

THE AUSTRALIAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH (AELC)

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

3 May 2026

Fifth Sunday of Easter

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

People can be obstinate, impervious even to the workings of the Holy Spirit. Faithful apostles, prophets, and preachers can become martyrs because they earnestly believe in Jesus. But for us, Jesus becomes the martyr—the sacrifice—the cornerstone, so that we may be His people, basking in light, shrouded in mercy. Christ ushers us, His precious, chosen, and holy ones, into His eternal realm that we may reside in the heavenly mansion prepared by God the Father.

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

Hymns (LSB): 687 490 645 644

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. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Alleluia.

Romans 6:9; John 14:23

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 687

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 146

¹Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord, O my soul!

²I will praise the Lord as long as I live;

I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

³Put not your trust in princes,

in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.

⁴When his breath departs he returns to the earth;

on that very day his plans perish.

⁵Blessèd is he whose help is the God of Jacob,

whose hope is in the Lord his God,

⁶who made heaven and earth,

the sea, and all that is in them,

who keeps faith forever;

⁷who executes justice for the oppressed,

who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets the prisoners free;

⁸the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;

the Lord loves the righteous.

⁹The Lord watches over the sojourners;

he upholds the widow and the fatherless,

but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

¹⁰The Lord will reign forever,

your God, O Zion, to all generations. 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 honour.

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

O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one will. Grant that we may love what You have commanded and desire what You promise, that among the many changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found; 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 Acts 6:1-9; 7:2a, 51-60

¹Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. ²And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. ³Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” ⁵And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

⁸And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. . . .

²And Stephen said:

“Brothers and fathers, hear me. . . .

⁵¹You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. ⁵²Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, ⁵³you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.”

⁵⁴Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. ⁵⁵But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” ⁵⁷But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. ⁵⁸Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice,

“Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

R This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Second Reading 1 Peter 2:2-10

²Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation— ³if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

⁴As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For it stands in Scripture:

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious,
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

⁷So the honour is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone,”

⁸and

“A stone of stumbling,
and a rock of offense.”

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

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 14:1-14**



¹[Jesus said:] “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ²In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to where I am going.” ⁵Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” ⁹Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’ ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

¹²“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes ¹²in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. ¹³Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”

R This is the Gospel of the Lord.



Apostles’ Creed

G 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 490

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

**A CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A
PEOPLE FOR HIS OWN POSSESSION
Sermon for the 5th Sunday of Easter 2026
1 Peter 2:2-10**

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 our Second Reading from before, 1 Peter 2:2-10:

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

Dear friends in Christ,

Every one of you present here today is precious. You are holy, a kingly priesthood. You are a chosen family. God Himself says so: **“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession.”**

As the Israelites were once the chosen people of God, now you, being made God’s children in Holy Baptism, are the new Israel, chosen by God. *You are who He says you are*. Holy, kingly priests chosen and purchased with His holy blood and innocent suffering and death.

His Word defines and proclaims who you are. A couple of sentences before our text today, Peter quoted Isaiah 40.¹ He said, “*Grass withers, and the flower falls, but the Word of the Lord remains forever*” (1 Peter 1:24-25). God’s changeless will and Word are constant in this changing life. The Law condemns sinners; the Gospel works faith and hope through Christ.

It is the mighty, living, eternal Word of God that *alone can bring eternal life to the people of our dying planet.* The Word that Isaiah spoke about was the very same Word that had brought the Christians of Peter’s time to faith, the Word preached to them. That same eternal, life-giving Word is alive today wherever the Bible is read and proclaimed, as it is now. Luther once wrote, “We must recognise in our hearts and believe that we receive everything from Him and that He is our God. Then out with it, and freely and openly confess this before the world—preach, praise, glorify, and give thanks! This is the real and only worship of God, the true office of the priest, and the finest, most acceptable offering” (*Luther’s Works 14:32*).

These words are amazing and comforting. Why? Because we were not always His people. He was not always our God. Peter writes of darkness and light and says, “**Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.**”

Here, Peter is quoting Isaiah’s contemporary, the prophet Hosea, whose whole message could be summed up by those few words: “**Not a people, but now you are God’s people.**” Disconnected from God, sinful from birth, hostile to God’s Word and will, all humanity bears this horrible stencil: “*Not the people of God.*” God was so angry with the unbelieving Israelites that He commanded Hosea to take a known prostitute as a wife as a visual aid for rebuking the unfaithfulness of the nation. Hosea was to call their son *Lo-Ammi* (Hebrew for “not My people”); “*for you are not My people, and I am not your God.*” “I am not your God” is the most catastrophic utterance any human being will ever hear.

