

THE AUSTRALIAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH (AELC)
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHNS AUBIGNY,
ST PAULS GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY

26 April 2026

Fourth Sunday of Easter Good Shepherd Sunday

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

Believers saturate themselves in fervent prayer and the breaking of bread. Believers empty themselves of possessions, giving belongings to the underprivileged. Suffering is endured, and this is the very nature of Christ. By His wounds, we are healed. He is the one true Shepherd without blemish, fault, or sin. Yet He was unjustly threatened, despised, and condemned. But He is also the One who opens the door, unbars the gates, and welcomes His sheep eternally.

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

Hymns (LSB): 692 710 685 (531 618) 525

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. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. Alleluia.

Romans 6:9; John 10:14

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 692

Stand

Confession of Sins and Absolution

LSB 184-185

P 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

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C **who made heaven and earth.**

Psalm 124:8

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

C **and You forgave the guilt of my sin.**

Psalm 32:5

P O almighty God, merciful Father,

C I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.

P Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Stand

Introit & Glory to the Father

Psalm 23

**¹The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.**

**²He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.**

**³He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.**

**⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.**

**⁵You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.**

**⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**

**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.**

Salutation and Collect of the Day

P The Lord be with you.

2 Timothy 4:22



☐ And with your spir - it.

P Let us pray:

The Collect

Almighty God, merciful Father, since You have wakened from death the Shepherd of Your sheep, grant us Your Holy Spirit that when we hear the voice of our Shepherd we may know Him who calls us each by name and follow where He leads; through the same 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

Acts 2:42-47

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Second Reading

1 Peter 2:19-25

¹⁹This is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. ²⁰For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. ²¹For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²²He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

²³When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

P 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

P The Holy Gospel according to **John 10:1-10.**



C Glo - ry be to You, O Lord.

John 10:1–10

¹[Jesus said:] “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. ²But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.



Nicene Creed

CI believe in one God,

the Father Almighty,

maker of heaven and earth

and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,

the only-begotten Son of God,

begotten of His Father before all worlds,

God of God, Light of Light,

very God of very God,

begotten, not made,

being of one substance with the Father,

by whom all things were made;

who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven

and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary

and was made man;

and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.

He suffered and was buried.

And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures

and ascended into heaven

and sits at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead,

whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the Lord and giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,

who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,

who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,

I acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins,

and I look for the resurrection of the dead

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Hymn 710

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

THE SHAPE OF GOD PLEASING WORSHIP Sermon for the 4th Sunday of Easter, 2026 Acts 2:42

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 part of the First Reading from before, Acts 2:42: “**And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.**”

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

Dear friends in Christ,

Last Sunday, we heard that God does not come to us through our feelings, but through His means: the Word and the Sacraments. That is how Almighty God serves us. Frivolity and entertainment have no place in the worship of the true God. Rather, Christian worship should be characterised by a sense of *repentance and humility* engendered by the Law, and a sense of confident *trust and joy* engendered by the precious truths of the Gospel.

When Sunday comes around, like any other day, we get out of bed, get the chores done, and then get ready for church. It’s pretty much the same routine each week. But have you ever stopped to consider *why* we come to church? Is it just to keep friends or family happy? Did our parents and grandparents all come to church, so we should too? Is it just a *routine* we have fallen into? I hope not. Surely, we come to worship God, understanding how important our worship is, giving thanks to God for His daily and eternal gifts.

Of course, everybody will miss a Sunday or two for various reasons, whether due to illness, holidays, or something else. There is nothing wrong with this. And sometimes there are reasons we cannot attend *at all*. Old age or remoteness can stop us altogether. But that too is okay. Such people can still, according to

1 Thessalonians, “*pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you*” (1 Thess. 5:17-18), because the whole of the Christian’s life is a life of worship, a continual communing with God. But what is unfortunate is that many simply do not bother to turn up *when there is no reason they can’t*. It sounds better to sleep in, go shopping, play sports, or laze around at home, rather than finding an hour or two each Sunday to come to the Lord’s house—it’s just not that *important*.

Coming to worship in the Lord’s house is important because not only is He there to meet with us each Sunday, but we receive doctrinal instruction from Him week after week.

When we come to worship in the Lord’s house, He is teaching us. Worship teaches the faith and nurtures the faithful because it is Word-oriented. Worship is a safe learning environment because the Word of God has a primary place in this gathering. The fellowship of believers, gathered in the name of Jesus, fosters the work of the Spirit. When the LORD once called to Samuel, he replied, “*Speak, for your servant hears*” (1 Sam. 3:10). These words are worthy of memorisation by every faithful believer entering God’s house.

Worship is also important because it is where God equips His people to live out their relationship with Him in the presence of the world.

Worship is always evangelism or witnessing. The Apostle Peter says to be “*prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you*” (1 Peter 3:15). Whatever we do in worship expresses our faith and hope so others may see. In this regard, a dynamic interplay is at work in worship. Our worship affects our witness, and our witness affects our worship. There is a two-way relationship between evangelism and worship. There is a closeness between faith and our worship. True worship has to do with life in faith. In our worship practices, we prepare, proclaim, and enact what ought to happen every day as members of God’s family, as we go forth and tell others about the truth of the Gospel whenever we have the opportunity. What we do on Sunday affects our daily lives, and our daily relationship with God affects our expressions of worship on Sundays.

Furthermore, when we worship, we worship as the children of God in Christ Jesus, our Good Shepherd.

Our God comes to us, and through His Spirit working within us, we respond by joyfully receiving Him. In fact, we do not worship Him all alone, but with the “*angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven,*” we “*laud and magnify His glorious name*” before receiving Christ’s body and blood for the forgiveness of all our sins.

No doubt, worship is important and powerful, but it is not entirely up in the air on **how** we should worship. While it is true that there is diversity in the forms of Christian worship, this does not disturb us unduly because we uphold the Lutheran principle that it is not necessary for the church “*that rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike*” (Augsburg Confession VII). However, ***God Himself has shaped how we are to worship Him***, and this leads us to our text from Acts. From it, we can see how God guided the Early Church in its worship, giving us a record of how they did so that we could follow.

After Peter had finished his Pentecost sermon, and some three thousand had been baptised, Luke writes how the believers now “**devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.**”

Worship always has a shape. It always did, and it always will. Generally speaking, the shape of worship is determined by what you think about worship. If you think it’s all about how you feel, then your worship will involve such things as loud music and having a good time in church, for the simple purpose of leading you to a conviction or a decision. Such worship only seeks to build emotions, rather than to build faith. Another example might be when people, leaving church after worship has concluded, say, “*I never really got anything out of that today.*” What do they mean? Quite often, they are referring to the sermon. In other words, the main focus of the worship service was the pastor and how he conducted himself. Again, others will say that worship is boring because we have boring old hymns and an outdated liturgy. Surely we could modernise a bit.

God shapes how we are to worship Him. Although we shall always feel refreshed by worship, it is not about *how we feel* toward God. We are refreshed because God comes to us in Word and Sacrament, to bless us and equip us for the faith and the life of faith, as we are reminded of what He has done for us.

Worship is for the *inner man*, the part of us that loves God. The outer man is corrupted in sin and still hates whatever is holy, and in worship, we must discipline our flesh and make it serve what is right and good and holy. We dare not allow our flesh to shape our worship by its pleasures and feelings, or we shall be shaped by that part of us in which sin rules.

Worship, as we do it today, is still shaped by the same things as it was for the earliest Christians. In fact, the text before us describes *how* they worshipped. If you look closely at our text, it has four elements. Luke writes, “**They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching**” - this is the first element..., “**and the fellowship**” – that’s the second..., “**to the breaking of the bread**” – that’s the third..., “**and the prayers,**” that’s the fourth. How simple is that, and yet, how many churches get it wrong. Let’s take a closer look at each element.

First of all, the “**apostles’ teaching.**”

That is the portion of the service where we read the Scriptures and teach. The lessons we have each week, and the sermon, are part of the worship service. Luther says that a worship service without a sermon should not even take place. It’s a little bit like the story of Philip and the Ethiopian in Acts chapter 8. There, we read of that Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. “*The Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.”* ³⁰ *So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”* ³¹ *And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him”* (29-31). Philip then explained to him what he was reading. This is what happens in a sermon. The Word of God is expanded upon, explaining God’s words to the hearers. God sends His shepherds to teach His Word to His hearers.

Furthermore, it comes as no surprise that the “**apostles’ teaching**” is listed first, because the Word of God is the most important element in worship. If you took God and His Word out of the worship service, it would no longer be a worship service. That is why we give such priority to the reading of Scripture and the preaching of the sermon. A century ago, the Lutheran church had sermons that lasted from 45 minutes to an hour and a half. People had the time and the desire to learn and listen. Today, many people’s attitude is that if something can’t be said from the pulpit in less than 10 minutes, then you can’t say it! Our flesh always struggles against the spirit in this most important element of worship.

Second, we have “**fellowship.**”

The Greek word used here for “fellowship” is *koinonia* (pronounced “coin-own-e-a”). This word means fellowship or sharing together in something holy. That fellowship is most clearly seen in the Lord’s Supper, but it is also experienced in the confession of sins and the absolution, the confession of faith, the singing of the hymns and so forth. We have fellowship together in something holy — we share in the forgiveness proclaimed in the absolution and delivered personally to each one of us in the sacrament.

Again, we share in something holy when we announce to the world what we believe and when we speak the words of the creeds, whether they be the Apostles’, Nicene, or Athanasian Creeds. These creeds have been used since the time of the Apostles, have been confessed by the Church against errors common throughout the Church’s history, are believed by everyone who is a Christian, and are denied only by those who also deny Christ.

Third is the “**breaking of the bread.**”

This specifically refers to the Lord’s Supper. It is, and always has been, an integral part of Christian worship. Until about a century and a half ago, no Sunday or festival service of the Lutheran Church was without Holy Communion. We come to hear of God’s grace, and then to receive it in the most personal and intimate fashion, by mouth, as we eat the body and drink the blood of our Saviour in this precious gift.

Except among those who deny God’s gift and reject His Sacrament, the Lord’s Supper was an indispensable part of regular worship until the age of rationalism and pietism led many Lutherans to mistakenly flee from the Sacrament and receive it only two to four times a year.

The fourth part of the worship is “**prayer.**”

We talk to God. We pour out our hearts to Him. He has spoken to us in His Word, and He invites us to come to Him and speak with Him in corporate prayer — the prayer of the body of Christ. We pray about everything that concerns all of us, for forgiveness, to give thanks, and to seek His continued blessings and grace. This is not a time for purely personal petitions, but for the things we all together desire and for which the body of Christ cries out to God with one voice. We lift up our hearts together, calling on God for what we need, and we confidently trust God to hear our prayers and grant our petitions, for we do not

seek what God does not want, or those things concerning which we have no word, but what God Himself has taught us to pray about and promised to pour out on His people when they pray.

That is the shape of worship in Scripture — word, sacrament, liturgy and prayer. And how we do those things is also significant. Just as surely as false preaching is a serious and deadly error, and denying the Sacrament impoverishes a church, worship which does not faithfully follow the shape and purpose which God has revealed, and which God has caused to arise in His Church, is dangerous and even deadly as well. It is through worship that we teach, and we learn. It becomes part of us, shaping our thinking, values, and lives. We refresh our faith in God through the faithful repetition of the liturgy and the shape of our worship, which teaches us of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of our sins, and the sweet promises of resurrection and life everlasting as God's gifts to us through faith, for Christ's sake.

Therefore, let us continue to meet in worship of the Triune God. Almighty God, our Father, the Good Shepherd Himself, Jesus Christ, and the Sanctifier, the Holy Spirit. For in these, we have our salvation! Amen.

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

Hymn & Offering

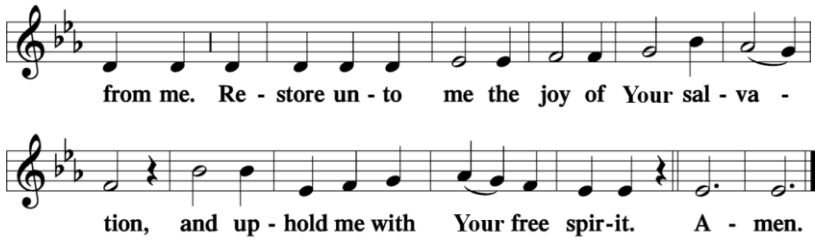
Hymn 685

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



Prayer of the Church for Good Shepherd Sunday

[1 Timothy 2:1-4]

Loving Father, Your Son is the great Shepherd of the sheep, who faithfully gathers His flock to Himself in the pastures of the Church. Grant us steadfast faith to hear His voice and follow Him, even through the valley of the shadow of death, that we may receive our portion in His abundant life.

Gracious God, bestow the gift of Christ's wisdom and tenderness upon all who are called to shepherd the souls of Your people. Teach believers everywhere to receive their pastors as a gift from You and to follow Christ, the Good Shepherd.

O Lord, hear our prayers for all Christian homes. Preserve all married couples in love and faithfulness; strengthen all parents for their task as teachers of the faith; uphold the unmarried honourable and unashamed in their station; and with good deeds in every home, let the ignorance of foolish people be put to silence by Your divine institution.

Mighty Shepherd, You hold in Your hands all the might of man, and You hold accountable those who would govern Your people. Grant us good government and leaders who will honour Your purpose, protect Your people, serve the cause of justice and defend our liberty.

Author of life, You gather us together in the fellowship of Christ and His apostolic Word and so lead us to intercede for one another in every need. Hear our prayers for the Church and for the world, especially for those Christians in countries who are persecuted for their faith. Work by Your mercy for their good now and eternally, and add to our number those who are being saved, until You bring us to the day when we shall rest eternally in Your safekeeping.

Father of glory, You have promised to prepare a table before us in the presence of our enemies and to fill our cup of salvation to overflowing. Bless us whenever we receive the Sacrament of the altar, that even amid sin, death and the devil,

Your goodness and mercy may follow us all the days of our lives, and we may dwell in Your house forever.

Heavenly Father, in Your name Your Son purchased us with His own most holy blood, and He now leads us through the gate of death to our eternal home with You. As the sheep of His fold, inspire us to hear His voice gladly and to follow Him steadfastly through every tribulation.

Graciously receive our prayers, deliver and preserve us, for to You alone we give all glory, honour and worship, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn 531

Preface

LSB 194
2 Timothy 4:22

P The Lord be with you.

C And with Your spir - it.

P Lift up your hearts.

C We lift them up un - to the Lord.

P Let us give thanks un - to the Lord, our God.

C It is meet and right so to do.

[Colossians 3:1]

[Psalm 136]

Proper Preface

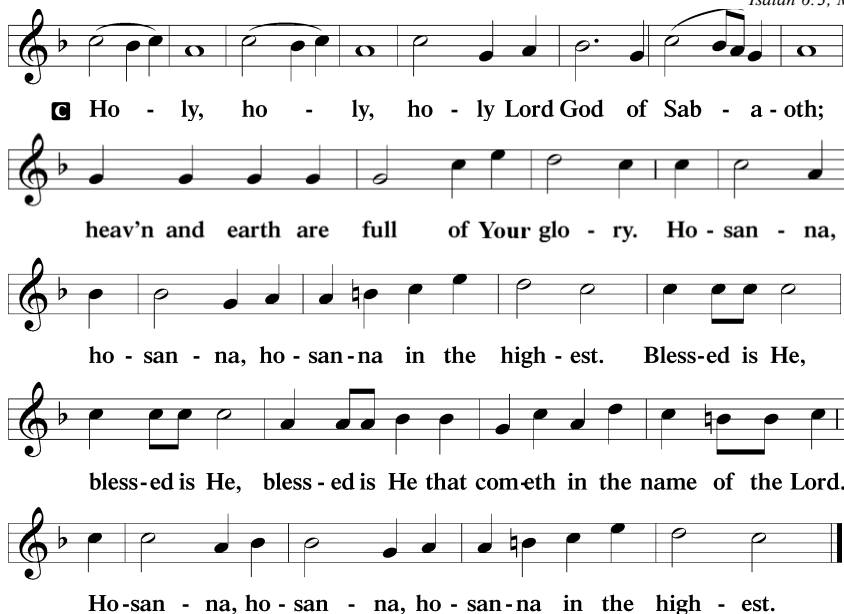
P It is truly meet, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord,

Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud
and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

Sanctus

LSB 195

Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 21:9



C Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of Sab - a - oth;
heav'n and earth are full of Your glo - ry. Ho - san - na,
ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is He,
bless - ed is He, bless - ed is He that com - eth in the name of the Lord.
Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

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.**

The Words of Our Lord

LSB 197

Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

P Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

Pax Domini

LSB 197
John 20:19

Two staves of musical notation in G major, 4/4 time. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of text, and the second staff contains the melody for the second line. The lyrics are: [P] The peace of the Lord be with you al - ways. [G] A - men.

The Lamb of God (Agnus Dei)

LSB 198
John 1:29

Five staves of musical notation in G major, 4/4 time. The lyrics are: O Christ, the Lamb of God, that tak - est a-way the sin of the world, have mer - cy up - on us. O Christ, the Lamb of God, that tak - est a-way the sin of the world, have mer - cy up - on us. O Christ, the Lamb of God, that tak - est a-way the sin of the world, grant us Your peace. A - men.

The Distribution

Distribution Hymn 618

After the Distribution, we stand

Nunc Dimittis

LSB 211 Luke 2:29-32



C 1 O Lord, now let Your ser - vant De -
2 All glo - ry to the Fa - ther, All



part in heav'n - ly peace, For I have seen the
glo - ry to the Son, All glo - ry to the



glo - ry Of Your re - deem - ing grace:
Spir - it, For - ev - er Three in One;



A light to lead the Gen - tiles Un -
For as in the be - gin - ning, Is



to Your ho - ly hill, The glo - ry of Your
now, shall ev - er be, God's tri - une name re -



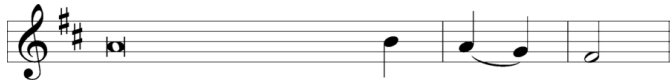
peo - ple, Your cho - sen Is - ra - el.
sound - ing Through all e - ter - ni - ty.

Thanksgiving

LSB 200 Psalm 107:1



p O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good,



C and His mercy endures for - ev - er.

Post-Communion Collect

P Let us pray.

We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



C A - men.

Salutation

2



P The Lord be with you.



C And with Your spir - it.

LSB 201

Timothy 4:22

Benedicamus



P Bless we the Lord.



C Thanks be to God.

LSB 202

[Psalm 103:1]

Benediction

LSB 202

Numbers 6:24-26

P 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.



C A-men, a-men, a - men.

Hymn 525

Acknowledgments

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ARTICLE: Worship

It is always good to look at the historical roots of our understanding of worship, and in this instance, we want to look particularly at the origin of the salient phrase *lex orandi, lex credendi* (law of praying, law of believing).

In the early 5th century, a lay monk named Prosper of Aquitaine¹ (390-455) was a literary disciple and defender of Augustine. Facing a controversy over baptism, Prosper penned the original adage: *legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* (the rule of believing establishes the rule of supplicating). As part of his argument for salvation by grace alone, Prosper demonstrated that the reason the Church prays for all people is that faith is purely the result of God's grace. Thus, the liturgy underscored the belief of the Church.

Although Prosper's concept is clear in its context, the simplified form of the phrase - *lex orandi, lex credendi* - has taken on a life of its own. Three distinct ways have developed for interpreting and applying the basic truth articulated by Prosper.

First, worship life creates and affects beliefs.

Arius (AD 256-336), an early Christian teacher who began to lead people away from the true biblical faith, understood that the worship life of a Christian community had a powerful effect on its beliefs. To introduce his aberrations about Christ's origin, Arius set his beliefs to *music*, using marketplace tunes to infect people's thinking and theological consciousness.

One result of these popular jingles was that Arianism was difficult to eradicate in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). A century or so later, when Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople (ca. AD 428), forbade his people from speaking of Mary as "God-bearer," only allowing them to call her "Christ-bearer," a theological battle erupted. His devotional directions were considered denials of the doctrine of the nature (actually the two natures) of Christ. As a result of this Nestorian heresy, a church council meeting in Chalcedon in AD 451 quickly reaffirmed the phrase "God-bearer" in the liturgical confessions of the Church.

A more recent and concrete illustration of this idea that worship forms faith is the 1950 doctrinal statement by Pope Pius XII that established the bodily assumption of Mary as an official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. This doctrine states that Mary is *physically* in heaven. It flows out of the worship life of Catholics, who have prayed to Mary for centuries. Such devotion is verified and undergirded by the papal affirmation, but it was based on the practices of the Catholic Church over many centuries, *not* on any biblical evidence. Eastern Orthodox Christians have had similar liturgical influences upon their doctrine. Likewise, several Protestant Christian groups hold a similar view, seeking to demonstrate the Spirit's presence through charismatic activities in their

¹ Aquitaine is a region in southwestern France.

worship practices. Similarly, many modern Christian church bodies continue to seek Christian unity through external worship practices, particularly a common worship resource, rather than through agreement on biblical teachings.

Second, beliefs create and affect worship life.

The second way to view the phrase *lex orandi, lex credendi*, takes an opposite perspective.

Due to many heretical worship practices in the early Church, ecclesiastical and doctrinal control over the liturgy was often rigidly exercised. The Reformation era brought about a recognition of the *dogmatic value* of liturgy. John Calvin, in particular, made the Second Commandment foundational for all worship practices of those who followed his style of reform. Idolatry of any type was carefully avoided, including, as Calvin saw it, the idolatry of the liturgy.

