

THE AUSTRALIAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH (AELC)

BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOURS LOWOOD, ST JOHNS AUBIGNY,

ST PAULS GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY

7 December 2025

The Second Sunday of Advent

A warm welcome to all those who are worshipping with us today!

Behold, the Messiah comes to fulfil the Law and the Prophets, and it shall be proclaimed in all of Jerusalem, "This is the prophet Jesus!" From Mount Sinai to Calvary, the Lord reveals His edicts, His decrees, and that Jesus is the very fulfilment of them all. Christ is faithful in the midst of faithlessness, humble in the midst of arrogance. He alone is the rightful Prophet, Priest, and King. Hosanna in the highest!

In preparation of worship, please prepare by

- **Praying one of the prayers found on page 308 in your LSB hymnbook**
- **Bookmarking Psalm 122 (in front of LSB hymnbook) for the Introit.**

THE LIGHTING OF THE SECOND ADVENT CANDLE

R: I will send My messenger to prepare the way for Me.

C: Then the Lord you are looking for will suddenly come to His temple.

ALL: Thank You, Lord Jesus, for coming to bring God's salvation. Help us to prepare the way for Your coming. Amen.

Hymns (LSB): 347 344 346 738

Introit: Psalm 72:1-7, found in the front of your LSB hymnbook.

Gradual: Zechariah 9:9; Psalm 118:26

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion,

Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem.

Behold, your King is coming to you;

Righteous and having salvation.

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

From the house of the Lord we bless you.

Collect: Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

The First Reading: Isaiah 11:1–10

¹There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

²And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

³And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,

⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

⁵Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

⁶The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.

⁷The cow and the bear shall graze;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

⁹They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—
of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

The Second Reading: Romans 15:4–13

⁴Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

⁸For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles,
and sing to your name.”

¹⁰And again it is said,

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.”

¹¹And again,

“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,
and let all the peoples extol him.”

¹²And again Isaiah says,

“The root of Jesse will come,
even he who arises to rule the Gentiles;
in him will the Gentiles hope.”

¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

The Gospel Reading from Matthew 3:1–12

¹In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ²“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” ³For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’”

⁴Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

REPENT! FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND

Sermon for the 2nd Sunday in Advent, 2025

Matthew 3:1-12

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

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel reading read before, Matthew 3:1-12:

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

Dear friends in Christ,

John began preaching in the desert country near the Dead Sea along the Jordan River, a landscape that was barren, wild and mountainous. Wearing **“a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist,”** and eating **“locusts and wild honey,”** his message was **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”**

Usually, the first thing people notice about John is how unusual his food and clothing are. However, wearing this type of clothing wasn’t unique to John. Many years earlier, the prophet Elijah had worn the same kind of attire.¹

Again, the wild honey John ate was plentiful in the desert region, and locusts were a common food among poor people when nothing better was available. Once more, this isn't anything unusual. The Law of Moses specifically told the Israelites: *“You may eat any kind of locust, katydid, cricket or grasshopper”* (Lev. 11:22).

Anyhow, the way John dressed and what he ate were not as important as the message he preached. Matthew identified John as the one **“who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight,’”** and his message, **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,”** echoed the call of all the Old Testament prophets, and soon Jesus Himslef would also be calling His people to repentance.

To repent literally means to *‘change one’s mind.’* The full definition of repentance includes recognising sin as an act of disobedience to God’s commandments, feeling truly sorry for sin, having the sincere desire to amend

¹ 2 Kings 1:8

sinful ways, and trusting in the Lord alone for forgiveness and salvation; furthermore, it is not a one-time act. In his 95 Theses, Luther declared that *the entire life of a Christian is to be characterised by repentance*, and in his *Small Catechism*, Luther tells us that our baptism should remind us to drown our old Adam by daily contrition and repentance.

John's call upon Israel to repent was a plea for them to turn and be converted, to become once again the flock of the divine Shepherd. The Israel of John's day was a flock of lost sheep, so John was calling them away from God's final judgment towards conversion and true faith in the God from whom they had wandered. By their unbelief, they had become like the exiled Israelites who had fallen away. He told them **"the kingdom of heaven is at hand."** "Kingdom" refers not to a geographical location but to God's act of ruling. God's rule was near in Christ. That was the thrust of John's message. The promised Saviour had entered the world. Jesus was about to begin His public ministry. After living a life of perfect obedience to all of God's commandments, He would willingly lay down His life on Calvary's cross to atone for the sins of the world. On the third day He would rise again, proving that God's kingdom had triumphed over the kingdom of Satan. These momentous events were about to unfold soon.

