

**Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,**  
**ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY**  
7 January Second Sunday after Christmas

**HYMNS:** 47 279 256 40 285 {289 if needed} 437

**INTROIT:** Psalm 84.

How lovely is Your sanctuary, O LORD of hosts!

My soul has been deeply longing, —indeed it has been wasting away, for the court of the LORD. My heart and my flesh are shouting for joy to the living God.

Even a bird has found a home, and a swallow a nest for herself, where she has put her young, even Your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they are still praising You.

Blessed are those whose strength is in You. Your highways are in their hearts.

As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a spring; the early rain also wraps it with blessings.

They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.

O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; listen, O God of Jacob!

Look at our shield, O God; look upon the face of Your anointed one.

For one day in Your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere! I have preferred to lie at the threshold of the house of my God rather than to dwell in the tents of wicked people.

The LORD God is a Sun and a Shield; the LORD will give grace and glory.

He will not hold back anything good from those whose walk is blameless.

O LORD of hosts, blessed is the person who trusts in You!

**COLLECT:** Almighty God, our Lord and our Redeemer, You have given us the gift of Your Son for eternal life, and have called us together around the Word and Sacraments to be Your church. By Your undeserved love You have forgiven us our sins, and blessed Your church in the name of Jesus Christ. Continue to bless Your church, as You have blessed us in the past, so that we may grow in You, the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, 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:** 1 Kings 8:22-30 Solomon's prayer of dedication.  
Romans 6:1-11 We are buried with Christ through Baptism.  
Mark 1:4-11 John baptizes Jesus.

### **1 Kings 8:22-30**

<sup>22</sup> Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in front of the whole assembly of Israel and spread his hands toward heaven. <sup>23</sup> He said: "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like You in heaven above or on earth below. You keep Your Covenant and show faithful love to Your servants, who walk before You with all their hearts. <sup>24</sup> You have kept Your promise to Your servant, my father David. You promised it with Your mouth and carried it out with Your hand, as is so today. <sup>25</sup> Now, O LORD, God of Israel, keep Your promise to Your servant, my father David, when You said to him, 'You will not fail to have a man sitting before Me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons pay close attention to their ways, so that they walk before Me as You have been walking before Me!' <sup>26</sup> Now therefore, O God of Israel, please let the promise that You have made to Your servant, David, my father, be confirmed! <sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, will God really dwell on the earth? Look! The heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this Temple, which I have built! <sup>28</sup> Yet give attention to the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O LORD, my God, and hear the cry and the prayer that Your servant is praying before You today! <sup>29</sup> May Your eyes be open toward this Temple night and day, toward the place about which You have said, 'My name will be there,' that You may hear the prayer that Your servant is making toward this place! <sup>30</sup> Hear the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel when they pray toward this place! May You Yourself hear in heaven, Your dwelling place, and, when You hear, forgive!

### **Romans 6:1-11**

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, what shall we say? "Shall we go on sinning so that God may be more gracious to us?" <sup>2</sup> Certainly not! How shall we, who died to sin, live any longer in it? <sup>3</sup> Or do you not know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? <sup>4</sup> Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, so that, as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might begin to live a new life. <sup>5</sup> If we have been planted together with Him in the likeness of His death, then we shall be planted together with Him also in the likeness of His resurrection. <sup>6</sup> We know that our old self was crucified with Him, that our sinful bodies might be rendered powerless, in order that we might not be slaves to sin any longer. <sup>7</sup> For the one

who has died has been declared free from sin. <sup>8</sup> If we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, <sup>9</sup> because we know that, since Christ was raised from the dead, He will not die again. Death no longer has any mastery over Him. <sup>10</sup> For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all, but the life that He lives He lives to God. <sup>11</sup> So you too, reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus!

### **Mark 1:4-11**

<sup>4</sup> John the Baptist came in the wilderness and preached that people should repent and be baptised for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup> All the land of Judea and all the people of Jerusalem kept coming out to him. They were baptised by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. <sup>6</sup> John was dressed in camel's hair, wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup> He preached: "He who is mightier than I am is coming after me and I am not worthy to bend down and untie His sandal-straps. <sup>8</sup> I have baptised you with water; but He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

<sup>9</sup> In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised in the Jordan by John. <sup>10</sup> Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, He saw heaven being torn apart and the Spirit coming down on Him like a dove. <sup>11</sup> Then a voice came from heaven: "You are My Son, whom I love. With You I am well pleased."