A theology of worship affects the actions of worship. Indeed, the early revival preachers in the United States used an approach to evangelistic worship with a particular theological goal. Preparatory songs “warmed people up to worship,” and then the preachers gave extended and persuasive sermons that ended with an exhortation to “accept Christ.” A physical act of coming forward and being “smitten in the Spirit” concluded the services. Recent evangelical worship styles continue this mechanical and manipulative approach to worship, even here in Australia, yet such practices clearly show that *theology affects worship practices*.

Third, worship life and beliefs affect each other.

The third way to interpret Prosper’s phrase is a middle position that acknowledges the validity of the two previous views while showing that each is deficient for neglecting the other. Lutherans have navigated this middle course between the proverbial and mythical Scylla and Charybdis.² For centuries, Lutherans have reflected the mutuality of both doctrine *and* devotional life. Theology and worship are significantly interrelated.

In 1523 and again in 1526, Martin Luther wrote his *Order of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg* and his *German Mass*, in which he demonstrated that changing certain parts of the liturgy was necessary for doctrinal purity, especially when he discovered that the proper biblical emphasis in the Lord’s Supper was on *God’s gift to humanity rather than on the sacrificial responses of humans toward God*.

A mutual relationship always exists between liturgy and doctrine because liturgy communicates doctrine and affects the lives of those who worship. Rites and ceremonies form a training school of faith. While ceremonies cannot create faith, they can point to it. They are the scaffolding needed for building the church, but must not be confused

² Being between Scylla and Charybdis is an idiom deriving from Greek mythology, which has been associated with the proverbial advice “to choose the lesser of two evils.”

with the church itself. They can serve to bring the immature (the young and simple folk) into the orbit of the Word and Sacrament, where faith is born. As long as man is “external,” such outward orders will be needed for the sake of love, for love and order belong together. What occurs in worship affects doctrine, and, according to Luther, the doctrine of the Church should be evident in its worship.

The Danish Lutheran theologian Regin Prenter has carried on Luther’s approach of relating theology and liturgy. In a masterful article titled “*Liturgy and Theology*,” Prenter exhibits this uniquely Lutheran approach: “The liturgy of the Church is theological. It speaks to God and man about God and man... The theology of the Church is liturgical, a part of the liturgy in the wider sense. It serves God and neighbour. The separation of the two has detrimental effects, warns Prenter:

If liturgy is separated from theology, i.e., if it is no longer in its essence “theology” or true witness to the revelation of God, it then becomes an end in itself, a “good work,” performed with the intention of pleasing God. If, on the other hand, theology is separated from liturgy, i.e., if it is no longer seen as a part of the liturgy of the Church, part of the living sacrifice of our bodies in the service of God and our fellow men, it, too, becomes an end in itself, a human wisdom competing with and sometimes even rejecting the revelation of God... These two dangers arising out of the neglect of the essential unity of liturgy and theology are, I think, imminent in our present situation in the Lutheran Church.³

Thus, there is an intimate relationship between what is done on a Sunday in a Lutheran congregation and what it means to be Lutheran.

Lutheran theologian Peter Brunner also underscores the mutual relationship between doctrine and worship. In introductory comments to his classic book *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, he states: “The church’s doctrine on worship will determine which liturgical order it employs, which it leaves to freedom of choice, and which it rejects.”⁴ On the other hand, Brunner also states that “if the dogmatic statements do not simultaneously express what takes place in the concrete worship service in which we take part, this worship will find itself in a bad way. It would then cease to be the worship instituted by God and Christ.”⁵

Being a Lutheran means retaining the mutual tension between worship life and doctrine. It means we shall evaluate our worship practices in light of what the Bible teaches. It also means that we shall evaluate our worship practices to be sure they reflect what we wish to teach.

³ Prenter, “*Liturgy and Theology*,” 141.

⁴ Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, 24.

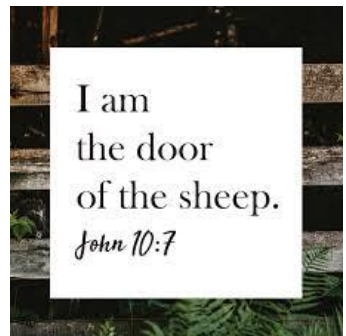
⁵ Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, 27.

