THE AUSTRALIAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH (AELC)

BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHNS AUBIGNY, ST PAULS GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY

25 January 2026
Third Sunday after the Epiphany

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

The light of Jesus dispels darkness where His Gospel is preached in purity and truth. His Word illuminates the power of the cross, uniting believers in the one Christian faith. To follow another besides Jesus is complete folly. Jesus' call to repentance and invitation to follow Him begets an immediate response. When believers are in the company of Christ Jesus, we witness that through Him demons are defeated, diseases are healed, and the almighty power of God is unconstrained.

In preparation of worship, please prepare by

- **Praying a prayer before worship found on page 308 in your LSB hymnbook**

Hymns (LSB): 903 839 845 (Tune 410 LH) 805

Verse of the Day
Alleluia. From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Alleluia.
Matthew 4:17

Stand

Invocation

R In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.** *Matthew 28:19b; [18:20]*

Hymn 903

Stand

Confession of Sins and Absolution *LSB 184-185*

R Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, asking Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness. *[Hebrews 10:22]*

Kneel/Sit

R Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C **who made heaven and earth.** *Psalm 124:8*

R I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,

C **and You forgave the guilt of my sin.** *Psalm 32:5*

R Almighty God, our maker and redeemer, we poor sinners confess unto You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against You by thought, word, and deed. Therefore, we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

C **O most merciful God, who has given Your only Son to die for us, have mercy upon us and for His sake grant us forgiveness of all our sins; and by Your Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of You and of Your will and true obedience to Your Word, to the end that by Your grace we may come to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

The Reader stands and faces the congregation

R Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy upon us and has given His only Son to die for us and for His sake forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in His name He gives power to become the children of God and has promised them His Holy Spirit. He that believes and is baptised shall be saved. Grant this, Lord, unto us all.

Mark 16:16; John 1:12

C **Amen.**

Stand

Introit & Glory to the Father

Psalm 27:1-9

1 The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?
2 When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh,
my adversaries and foes,
it is they who stumble and fall.
3 Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.
4 One thing have I asked of the LORD,
that will I seek after:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD
and to inquire in His temple.

5 For He will hide me in His shelter
in the day of trouble;
He will conceal me under the cover of His tent;
He will lift me high upon a rock.
6 And now my head shall be lifted up
above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in His tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the LORD.
7 Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud;
be gracious to me and answer me!
8 You have said, "Seek My face."
My heart says to You,
"Your face, LORD, do I seek."
9 Hide not Your face from me.
Turn not Your servant away in anger,
O You who have been my help.
Cast me not off; forsake me not,
O God of my salvation!

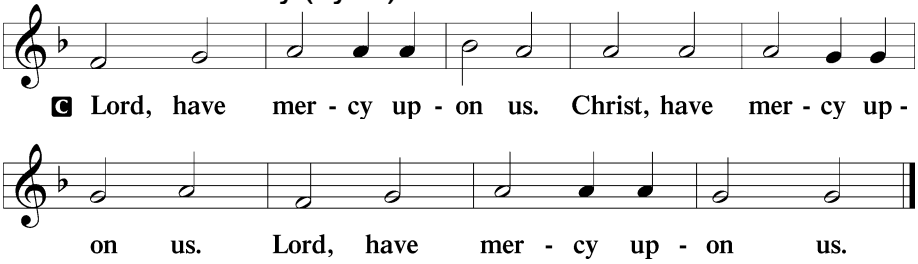
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The Gradual = Psalm 117:1-2a; 96:8

R Praise the LORD, all nations!
Extol Him, all peoples!
For great is His steadfast love toward us,
And the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name;
Bring an offering, and come into His courts!

The Lord Have Mercy (Kyrie)