The people needed to repent of all the misconceptions they had about the Saviour. If they held a wrong idea of who the Saviour was supposed to be, then they would not appreciate the Saviour for who He truly is. If they're looking for the wrong things in a Messiah, *then they would not recognise Him when He appeared*. Remember, John was to **"prepare the way of the Lord."** He did this by teaching them the true nature of their sinfulness, so that they would see their need for the Saviour; and he prepares them by teaching them who the Saviour is, and what He will do.

We observe this in the incident when the Pharisees and Sadducees confronted John. Both groups had their own ideas about what the Saviour would be like. Aside from their shared opposition to Jesus and His message, they had little in common. The Pharisees believed they were righteous in God's eyes because they strictly kept the Law, even adding many of their own regulations to the Law. They thought they were not even close to the point where God would condemn them. If others wanted to repent, that was fine, but they felt they had no need to do so. The Sadducees, on the other hand, did not believe in the resurrection or angels. Their focus was solely on this life and this world, so they showed no interest in the kingdom of heaven that John was proclaiming.

Why then did the Pharisees and Sadducees come out to John to be baptised by him?

Simply because they saw all the people flocking out to John, and *did not want to be left out*. They were the religious leaders of the Jews, and they hoped to hold on to their power and prestige by going along with the crowd and not openly opposing such a popular messenger of God. But they were not able to deceive John. He said to them, **“You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”**

Calling them a brood of vipers was like calling them children of the devil. The **“wrath to come”** from which they were trying to flee is described by John as a fire of divine judgment. **“I baptise you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.”**

Just as vipers or snakes would scurry away from a brush fire or a burning stubble field, so these people were trying to escape God’s judgment by going through the motions of baptism, but they would not succeed. To be baptised would only have increased their guilt before God, just as unworthy communicants are warned that they only bring God’s judgement upon themselves.²

These Pharisees and Sadducees needed to understand that salvation does not come from their rules or even their ancestry. They had to stop saying, *“The Messiah will save us because of who we are and what we do.”* Their thinking had to change so that they could genuinely say, *“The Messiah will save us because of who He is and what He has done.”* Acknowledge your sin and unworthiness and trust solely in what Christ has done—that’s the proper way to prepare for the Saviour’s coming.

“The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” How must we see these words?

If we see in them a dire warning to shape up and be sorry now, because when the kingdom of heaven comes, we are going to be in big trouble if we haven’t repented, then okay, but we must not miss *the real point* John is trying to make.

² 1 Corinthians 11:27-30

John isn't using the coming kingdom as a threat to make people fall into line; no, instead, he's preaching glorious news. **"The kingdom of heaven is at hand."** Why? *Because the King is about to arrive!* John has been preparing the way for the Saviour who is no less than the Lord Himself, and the Lord Himself is about to make an appearance. In fact, the very next verse after our text today says: *"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John"* (Matt. 3:13). Jesus is about to appear and be baptised. After preparing the crowds for the arrival of the Saviour, John will soon point at the Saviour—in the flesh—and cry out, *"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29).

Dear friends, **"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."** That is, let go of all your preconceived ideas about who you think Jesus should be, and instead, *rejoice in who He already is.* He is the only Son of God, who became flesh and was born of the Virgin Mary, to be our Saviour. As the Saviour, He has carried all our sins to the cross and endured God's judgement for them there. He has died our death and risen again, thus conquering death and earning salvation for us, and He has promised that He will return in glory to bring us to eternal life. That's who our Saviour is, according to His own Word, and yet many wish for Him to be something else instead.

That's exactly the temptation that's always near to our sinful flesh. Many want Jesus to be a Saviour different from who He truly is, instead of trusting Him as the Saviour He is. Our sinful desires try to put Jesus in a box and transform Him into a messiah that suits *our preferences*; each of our desires attempts to limit the holy Son of God, making Him less than He truly is.

Think of the Pharisees and their belief that heaven belongs to them because of what they do. So many have that Pharisee-ism that says: *"I am saved—at least in part—by what I do or who I am. God looks at me, and He sees something good. This goodness He sees may be my works or my intentions. It may be my feelings and yearnings. It may be the decision I have made to follow Him. I'm not sure what it is, but there is something about me that triggers His love and Jesus' salvation for me."* This all sounds pretty decent and sincere, but look at it again. If you say, *"I am saved, at least in part because of what I do or who I am,"* then you are in effect saying, *"Jesus didn't quite do enough for me by coming to earth, dying on the cross, and rising again to save me. I have to add to His death and resurrection and help by doing my part."* Can you see what

happens? The desire to play a part in our own salvation actually ends up robbing Jesus of His glory and taking some of it for ourselves, and if we persist in believing that our works contribute to our salvation, then we are certainly not going to listen to the Lord who declares “*For by grace you have been saved through faith. This is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, that no one may boast*” (Ephesians 2:8-9). If anyone trusts in their own works, then they will miss the Saviour who has done all the work. Anyone who thinks that they contribute to their salvation ***needs to repent***.

Then there is the Sadducee in us who says, “*All I want out of Jesus is help for this life. If He helps me when I’m in a pickle, or cures me of my ailments, or keeps me wealthy and prosperous and out of trouble, well, that’s the Saviour I’m looking for. I’m not really worried about the final judgement, the resurrection of the dead, heaven and hell or eternal life. I want a Saviour who’s going to show results here and now.*”

If this is the Saviour anyone is looking for, then they will pass right by Jesus. He has declared that He’s sacrificed Himself to make us holy, not popular or successful in the world. He has warned that the world will persecute the Church.³ He says that He disciplines His children and even uses weakness and affliction to strengthen their faith.⁴ If anyone is looking for a saviour to make this world a paradise, they will go right past Jesus. Rather, He has come to deliver us from this sinful world to everlasting paradise. Anyone who lives only for the here and now needs to change their minds while there is still time, in other words, ***repent***.

Finally, there is that old Adam in all of us who just doesn’t want to be righteous, that just wants to hold on to sin. Have you ever had the thought, “*I know that Jesus loves me so much, but I’m going to continue to hold on to this sin for a number of reasons. It makes my life easier; I’m afraid to live without it, I like it, I’m addicted to it. At any rate, the Saviour tells me that He’ll save me anyway.*” This thinking is quite popular, but it’s not the Jesus the Scriptures proclaim. God’s Word tells us to “*put to death your members, which are on the earth: sexual sin, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry*” (Col. 3:5). Jesus has borne all our sins to the cross and suffered for them there. He did not go to the cross to let us hold on to such poison; He died to set us free!

³ John 15:18

⁴ Proverbs 3:12; Hebrews 12:6

Can you see? To hold on to sin now is to say that we want a Saviour who dies for most of our sins, but not all of them. We must change our minds while there's still time, in other words, *repent*.

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Christmas is only a couple of short weeks away. Look forward to that day. See Mary as she cradles that newborn Child. The King is born in Bethlehem - the shepherds gather around Him because they know He is their King. However, this King is just as near to us today as He was to His parents and those shepherds. He comes near to us today in His Word and Sacraments. He does not yet come with **“His winnowing shovel”** to sweep the sinner into judgment. Now, today, He comes with grace, He comes to forgive us all our sins, to strengthen our faith, and to prepare us for everlasting life.

The King is here to forgive us all our sins. Lay them all on Jesus. Every sin we have committed in the past, those we commit today, and those we commit tomorrow—all are forgiven if we repent. And all this is not because of who we are or what we do, but because of *who Jesus is*.

Jesus has saved us from all our sins. He has made the path straight for us to enter His eternal kingdom. Because He is at hand, all our sins have been forgiven. We do not have to fear the coming judgment; instead, in this sin-stained world, we lift up our heads and rejoice, for our salvation is drawing closer. Amen.

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

Prayer of the Church for the Second Sunday of Advent

Merciful God, You remember Your covenant forever, for a thousand generations. Teach us to remember Your wondrous works and seek Your strength and presence continually.

O Lord, the voice of Your prophet broke the silence to prepare the way for Your Son. Give Your people the courage to speak Christ to the nations and teach those still in darkness and death about His gift of light and life. Keep us from being ashamed of the Gospel or intimidated by others' opinions.

Gracious Father, You give Your Word to the Church for encouragement and instruction in endurance. Continue to instruct us by Your Word, that we may abound in hope.

Almighty God, You preserved Jesse's faithful line by the incarnation of Your Son. Give families and individuals strength to faithfully fulfil their vocations to love and forgive one another, that we may be trained up in Your fear, love and trust.

Merciful Lord, Your Son rules over creation with justice and righteousness. Endow those in authority with the desire and ability to protect the innocent, punish the wicked and work for the common welfare.

Holy God, St. John spoke the promise of healing to the broken and wounded. Give to all afflicted in body or mind the riches of Your grace, healing according to Your will, and grace to carry them through the day of their trouble.

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, and make ready the way of Your only begotten Son, who comes to us this day in His Word, and grant us all things needful and keep from us all things harmful to us and to our salvation, that with confidence in Your will, we may say "amen" to our prayers and live in contentment and peace; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Article: Article: Digital Worship Fatigue

A few years back, when the pandemic arrived, churches around the world had no choice but to pivot to online worship. Although churches were empty, ways were found to still serve the people. Remember how the AELC pre-recorded services and posted them online. For a time, that worked.

The AELC was not the only church that recorded its services. Many churches worldwide that had never considered online ministry suddenly found themselves reaching people far beyond their usual walls. Some pastors even reported record numbers. Views were counted in the hundreds or thousands. Sermons were being streamed far and wide, and some even began to wonder if this was the new normal for the church.

Today, the enthusiasm has waned. While online worship remains a tool, it no longer carries the same momentum. Pew Research⁵ notes that while 92% of regular churchgoers watched services online at least once during the height of the pandemic, fewer than half continued the practice consistently only a year later. The novelty has worn off. What felt innovative in 2020 feels thin in 2025. Pastors who once celebrated thousands of views now quietly admit that only a fraction remains. The consumer culture of digital church—easy to start, easy to stop—has proven unsustainable.

The truth is clear: the surge in online participation was not a revolution. It was a survival strategy. And now, people are tired of digital substitutes.

Online worship has its place, but a screen can never replicate a sanctuary.

A livestream delivers content—a sermon, a hymn, a prayer, but worship was never meant to be just transferring information. Worship is embodied. It's the sound of voices coming together, the atmosphere of prayer, and the physical act of gathering.

A screen strips away much of that. You can watch the music, but you can't feel the vibrations of voices filling the room. You can hear the sermon, but you don't sense the collective weight of people leaning into God's Word together.

Community also suffers. In-person worship allows for chance conversations and eye contact that reassures someone they are not alone. Online services cannot reproduce those sacred moments.

Even the physical act of showing up matters. Walking into a church building is a declaration: *"I'm part of this body. I'm here to meet with God and His people."* Sitting at home in pyjamas doesn't carry the same meaning.

⁵ The Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping the world, including religion.

For a season, digital worship was necessary. But over time, the absence of sacred space left many believers spiritually thin. It turns out that screens are a weak substitute for sanctuaries.

The writer of Hebrews captured it perfectly: “*Do not neglect to meet together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encourage one another*” (Hebrews 10:25). Screens are helpful. Sacred spaces are essential.

One of the great challenges of digital worship is simple: distraction.

In a sanctuary, most distractions are limited. A phone may buzz or a child may fidget, but the environment itself is designed to focus attention on God.

At home, distractions are everywhere. The doorbell rings. The dog barks. The washing machine buzzer goes off. A text message pops up during the sermon. Worship competes with a dozen other voices.

Even the screen itself invites divided attention. As you watch the worship service on your computer, the temptation to check email, scroll social media, or glance at the news is constant. The average online viewer rarely gives full, uninterrupted focus for more than a few minutes.

Children in the home add another layer. Parents attempting to watch often juggle breakfast, playtime, or squabbles. What may feel like a calm experience in a pew becomes chaos on the couch.

The result? Worship becomes background noise rather than a sacred encounter. Instead of being immersed in Scripture, prayer, and song, people drift in and out. Some “attend” a full service without truly engaging a single moment.

Pastors know this struggle. Many have received messages like, “I loved the part about forgiveness,” only to realise the person tuned in for five minutes and missed the rest. Online numbers may look strong, but engagement is shallow.

Distraction is not a minor issue—it undercuts the very purpose of worship. Without focus, the heart is rarely transformed.

Online worship is undeniably convenient. With a few clicks, you can join a service from your living room, your car, or even a beach chair. For those who are sick, travelling, or homebound, this accessibility is a blessing.

But convenience comes with a cost. What begins as a short-term solution can become a long-term substitute. Healthy members often start choosing the easiest path—watching online instead of gathering in person.

When worship is reduced to convenience, commitment weakens. Church becomes optional, something to fit in around errands, sports, or weekend plans. It shifts from a central rhythm of life to a side activity when time allows.

This decline affects more than attendance. Giving drops. Volunteering decreases. Fewer people step into leadership roles. Online worshippers rarely serve on committees, or help in other ways. Their engagement is passive rather than active.

Over time, convenience breeds complacency. A casual click replaces the discipline of showing up. A sermon on screen replaces fellowship with others. The church shifts from a community of belonging to a product to be consumed.

Convenience is not always the enemy. But when it becomes the norm, it erodes the very heart of commitment. The easy option eventually costs the church dearly.

The digital church is not going away. It still has a role to play in ministry. The key is learning how to use it *wisely*.

Online services provide access to people who cannot attend in person—shut-ins, the chronically ill, or those travelling or living far away. For seekers who are hesitant to step into a building, a livestream can be a gentle first step toward faith.

The danger comes when churches view digital worship as a permanent replacement. No screen can sustain the long-term spiritual health of a believer. Christianity is designed to be lived in community, not isolation.

The better approach is a both/and strategy. Use digital tools as a supplement, not a substitute. Encourage members to take advantage of online services when necessary, but call them back consistently to embodied community.

Digital platforms can also enhance ministry beyond Sunday morning. They can distribute midweek devotionals, small group resources, and discipleship content. In that sense, the internet becomes a tool for depth rather than just convenience.

But the priority must remain clear: the gathered church is essential. Digital ministry extends the church's reach, but it cannot replace the church's core.

The goal should never be to build a digital-only congregation. The goal is to leverage every tool available to bring people together in person, where worship is richest and discipleship is strongest.

Screens are useful servants. But the sanctuary remains home.

Digital worship fatigue is real. The decline in online participation is not a sign of failure, but a reminder of how God designed His people. Worship is not just content; it is community. It is not only heard; it is felt.

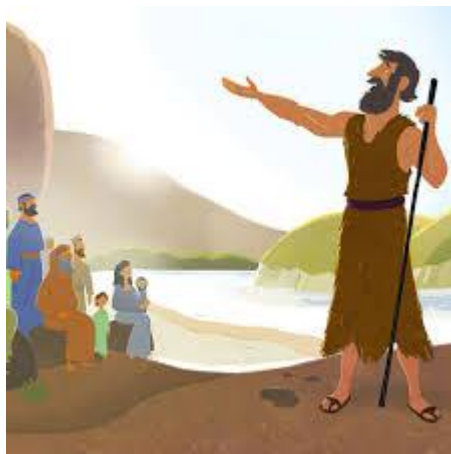
The church must not abandon digital tools, but it must place them in their proper place—useful, but never ultimate. The greater call is to bring people back into the house of God, where presence matters more than pixels.

The psalmist declared, “*I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord’*” (Psalm 122:1). That joy cannot be livestreamed. It must be lived.

Children's Address:

Do you have visitors coming to your house for Christmas? What will you do to get ready for those visitors? Will you help bake Christmas cookies? Will you help clean the house? What if a king was coming to visit? You'd want your house to be very clean, and you'd bake the very best cookies ever made!

During Advent, the weeks before Christmas, we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth. We'll welcome Him as our King. Jesus was born in Bethlehem. When He grew up, it was time for Him to start healing, helping people, and teaching about the kingdom of God. So before Jesus began His ministry, God sent a man named John to help people get ready to welcome Jesus as their King and Saviour. They didn't have to clean, bake, or decorate. To prepare for Jesus, John told the people to repent. To "repent" means to be sorry for your sins.



That's the best way to prepare and welcome Jesus the King. When we feel sorry for our sins, we understand we need a Saviour. We need Jesus! During Advent, we prepare to welcome Jesus by feeling regret for our sins. We ask God to forgive us because Jesus died on the cross for us. That's why Jesus was born in Bethlehem. He came to die on the cross and rise from the dead for us.

