank You for soil and seed, sunlight and rain, health and strength, machinery and technology, and every other blessing by which You give us our daily bread. You have given us a plentiful land, rich in resources for agriculture, mining, and industry. You have blessed us with education and skills to use these resources for the good of our country and its people. Although You do not always spare us from trouble and dark days, we still must confess that our cup of blessing is overflowing, and so we praise Your name. Make us continually aware of Your goodness, O Lord. Increase our trust that in all things You are working for our good.

But, Lord, You not only care for our bodies; Your richest love is reserved for the salvation of our souls. Because You have revealed Yourself to us in Your Word, we know You in Your limitless grace, and live in the light of Your truth and love. We thank You especially for Your greatest of gifts: Jesus Christ our Saviour, and for all the blessings of the Gospel and the Church. Help us to appreciate fully these choicest gifts, and to produce in our lives a rich harvest of faith, goodness, and love.

Free us from every temptation to trust in uncertain things like material wealth. Free us from covetousness, envy, and jealousy. Increase our joy in what You provide, and make us content. Make us more sensitive to what others need. Give us compassion to help those who have too little, and the opportunities to share Your blessings. Let our service to others pave the way for witness to the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ Your Son. Teach us to use wisely the things You place at our disposal.

Bless and strengthen the poor and the hungry, those who cannot work, the lonely, the depressed, and especially those who are suffering because of their Christian faith. Give them all the generous help of friends, but, above all, strong trust in Your presence and care.

Guide the nations on earth, and particularly those countries whose people are desperately poor. Grant that all who look up to You for material blessings may find Your kingdom, and Your righteousness. Bless our country Australia with a united spirit and godly goals. Teach its leaders and its people to know, believe, and do Your will. Remove from us things that are unwise and harmful.

Continue to supply the spiritual needs of our families, so that truth, love, and high morals may bless our homes.

We offer You our prayers and our songs of praise, heavenly Father, in the name of Your dear Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and honour for ever. Amen.

Article: Confession and Forgiveness

Scripture distinguishes between two types of sorrow. *“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death”* (2 Corinthians 7:10). Godly sorrow expresses itself when we see our offence for what it really is: sin against God and sin against people. Worldly sorrow reveals itself when we appear sorry that we got caught or must suffer some consequence. It is often accompanied by attempts to justify, cover up sin, or accuse others.

Repentance means coming to one’s senses and turning back. In the parable of the lost son who squandered his share of his father’s estate, Jesus talked about this man’s regret: *“When he came to his senses, he said ...”* (Luke 15:17). The son returned home to confess *“Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son”* (v. 21).

The Augsburg Confession (Article XII) defines repentance in two parts: *Properly speaking, repentance consists of these two parts: one is contrition, that is, terror smiting the conscience with a knowledge of sin, and the other is faith, which is born of the Gospel, or of absolution, believes that sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake, comforts the conscience, and delivers it from terror. Then good works, which are the fruit of repentance, are bound to follow.* (3-6)

Repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret is found in confession and forgiveness. Confession of a penitent lays one bare and pitiful before God, open and thirsting for absolution. Faith receives God’s forgiveness, which covers one’s nakedness, providing comfort and hope, and makes him righteous in God’s sight. In response, the forgiven sinner praises God through good works.

Because we are conceived and born in sin, our most natural expression of sorrow leads to death. That which comes naturally is frequently practised throughout life. Worldly sorrow tends to be on “automatic pilot.” Thus, it becomes necessary to choose words carefully for confession of our sin as well as the announcement of God’s forgiveness and our personal forgiveness.

Even when we begin to realise our sin, our practised words of self-justification and blaming others instinctively fall from our lips. We inherit this trait from our father Adam, whose first confession typifies man’s most natural response. *“Well, yes, Lord, I did eat some fruit. But it was the woman, whom, incidentally, You gave me, that caused me to trip up.”* Eve learned from her husband’s example: *“Not me! It was the serpent who tricked me into eating it!”*

When we blame others, we really blame God. We call Him a liar. *“If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word has no place in*

our lives” (1 John 1:10).

In addition to examples of lousy confessions, the Bible furnishes us with beautiful confessions, such as David’s confession to Nathan (2 Samuel 12:13), and penitential psalms, such as 6, 32, 38, and 51. With fasting, sackcloth, and ashes, Daniel prayed a wonderful confession of repentance and praise for God’s mercy, a portion of which follows:

O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant of love with all who love Him and obey His commands, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from Your commands and laws. We have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. Lord, You are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame - the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where You have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to You. O LORD, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against You. The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against Him....

Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against You....

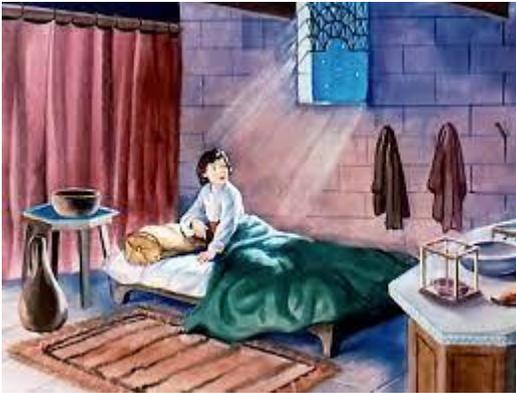
O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For Your sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people bear Your Name. (Daniel 9:4-19)

Both parts of repentance are expressed in this confession. Contrition for sin is clearly articulated, acknowledging sin before a holy God. Faith in a merciful and forgiving God is explicit in these words. Daniel’s prayer testifies to his trust in God by admitting sin and seeking forgiveness. Specific sins are identified, although he does not detail an exhaustive list of sins. There is no blaming God or others for sin. Daniel recognises that consequences are deserved because of Israel’s unfaithfulness to God. Praise for God and His mighty acts become part of the overall confession of sin and faith. May Daniel’s confession be a model for us to copy! As we, too, confess our many sins, let us also remember that there is complete forgiveness offered since we are made righteous through the blood of Jesus.

Children's Message:

Have you ever been in the middle of playing when you heard someone, maybe your parents, calling you? Or what if you were cozy, sleeping in your bed, and you heard someone call out your name? You might jump right up and go see who called and what it is that they may need!

Now imagine that when you went to your mum or dad, they said, "Oh! We didn't call you!" Then it happens two more times! That would be pretty confusing, right?



Well, that's like what happened to Samuel in our First Reading today. He was a young boy, just like some of you, except he didn't live at home; he lived at the temple of the Lord. One night he was sleeping and heard, "Samuel, Samuel!" He thought that the priest Eli was calling him, but

who do you think was actually calling? Yes, it was God!

Perhaps Samuel wanted to go on sleeping. Maybe he didn't want to be bothered, or maybe he was even a little afraid of what God would say. Sometimes we may feel that way. We'd rather ignore God's Word or keep on doing whatever seems most important to us. We forget to hold His Word sacred and gladly hear and learn it.

Today, Samuel is a great example of faith for us all! Do you think he kept sleeping or ignored God's call? Right! He got up and answered the Lord, "*Speak! For Your servant is listening*" (1 Sam. 3:10). Samuel knew that whatever it was God wanted to share with him was more important than sleeping, than playing, than reading. He knew that God's Word was most important of all.

God speaks to you too, right here in church! We can be like Samuel, saying, "*Speak! For Your servant is listening.*" We can pay attention to God's Word and hear what He wants to share with us. He wants to tell us the most important things! God wants to share about His Son, Jesus, who came to die for us and forgive us all of our sins. He wants to comfort us when we're sad, give us peace when we're scared, and encourage us to share that comfort and peace with everyone we know. Let's pray. *Dear Jesus, You love to speak and we love to listen. Thank You for reminding us about Samuel so we can learn. to listen to Your Word and serve You with cheerful hearts. Amen.*

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

21 January 3 Epiphany	28 January 4 Epiphany	4 February 5 Epiphany
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 9.00am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR
Sunday, 21 January		
READINGS: Jonah 3:1-5, 10; 1 Corinthians 7:29-35; Mark 1:14-20		
HYMNS: 45 217 366 (839 840) 509		
Sunday, 28 January		
READINGS: Deuteronomy 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Mark 1:21-28		
HYMNS: 47 239 409 (789 286) 822		

Saturday 20th at 7pm there will be a youth group bon fire at Priebbenow's family farm. Please contact Patrick on 0403005358 regarding more details closer to the date, if you wish to attend.

The next confirmation class for the Darling Downs congregations is set to begin in February. These classes will be held at Bethlehem Toowoomba. Parents of these children – please let pastor know which days of the week would suit so he can prepare a day and time.

The confirmation class below the Range is also set to recommence in February.

Congregation AGM dates:

St John's Aubigny: Sunday, January 28, 7.30pm

St Paul's Greenwood:

Trinity Oakey:

Bethlehem Toowoomba:

Trinity Marburg:

Our Saviour Lowood: