

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

HYMNS: 95 768 829 368 289 508

INTROIT: Psalm 148

Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens! Praise Him in the heights above!

Praise Him, all you His angels! Praise Him, all His hosts!

Praise Him, sun and moon! Praise Him, all you stars of light!

Praise Him, you heaven of heavens, and you waters above the heavens!

Let them praise the name of the LORD! For He commanded, and they were created.

He set them in position for ever and ever. He gave a decree that will not pass away.

Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, fire and hail, snow and fog, wind and storm, which carry out His Word, you mountains and all hills, you fruit trees and all cedars, you wild animals and all cattle, you reptiles and winged birds, you kings of the earth and all peoples, you princes and all judges on the earth, you young men and also you maidens, you old men together with young people!

Let them praise the name of the LORD! For His name alone is exalted. His majesty is above earth and heaven.

He has raised up a horn for His people, praise from all His devout people, from the people of Israel, the people who are close to Him!

Praise the LORD!

COLLECT: Almighty God, grant that we, who have celebrated the Lord's resurrection, may by Your grace confess in our life and conversation that Jesus is Lord and God; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Welcome to all worshipping with us!

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

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

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

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.

READINGS:

- Acts 4:32-35 The first Christians share their possessions.
1 John 1:1-2:2 The Word gives life and light.
John 20:19-31 The risen Lord appears to Thomas.

Acts 4:32-35

³² The large number of believers was one in heart and soul, and no one said that any of his possessions was his own, but they possessed everything in common.

³³ With great power the apostles continued to give testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great good will rested on them all.

³⁴ For there was no one among them who was in need. For all who possessed pieces of land or houses used to sell them, bring the proceeds of the things that were sold ³⁵ and lay them at the apostles' feet. These used to be distributed to each one according to the need he had.

1 John 1:1-2:2

¹ That which was from **the beginning**, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched, concerning the Word of Life - ² and the Life has been revealed; and we have seen It, testify to It and proclaim to you the eternal Life that was with the Father and that has been revealed to us. ³ What we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, that you also may have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is also with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ We are writing these things that our joy may be complete.

⁵ This is the message that we have heard from Him and that we are telling you: that God is Light and in Him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in darkness, we are lying and not practising the truth.

⁷ However, if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we are making Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.

^{2:1} My little children, I am writing this to you that you may not sin. If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

² He is the propitiation for our sins and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

John 20:19-31

¹⁹ That Sunday evening the doors had been locked where the disciples were, because they were afraid of the Jews. Then Jesus came, stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you!”

²⁰ After He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I also am sending you.”

²² After He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit! ²³ If you forgive any people’s sins, they have been forgiven; if you retain any people’s sins, they have been retained.”

²⁴ However, Thomas, one of the twelve, who was called “The Twin,” was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ The other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.”

He told them, “Unless I see the marks of the nails in His hands and put my finger into the marks of the nails and put my hand into His side, I shall certainly not believe.”

²⁶ A week later, His disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors had been locked, Jesus came, stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”

²⁷ Next He told Thomas, “Put your finger here and look at My hands! Take your hand and put it into My side! Stop your unbelief and believe!”

²⁸ Thomas answered Him, “My Lord and my God!”

²⁹ Jesus asked him, “Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed!”

³⁰ Jesus also performed many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which have not been written in this book. ³¹ However, these things have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, you may have life in His name.

THE WORD OF LIFE
Sermon for the Second Sunday of Easter 2024
1 John 1:1-2:2

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 the Second Reading from before, 1 John 1:1-2:2: **That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched, concerning the Word of Life ² and the Life has been revealed; and we have seen It, testify to It and proclaim to you the eternal Life that was with the Father and that has been revealed to us. ³ What we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, that you also may have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is also with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ We are writing these things that our joy may be complete.**

⁵ This is the message that we have heard from Him and that we are telling you: that God is Light and in Him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in darkness, we are lying and not practising the truth.

⁷ However, if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we are making Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.

^{2:1} My little children, I am writing this to you that you may not sin. If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the propitiation for our sins and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

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

Dear friends in Christ,

Starting today, on this Second Sunday of Easter, our Second Readings will be taken from First John. This is appropriate for the Easter season since First John is all about Jesus, who was crucified and risen for us. John shows a real flesh and blood Saviour for real flesh and blood sinners like you and me. John tells us that the only way to have fellowship with God and with one another is through Christ, the eternal Son of God, who came in the flesh, shed His blood for us, and rose from the dead

bodily to give us eternal life. We have fellowship with God and with one another only through the enfleshed and proclaimed Word of Life, Jesus Christ. Over the coming Sundays, we shall spend time with John, and learn more about this **Word of Life**.