John told people to repent. Then he told them, "*Bear fruit in keeping with repentance*" (Matt. 3:8). They should live as people whose sins are forgiven, people who follow Jesus. We want to live that way too. We love Jesus and follow Him. Our sins are forgiven, and we want to forgive and be kind to others. Baking cookies and cleaning and decorating for Christmas are fun, but welcoming Jesus, our King, really means remembering He came to die on the cross to take away our sins. Our sins are forgiven, and now we want to live as His followers. That's preparing to celebrate Jesus' birthday!

Jesus, we are sorry for our sins. Thank You for dying on the cross so that our sins are forgiven. We welcome you as our King and look forward to Your birthday! Amen.

Verse of the Day

Alleluia. Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight; all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia.

Luke 3:4b, 6

SERVICE TIMES

2 MID-WEEK ADVENT	14 December 3 Advent	3 MID-WEEK ADVENT
Tuesday, 9 December, 7.00pm. LOWOOD. Wednesday, 10 December, 7.30pm, OAKEY.	10.00am Downs Children's Christmas Tree Program at Aubigny (shared brunch after service) 7.00pm Marburg/Lowood Children's Christmas Tree Program at Marburg	Tuesday, 9 December, 7.00pm. LOWOOD. Wednesday, 10 December, 7.30pm, OAKEY.

Tuesday/Wednesday 2 Mid-Week Advent

HYMNS: (LSB) 352 933 338 385

Sunday, 14 December

Children's Christmas Services

Tuesday/Wednesday 3 Mid-Week Advent

HYMNS: (LSB) 362 933 354 613

Sunday, 21 December

READINGS: Isaiah 7:10-17; Romans 1:1-17; Matthew 1:18-25

HYMNS: 338 357 814 (610 628) 361

Saturday 13th December, 1pm. Fellowship afternoon at Bethlehem Toowoomba in the hall. Please bring something for a shared afternoon tea,

December Christmas Schedule

Sunday, 21 December, 7.30pm. Carols Evening at Oakey.

Tuesday, 23 December, 7.00pm. Carols Evening at Lowood.

Wednesday, 24 December, 7.30pm. Christmas Eve HC service at Greenwood.

Thursday, 25 December, Christmas Day

8.00am LOWOOD HC

8.30am OAK LR

9.00am GRN LR

9.00am TMBA LR

9.30am AUB LR

WEEKLY READINGS

Sunday, December 7	Genesis 20-22, Romans 8	<i>Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (2017)</i> pp. 16-18, The Creed
Monday, December 8	Genesis 23-24	
Tuesday, December 9	Genesis 25-26, Romans 9	
Wednesday, December 10	Genesis 27-28	
Thursday, December 11	Genesis 29-30, Romans 10	
Friday, December 12	Genesis 31-32	
Saturday, December 13	Genesis 33-35, Romans 11	

AELC Member Congregations Details

Contact: ddaalc@gmail.com

Congregation	Address	Giving
Bethlehem Toowoomba	41 Buckland Street, Harristown	BSB 638-070 Account 15877094
Our Saviour Lowood	63 Prospect Street, Lowood	BSB 633-108 Account 159171487
St Johns Aubigny	2 Aubigny Crosshill Road, Aubigny	BSB 014-675 Account 388228975
St Pauls Greenwood	617 Acland-Silverleigh Road, Greenwood	BSB 638-070 Account 6918247
Trinity Marburg	19 Edmund Street, Marburg	BSB 633-000 Account 146106893
Trinity Oakey	125 Hamlyn Road, Oakey	BSB 638-070 Account 7405138

Pastor Peter Ziebell: Ph. 0407583922 Email: paziebell@gmail.com

The Church Office of the AELC: Email: ddaalc@gmail.com

About the AELC

The Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC) believes that the Holy Scriptures are the inspired, inerrant, infallible, and authoritative Word of God, and accordingly, believe that the Holy Scriptures are the sole source of what we believe, teach, and confess. We also subscribe to *The Lutheran Confessions of 1580*, *The Word Shall Stand* and *The AELC Statement of Faith* as correct expositions of Scripture, which address issues that have arisen throughout history by the Word of God. We teach nothing new and stand on Scripture alone as God's Word to us. We teach the message of Christ crucified for sinners. We teach that salvation is by God's grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone.



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