Children’s Address: Let’s pretend for a minute that we are all in a jail cell. We have thick concrete walls on three sides, and on the back wall, a tiny window with bars. It’s too high for us to see out, but at least a little light gets into the cell. The fourth wall, the front wall, is concrete too, but there’s a big dull-grey metal door in it. It has a slot at the top where someone can slide a piece of metal open and look in at us. Then they slam it back shut. There’s another slot at the bottom, where they can slide in a tray of food.

We are not getting out of this cell unless we go through that door. Now, someone might come and say, “Hey, I’ll pull these bars off the window in the back wall, and you can escape that way.” But what we don’t know is that if we go out the window, we’ll plummet to our death off a mountain. Another voice might say to dig through the side wall. It might take twenty years, but maybe we could do it. What we don’t know is that on the other side of either wall is lava that would melt us in a second. The only way out is this one big metal door in the front.

Now, let’s take a little chalk and write “Jesus” on the door. Why do that? Well, I’ll tell you why. Because Jesus is the only way we’re getting out. And when we write “Jesus” on the door, it swings open, and we go outside in the nice warm sun with all of our family and friends.

In our Gospel this morning, Jesus says, “*I am the door of the sheep*” (Jn 10:7). Jesus is our door. How can that be? How does Jesus open the door for us? It’s our sin that puts us in prison, that locks the door—that keeps us from being with God, from receiving His blessings, from getting to go to heaven someday. But when Jesus died on the cross, He took away our sin. God forgives us our sins because Jesus died for them. So now they don’t keep us locked in prison anymore. That’s how Jesus is the door. He opens the door. We go through Jesus into heaven. We go through Jesus to be set free from the bad things we’ve done. We go through Jesus to live forever.



Lots of voices want us to follow them. They might even seem like good ideas for a while, but they do not go to good places. We listen to Jesus’ voice. We go through Him into the place He’s prepared just for us to live forever. *My dear Shepherd, thank You for being the door through which to enter eternal life! Amen.*

SERVICE TIMES

3 May 5 Easter	10 May 6 Easter	17 May 7 Easter
8.30am OAK LR	8.30am OAK HC	8.30am OAK LR
9.00am TMBA LR	9.00am TMBA LR	9.00am TMBA HC
9.00am GRN LR	9.30am AUB LR	9.00am GRN LR
9.30am AUB LR	10.15am GRN HC	10.45am AUB HC
9.00am MARBURG HC	9.00am LOWOOD LR	9.00am MARBURG LR

Sunday, 5 Easter

READINGS: Acts 6:1-9; 7:2a; 51-60; 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14

HYMNS: 687 490 645 (554 619) 644

Sunday, 6 Easter

READINGS: Acts 17:16-31; 1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21

HYMNS: 779 567 588 (683 617) 812

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Friday, May 1, 7.00pm, YAY (Young Adults & Youth) at Aubigny for Aubigny-Oakey-Greenwood. Hall open from 6:30pm. Please bring your Bible, hymn book, and a plate to share for supper.

The next confirmation class begins in May. If you haven't already done so, parents, let pastor know if your child will be attending.

For anyone who would like a copy of the "Child Protection and Safety Risk Management Policy 2026" for the Darling Downs Parish of the AELC for your individual congregation to read so that it can be adopted as the Child Safety policy for the congregation, please email the Child Safety Officer at childsafety@aelc.org.au for an online copy, or ask for a printed copy.

Bible Studies for May:

Sunday, 3rd, after service, Marburg.

Sunday, 17th, 8.00am, Toowoomba.

Wednesday, 20th, 10.00am, Lowood.

Wednesday, 20th, 7.30pm, Greenwood.

Friday, 29th, 7.30pm, Oak/Aub at Oakey.

WEEKLY READINGS

Sunday, April 26	2 Kings 17-18 Matthew 15	<i>Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (2017)</i> pp. 128 - 132, The Apostles Creed Questions 103 - 112
Monday, April 27	2 Kings 19-21	
Tuesday, April 28	2 Kings 22-23 Matthew 16	
Wednesday, April 29	2 Kings 24-25 Matthew 17	
Thursday, April 30	Hosea 1-4 Matthew 18	
Friday, May 1	Hosea 5-8	
Saturday, May 2	Hosea 9-11 Matthew 19	

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

Matthew Sippel – matthewsippel@aelc.org.au

Child Safety Officer – childsafety@aelc.org.au