

**Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,**  
**ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKY**  
23<sup>rd</sup> March     Third Sunday in Lent

**HYMNS:** 51 358 831 333 839 79

**INTROIT:** Psalm 85

LORD, You have been favourable to Your land. You have brought Jacob back from captivity.

You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people. You have covered all their sin. You have taken back all Your fury. You have turned away from Your fierce anger.

Restore us, O God, You who save us! Withhold Your indignation toward us! Will You be angry with us for ever? Will You prolong Your anger through all generations?

Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You? Show us Your mercy, O LORD, and grant us Your salvation!

Let me hear what God, the LORD, will speak! For He will promise peace to His people, to His devout people. However, let them not become foolish again!

Surely His salvation is near those who fear Him, that glory may dwell in our land.

Mercy and truth have met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Truth will sprout up from the earth, and righteousness will look down from heaven.

The LORD will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its produce.

Righteousness will go before Him, to prepare a way for His footsteps.

**COLLECT:** O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

*Welcome to all worshipping with us today!*

Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.

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

**READINGS:** Ezekiel 33:7-20 The Watchman's Duty.

1 Corinthians 10:1-13 These things happened as lessons for us.

Luke 13:1-9 Unless you repent, you will all perish.

### **Ezekiel 33:7-20**

<sup>7</sup> “As for you, son of man, I have appointed you as a watchman for the family of Israel. You shall listen to what I say and give them a warning from Me!

<sup>8</sup> When I tell a wicked person, ‘You wicked person, you will certainly die!’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked person to turn from his way, that wicked person will die in his wickedness, but I shall hold you responsible for his death.

<sup>9</sup> However, if you warn a wicked person to turn from his way, and he has not turned from his way, he will die because of his sin. However, you yourself will have saved your own life.

<sup>10</sup> “As for you, son of man, tell the family of Israel, ‘This is what you have been saying: “Our wrongdoings and our sins are weighing us down. We are wasting away because of them. How, then, can we live?”’

<sup>11</sup> “Tell them, ‘As surely as I live,’ declares the Lord GOD, ‘I certainly take no pleasure in the death of a wicked person. Rather, I take pleasure in the wicked person’s turning from his way that he may live. Turn back! Turn back from your evil ways! Why, then, will you die, family of Israel?’

<sup>12</sup> “As for you, son of man, tell your countrymen, ‘The righteousness of a righteous person will not deliver him on the day when he rebels. On the day when a wicked person turns from his wickedness, he will not stumble because of his wickedness. The righteous person will not be able to live because of his righteousness on the day when he sins. <sup>13</sup> When I promise a righteous person that he will certainly live, and he then trusts in his own righteousness and commits evil, none of his righteous deeds will be remembered. Rather, he will die because of his evil, which he has committed. <sup>14</sup> When I tell a wicked person, “You will certainly die,” and he then turns away from his sin and does what is just and right, <sup>15</sup> if the wicked person returns the security for a loan, makes restitution for what he has stolen, lives by the Statutes of life and does not commit evil, then he will certainly live. He will not die. <sup>16</sup> None of his sins, which he has committed, will be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right. He will certainly live.’

<sup>17</sup> “However, your countrymen are saying, ‘The Way of the Lord is not just,’ when it is their own way that is not just. <sup>18</sup> When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and commits evil, he will die because of it. <sup>19</sup> When a wicked person turns away from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he will live because of it. <sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, you are saying, ‘The Way of the Lord is not just.’ You family of Israel, I shall judge each of you according to his own ways.”

## 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

<sup>1</sup> I want you to know, fellow-Christians, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea. <sup>2</sup> They were all baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. <sup>3</sup> They all ate the same spiritual food <sup>4</sup> and they all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that accompanied them, and that Rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup> Yet God was not pleased with most of them. For **they were scattered over the desert.** <sup>6</sup> Now, these things happened as examples for us, that we might not **covet** what is evil as they coveted them. <sup>7</sup> Do not be idolaters, as some of them were, as the Scripture has said, “**The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to play!**”! <sup>8</sup> Let us not sin sexually as some of them did! Twenty-three thousand fell on one day. <sup>9</sup> Let us not put Christ to a test, as some of them did! They were destroyed by snakes. <sup>10</sup> Do not grumble, as some of them grumbled! The angel of death destroyed them. <sup>11</sup> These things happened to them to give examples to others and were written down to warn us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come. <sup>12</sup> Therefore, the one who thinks that he is standing firm should beware that he does not fall. <sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to all human beings. However, God is faithful. He will not allow you to be tested beyond what you can bear. Rather, when you are tested, He will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

## Luke 13:1-9

<sup>1</sup> At that time some people were present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. <sup>2</sup> Jesus answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? <sup>3</sup> I tell you, no. However, unless you repent, you too will all perish in a similar way. <sup>4</sup> Or do you think that those eighteen who were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them were guiltier than all the other people who were living in Jerusalem were? <sup>5</sup> I tell you, no; but, unless you repent, you will all perish in the same way.”

<sup>6</sup> Jesus told them this parable: “A man had a fig tree that had been planted in his vineyard. He came looking for fruit on it but did not find any. <sup>7</sup> He told the man who worked the vineyard, ‘Look here! For the last three years I have been coming here looking for fruit on this fig tree and have not been finding any. Therefore, cut it down! Why does it keep using up the ground?’

<sup>8</sup> “However, the man answered him, ‘Sir, allow it to stand this year also, until I dig around it and put fertiliser on it! <sup>9</sup> If the tree bears fruit in future, fine. However, if it does not, you will cut it down.’”

# THE GOOD NEWS OF A SAVIOUR WHO GIVES US A NEW BEGINNING

Sermon for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent 2025

Genesis 6:1-8

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 Genesis 6:1-8: **When mankind began to become numerous on the surface of the earth, daughters were born to them. <sup>2</sup> The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful and married whatever women they chose. <sup>3</sup> Then the LORD said: “My Spirit will not struggle for ever with human beings because of their errors. They are sinful human nature. However, they will still live for a hundred and twenty years.”**

**<sup>4</sup> There were giants on the earth in those days, as well as later, when the sons of God had intercourse with the daughters of men, who gave birth to children by them. These were the heroes who were famous men from time long ago.**

**<sup>5</sup> The LORD saw that the people on the earth were very wicked and that every tendency of the thoughts in their hearts was nothing but evil all the time. <sup>6</sup> The LORD regretted that He had made mankind on the earth and felt grieved in His heart. <sup>7</sup> The LORD said: “I shall wipe from the face of the ground the people whom I have created, both people, cattle, creeping things and birds of the sky, because I am sorry that I have made them.”**

**<sup>8</sup> However, the LORD regarded Noah kindly.**

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

Dear friends in Christ,

We are all familiar with the adage, “Life was not meant to be easy.” Well, it was, until sin infected the world. Ever since Satan tempted our first parents, there has been trouble in this world, making life extremely difficult at times. Even living our spiritual lives can be difficult, and we are told that we enter the kingdom of heaven through much tribulation.<sup>1</sup> Pressure, hardship, and opposition are to be expected by God’s people on their earthly journey toward their full experience of His heavenly kingdom.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 14:22

So, have you ever felt as if things had hit rock bottom? Have there been times when you think things could not get any worse? It could be because of the circumstances around you. It could be because of what’s been going on within you, or it could be family issues, financial issues, business issues—all sorts of things that crowd around you, strangling you so much that the light begins to fade. If none of you have ever found yourselves in such a situation, then be thankful—*because it can happen to anyone*.

In our text from Genesis, in the days of Noah, such a time had come—not just for him but also for mankind. Things had hit rock bottom. This morning’s text traces the developments that led to God’s decision to send the flood. The Sethites, the people of God through whom the promised Messiah would come, had until now remained separate from the unbelieving Cainites. Now, however, they began to drift from their loyalty to the true God and draw closer to their heathen neighbours. Moses writes, “**The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful and married whatever women they chose.**” If the “**sons of God**” were Sethite men, then by contrast, the “**daughters of men**” were *unbelieving women*. These Sethites had not made faith a priority in their marriages and families but married whichever “**daughters of men**” appealed to them. When contemplating marriage, the most important of human relationships, the Sethites pushed their faith and their godly heritage into the background. When looking for a prospective wife, they didn’t ask this question: “*Will this woman help to make my home a place of godly instruction?*” Instead, they asked only the question that to them was the most important: “*Is she good-looking?*” And as faith was put to the side in families and homes, it went to the wayside for nearly all humanity. We know that a living faith shows itself in works<sup>2</sup>—and the lack of faith at that time showed itself in callousness, hedonism, and violence.<sup>3</sup>

In the early days of mankind’s history, things had become so bad that we read, “**The LORD regretted that He had made mankind on the earth and felt grieved in His heart.**” Human emotions express the pain that God experienced when He reflected on the total corruption of humankind by sin. A new beginning was needed. But if you were to look around at the world at that time, it would have been natural to wonder whether a new beginning was even possible—or if things had already gone too far. The situation looks very dire when we hear God say, “**I shall wipe from the face of the ground the people whom I have created.**”

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<sup>2</sup> James 2:14ff

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 5:19-21

This action of the LORD must *not* be seen as being heartless and vindictive; actually, it's the very opposite. The LORD would take this drastic action because He didn't want His plan for gathering His family of believers to be frustrated. Thus, we hear one word that changes everything: "**However.**" God had said, "**I shall wipe from the face of the ground the people whom I have created...**" and immediately followed up with, "**However, the LORD regarded Noah kindly.**"

What was different about Noah? Like the rest of mankind, Noah was surely a sinner, so what was different about him and the rest of mankind? The simple answer is that Noah had faith in the Lord—and the Lord counted his faith as righteousness. When Moses gives the generations of Noah, beginning with verse 9 of Genesis 6, he states, "*Noah was a righteous man.*" In the Bible, this is a courtroom term. Noah, a sinner, had been pronounced innocent by God. God's favour is His grace, His unmerited love, which faith receives. This grace not only gave Noah something he did not deserve but actually gave him *the very opposite of what he deserved.* Because of God's grace, everything changed for Noah and for mankind. A fresh start for man may have seemed impossible, but with our gracious God, *all things are possible.*<sup>4</sup> We know how the story goes on from here. The LORD said: "**I shall wipe from the face of the ground the people whom I have created, both people, cattle, creeping things and birds of the sky, because I am sorry that I have made them.**" God told Noah that because of man's wickedness, he would be destroyed by a flood. But God also promised Noah that he and his family—his wife, his three sons, and his sons' wives—would be delivered through the flood in an ark that Noah was to build. The LORD would give Noah instructions for building the ark and tell him to fill it with two of each sort of animal and with every kind of food. In faith, Noah followed God's Word.

Noah also spoke God's Word to the people around him as he waited. In his Second Letter, Peter calls Noah a "*herald of righteousness*" (2:5), but the people would not listen. So, after 120 years of preaching, building, and waiting, the time came. Noah went into the ark with his family and the animals at God's command. The Lord shut him in—and soon the storm began. It rained for forty days and forty nights. Water covered the earth, and every man and creature on land was wiped out in God's judgment. Only Noah and those with him in the ark remained.

After 150 days, the ark came to rest in the mountains of Ararat. And after another 220 days, the ground had dried to the point where Noah, his family, and the animals were able to leave the ark and embark upon a new beginning for mankind. It seems *new beginnings are possible after all.*

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 19:26

On a worldwide basis, things never again sank as low as they had in the days before the flood. Yet the underlying problem of sin remained. It was seen in Noah himself and in his family. Before long, it would be seen in man's refusal to spread across the earth as the Lord had said to do—as the people chose instead to band together and try to demonstrate their own greatness by building a tower to the heavens at Babel.

God had granted deliverance from the violence of the pre-flood era and had given mankind a fresh start. But people still found themselves confronted by sin from without and from within. *Another deliverance was needed.*

In the fullness of time, that needed deliverance was provided—as the same God who had saved Noah and his family from a sin-dominated world now took action to save mankind from sin itself, and the way He would accomplish this new deliverance would *bear a striking resemblance to the earlier deliverance.*

Just as the problem of evil had needed to be confronted at the time of the flood, so the evil of our sin could not simply be overlooked but needed to be confronted and dealt with once and for all. And just as God had earlier provided the way of rescue through the ark, He would also provide the rescue for us.

To deliver us from sin and give us a fresh start in God's grace, our Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself into death, as on the cross He experienced in our place the flood of God's righteous judgment for our sins. He bore your sins and mine—the sins of all people of all time—and let the just judgment for those sins pour over Him. For each of our thoughtless words, the waves crashed down on Him. For all our unholy thoughts, the torrents of judgment beat against Him. For all our loveless deeds, the waters rose higher and higher—until that flood of judgment took His life.

But as He took our place in that flood, He also provided an ark of salvation for us. By the power of the Gospel, through His means of grace, He brings us into the “ark” of the Holy Christian Church, where by God's grace we are sheltered in Christ Jesus and His righteousness. In this ark, we are saved from judgment and given a new beginning—with our sins taken away, and with new peace, new light, and hope that does not disappoint. ***In Christ Jesus, God has saved us from sin and given us new and everlasting life.***

In his First Letter, Peter mentions the ark, how eight persons were brought safely through water, and how “*baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*” (3:21). When God gave mankind a new beginning by saving Noah and his family in an ark through the waters of the flood, He was pointing ahead to the greater new beginning He would give us as He saves us in Christ Jesus through the waters of Holy Baptism.

Through the washing away of our sins, God has given us a cleansed conscience. In the power of Christ's resurrection, He has raised us to new life. Through the power of His Word, He keeps us in this new life—so that our life in Him is always new.

And that new life will never end. On the day when Christ comes again in glory to judge the living and dead, He will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Christ. Those who have rejected Him and the life He offers will be taken away in judgment, like the people at the time of flood. And, as in the days of Noah, those who have trusted in the Lord will remain to begin another new day together with the Lord—joining Him and all believers in Christ to live together in God's renewed creation. All things will be new—and there will never again be a need for a new beginning.

After the flood, God placed a rainbow in the sky and said the rainbow would serve as a reminder of His promise that a worldwide flood would never be repeated. From now on, look to the cross of Christ; look to His empty tomb; look to your baptism into Christ; look to the words of eternal life God has given you in Holy Scripture—and see in them God's promise to you that your sins have been dealt with once and for all and that new and everlasting life is yours, never to be taken away. As the LORD regarded Noah kindly, through His Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, He regards us kindly as well. All glory, honour, and praise be to Christ Jesus our Saviour, who makes all things new. Amen.

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

## PRAYER FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

Lord God, heavenly Father, limitless in love, and perfect in power, receive our worship and praise. Our eyes always turn to You, for without You there is no help, and with You there is no danger. Be the guardian and defender of all who lift up their hearts to You, of all who seek Your help in times of need.

We confess that we fully deserve Your wrath for breaking Your holy commandments. Therefore we thank You for Your great love in Jesus, who in His compassion and grace sacrificed Himself for our sins. With grateful hearts we praise You for His finished work: His holy life, His blessed example, His gracious teaching, His loving companionship, and His atoning death, and the place in Your kingdom that He has won for us.



Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may follow the example of Jesus, and walk in love. Grant that, as Your children, we may continue to repent of our sins, give up the ways of darkness and error, and walk in paths that are good, righteous, and true. Fill our lives with holiness, with love of Your Word, and with every grace and virtue.

Prosper and protect the work of Your Church. Give success to all who proclaim the glorious Gospel of salvation. Give conviction and faithfulness to all Your people, that they may work with zeal to gather in the harvest of Christ's redeemed people.

Rule and direct our government. Give wisdom and integrity to all in our police and armed forces, that our nation may be kept in peace, and that righteousness and justice may hold sway everywhere.

We pray for all in any need of body or soul, for all loved ones in distant places, for all who have strayed from Your truth, for all who are in temptation, for all who are suffering sickness and pain, and for all who mourn. Bless and help them according to their need. Hear their prayers. Comfort them with Your presence.

Unite in one spirit through the truth all in Your Church on earth, and finally bring us to Your joys in heaven. We pray for these things in the name of Your Son Jesus Christ, who, together with You and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



## WEEKLY ARTICLE – What is Worship Part 2

Fourth, worship is always *evangelism* or *witnessing*.

Whatever we do in worship expresses our faith so others may see. In this regard, there is a dramatic dynamic at work in worship. Our worship affects our witness, and our witness affects our worship. Lutherans see a two-way relationship between evangelism and worship. Worship affects witness, and witness affects worship. There is a closeness of faith and Lutheran worship. True worship has to do with life in faith. What happens in the worship practices is preparation, proclamation and enactment of what should happen daily. What we do on Sunday affects our daily lives, and our daily relationship with God affects our expressions of worship on Sundays.

After considering the four dimensions of worship, we now turn our attention to the four reasons for worship, which can be arranged in two pairs of relationships.

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, take time to be with Him, and 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, we worship in **obedience** to God. 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.

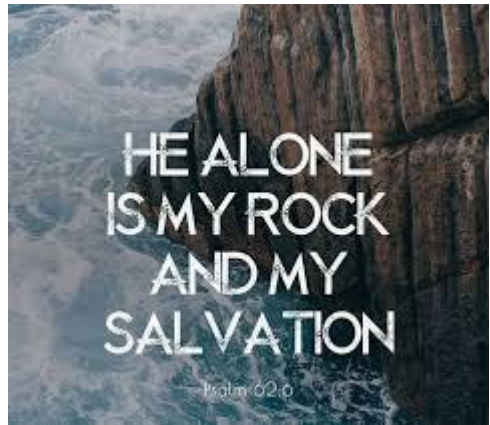
Thus, we return to the multidimensional dynamic of Lutheran worship: ***Our worship is from God to us and from us back to God.*** Our Lord speaks and we listen. The rhythm of our worship is from Him to us and then from us back to Him. He gives His gifts, and together, we receive and extol them. We build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

## Children's Message:

I'm going to ask you a question, "Who is church all about?" Jesus! That's right. When we come to church, we come to hear about Jesus.

Does it seem weird to you, then, that the first reading we hear in church most Sundays is from the Old Testament? After all, do you hear the name "Jesus" a lot in the Old Testament? Not really, no. You hear about Him a lot in the Gospel readings, but not so much in the Old Testament. So what's the Old Testament good for? Why do we read it in church?

Well, today, in our Second Reading, Paul tells us that one thing the Old Testament is good for is teaching us lessons. Let me give you an example. In the book of Numbers, the people of Israel are out in the wilderness where there's nothing to eat or drink. Do you know what God does for them? He gives them manna, this miraculous bread that comes down from heaven for them every night, and He gives them water out of a rock. But you



know what the people thought about this miraculous food and water? They didn't like it, and instead complained! So God sent snakes to bite them for rebelling against Him. Is there a lesson we can learn from that? Yes, we can learn that with everything God has given us, He will punish us if we refuse to trust Him.

Is there anything else the Old Testament is good for? Actually, all the lessons are for one greater reason. Paul tells us that our Lord Jesus was there in the Old Testament. After all, when the Israelites needed water to drink, who gave them water? Paul says it was Jesus who gave them water. And who brought them through the waters of the Red Sea to save them from the evil Egyptians? Jesus did, just like He brought you through the waters of your baptism to save you from the devil and all his angels. Actually, everything God did for His people in the Old Testament and for us today is because Jesus made us God's children again by taking our sins to the cross.

So why did God give us the Old Testament? Because it teaches us lessons that really all point to Jesus, the one church is all about. When we read the Old Testament in the future, listen for the lessons and everything Jesus has done for you.

*Thank You Jesus that even in the Old Testament, You were working to protect and save Your people. Help me to see You in Your Word. Amen.*

## WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

<b>30 March 4 Lent</b>	<b>6 April 5 Lent</b>	<b>13 April Palm Sunday</b>
10.00am TMBA HC AELC service and Parish AGM.	8.30am OAK LR (Matthew Sippel) 9.00am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR	8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR (Matthew Sippel) 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am MARBURG LR
<b>Sunday, 30 March</b>		
READINGS: Isaiah 12:1-6;                      2 Corinthians 5:16-21;                      Luke 15:1-3, 11-32		
HYMNS: 53   305   57 (part 1) (LSB: 619   LSB: 622)   159		
<b>Sunday, 6 April</b>		
READINGS: Isaiah 43:16-21;                      Philippians 3:4b-14;                      Luke 20:9-20		
HYMNS: 54   62   170 (157   320)   191		

### **MID-WEEK of LENT 4 SERVICES**

**Down's Members** – Wednesday, 26 March, Trinity Oakey Toowoomba, 7.30pm.

Our hymns for our mid-week services will be taken from the *Lutheran Service Book*. If you have a copy, please bring it along. Printed hymn sheets will be provided for those who don't.

HYMNS: 684 846 435

**Lowood/Marburg Members** – Thurs, 27 March, Our Saviour Lowood, 10.00am.

Matins Service and Bible Study, followed by a shared cuppa.

Please bring along a plate for a shared lunch after the AELC service next Sunday and also a reminder that the offering will be returned to each congregation and loose offering will go to the parish treasury.

Saturday, 5 April, 7:00pm, Young Adults & Youth (YAY) NOTE CHANGE OF DATE is on at Aubigny, with the hall open from 6:30pm. Please bring your Bible, and a plate to share, for an evening of fun, games, food, and a devotion. Any questions, please contact Matthew at [matthewsippelaelc@gmail.com](mailto:matthewsippelaelc@gmail.com).