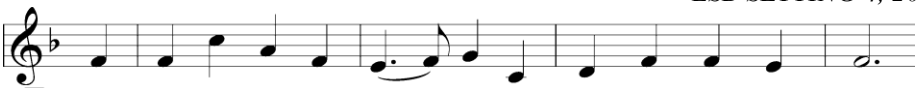
Mark 10:47



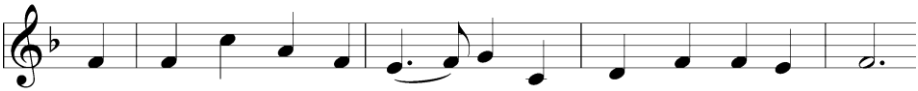
Gloria in Excelsis

R Glory be to God on high *Luke 2:14; John 1:29*

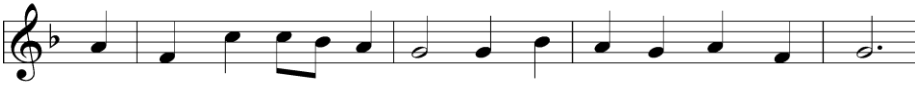
LSB SETTING 4, 204



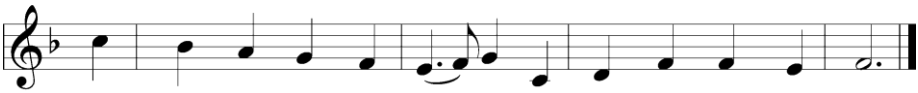
C 1 To God on high be glo - ry And peace to all the earth;
2 To You, O sole-be - got - ten, The Fa - ther's Son, we pray;
3 For You a - lone are ho - ly; You on - ly are the Lord.



Good-will from God in heav - en Pro-claimed at Je-sus' birth!
O Lamb of God, our Sav - ior, You take our sins a - way.
For - ev - er and for - ev - er, Be wor-shiped and a - dored;



We praise and bless You, Fa - ther; Your ho - ly name, we sing—
Have mer - cy on us, Je - sus; Re - ceive our heart - felt cry,
You with the Ho - ly Spir - it A - lone are Lord Most High,

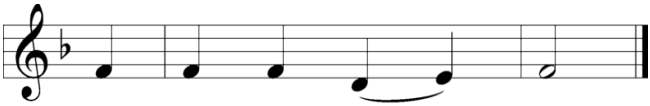


Our thanks for Your great glo - ry, Lord God, our heav'n-ly King.
Where You in pow'r are seat-ed At God's right hand on high—
In God the Fa-ther's glo - ry. "A - men!" our glad re - ply.

Text: Stephen P. Starke

Salutation and Collect of the Day

R The Lord be with you. *2 Timothy 4:22*



C And with your spir - it.

R Let us pray:

The Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities and stretch forth the hand of Your majesty to heal and defend us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Sit

First Reading **Isaiah 9:1-4**

1 There will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he
brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the
latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the nations.
2 The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shined.
3 You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.
4 For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

R This is the Word of the Lord.
C **Thanks be to God.**

Second Reading 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

10 I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you
agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same
mind and the same judgment. 11 For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people
that there is quarrelling among you, my brothers. 12 What I mean is that each one of
you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I
follow Christ." 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you
baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except
Crispus and Gaius, 15 so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name.
16 (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know
whether I baptized anyone else.) 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize but to
preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ
be emptied of its power.

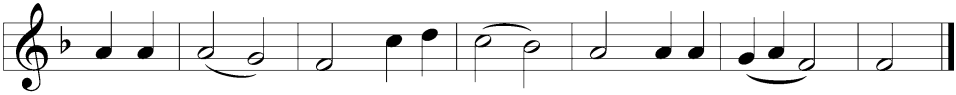
[18]For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

R This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Stand

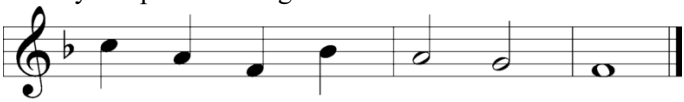
Alleluia



C **Al-le - lu - ia. Al-le - lu - ia. Al-le - lu - ia.**

Holy Gospel

R The Holy Gospel according to **Matthew 4:12-25**



C **Glo - ry be to You, O Lord.**

[12]When [Jesus] heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. [13]And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, [14]so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

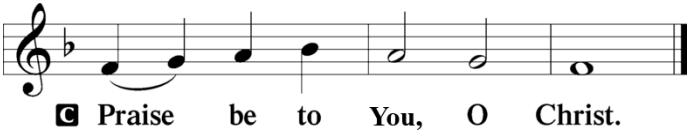
[15]"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—
[16]the people dwelling in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death,
on them a light has dawned."

[17]From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

[18]While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. [19]And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." [20]Immediately they left their nets and followed him. [21]And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. [22]Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

[23]And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. [24]So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. [25]And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

R This is the Gospel of the Lord.



Apostles' Creed

C **I believe in God, the Father Almighty,**
maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Hymn 839

Sermon *(the congregation stands to hear the text and then sits)*

LET THERE BE NO DIVISIONS
Sermon for the 3rd Sunday after the Epiphany 2026
1 Corinthians 1:10-18

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 Corinthians 1:10-18:

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

Dear friends in Christ,

"*That old evil foe, now means deadly woe*." These words of Luther in his famous hymn are spot on. The Apostle Peter warns us to be watchful because our "*adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour*" (1 Peter 5:8). The devil "*tries every trick and does not stop until he finally wears us out, so that we either renounce our faith or throw up our hands and put up our feet, becoming indifferent or impatient*" (Large Catechism V, 26).

One of the chief weapons the devil uses, and what Paul warns about today, is *division*. The devil tries to drive a wedge between Christians and even divide congregations. Worse still, he seeks divide the church. "Divide and conquer" is the devil's strategy against the church. Weaken the enemy by dividing the troops against each other. Prowl around looking for the lone sheep, the isolated one who is wandering by himself in the wilderness, away from the flock and the shepherd, because there is nothing more vulnerable than the solitary sheep, the one left all alone. There is nothing more vulnerable to the crafts and assaults of the evil one than the individual believer, all by himself. He is easy pickings for that old evil foe.

This strategy of the devil is deceptively simple — *use sin to isolate the sinner*. So you sin, and the devil uses that sin to make you doubt whether you are a child of God or forgiven. He stirs up guilt and shame so you begin to think God doesn't want anything to do with you. You stop praying; you stop hearing the Word; you stop communing. You may not even notice the change at first, but eventually *it doesn't matter to you anymore*. You may still show up at church once in a while just to check in or to stay on the books, but it really doesn't mean much, if anything. Or the devil may simply stir up some good old-fashioned apathy and boredom. Who needs those old, boring hymns and tired sermons on

Christ crucified when there is so much entertainment available at the touch of a button? And if I'm feeling vaguely "spiritual" and need a lift, I can dial something up on TV, read a sermon online, or listen to some inspirational music or a podcast. Bam! The devil's got you right where he wants you. ***He has taken your eyes off Jesus and onto your spiritual self***.

But that's only *half the job*. The other half is to *isolate you from your fellow believers*. Again, the devil uses sin to get the job done. You sin against your brother and vice versa. It may be something big or, as is usually the case, something trivial. Someone said or did something you didn't like. And then the devil stirs up anger and resentment, and before you know it, you're at each other's throats. Or he puts this bug in your ear that things aren't going the way you want them to go, and so you take your toys and go somewhere else, or you just stay at home so you don't have to deal with "those people" anymore. And now you are in the perfect place for the devil — all alone in your own little world and isolated from the flock, isolated from the shepherd. We have all heard that proverb, "*Idle hands are the devil's playthings*." If you're not doing something useful, you'll end up doing something annoying, destructive or just plain stupid, just the sort of sheep a roaring lion is looking for.

Paul had heard of divisions within the Corinthian congregation after some people from Chloe's household visited him. Members were suing one another in the secular court. There was quarrelling and dissension. They were talking in terms of "we" and "they," divided along party lines. Some said, "**I follow Paul**." Paul was the first missionary, and perhaps his teaching was regarded as most authentic. Others said, "**I follow Apollos**." Perhaps his teaching may have been more advanced than Paul's, who would later say, "*I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth*" (1 Cor. 3:6). Still others said, "**I follow Cephas**," the Aramaic name for Peter. Peter may have carried particular authority as a follower of Jesus in His earthly ministry. But perhaps the most dangerous of them all were the ones who boasted, "**I follow Christ**." How could they be considered dangerous? Because they were behaving as though they were the only ones who did. These people who claimed to give all their loyalty to Christ were also guilty of *factionalism*. Their slogan, "**I follow Christ**," had become a party slogan. They may well have been less concerned about healing the divisions than they were about proving that they were the best party. Paul would later warn the Christians in Rome, "*Do not be arrogant, but be afraid*" (Rom.

11:20). Paul wanted to remind those Corinthian Christians who prided themselves on their power and freedom in the Spirit to be careful not to fall from grace.

Into all this nasty division, dissension, and party pettiness, Paul fires the arrow of his apostolic appeal. "**I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment**."

Unity is the way of Christ and His Spirit; division is the way of the devil. Paul would later write to the Ephesians, "*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all*" (Eph. 4:4).

Every single picture of the church in the Scriptures is a corporate image. There is no notion of the isolated, individual believer. The church is a priesthood of the baptised, the household of God's children, a spiritual temple built out of living stones. Even the word church means "*assembly, ones who are called out and brought together*."

The front-running image is that of a body with many different kinds of members. "*We, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another*" (Rom. 12:5). A body consists of a variety of parts or members. Each one of them is different and serves its own special purpose. Big toe, little toe, ear, eye, nose, finger, and all the rest. One is not more important or indispensable than the others. The little toe may seem insignificant until you lose it, and then you'll see what it's been doing down there all along, keeping your balance and stride. And you'll miss it. You literally need to learn to walk all over again when you lose your little toe.

A body can function more or less without some of its parts, though not without a certain amount of hardship and suffering. But the parts cannot exist without the body and without each other. A severed toe or ear will die apart from the body. The ear cannot say to the big toe, "I don't need you; I can get along just fine without you." Without the big toe and the foot to which it is attached, the ear cannot move anywhere. And without the ear to hear the traffic and the warning signals, the big toe won't know to stop when the car is coming.

Parts of the body need each other in order to function. And they all need to be joined together as a body and not some random collection of individual parts.

If we are going to be guided by the Scriptures and see the church as God sees it through the lens of the Word, we need to adjust our thinking about the congregation. While we are many individuals of different opinions, ages, skills, perspectives, etc., we are all members of one body and members of one another. We share the same baptismal bath. We eat the same bread that is the Body of Christ; we drink the same cup that is the blood of Christ. We are literally "bodied" and "bloodied" together in a unity that transcends our individuality. The church is much more than the sum of its parts.

One of the great heresies against the church is the notion that the church is a gathering of "like-minded individuals." In other words, the church is like a country club where people who agree with each other get together to agree with each other. And while this is certainly what Paul urges the Corinthians toward — that they agree with each other and be of the same mind and judgment — this is not what makes them the church. *It's the other way around*. In other words, you don't become a member of the body of Christ because you agree and have the same mind; *you have the same mind because you are a member of the body of Christ*. Unity is God's doing, the work of the Spirit working through the Word, calling, gathering, enlightening, sanctifying, and keeping the whole church with Christ in the one true faith. God works unity; Sin works disunity. The devil, together with our own sinful natures, is what divides the church and isolates its members.

Unity was threatened in the Corinthian congregation. Divisions are not simply sins of members against members; they are sins against the body of Christ, the very body that was nailed to the cross to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under His lordship. *To perpetuate division and discord is to be an instrument in the hand of the devil, to be the knife in his hand, hacking away at and dismembering the body of Christ*. You don't want to be in that position, I assure you. If you ever find yourself referring to fellow members as "those people" or "that group" you need to stop, drop, and repent because you're playing into the devil's hands.

The antidote is not compromise or some phony version of "playing nice," but the cross of Jesus. Paul squares the divided Corinthians up to the cross of Christ.

He preaches "*nothing but Christ and Him crucified*" (1 Cor. 2:2). He literally holds before their eyes dead Jesus hanging on a cross, taking away their sins, rescuing them from sin, death, and the devil and says to them, "*How do all your divisions stack up against this?*" How do your cliques and quarrels look when viewed against the cross of Jesus? We read about how the disciples bickered over who was the top dog on the night Jesus was betrayed, and we shake our heads at how silly they are. Didn't they hear Jesus? Didn't they realise what He was about to do? He was talking about His body being given into death and His blood shed on the cross, and they are arguing over which one of them is the greatest!

We're appalled by their lack of hearing and understanding, yet we ourselves do the same thing. We can go from the altar directly to each other's throats in just a few short steps. The same mouth that eats and drinks the body and blood of Christ and sings His praises can curse and slander a brother in the next breath. One body can quickly become many scattered members if left to our own devices.

The answer lies in the cross of Jesus. Not the symbol but the fruits. In baptism, we die to self and rise as members of Christ's body. In the Word that kills sin and the sinner and raises up the saint. In the Supper, where we partake of the one body of Christ and are made the one body of Christ. "*Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread*," Paul reminds the Corinthians later in his letter (1 Cor. 10:17). There are many grains, but one loaf. There are many grapes, but one cup. There are many members, but one body. God does this, we don't do it. God is doing this here too, among us. By the Word of the cross, which is utter foolishness to the world but the power of God for salvation to all who believe, we are being made one, *in spite of ourselves*.

You are one body in the Lord. Baptised with one baptism. Forgiven by one Word. Fed by one body and one blood. You are one in Christ. And when you agree with one another, and strive to work together and are united in mind and judgment, when divisions are healed instead of perpetuated, you are being the body of Christ that you are. In the name of Jesus, amen.

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

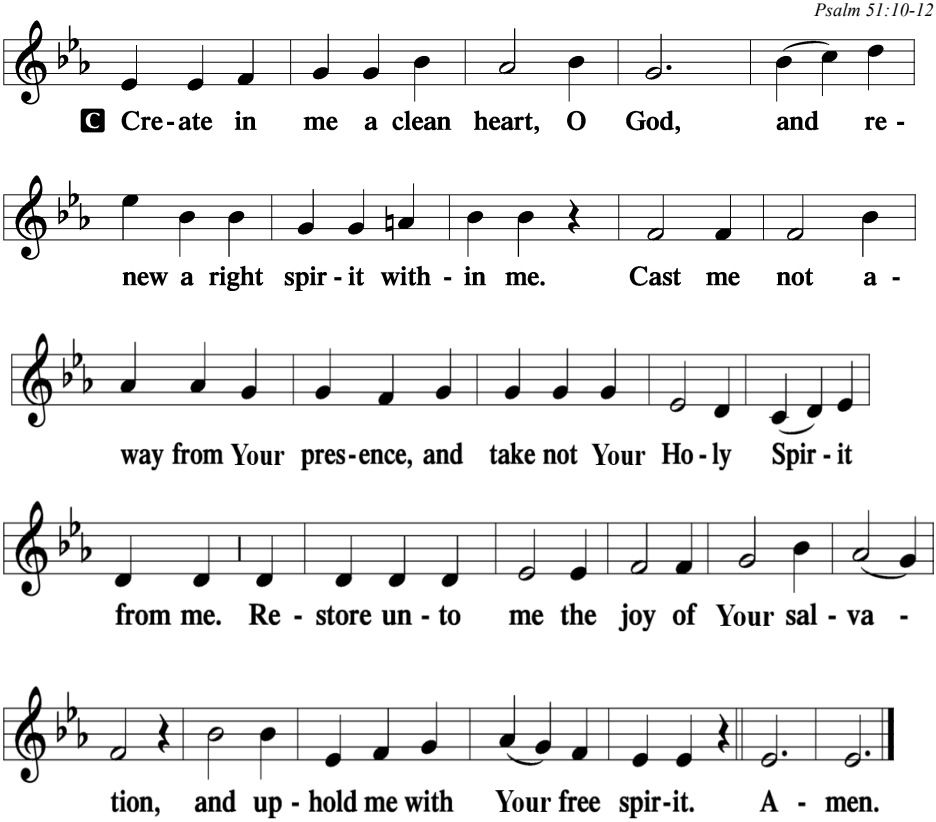
Hymn & Offering *(the Offering may be received during or after the singing of the hymn)*

Hymn 845

Stand

Offertory *LSB 192*

Psalm 51:10-12



Prayer of the Church [1 Timothy 2:1-4]

Third Sunday after the Epiphany

O Lord, You gather us by the work of Your Spirit and dwell in our midst by Your Means of Grace for the sake of Your Son. Open our mouths to tell of Your name and declare Your praises to all who will hear.

Merciful Lord, graciously allow Your Church to enjoy unity of doctrine and a spirit of harmony in the work that You have given her to do. Prosper this work, and supply us with faithful pastors and church workers.

Heavenly Father, You sent Your Son as the Saviour of the world, that all the families of the nations might worship before You. Bless the families of this congregation with Your grace and protection, that they might remember You in both joy and trouble and worship before You forevermore.

O God, grant peace to the nations. Give good and faithful leaders in our land. Grant them wisdom and integrity for the good of all people, that justice may be served in every place and for the protection of the unborn and the weak.

Holy Lord, Your Son welcomed the sick, the afflicted and those oppressed by demons, and He healed them. Have mercy upon all whom we bring before You in prayer, and deliver them according to Your gracious will.

Gracious Lord, be present with the lonely. Work through us, that they may find welcome and consolation within the fellowship of God's people. Grant that those who sorrow may not despair but find hope in Christ.

Lord God, heavenly Father, You raised Your Son, Jesus, from the dead as the firstfruits of the new creation. In reverence, we glorify Your name for the hope and promise of the resurrection. We give You thanks and praise for all those who have departed from this mortal life in faith. Preserve us also in Your Word and faith until we die.