## **ENCOURAGEMENT TO STEADFASTNESS**

### **Sermon for the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Place of Worship of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Oakey Hebrews 10:19-25**

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 Hebrews 10:19-25: **Therefore, fellow-Christians, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by the new, living way that He has opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His body, <sup>21</sup> and, since we have a High Priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith! For our hearts have been sprinkled to take away guilty consciences, and our bodies have been washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup> Let us cling to the confession of our hope without wavering! For He who has made the promise is faithful.**

**<sup>24</sup> Let us also consider how we may stimulate one another to love and to do good works! <sup>25</sup> Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as some are regularly doing, but let us continue to encourage one another, and so much more as you see the day approaching!**

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

Dear friends in Christ,

As we gather today to thank God for the 30 years He has given the congregation here at Trinity Oakey a place to worship, we realise that a lot has happened in the world over the past 30 years. There have been wars and rumours of war. Terrorist attacks. The collapse of stock markets. There have been droughts and floods, fire and famine. Changes of government and legalisation of sinful acts. But wonderful progress has been made as well. There have been breakthroughs in medical science, giving us better and more effective treatments for disease and so on. We've also seen the explosion of the World Wide Web and mobile phone technology, as well as advancements in the field of transportation. The world is moving with the times.

But what about in the church? As the world has progressed and continues to move forward, many feel that the Church must keep up. It has to continually evolve its teachings, get out of the dark ages and move with the times. We see that in how more and more churches accept the teaching of evolution. Homosexuality and single-sex marriage are not called out as sin, and of course, there are many women who take the office of pastor. There is hardly any teaching about sin and grace. And one of the best ways for the church to act in today's modern world is to cast aside any past differences in doctrine and practice among the various churches and come together. Whatever denomination you belong to no longer matters. There are no boundaries. We all worship the same god, so let's work together. Such practice is called syncretism – a dangerous mishmash of various teachings. Disobedience to God and His Word is seen as wonderful progress in the church.

While changes continue to happen in the world, the church of God and its teachings must not change. The prophet Malachi recorded the LORD God as saying, "*I am the LORD, and I do not change*" (3:6). The writer of Hebrews also states how "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever*" (13:8). The world changes, but the true Christian religion is a religion of an unchanging God. This religion is based on the truth of God's Word, and truth is always the same. Two times two is still four. A straight line is still the shortest distance

between two points. Fire is still hot, and ice is still cold. So, if such simple truths stand in a world of constant changes, why shouldn't the truth of our faith given through God's Word<sup>1</sup> still stand unchanged even today? The Apostle Peter once wrote, "*The Word of the Lord remains forever*" (1 Peter 1:25). It cannot and does not change. But since the trend of our times has changed, and since many churches around us continue to be affected by the spirit of our times and have changed not only their methods but also their message, I wish to urge you once again today to remain faithful and steadfast as you continue to hold fast the profession of your faith.

The writer of Hebrews was addressing people who had been converted from Judaism to Christianity. No doubt, many of these lived in Jerusalem and Judea, where they still had the old Jewish worship, the old Jewish priests, and the old Jewish Temple constantly before them. Much of the old Jewish worship, especially the ceremonies of festival days, was very impressive. Compared to that, Christianity and its form of worship were rather simple, for there were no priests in flowing, multicoloured robes and no smoking sacrifices. Hence, there was the constant danger of apostasy, of abandoning Christianity and reverting back to Judaism, to self-righteousness and unbelief. So the writer of Hebrews wished to teach the people that religion based upon a risen, living Christ was far better, far more comforting and satisfying, and far more easily understood than the religion of the Old Testament, which merely pointed forward to the coming of Christ. He appeals to them, "**Let us cling to the confession of our hope without wavering!**" Don't let go! The work of Christ is complete; there is no need to take away or add to this work, and the writer uses the present tense to remind them and us that such clinging is ever to continue. He uses the word "hope" to lift our eyes to the future. From Christ comes not only pardon for sins in the present but glorious hope for the future. Heaven is our sure home, "**For He who has made the promise is faithful.**"