As we begin our journey through John's Letter, it helps immensely to have a little background on this Letter.

Around the time that Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in the year 70, the apostle John left Jerusalem and moved to the city of Ephesus in western Asia Minor, in what is now Turkey. By this time, Peter and Paul had died, along with many of the other apostles, and before long, John would be the last one left, the last living link to the Lord Jesus Christ. He, who had been the youngest disciple, was now the last apostle. John developed a strong bond with those churches in Asia Minor and was affectionately known as "the Elder" or "the Old Man," and he, in turn, called the Christians in these churches "my children" or "**my little children**" as we hear today.

Now, it was the late first century, and John himself was perhaps in his 80s. Nevertheless, he was still busy teaching the pure apostolic doctrine. However, in Ephesus and elsewhere, certain false doctrines and false teachers had arisen, which challenged the right teaching about Christ. They drew off followers for themselves. They withdrew from the fellowship of the church in order to form their own groups. These false teachers were influenced by philosophical ideas that said that physical matter was evil and that one had to *ascend from the material to the spiritual*. Having this "knowledge" made you "super-spiritual," advanced and superior, and really without sin.

One of the false teachers who was popular in Ephesus at this time was a man named Cerinthus (pronounced *Sir-in-thus*). Cerinthus taught that the man Jesus *was not really God*. He taught that Jesus was just a man born the ordinary way, the son of Joseph and Mary - but a really good man, very wise. At His baptism, the spirit of Christ came upon this man Jesus, and thus, He was able to do miracles, teach about God, and so on. But the Christ-spirit left Jesus before He suffered and died since, of course, God cannot suffer and die. Like most heretics, Cerinthus couldn't get God and man together in the one man Jesus Christ. How could God become man? How could God come in the flesh? How could God suffer and die and rise bodily from the dead? This didn't make sense to Cerinthus, and so he tried to explain it away.

But John, the old apostle who had been with Jesus, knew better. Only a flesh-and-blood, God-in-the-flesh Jesus, who is the Christ in Himself, the eternal Son of God - only this Jesus could be the Saviour who saves us from sin. It isn't by us ascending from the physical to the spiritual. It's by the spiritual - namely, the divine, heavenly Son of God - *descending to us* and taking on our physical flesh and suffering and

dying and shedding His blood for us - this is how we are saved. It is not by us “super-spiritual” ones attaining some higher level of secret knowledge. No, **“the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.”**

The false teachings of Cerinthus and others seem to be the backdrop for this Letter from John. He’s writing to the churches in and around Ephesus, warning them of the false teachings about Christ that were going around, explaining how these are really harmful. They’re divisive of fellowship with God and within the church. These wrong views about Christ cannot save you. On the positive side, John clearly teaches the right doctrine of Christ and how this truth brings about fellowship with God. It **“cleanses us from all sin.”** It produces love and fellowship with one another in the church, and from John’s Letter, we see tremendous implications for us here today.

John starts out: **“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched, concerning the Word of Life ² and the Life has been revealed; and we have seen It, testify to It and proclaim to you the eternal Life that was with the Father and that has been revealed to us. ³ What we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, that you also may have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is also with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ We are writing these things that our joy may be complete.”**

Fellowship through the **“Word of Life.”** We have fellowship with God and with one another only through the enfleshed and proclaimed **“Word of Life.”** John had been with Jesus throughout His ministry. He had been there at the cross, too, when Jesus was suffering and bleeding and dying. John had been there with the disciples on Easter evening when he heard the risen Lord say, *“Peace be with you”* (John 20:19). John had seen Christ’s hands and side, where the nails had gone in, and the spear had been thrust. This was a physical, resurrected, flesh-and-blood Saviour. This was no ghost or hallucination. No, Jesus Himself had really risen from the dead, bodily - Jesus, the Christ, the same one John had heard and seen throughout His ministry. Again, John was there a week later when Jesus came into their midst again, this time with Thomas present. Jesus spoke His word of peace to them again and invited Thomas to touch and see His hands and side. Thomas worshipped the risen Lord Jesus Christ, saying, *“My Lord and my God!”* (John 20:28).