By birth, no one lives under the mercy of God. We are born under the curse of sin, death, and hell. The horrible name that Hosea was instructed to give his daughter, *Lo-Ruhamah* (“not loved”), is the name we also were assigned at birth (Hosea 1:6).

¹ Isaiah 40:6-8

“But now you *have* received mercy,” says Peter. “Now you *are* the people of God.” When Word and Sacrament work the incredible change in a human being that we call *conversion*, things change. When a human being is connected to Jesus Christ in faith, things change. Our status before God changes: God sees us clothed in the righteous robes of his Son and proclaims, “*Not guilty!*” Our attitude also changes; instead of hating God’s Word and ways, we come to love them. We see God as our Father instead of a judge and jailer.

God the Father shows His mercy through His only Son, Jesus Christ, and today Peter calls Christ “**a living Stone rejected by men.**” He was shown no mercy by God when He died in our place. The wrath of God fell upon Him as it should’ve fallen upon us. For us, He suffered and died.

But Christ is not a dead Stone. He is the “**living Stone.**” Having accepted the full payment for mankind’s sin, God the Father raised His Son from the dead on that Easter morning. “**The Stone that the builders rejected has become the Cornerstone,**” the first-laid stone of the Church’s foundation, the stone on which the whole building depends, the Cornerstone.

He is chosen and precious in the sight of God. But not only Jesus. *We* are chosen and precious in the sight of God in Him. Through Him, we, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house. A house not made of bricks or stone, but of *living stones*. A Church made of a holy priesthood offering up sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Yet, life doesn’t always fit into that beautiful picture of all of us being built together into the Church, does it? There is suffering and pain. Life does not always go as we would like. There is real pain and loss, whether it be physical or material. Perhaps like David, we find ourselves asking, “*How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day?*” (Psalm 13:1-2). It’s as though everywhere we turn, there is something that makes our lives difficult.

And the other stones around us? They are of no help. In fact, doesn’t it feel like sometimes they try to tear you down more than they build you up? Again, with David, we sometimes cry out, “*I am in the midst of lions; I lie among ravenous beasts—men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords*” (Psalm 57:4). These stones should be supporting us, not hurting

me. Why the friendly fire? Sticks and stones may break my bones, but their words still hurt. Each one is managing to land for maximum effect from the very people who shouldn't be throwing stones at you.

Now, if we are to be brutally honest with ourselves, we hit people with stones, too, don't we? They hurt me; I hurt them back. You are hit with stones, so you hit others with them. Do unto others, stone others, before they stone you.

Amidst our being built into spiritual houses, *bad things still happen*. Really bad, unfair stuff is going on all around us. A loved one gets sick. You don't feel so hot. You want to know what's going on with you, but you don't want to find out it's something bad. And it's easy to think that believing in Jesus should count for something. It should get me something — something more than the other person who doesn't believe. It should get me a pass, a get-out-of-suffering-free card. The people around me should be better. God should be better to me. *Things should be better than this!*

“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession.” Chosen? Unlikely. Kingly? We aren't even ruling the little corner of our lives, let alone anything in heaven. Holy? A people of God's own possession? Are you joking? There seem to be more stones crushing us than building us up!

If anyone thinks or talks this way, that is *utter unbelief* because our Lord's words are **not** a matter of what we see or experience. They aren't made true by things working out for you or made untrue by things not working for you.

We are not kingly priests because we look like kingly priests. We are not a chosen family because we act like a chosen family, or events turn out our way to prove to us that God loves us. Neither do we do something and make ourselves His own possession, nor do we make life work out the way we want it to work out.

No. ***We are who the Father says we are***. We are worth what He has paid for us. And what was the price paid for us? *“Not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot”* (1 Peter 1:18-19). As we live our lives, remember what it cost God to make us His own—the precious blood of Christ. He paid the death of His Son. It's not a matter of whether we measure up or things turn out the way we plan. Christ did what He did for us, and ***that*** makes and defines who we are and what we are worth.

You see—Christ mattered first. He really is “**the Stone that the builders rejected.**” He really is chosen and precious to God. Christ is the Stone rejected by men but chosen and precious to God. And after His death on the cross, He was raised as a living Stone.

We find our identity in Him. He’s the living Stone. We are living stones in Him. But not just us as individuals. All of us right now are “**living stones... being built up as a spiritual house... through Jesus Christ.**”

His building. His people. We heard from our Gospel before, Jesus telling us that He is “*the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*” (John 14:6). This teaching is exclusive. There are no other paths to eternal life. No one comes to the Father *except* through Jesus. What a contrast to the popular teaching that says all religions reach God, but just follow different paths.

No, *apart from Him*, we are just dead rocks. Not God’s people. Unholy priests who deserve no mercy. Just people stumbling around, disobeying His Word.

But in Him—through the sacrifice of Christ—God considers us precious. *His* death for our sins. *His* resurrection for our resurrection. And we are made alive, living stones, built together into His Holy Church, not just stones, tossed around or hurled like missiles at others.

No, He is working among us. He is building us together. His holiness has become our holiness. His kingliness is now our kingliness. His priesthood, our priesthood. His mercy showered upon us in His gifts. “*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom*” (Luke 12:32).

All so that “**you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.**” In order that we might praise and sing to Him. To let all know, “**The Stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.**” A cornerstone holding the whole building together. You, I, all living stones connected to Him, building a great big giant building that praises and magnifies the Father.

In Him, we really do offer up praises and thanksgiving. In Him, we offer up our bodies as living sacrifices for those around us. No longer living in our sins, our despair, our evil, our deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander, or whatever other stones we toss at one another. But loving others, for others, for the sake of others, He takes the stones that fall around us. He builds us all together. He makes us a building, His spiritual building, *His Church.*

His Word is the final word on who we are and who we shall be. **“Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation—³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.”**

Come to the Lord. Enter His presence with thanksgiving. Believe again in who you are and live from it. **“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.”**

This is who we are. This is who we shall be on the Last Day. This is who we are now. 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 645

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 Fifth Sunday of Easter

[1 Timothy 2:1-4]

Heavenly Father, through the power of Christ's resurrection, You adopt all who believe in Him. Receive us as Your newborn children and nourish our faith through the pure spiritual milk of Your Word, that we may dwell in Your presence forever.

Send labourers into Your harvest, Lord. Preserve our pastor and continue to make him devoted to Your Word and to prayer. Strengthen the zeal of our student Matthew that he may become a future shepherd of Your sheep. Give many servants to Your Church, that neither the preaching nor the care of Your people may fall into neglect or disregard.

Merciful Lord, help parents to raise their children to know You as their help and hope, that they may not put their trust in princes in whom there is no salvation.

Holy God, Your power brought all things into being and still preserves what You have made. Bless the office of the Prime Minister and all elected and appointed civil servants. Lead them to honour You and Your purpose, establishing order and justice, encouraging virtue, and protecting all life. Give them wisdom and moderation to lead for the well-being of the nation.

Father of glory, Your Son declared Himself to be the Way, the Truth and the Life. Bless all who come to You in prayer. May Christ Himself be their way of salvation, their truth amid doubt and their life amid death. Grant them a sure and steadfast hope in the good news that He has prepared a place for them with You, where pain and sickness and all other troubles and fears are no more, and all things are made new.

Almighty God, in Christ You have made us a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and a people for Your possession. Preserve Your people in the one true faith, and bless us with a heart for the lost, that they may come to saving faith in You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

O Lord, we thank and praise You for Your servant Stephen, whom Your Son has received into His glory. May we imitate him in faith and love to speak Your truth with boldness, forgiving those who sin against us as Christ forgave His persecutors from the cross. When our last hour comes, let us fall asleep in Him and be born into eternal life, for the sake of Him who was born into our flesh to redeem it, even Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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.

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.



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

Hymn 644

Acknowledgments

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ARTICLE: God supplies the capability of action, but we bear the culpability for the action

Isn't the world evil! I often hear people say the end is nigh because the world has become so wicked and evil. Fair enough, but you only have to look at the history of the world to see that believers of all ages have thought the same thing. The inhabitants of this world have been evil ever since sin entered, way back in the Garden of Eden.

Such thinking may lead to the following thoughts: “If God gives a person the ability to think, act, and function, does God then bear some responsibility for the evil people do? Or perhaps is God totally responsible for the evil we do because we are mere pawns in His hand?” The Bible answers both questions with a **no**. The psalmist said of God, “*The LORD is upright; He is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in Him*” (Psalm 92:15). God is not responsible for the evil people do.

First, regarding the evil people perpetrate in this world, we see that, on occasion, God prevents it. When Abimelech took Sarah into his harem, it threatened God’s promise that an ancestor of the Saviour would be born through Abraham and Sarah. Thus, God prevented Abimelech from having relations with Sarah (Gen. 20:6). God stopped the evil from happening. On occasion, God may *permit* evil to happen, but He will govern it so that it works out for good. God permitted Joseph to be sold into slavery. This took Joseph from slavery to prison to second-in-command in all of Egypt. What God permitted worked out for good, not only for Joseph but also for Jacob and his family, as well as for God’s plan to save the entire world through the coming Messiah.