All these things and whatever else You know that we need, grant us, Father, for the sake of Him who died and rose again and now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

LSB 196

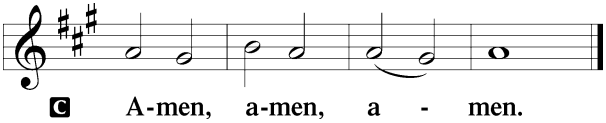
Matthew 6:9-13

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

LSB 202
Numbers 6:24-26

R The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.



Sit

Hymn 805

Acknowledgments
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Article: Artificial Intelligence in the Church

Until recently, nearly all content on the internet was real, that is, produced by a human. Pictures came from photographers, videos from someone's camera, and blogs and articles from human writers. Not anymore. Computer-generated images look real, videos can be deep-faked, and it is now possible to have entire blog posts or stories generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI). The next bestselling novel could theoretically be "computed." The same holds true for a sermon, a student's essay, or even an entire news report or website. The generated words are often convincing, though they do not proceed from a rational soul but from a sophisticated computer program that rearranges text to give the appearance that it is "saying" something. This has led many to fear that AI will take over or replace humanity.

We must speak accurately about AI if we are going to think clearly about it and avoid panic. The term "artificial intelligence" is somewhat of a misnomer. Computers are not intelligent. Computers compute. They can only use what they are given. If a user or programmer gives the computer bad input, it will give bad output. Computers don't think or make truth claims or feel or engage in any of the faculties of the soul.

People often mistake the human mind for a kind of computer; it is anything but. We are "*fearfully and wonderfully made*" (Psalm 139:14). Luther teaches us to confess with the Bible that "*God has made me and all creatures" and that He gave me "my reason and all my senses*" (SC Apostle's Creed). In the Athanasian Creed, we confess that Christ became "*perfect man, composed of a rational soul and human flesh*." Only man's God-given rational soul truly possesses speech, thought and intelligence. The angels also have speech and intelligence. A computer does not. Many tend to believe that if a computer gives an answer, it is accurate. But if the input was garbage or relativist, so will the output be.

It can, however, look like it does. AI can now produce words that no rational soul has thought or claimed to be true. This is problematic: The words seem rational, but they are devoid of reason, except in a derived way. Its "reason" comes from an algorithm produced by rational man.

The philosopher John Searle proposes a thought experiment to illustrate what AI is doing. Imagine a man in a room who is instructed to decode Chinese sentences into English sentences by changing the characters according to a complicated flow chart. Now imagine people slip Chinese messages under the door, and the man slips the English translations back out under the door. To anyone passing by, it would seem that there is a man in the room who understands Chinese when, in fact, he is only following a series of instructions. He doesn't understand a word of Chinese.

Herein lie the benefits and dangers of artificial intelligence. If we need instructions followed quickly, a computer can often do so faster. If we need genuine understanding and communication, only a rational soul will suffice. God sent angels, prophets, apostles and His only Son to deliver His Word to us — not a complex calculating machine.

Like any tool, AI can be used or misused. Its applications in computation continue to grow each year. In medicine, AI can detect patterns that may signal cancer or other diseases in patients. Programmers can use AI to develop software more quickly by auto-generating code. Foreign-language chatbots can help people learn. However, the tool can also be used for deception. How will an English teacher ever assign students a five-paragraph essay as homework now that the computer can generate it for them? If AI is used to undercut the learning process, it will debilitate us, making us lazy and gullible.

In some ways, AI programs like the popular ChatGPT are just another way to search the internet; instead of displaying pages of search results, it aggregates results into a text response. The difference is that the user with a human mind is no longer filtering the data. He relies on the AI to present the information. However, as

mentioned above, AI does not make truth claims or produce new information, though it may seem to. It only computes, rearranges and regurgitates.

AI also necessarily carries the biases and selections of its programming — and what is excluded is often as important as what is included. There can be no such thing as a worldview-neutral medium. Books, radio and TV all convey a worldview. AI will not be different in this respect. Current AI models are decidedly unbiblical in their worldview. For example, the programmers of ChatGPT (GPT-4) apparently do not believe in objective moral truths. When asked whether two propositions were true, it would not generate text affirming the moral proposition. The two propositions were that two and two equals four, and that harming people for fun is bad. It generated this text:

> *"2+2=4" is a mathematical truth, which is objective and based on the rules and logic of mathematics. It is a universal truth that is consistent and can be proven within the framework of mathematics.*
> *On the other hand, "Harming people for fun is bad" is a moral statement. While many people would agree with this statement, it is not an objective truth in the same way as a mathematical statement.*

But it is objectively true that "harming people for fun is bad." Only a relativist worldview suggests otherwise. Of course, your interaction with this software might produce different output, which is its own problem. Programmers might update the software to give more reasonable answers to philosophical questions, but there is no getting around the fact that a computer lacks the requisite "*work of the law … written on [the] heart*" (Rom. 2:15) to do moral philosophy.