As we await our Lord to call us to our heavenly home, the writer of Hebrews gives us words that become our unwavering confession of hope. He says, "**Therefore, fellow-Christians, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by the new, living way that He has opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His body, <sup>21</sup> and, since we have a High Priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith!**"

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 10:17

Dear friends, can you see how you have been granted free access to God and confidence to enter into the “**Most Holy Place**”? That is heaven, where you can stand in the very presence of God - not based upon your own merits or good works, but “**by the blood of Jesus.**” He is the “**High Priest over the house of God,**” who has opened the way “**for us through the curtain, that is, through His body.**” He is the Way to God, the only Way, the new Way, the living Way. Your way to heaven is by the crucified Christ, and His death and resurrection are your way to life. In full assurance of faith, in the knowledge that your “**hearts have been sprinkled to take away guilty consciences,**” that you “**have been washed with pure water**” of baptism from all unrighteousness, you can come before God, stand before Him, and live with Him eternally. The Apostle John writes, “*We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world*” (1 John 2:1-2). This is the summary of the Christian faith as presented in the Letter to the Hebrews. What a wonderful, satisfying, and comforting religion! Hold fast to this profession of faith! Do not change it! Never give it up!

This profession of faith has been the confession of not only the members here at Trinity Oakey for the past 30 years but also of all of the congregations of the Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church. Actually, most all of us have professed this faith all our lives in the different Lutheran Synods in which we were members before the formation of the AELC. But because these other Lutheran Church bodies decided to “change with the times,” we could no longer stand by and let the pure Word of God become adulterated or modernised. Being bound by the Word of God, the message of our congregations is the same as it has always been ever since this Word of God was given to us. What the Word of God has spoken, that is our confession. Nothing more, nothing less. And one particular thing this Word of God teaches is that salvation is by grace, through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ, who is our great High Priest and our Advocate with the Father.

This is the profession of faith we are to cling to, to steadfastly believe and confess. No matter how much the religion of works may please natural man, no matter how much the pomp and ceremony of other denominations may appeal to the eye, we are to hold fast to the simple profession of our faith.

So how wonderful it is that in His grace and mercy, the Lord God has given the members of Trinity Oakey a place of worship where we may come to profess and affirm this faith publically and to be served by Him. A place where we may

continue “*steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles and in the fellowship, in the breaking of the bread and in the prayers*” (Acts 2:42). How truly blessed we are! In all our places of worship, we have a God who is always present to serve, bless, and protect us. He comes to us in Word and Sacrament, and we are the humble receivers of His grace. “*I was glad when people told me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD!”*” David wrote in Psalm 122.

Publically gathering together in the Lord’s house, I urge you to remain steadfast in your faith because “**He who has made the promise is faithful.**” Of course, the reference here is to Christ Jesus, the faithful Saviour. John writes in Revelation, “*Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the First-born from the dead and the Ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood and has made us a kingdom, priests to God and His Father — to Him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen*” (1:5-6). Hebrews 6:18 tells us that it is “*impossible for God to lie.*” Hence, we have indeed a strong consolation and a wonderful hope as an anchor of our soul. The faithful Saviour promises salvation to all who believe. Certainly, that should stimulate you to be steadfast and true when you think of the faithfulness and the absolute certainty of His promises.

However, the danger of falling away from your own steadfastness is always near. You must constantly contend with temptations to stop coming to the Lord’s house. The Devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh would rather find other things to do than spend an hour or two sitting at Jesus’ feet. The writer of Hebrews warns not to “**forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as some are regularly doing.**” If you stay away from the Lord’s house, then your Christian enthusiasm will soon cool, and your faith will wane when church services are neglected. Unfilled pews, yawning with emptiness, are never a testimony of faithfulness but always an indication of faithlessness. They are usually evidence of improper thinking and frequently show that people have not yet learned to put first things first, the care of the soul above mere pleasures for body and mind. Neglect of church attendance and neglect of the Lord’s Supper is always a definite danger to faithfulness and steadfastness.

