

THE AUSTRALIAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH (AELC)

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

12 April 2026

Second Sunday of Easter

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

Persecution cannot silence those who teach and preach Christ crucified, dead, and risen. This unwavering testimony is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. Trials, sorrows, and temptations will never eclipse the revelation of Jesus to whom belongs all glory and honor. Just as Jesus, risen and scarred, stood in the midst of His disciples, so also He remains steadfast in the church, through bread and wine, reminding us of His wounds, nourishing our faith, and bestowing peace on all who see Him.

In preparation of worship, please prepare by praying one of the prayers found on page 308 in your LSB hymnbook

Hymns (LSB): 818 470 553 527

Verse of the Day

Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Alleluia..

Romans 6:9; John 20:29b

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 818

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

Service of the Word

Introit & Glory to the Father

Psalm 148;

¹Praise the Lord!

**Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise him in the heights!**

**²Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his hosts!**

**³Praise him, sun and moon,
praise him, all you shining stars!**

**⁴Praise him, you highest heavens,
and you waters above the heavens!**

**⁵Let them praise the name of the Lord!
For he commanded and they were created.**

**⁶And he established them forever and ever;
he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away.**

**⁷Praise the Lord from the earth,
you great sea creatures and all deeps,**

⁸fire and hail, snow and mist,
 stormy wind fulfilling his word!
⁹Mountains and all hills,
 fruit trees and all cedars!
¹⁰Beasts and all livestock,
 creeping things and flying birds!
¹¹Kings of the earth and all peoples,
 princes and all rulers of the earth!
¹²Young men and maidens together,
 old men and children!
¹³Let them praise the name of the Lord,
 for his name alone is exalted;
 his majesty is above earth and heaven.
¹⁴He has raised up a horn for his people,
 praise for all his saints,
 for the people of Israel who are near to him. Praise the Lord!

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

The pastor/reader speaks the gradual, and the congregation responds:

adapt. from Matthew 28:7; Hebrews 2:7; Psalm 8:6

R Christ has risen from the dead.

[God the Father] has crowned him with glory and honor.

He has given him dominion over the works of his hands;
 he has put all things under his feet.

The Lord Have Mercy (Kyrie)

Mark 10:47

C Lord, have mer - cy up - on us. Christ, have mer - cy up - on us. Lord, have mer - cy up - on us.

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

First Reading Acts 5:29–42

²⁹But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³²And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

³³When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. ³⁴But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honour by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. ³⁵And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. ³⁶For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. ³⁷After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. ³⁸So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; ³⁹but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” So they took his advice, ⁴⁰and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name. ⁴²And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

R This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Second Reading 1 Peter 1:3–9

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary,

you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

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 **John 20:19–31**



C Glo - ry be to You, O Lord.

¹⁹On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” ²²And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld.”

²⁴Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

²⁶Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” ²⁸Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

R This is the Gospel of the Lord.



C Praise be to You, O Christ.

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 470

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

THE ABIDING MEANING OF EASTER Sermon for the 2nd Sunday of Easter 2026 1 Peter 1:3-9

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 taken from 1 Peter 1:3-9, our Second Reading read before:

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

Dear friends in Christ,

For many people, Easter is over. The four-day weekend is finished, and they are back at work. For these individuals, Easter wasn't a time to reflect on our Saviour's completed work, but simply a period for enjoyment. Plus, look at what happened over Easter. Every day from Good Friday to Easter Sunday, thousands of people rushed to the football grounds. I wonder why thousands didn't head to church.

However, for all of us—those who worshipped our Saviour, followed Him through His passion, saw Him hang on the cross, and rise again—we *are living in the afterglow of Easter*. The events of that day, so beautifully recorded for us in Scripture, still ring in our minds. Our hearts continue to rejoice when we think of the open tomb and the angels' joyful refrain. We share in the joy of the women who went to the tomb that day and the wonder of the apostles. With the Emmaus disciples, our hearts burn within us as the Scriptures are fulfilled and the Saviour is revealed.¹

For us, Easter isn't just an annual event to prepare for, celebrate, and then forget. It's not merely a time to fulfil our "Easter duty" to the church, only to overlook it for another year. ***It is the foundation of our Christian faith and the driving force of our Christian life.*** Therefore, the significance of Easter is of utmost importance. Easter day has passed, but its meaning remains, so today, let us reflect on the abiding meaning of Easter.

¹ Luke 24:32

First of all, Easter means that *we can hope*.