There is not only the potential for active deception but also a form of passive deception. People give credence to computer modelling, assuming that because a computer calculated it, it is true. Just as many idolise the scientific method as being able to solve all problems and tell all truth, so now the promises of computer algorithms do the same. Many tend to believe that if a computer gave an answer, it was accurate. But if the input was garbage or relativist, so will be the output. This has led to defamation lawsuits against the companies that write ChatGPT and other artificial intelligence software. The legal question: If a computer program generates text that is false or defaming of real people, should the company behind that AI be held liable? The Eighth Commandment would suggest so.

AI will continue to have a place in the modern world. The Christian knows that it, along with the world, is passing away. The Christian, made wise by the Word of God, is uniquely poised to avoid deception and use AI for good, knowing where absolute truth is found. As the apostle John reminds us, Christ is the Word (logos) (John 1:1). He is the Word, the Way, the Truth and the Life. He became flesh for us, and the words He speaks to us are "*spirit and life*" (John 6:63).

Children's Address:

In this morning's Gospel, Matthew gives us an interesting piece of information. He tells us that the disciples, who were fishermen, were "*mending their nets*" when Jesus called them (4:21). They had holes in their nets, so they had to mend them to keep the fish from getting away.

Matthew says Jesus called the disciples to be fishers of men. That meant that instead of casting nets to catch fish, they'd use God's Word, teaching and preaching to lead others to repentance of their sins and faith in Jesus.

God sent His Son to mend the broken relationship between Him and us. Our sin destroyed that perfect relationship. But Jesus' death on the cross has mended the relationship and made it whole again by taking away the sins of the world. And your baptism into Jesus' death washes away all those sins that were yours. God sees us as perfect, whole, and complete in Christ. The relationship is mended so beautifully that God calls us His sons and daughters. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. He will never throw us away. *Heavenly Father, in Jesus, You have mended our relationship with You. You see us as Your sons and daughters and hold us near as a father holds His children. Fill us with Your Spirit, that we may live in this baptismal joy, knowing nothing can separate us from You. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

SERVICE TIMES

1 February 4 Epiphany	8 February 5 Epiphany	15 February The Transfiguration
8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am MARBURG HC	8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR

Sunday, 1 February		
READINGS: Micah 6:1-8;1 Corinthians 1:18-31;	Matthew 5:1-12	
HYMNS: 570 842 830 (435 628) 794		
Sunday, 8 February		
READINGS: Isaiah 58:3-9a;	1 Corinthians 2:1-12;	Matthew 5:13-20
HYMNS: 904 578 426 (560 619) 702		

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today, 1.30pm. Downs Sunday School teachers meeting at Trinity Oakey.

Wednesday, 4 February, 10.00am. Women's Guild at Bethlehem, Toowoomba. Opening Devotion: Leanne. Choose a Bible Verse from Judges Chapter 7–11. Item of Interest: Condiment Set (Salt & Pepper set).

Sunday, 8 February. Marburg/Lowood Elders meeting after service.

Annual Meeting Dates:

Aubigny: 1 February after Divine Service.

Marburg: 8 February after Divine Service.

Toowoomba: 22 February, 2.00pm.

Lowood: 1 March after Divine Service.

Oakey:

Greenwood: 15 February after Divine Service.

AELC Member Congregations Details

Contact: ddaelc@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: ddaelc@gmail.com

WEEKLY READINGS

Sunday, January 25	Exodus 23-24 2 Thess 2	*Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (2017)* pp. 37-40, Christian Questions with their Answers
Monday, January 26	Exodus 25-26 2 Thess 3	
Tuesday, January 27	Exodus 27-28 Philemon	
Wednesday, January 28	Exodus 29-30 James 1	
Thursday, January 29	Exodus 31-33 James 2	
Friday, January 30	Exodus 34-35 James 3	
Saturday, January 31	Exodus 36-38 James 4	

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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