John was there for all of that, all those years earlier. Now, he is bearing witness to the truth about Jesus, contrary to what the false teachers were saying. John is saying that Jesus is indeed God in the flesh, the eternal Son of God. Jesus is the Christ. John starts out this Letter like he starts out his Gospel, asserting the divinity of Jesus. In his Gospel, John states: *“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”* And then he says:

“*The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory of the Father’s only Son – He is full of grace and truth*” (John 1:1-2, 14). Now, in his Letter, John says the same thing: **“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched, concerning the Word of Life ² and the Life has been revealed; and we have seen It, (and) testify to It.”** John emphasises that the eternal Son of God, who was there in the beginning, really did come in the flesh. John, along with the other apostles, was there. They saw it with their own eyes. They even touched and handled His crucified and risen body. Those who tell you otherwise, people like Cerinthus - are lying. You will not find life or fellowship with God by listening to them.

Dear friends, we have life, eternal life, and fellowship with God only through the enfleshed **Word of Life**, the Lord Jesus Christ. It takes a flesh-and-blood Saviour, crucified and risen, to rescue sinners like us. You see, that’s the problem with Cerinthus and his modern counterparts. They downplay the *person* of Christ, His divine and human natures in one person. They downplay the *work* of Christ, His shedding His blood for our sins. These false teachers would rob you of the only life-giving Gospel there is. Cerinthus and his ilk hate the idea that we cannot save ourselves by our own wisdom or knowledge and by attaining a higher level of spirituality. All Cerinthus, ancient and modern, hate the idea that it takes the death of God Himself to save us from our sins. They don’t want to hear that our sins are that bad and that we are in such bad shape. All of us, by nature, want to think of ourselves as not that bad, not that lost. We want to be able to compare ourselves to others who are not as advanced as we are. At heart, then, we are all like Cerinthus.

But God has a better idea. It’s the only idea that works and old man John is the faithful witness who tells us about it. He tells us it is this God-in-the-flesh Jesus who gives us life. John tells us that we are sinners. We are not so advanced that we can get to the place where we are without sin: **“If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”** But at the same time, John tells us that God’s Son, Jesus Christ, has shed His blood for us to cleanse us from our sins. He says, **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”**

That’s what it takes to save a world of sinners like you and me. It takes a crucified Saviour. It takes the eternal Son of God dying for us. **“He is the propitiation for our sins,”** meaning Jesus is the One who takes the wrath of God against sinners upon Himself in our place. Jesus Christ satisfies God’s justice. Now risen from the dead, this same Jesus is our Advocate in heaven, pleading our case so that God declares us “not guilty” for Christ’s sake. This is what Jesus has done and is doing

for us! **“We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”**

Dear friends, we have fellowship with God and fellowship with one another through the enfleshed **Word of Life**, Jesus Christ the Son of God, our flesh-and-blood Saviour. And we know and believe in the **Word of Life** through the proclaimed **Word of Life**. John, Thomas, and other eyewitnesses could actually see, hear, touch, and handle Jesus “up close and personal.” You and I were not there, but we are at no disadvantage. Christ proclaimed is as good as Christ seen and heard. Jesus Himself says, *“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed!”* (John 20:29), and that’s us.

Today, the **Word of Life** has been proclaimed in your hearing. Through this proclamation, we do indeed have fellowship with God and eternal life. And in the sacrament, with the bread and wine, we do indeed receive the very body and blood of Christ, by which our sins are forgiven.

Dear friends, it’s Easter once again today because Jesus is with us, in our midst, speaking His Word of peace and life to us! We rejoice in this because we have fellowship with God and fellowship with one another through the **Word of Life** - the **Word of Life** enfleshed, the **Word of Life** proclaimed. Amen.

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

PRAYER FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Lord God, heavenly Father, mighty in power and majesty, the creator and preserver of all things to the very limits of space, we, Your children, come before You with our thanks and praise, and ask You in mercy to hear the prayers we offer.

We thank You that You have glorified Your Son Jesus by raising Him from the dead. Give us the blessings of that limitless grace that He has won for us on the cross.