The Apostle Peter begins by saying, “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.**”

Spiritually, we are dead by nature. There is no spark of spiritual life or capacity for growth within us. But praise be to God, He has shown mercy on our wretched, lost condition and has “**caused us to be born again,**” making us new creatures and giving us new life through His Word and Sacrament. The Spirit has worked within us, so we can hope—and the source of our hope is *God’s mercy*.

Peter describes this hope as a “**living**” hope, for it is drawn from a living God, with a guarantee made “**through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.**”

Jesus is not a dead hero, a noble martyr, or a living legend, but a *living* Lord. His life is real, so His resurrection is real. And as His resurrection is real, so our hope is real.

Easter signifies, therefore, that we can hope in the enduring power of His resurrection in our lives; hope in the resurrection of our own bodies from the grave; hope in the joyful reunion with our loved ones; and hope in the eternal vision of our resurrected Lord.

Furthermore, the object of our hope, Peter describes as “**an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.**”

The hope of resurrection is our inheritance—granted to us by our gracious Father as His children’s eternal heritage. Heaven is our true home and a reward that is “**imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.**” It is a treasure that neither moth nor rust can damage, and robbers cannot steal.² An inheritance safeguarded for us by the promise and power of God; it is the stronghold of His everlasting arms.

By virtue of that promise and that power, we are kept through “**faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**”

² Matthew 6:19

Through faith in the atoning merits and victorious resurrection of His Son, we hold tightly to God’s promises and make His life our own. In this way, He guarantees us salvation—both our present possession and our future inheritance. That salvation is the focus of our hope and the reason for our rejoicing!

We rejoice in that salvation because we already have it *now*. We recognise its power, feel its joy, and share its blessings. But we also rejoice because the full measure of that salvation’s power, joy, and blessings will be revealed in the last days. For us, *the best is yet to come*.

But before the best can come, we must go through *the worst*.

Christ could not enjoy the triumph of Easter without enduring the suffering of Good Friday. Through the cross to the crown was the journey of our Saviour, and through the cross to the crown is a principle of the Christian life. So, Peter goes on to show that Easter signifies that we must also suffer when he writes, **“In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.”**

It is no accident that our Lord taught His disciples to pray, *“Lead us not into temptation.”* Temptations are such an unavoidable part of the Christian’s experience that we need plenty of God’s help to ward them off or ease their impact. In every stage and situation of life, temptations surround us: the lure of the world, the pride of life, the concern for things— things of the body, things of the day, things that are bound to pass away.

The devil is full of ideas about how he can lead us astray spiritually. The Bible we neglect to read, the hands we forget to fold, the love we fail to show, the hasty words we speak, the jealous thoughts we have, and the vain ambition—all these are the devil’s devices. He aims to tempt us away from God in these ways. And among all the temptations we face, the worst is that *we feel immune to temptation*.

If we are honest, then we admit that we feel temptation at every turn in life. We walk in constant danger, and the pressure of temptation brings us the suffering Peter describes in our text.

We struggle not only because the devil tempts us to sin, but also because our patience and hope are frequently tested. Illness at home, problems at work, anxiety about the future, the unfaithfulness of friends, worries about finances, a death in the family—all these present real trials for even the most steadfast Christians. *These are part of the heavy burden we must carry as we journey through life.*

However, these trials and temptations, grievous as they are, are part of God’s design for our lives. Peter says that God regards them as “**more precious than gold.**” The comparison is fitting. Just as gold must be treated in the hot fire to become bright and pure, so too the Christian must be tested in the furnace of affliction to remove the impurities of sin and cleanse him from the alloy of unbelief. And, Peter urges, if this purging process is necessary for perishable gold, *how much more so for the imperishable soul of man!*

Even as Peter indicates that trouble is unavoidable for the Christian, he offers a note of optimism. These troubles, he assures us, will only be “**for a little while.**” They will last only as long as God considers it beneficial to us. And these troubles will occur only “**if necessary.**”

God’s aim is not to punish, but to bless. For, after all, the promise of God holds good, “*No temptation has overtaken you except what is common in all human beings. But 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, so that you may be able to bear it*” (1 Cor. 10:13).

God’s purpose in sending us the cross isn’t to cause us pain and distress. He doesn’t take pleasure in our suffering. His only aim is for our good that we may love Him more and serve Him better, and that our lives may be more beneficial to others and more aligned with His will. Peter states it this way: the “**genuineness of your faith... may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**”

Jesus Christ, at His return, will wipe away our tears, mend our wounds, and soothe our troubled hearts. Then there will be joy instead of mourning, songs instead of sighs, and peace instead of conflict. Finally, we shall see how our steadfastness in trials, our resistance to temptation, and our hope amid hardships have come together to glorify His name and demonstrate that He is our faithful and unfailing God. To that God, we shall behold, serve, and worship *when Jesus Christ comes again.*

This sure and fearless hope is ours once more this Eastertide, for in the victory of our risen Lord, we see the full and ultimate meaning of Easter for ourselves. This brings us to our final point: Easter signifies that *we shall triumph.*

Peter assures us that, despite trial, temptation, and all the assaults of hell, we shall nonetheless be protected by God’s power. This safekeeping will endure until the “**revelation of Jesus Christ.**” And of this Christ, Peter says, “**Though you have not seen Him, you love Him.**”

In human relationships, it is unthinkable that we should love someone we have never seen. But our fellowship with Christ is of a higher order. He who died for our sins—shall we not love Him? He who has made us His own—shall we not love Him? He who cleanses our heart—shall we not love Him? Indeed, “*we love Him because He first loved us*” (1 John 4:19).

This is a kind of love that does not rely on sight. Our union with Christ is not based on what we see, but on *faith*. Our passage clearly shows this: “**Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.**” Our fellowship with Christ gives us joy now, and glory later, that will be the consummation of our faith and our eternal salvation, as we obtain “**the outcome of (our) faith, the salvation of (our) souls.**”

Dear friends, this is the true meaning of Easter for us: Because Christ rose, we shall also rise. Because He defeated the evil enemy, we shall share in His victory forever. Because He lives, we shall live too. No, more precisely, *because He lives, eternal life is already ours here and now!*

Easter signifies that “life is hope.” Easter signifies that we have endured suffering. Easter signifies that our victory is certain. Easter signifies that throughout life, He will guide us with His counsel and, in the end, receive us into glory. 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 553

Stand

Offertory

LSB 192

Psalm 51:10-12

Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re -
new a right spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a -

way from Your pres-ence, and take not Your Ho-ly Spir-it
 from me. Re-store un-to me the joy of Your sal-va-
 tion, and up-hold me with Your free spir-it. A-men.

Prayer of the Church for the Second Sunday of Easter [1 Timothy 2:1-4]

Lord God, like Thomas, we wrestle with faith amid doubts and fears. Grant us Your Holy Spirit, that believing, we may see, and seeing, we may rejoice in Your Son and the power of His resurrection.

Gracious Lord, give courage to all pastors as they preach and teach the Word, that all who hear may believe and that, believing, they may live in righteousness and godliness until the day Christ returns as Judge and Lord of all.

Give peace, Lord, to our homes and enliven them by Christ’s resurrected life. Let the forgiveness of sins reign among husbands and wives, parents and children. Assure those who live alone that they, too, are Your children, upheld by Your right hand.

Lord God of hosts, You have added believers to the Lord Jesus in all times and places, from those receptive and hostile alike. Shepherd the nations, and bring all peoples to embrace the Gospel of the resurrected Christ. Curb wicked rulers and break their power, that all would be brought to the feet of Jesus in worship.

Gracious Father, as Your Son’s wounds brought gladness and peace to the troubled disciples, give Your presence and comfort to the troubled in our midst. Comfort also those who weep with the blessed joy of Easter morning.

O Lord, preserve Your Holy Communion and Your Son’s blessed Supper among us whenever it is offered. Give contrition and faith to those whenever they receive Christ’s body and blood. Unite them in their confession of Your truth, and so bring them worthily to eat and to drink for their forgiveness and life.

Heavenly Father, Your Son suffered on our behalf to win salvation for us. Grant that we may have the privilege not only of believing in Him, but also of suffering for His sake.

O Lord, heavenly Father, give us all things good and beneficial to us and to our salvation, and keep us from all things harmful; through Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Saviour, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Lord's Prayer (prayed together)

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.



G A-men, a-men, a - men.

Hymn 527

Acknowledgments

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ARTICLE: Peace be with You

“Google, what’s the weather forecast this weekend?” “Hey, Siri, call Mum.” “Alexa, set my alarm for 7:00 a.m.”

The human voice now has new power! We no longer need to type with our thumbs. We can speak to our devices, and they will do what we ask. Or at

least, that's how it's meant to work. It's the sort of thing that was science fiction just a few years ago. We can dictate to our word-processing programs, browse the internet without touching the keyboard, and call up a recipe in the kitchen without getting our tablet screen dirty.

God created the voice to carry power. When sea lions gather in large colonies to raise their pups, hundreds of pups swim out into the water together and return as a group. On the shore, they find their mothers by listening for the unique sound of her voice. Over time, every young sea lion finds its way back to its own mother.

Easter is, among other things, about the power of the voice, because the risen Lord Jesus comes to speak His peace into our hearts so that we may speak that peace to the world.

This is what we read in this morning's Gospel from John. After Mary and the other women told Jesus' disciples they had seen the Lord, the disciples didn't really believe. By the evening of the day, the disciples are behind locked doors, like a little hutch of rabbits afraid of the wolf that might be looking for them. This is the Church at its very worst. Hunkered down, huddled together, letting fear rather than faith control their every thought and action.

Then suddenly, Jesus arrives and stands among them. John says the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. But in their joy, not one of them apologises for their behaviour over the last few days. No one says they're sorry or that they should have done better. Perhaps part of the reason is they don't get a chance to say anything. Instead, it's Jesus who speaks the first word. And just as was the case at the sound of God's voice in creation, the sound of Jesus' voice creates something wonderful and new: "*Peace be with you,*" He says (John 20:19). This is not a wish or a hope. It is His gift to them. "*Peace be with you,*" He says, and there is peace and joy.

This, the disciples could only start to understand, was the entire purpose of what Jesus had just experienced. His death on the cross was meant to restore the peace between God and humanity that had been broken when we first sinned. Sin always creates separation and conflict between two parties. In sin, we focus on ourselves rather than others. In sin, harmony is impossible, as our will is not willingly aligned with the other's. Sin prevents us from being with God because His holiness cannot coexist with unholiness. But by

taking our sin to the cross, Christ removed the barrier and reconciled us to God, restoring our peace with Him.

The entire scene repeats a week later when Thomas is finally with the disciples. The doors are still locked, but Jesus returns again. He speaks the same words. *“Peace be with you.”* Instead of scolding, Jesus encourages Thomas to touch and see the wounds. *“Do not disbelieve, but believe”* (v 27).

Even though two thousand years have passed since that first Easter evening, the church still struggles to step out from behind locked doors and into the world. While we might not fear suffering the same cruelty as Jesus endured on the cross—the fear that kept the first apostles locked away—there is just as much to be cautious of in the twenty-first century as there was in the first. I sometimes hear people express concern that our church is aging and in decline. There is worry that, as we look around, society appears to be falling apart at its seams with the ongoing decline of morality. We even sometimes start to doubt planning for our future as a church because the rising cost of living will make it impossible to keep the church financially afloat, and so on.

The temptation is to focus all our attention on our fear and let that fear paralyze us. This text from John 20 is not about how the world locks its doors to the Gospel, but how the Church locks itself away from the world. The irony of the disciples’ locked doors is that they weren’t really keeping out soldiers looking to crucify them and they weren’t keeping out friends and relatives who may have wanted to ridicule them for following Jesus; there is no record of either of those things happening. The One they were locking out was Jesus. They locked out the word He had so clearly spoken to them about dying and rising again, and in locking out that word, they locked out Jesus. When fear becomes our focus, we fall into the same trap; we lock out the Lord, who time and again tells His Church, *“Do not be afraid!”*

Jesus will have none of it! The securely locked doors are no problem for Him. If the grave could not keep Him in the ground, their padlocks would not keep Him outside the room where they were gathered. And so, He comes and stands among them and among us and speaks His Word—a word that brings the very thing it says: *“Peace be with you!”*

This is Jesus’ word for us. *“Peace be with you.” “Peace, your sin is forgiven!” “Do not fear the world. I have overcome the world. Peace be with*

you.” That word comes to us today, with exactly the same power as it came to those first disciples on the first Easter and to Thomas a week later. “*These [words] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name*” (v 31). In His Word, Jesus comes to us, and we experience the power of His voice. He doesn’t just tell us about peace, but He actually speaks peace to you and me. As Luther puts it, “*As soon as He said it, it was done*” (Luther’s Works 12:32).