Therefore, “**stimulate one another... encourage one another.**” “**Stimulate**” means putting our mind on others, carefully noting their needs. As one body in Christ, we need to spur one another on “**to love and to do good works!**” And to “**encourage**” does not mean to lecture or criticise. It is the same verb from which the name “Advocate” for the Holy Spirit is derived in John 16:7. Standing alongside and helping one another where needed is far better than giving up

meeting with one another. Giving and receiving strength when tempted, urging and being urged when wavering, comforting and being comforted when sorrowing are pluses to be found in gathering around the Word in church.

But there is one more reason for faithfulness given in the words of our text. The writer says, “**so much more as you see the day approaching.**” We may all grow weary at times; we may all lose sight of the beauty of our religion by becoming so engrossed with material things, with our business and our pleasures, that we do not notice how we are gradually drifting farther and farther away from our Christian faith. It is for this reason that the writer reminds us of the approach of Judgment. The day is approaching, the day on which we must all stand before the judgment seat of God, the day which will reveal what has been in our heart, the day which will show all the world whether we have been faithful or faithless, whether we have been steadfast or unstable and wavering.

Dear friends, at all times, remain true to the only Saviour, who saves from sin and hell and gives eternal bliss and happiness to all who believe. Continue to hold fast to the profession of your faith without wavering. Continue to gather in the Lord’s house to be served by Him with Word and Sacrament. He has been gracious to give Trinity Oakey a place of worship for the past 30 years, and we pray that we shall be able to gather for many more years to come, until we all gather together in heaven, singing His praises for ever more. “*Continue to be faithful until death, and I shall give you the crown of life*” (Revelation 2:10). Amen.

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

## PRAYER FOR THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

Lord God, heavenly Father, we praise You that You have revealed Your will and wisdom in the life of Your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. We praise You that You have given us the gift of Your Holy Spirit in our baptism, and that in baptism You have acknowledged us as Your dear children. We praise You that in the baptism of Your Son in the Jordan You marked Him out as the Messiah, would be our true representative, to fulfil all righteousness, and, as our substitute, to give Himself in sacrifice for our sin and death. We praise You that, as Jesus saw the heavens opened when He was baptised, You have assured us of eternal life, where we shall see Your heaven opened to us.



Through Your Holy Spirit renew the mind of Christ in us, and let it grow in us. As Jesus began His public ministry for us at His baptism, we thank You for the privilege of regarding our baptism as our commissioning to serve You. Make us ready to give ourselves sacrificially for others, as Jesus has done, in ways that glorify You.

In mercy care for the spiritual welfare of all our baptised children. Give us grace as parents to show Your will and way to those who have yet to learn all that Christ has commanded us, by faithful worship, love for Your Word, and the desire to walk in the ways of Christ at all times. Free us all from being like this world. Transform us inwardly, that all our thoughts, words, and deeds may reflect Your perfect will.

Bless those who are one in confession with us in the fellowship of Your Church. Pour out Your blessing and strength on our pastor, that he may preach and teach Your Word with warmth and energy, and let the light of Your Gospel shine to people in darkness. Bless the witness of us all to the power of Jesus Christ to save sinners. Fill us with increasing zeal for the salvation of people who do not yet know Him as their Saviour, and for the extension of His kingdom. Send Your Holy Spirit to all Your people, to overcome weakness in Your Church, to remove all indifference, to cast out all fear of human beings, to reject the love of the world, and to banish all lukewarmness.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the place of worship You have given to the members of Trinity Oakey and, indeed, all the places of worship for the congregations of the AELC. We humbly ask that You would continue to cast the bright beams of light upon Your Church so that we, being instructed by the doctrine of the blessed apostles, may continue to walk in the light of Your truth and reject any teaching that is against Your holy Word and finally attain the light of everlasting life.

Grant that we may find strength in Your almighty power and daily care. Show Your mercy and goodness to the sick, the lonely, the bereaved, and the suffering. Teach them to cast their cares on You. Show them that You are not dealing with them in wrath, but in love, for Jesus' sake.

Help, heal, uphold, and strengthen us all, and in all things enable us to rejoice in Your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, whom we adore, with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **Article:      Why Worship?**

Why do we worship God? I can give four reasons:

First, God acts. As we see His creation and, most importantly, as we understand His grace in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, we recognise the dynamic involvement of our creating, redeeming, and sanctifying God. Worship begins with God entering our world in love.