We praise You that You have transformed the sadness of all Jesus’ disciples into the joy of the resurrection. Help us to grasp Christ’s promise of eternal life, believe it with joy, and rely on it with confidence. Fill us with the assurance that one day our eyes also will see Him, when finally He receives us and all believers into the kingdom prepared since You made the world.

Make the empty tomb the source of inspiration and power to Your Church. Fill all believers with a genuine desire to glorify Your name and do Your will, that people everywhere may be turned from their sin to faith in their risen Lord. As we witness to the risen Lord, give us a sense of solidarity with the apostles of Jesus, the courage that they had, the determination to witness to Jesus’ resurrection, and the message

of repentance and forgiveness that goes with it, give us opportunities to speak it forth, and give our words Your blessing.

Bless our country with Your continuing favour. Give us a government that maintains liberty, upholds justice, curbs lawlessness, and uses its authority with courage and high principle. Move all Christian citizens to accept their lawful obligations and duties cheerfully, giving respect to those in authority, and honour to all people.

Grant that we may live as people who are only pilgrims on earth. Give us the power and grace we need to resist evil, and fight the good fight of faith, until we finally receive the crown of life.

Give comfort to those among us who are sick, sorrowful, and distressed. Free us from all fear of death and the unknown. Fill us with patience in every test and trouble. Send Your Spirit to make us joyful and thankful Christians. We ask these things in the glorious hope of eternal life with You, in the name, and for the sake, of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Article: “Peace be with you!”

“That Sunday evening the doors had been locked where the disciples were, because they were afraid of the Jews. Then Jesus came, stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you!”” (John 20:19). Then, He showed them His hands and side. Remember how Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, and not on a warhorse? By that, He demonstrated His great humility and love for us. Here, Jesus came and stood in the midst of His cowering disciples, and His first words to them weren’t, “I told you so,” but, *“Peace be with you!”* He didn’t speak to them a word of condemnation, a word of Law, but Gospel. *“Peace be with you!”* And, with this, Jesus spoke of peace the world cannot give.

That peace, which the world cannot give, is the forgiveness of sins. This is the whole reason Jesus died, the reason why He became flesh – to win for us the forgiveness of sins. When He said “peace” to the disciples, it was as if He said to them, “You are forgiven.” He did what He came to do. They are forgiven. They need not fear, not fear neither sin, death, or hell. Instead, they can be at peace. Their Lord, and our Lord, has risen from the dead. As proof, He showed them His hands and side. He is the same Jesus they saw crucified, not a ghost or other such thing. Then, having received the peace the world can’t give, St. John writes, “The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord” (John 20:20).

The peace that the world can’t give, which God alone gives through Christ, is the assurance and confidence that our sins are forgiven. Every sin that we have committed – and which we have yet to commit – finds its atonement in Christ’s

passion. By His wounds, we are healed. By His wounds and by His rising again, we have peace. And that's something the world can't give us. We have the glad confidence of the forgiveness of sins and the joyful hope of the resurrection to eternal life. And, not only does Christ give us peace, which the world cannot, but He also gives it in a different way than the world gives its sort of peace.

St. John writes, *“Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I also am sending you.” After He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit! If you forgive any people's sins, they have been forgiven; if you retain any people's sins, they have been retained”* (John 20:21-23).

With these words, Jesus instituted the Office of the Holy Ministry and entrusted to it the responsibility of speaking publicly, in His stead, for the forgiveness of sins. The Apostles and our pastors today speak forth the forgiveness of Christ. When they speak within their office, such as in the Divine Service or in private confession and absolution, that our sins are forgiven and that we may depart in peace – they truly are, and we truly can. This is totally different than how the world works. In the world, if we want peace, we have to make it. Christ won us a peace the world can't, and He gives it in a way the world won't: freely. He gives forgiveness to us freely through His Sacraments, through the Means of Grace, and He constantly reassures us by sending pastors to speak His forgiveness in His stead.

This authority to forgive sins in the stead of Christ, what we know from the Catechism as the Office of the Keys, isn't the sole property of the pastoral office, but it is given by Christ to His Church. Jesus teaches us this in Matthew 18, where the authority to bind and loose sins is given to the congregation as a whole. The pastor is called to speak publicly in the stead of Christ and on behalf of the congregation. In our personal lives, however, when our neighbour sins against us – or we, them – and the words of Christ's forgiveness are spoken, at that moment, sins are truly forgiven. When we forgive our Christian friend because Christ forgives us or they assure us that we are forgiven because of Christ, that is true and valid in heaven, and that gives us peace, too. This means that God is not up in the sky looking to smite us but looks down upon us in love and smiles upon us.