Jesus spoke His peace to us in the water of our Baptism, where we were joined to His death and resurrection and died to sin and rose to new life. That peace is spoken to us every time we return in repentance to our Baptism, and He says to through our pastor, “*I forgive you all your sins.*” That peace is spoken to us at His table, where in, with, and under bread and wine, He comes through space and time to feed us His body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins and to lift from us from our fears. There His voice speaks peace. “This is for you,” He says, “for the forgiveness of sin.” And we rise from the table at peace, ready to go into the world.

“*As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you*” (v 21). The Lord cannot be bound; His Word will not be bound; and His followers do not live behind locked doors. He sends us out into the world, but we do not go empty-handed.

He breathes His Holy Spirit upon His disciples, and to His Church, He hands the keys to the kingdom of heaven. “*If you forgive the sins of anyone they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld*” (v 23). And with that, we, like those first disciples, are sent to the world to be the voice of peace. Our voices, our human voices, become voices of power, not because they are louder, wiser, or more entertaining than other voices, but because through our voice, He Himself speaks.

Long before there was a Siri, Alexa, or Google, there was the risen Lord Jesus, speaking to and through people like you and me, so that all who are locked behind doors of fear, sin, sickness, and even death itself might hear His word: “*Peace be with you.*”

Children’s Address: What do we have a picture of today? Yep, it’s a torch. What do we use these for? One of the most important uses of a torch is to provide light for us in the dark, so we don’t get hurt by not seeing dangers. So, we make sure that any torch we have is in perfect condition; we check that the bulb works and that it has good batteries. Now, when we switch it on, we know that it works! But what happens if I switch it on and forget to switch it off? Is that a good idea? Of course, it will run out of energy and stop working.



How about this idea? I turn it off, but once a week I come and turn it on for a couple of minutes just to make sure it’s still working. Will the battery still be like new five years from now when I really need to use the torch? No, the batteries will be losing energy even if I just check them.

Well, how about this? I just leave the torch off. Will it still be just as bright ten years from now if I don’t use it until then? Nope, it might not even work, because even with the torch off, the batteries slowly drain.

But now let’s think about something God does for us by His power: Jesus dying on the cross and defeating sin, death, and the devil. Wow! And Jesus rose from the dead three days later. He lives! So when you were baptised, Jesus gave you the forgiveness of your sins and the gift of eternal life now. And there’s more to come! God wants you to live that life with Him in perfect bodies in heaven someday. What a gift!

It’s been many years since Jesus won that gift of eternal life for you. And it may be a long time from now until you’ll be brought to live with Him in heaven. Do you think eternal life with Jesus will still be just as wonderful, peaceful, and joyous when you finally go to heaven? You bet! God is the giver and keeper of life! In our Second Reading today, the Apostle Peter says that the life God wants to live with you is “*kept in heaven for you*”—always ready and waiting (1 Peter 1:4). It’s just as wonderful as when Jesus won it for us, and it will not die out like a torch.

So we get concerned here on earth about things running down, getting broken, or fading. Not so with God’s gift of eternal life. And since we know it’s waiting for us and that God’s already done everything to bring us to heaven with Him, we can live here and help others. *Thank You, Jesus, for giving me eternal life. I know that I have a home waiting for me that never fades or dies out! Amen.*

SERVICE TIMES

19 April 3 Easter	26 April 4 Easter (Good Shepherd Sunday)	3 May 5 Easter
8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC (Baptism) 9.00am MARBURG LR	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

Sunday, 3 Easter		
READINGS: Acts 2:14a, 36-41;	1 Peter 1:17-25;	Luke 24:13-35
HYMNS: 352 482 578 (570 623) 488 GRN: 592 482 578 570 623 488		
Sunday, 4 Easter		
READINGS: Acts 2:42-47;	1 Peter 2:19-25;	John 10:1-10
HYMNS: 692 710 685 (531 618) 525		

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wednesday, 22 April, 10.00am Bible Study at Lowood.

A new confirmation class will start in May. Parents, if you have a confirmation-aged student, please contact pastor so we can begin preparations.

WEEKLY READINGS

Sunday, April 12	1 Kings 6-7 Matthew 7	<i>Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (2017)</i> pp. 115 - 119, Ninth & Tenth Commandment Questions 88 - 92
Monday, April 13	1 Kings 8-9	
Tuesday, April 14	1 Kings 10-11 Matthew 8	
Wednesday, April 15	1 Kings 12-13	
Thursday, April 16	1 Kings 14-15 Matthew 9	
Friday, April 17	1 Kings 16-18	
Saturday, April 18	1 Kings 19-20 Matthew 10	

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

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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.