Second, as a result of God's actions, we want and need to respond to Him. There is a natural human desire to express feelings of awe and wonderment in particular ways. According to many modern sociologists, ritual is an important part of the human experience. Worship, therefore, is a proper response to God's activities for us, to us, and in us.

Third, God commands that we worship Him. This may be more obvious than we think. God has given many commands, some of which we do not always understand. As we mature in the faith, we find that God's commands are good. He has commanded that we worship Him, that we take time to be with Him, and that we come together with other believers to respond to His work in our lives. This quality time with God is His gracious will and loving wish for us.

Fourth and finally, in obedience to God, we worship. Because of our sinful condition, we do not always "feel" like worshipping. However, despite our feelings, God wants our physical, emotional, and spiritual selves to come into His presence. Our worship is not merely for ourselves but for Him who loved us enough to send His Son and Spirit.

Thus, our worship is multidimensional: Our worship is from God to us and from us back to God. Our Lord speaks and we listen. The rhythm of our worship is from Him to us, and then from us back to Him. He gives His gifts, and together we receive and extol them. We build one another up as we speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

## Children's Message:

How many of you like to receive gifts? I know I do. Did you get gifts at Christmas? Wasn't it fun? Did you get clothes or shoes? Did you get toys? It's such an amazing thing that our families give us gifts of things that we want and things that we need just because they care about us. It's really a blessing to us!

Today I wish to tell you about a present that God gives to us. It's called Holy Baptism. Jesus gives us Baptism as a gift. Do any of you remember being baptised? Most of you don't because you were too tiny to remember - like maybe just a week or two old.

Baptism is a different kind of gift given to us. It has two parts to it. First of all, we get water put on our heads, but it's not like a bath or a shower. While we get water put on our head, we also get the second part of the gift: very special words that are said. Do you know what the special words are? While the water is being poured on our heads, the pastor says, "I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." When we receive the water and the special words, we get to share in Jesus dying on the cross for us, which makes us part of God's family.



Becoming a part of God's family is a most important gift. When we're baptised, God tells us that we are part of a family that includes people from all over the world. God's family is made up of men and women, boys and girls, of all different places and cultures. God promises to love all of us in His family. He tells us that He forgives us of the things we do wrong and that He will never leave us. He promises us that when we are a part of His family, we are loved and forgiven and cared for. One day, He will take His family to be with Him in heaven, where there is no sadness and nothing bad. It will be the happiest and best place you can imagine!

So let's remember, Holy Baptism is a gift from God. The gift has two parts: water and God's special words. What are God's special words? "I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." What does it mean to be baptised? That we are made a part of God's family. And being a part of God's family is the best gift of all.

## WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

<b>14 January 2 Epiphany</b>	<b>21 January 3 Epiphany</b>	<b>28 January 4 Epiphany</b>
8.30am OAK LR 9.0am TMBA HC Harvest 9.00am GRN LR 10.45 am AUB HC Harvest 9.00am MARBURG LR	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
<b>Sunday, 14 January</b>		
READINGS: 1 Samuel 3:1-20; HARVEST: Deuteronomy 26:1-11;	1 Corinthians 6:12-20; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15;	John 1:43-51 Luke 12:13-21
HYMNS: 507 39 336 221 TMBA & AUB: 562 (tune 282) 437 563 169 842 890		
<b>Sunday, 21 January</b>		
READINGS: Jonah 3:1-5, 10;	1 Corinthians 7:29-35;	Mark 1:14-20
HYMNS: 45 217 366 (839 840) 509		

Our student Patrick would like to get a youth group going, and would like to hear from anyone interested in attending and helping to make this happen. Please contact Patrick on 0403 005358 or at [patrickhensel95@gmail.com](mailto:patrickhensel95@gmail.com).

*Welcome to all worshipping with us!*

Pastor Ziebell can be contacted via phone/text at 0407 583922.

Email him at [paziebell@gmail.com](mailto:paziebell@gmail.com) or to the church office at [draelc@gmail.com](mailto:draelc@gmail.com).

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

Pastor is usually in his office Tuesday-Wednesday for anyone who would like to call in. Other days of the week are set aside for visits.