By His resurrection, Christ brings us peace the world cannot give. In Him, the sins which formerly would've seen us eternally condemned in hell are forgiven. By Him our bodies will be raised anew and we shall live in eternal joy – and that is something the world can't give.

Children's Message:

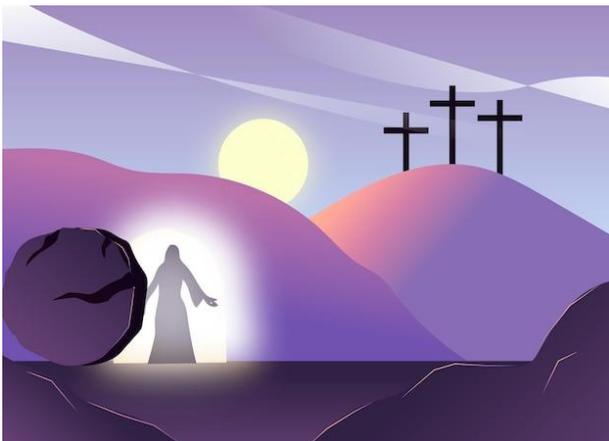
In today's first Bible reading, Acts 4:32-35, we learn about what happened with Jesus' followers shortly after His resurrection. Jesus had earlier gathered His closest followers and taught, corrected, and loved them. After Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, these followers and other believers came together to share the message of God's love.

Jesus' followers were telling everyone about Jesus rising from the dead. This was amazing, wonderful news. Then, the Bible says, "*great good will rested on them all.*" This great good will was the love of God. God's love poured out on these believers as their faith in Jesus grew. Jesus' death on the cross and rising from the dead makes us friends with God. This is good will - a wonderful gift of God.

Did you hear how God's love caused the believers to act toward one another? They "*possessed everything in common,*" "*there was no one among them who was in need,*" and the things they had were "*distributed to each one according to the need he had.*" They shared everything. They didn't hold onto possessions.

This is how it is with us in the Church. Because Jesus loves us, we realise that we have received gift after gift from God, and we want to share. As we share the message of Jesus while sharing what we have with others, things work right. People learn about Jesus, knowing how much He's gifted them.

Dear Jesus, thank You for giving us eternal life by dying and rising. Help us freely share with others. Amen.



WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

14 April 3 Easter	21 April 4 Easter	28 April 5 Easter
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 LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am LOWOOD HC	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am MARBURG LR
Sunday, 14 April		
READINGS: Acts 3:11-21;	1 John 3:1-7;	Luke 24:36-49
HYMNS: 90 323 497 (294 839) 105		
Sunday, 21 April		
READINGS: Acts 4:1-12;	1 John 3:16-24;	John 10:11-18
HYMNS: 391 154 381 (161 289) 390		
Sunday, 28 April		
READINGS: Acts 8:26-40;	1 John 4:1-11;	John 15:1-8
HYMNS: 164 51 394 (840 291) 783		

Wednesday, 10 April, 10.00am. Women's Guild at Bethlehem Toowoomba. Opening Devotion: Leanne. Choose a Bible verse from Numbers 20-23. Item of Interest: Something pink.

Tuesday, 16 April, 7.30pm. Men's Fellowship at Trinity Oakey.

BIBLE STUDIES:

Lowood: Thursday, 18 April, 10.00am.

Greenwood: Thursday, 25 April 7.30pm.

Oakey/Aubigny: Friday, 26 April 7.30pm.

Toowoomba: Sunday, 28 April, 8.00am.

Pastor is putting together an order for the *Lutheran Service Book*. At our AGMs, it was discussed if we could begin using hymns out of this hymnbook and gradually moving to it, as the Lutheran Hymnbook we now use is out of print and unavailable for purchase. If any individuals/congregations wish to order a copy, please get these orders to pastor by 21 April. The current price for the hymnbooks is about \$70.00, but it could be cheaper with bulk purchases. Also note that there are 2 editions. A regular, soft-covered edition about the size of our hymnbook, and also a larger hardcover edition with larger print. Pastor has a copy of both and will bring them along to worship services over the coming weeks if you wish to look at them before deciding which one to purchase.