We need to note that God’s permission of people’s evil deeds is not a weakness in God, as though He could not prevent it. The same Lord who protected Israel from the Egyptians at the Red Sea is able to stop evil from happening. God’s permission of evil is not apathy on His part, as though God does not care about evil. God is serious in His opposition to sin. Paul wrote, “*God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you*” (2 Thess. 1:6). When God permits sin, it is not an indulgent attitude on God’s part, as when Eli did nothing to prevent his sons from sinning. The Lord clearly forbids sin and, just as clearly, spells out the penalty for disobedience (Rom. 6:23). God’s permission of evil is not an abrogation of His will, as though His Ten Commandments were turned into ten suggestions. God’s commandments are absolutes. They are applicable to all people of all ages.

We are responsible for the evil we do. God may give us the ability to act, but we are responsible for what we do with that ability.

In the first place, we are not mere pawns in the hands of God. God’s governance of the world does not force people to act as they do. This was the view of philosophies such as Stoicism, Fatalism, and Determinism. All three of

these views portray humans as helpless pawns who can only carry out what has been decreed for them. Jesus, however, warned Judas that his actions would bring about terrible consequences. From the perspective of human responsibility, Judas was accountable for his betrayal of Jesus (Matt. 26:23-24).

Second, God tells us that we are personally accountable for our actions. Before the fall into sin, Adam and Eve had the ability to obey God or to disobey Him. However, when they fell into sin, they lost the image of God. No longer can humans, by nature, obey God. In the state in which we come into this world, all we can do is disobey God. In spiritual matters (such as coming to faith, desiring to do God's will, and carrying out God's commandments), people by nature have no free will. We are spiritually blind when we enter this world. We don't think we need a Saviour, and we think we can save ourselves (1 Cor. 2:14). We are spiritually dead, unable to do anything to save ourselves (Eph. 2:1). We are enemies of God, actively hostile to God's will (Rom. 8:7). All we can do, according to our natural spiritual powers, is to sin. It is only after God converts us that we can, to a degree, cooperate with God in our sanctified lives. Even here, we cooperate with God in carrying out His will only because God has enabled us to do so. Paul writes, "*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them*" (Eph. 2:10). For this reason, God gets the credit for the good that we do. "For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

As we use our reason in earthly affairs, we do have free will. We can choose actions that benefit others in society. I can choose to help my neighbour, to be a good citizen, to drive within the speed limit, to stop at stop signs, to refrain from robbing a bank, and to say no to the abuse of drugs or alcohol. Such actions benefit society. We call this *civic righteousness*. However, apart from faith in Christ, these actions are still sin in the sight of a holy God. As I use my reason and will in earthly affairs, I am responsible for the decisions I make. If I decide to rob a bank, God may have supplied me with the capability to act, but I bear the culpability (blame, moral responsibility) for the action I chose.

God cannot be blamed for the evil that people do. He does not force anyone to do evil. God holds us personally accountable for the sins we commit (Ps 5:4-6). He cannot be charged with evil, for he is, in his essence, completely free of any wrongdoing and is unalterably opposed to evil (Ps 92:15). God may concur in

the *material* portion of an act, in that he gives the ability to perform it. However, the *formal* (moral) responsibility for the act lies with the one who does it. Scripture teaches us: God supplies the capability of action, but we bear the blame for evil actions.

Children’s Address: Listen to these Bible words from the Gospel of John: “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it” (John 14:14).



That sounds very nice. Jesus promises to answer our prayers. Can you think of a time when you prayed for something, and Jesus answered your prayer?

We know that Jesus hears and answers our prayers because *we are part of God’s family*. Jesus died on the cross for our sins and came alive again on Easter. Then, after we were born, Jesus brought us into God’s family when we were baptised. The pastor poured water over our heads and baptised us in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. When this happened, God forgave us our sins. We became part of God’s family. Now, because we are in God’s family, God hears and answers our prayers.

Sometimes when people pray, they end their prayer with these words: “*In Jesus’ name. Amen.*” That’s nice because it reminds us that Jesus loves us and promises to answer our prayers. Sometimes God gives us what we ask. Other times, He answers by not giving us what we ask. Whichever way God answers our prayers, we can remember that God loves us and has promised to answer them because Jesus died and rose again to bring us into God’s family.

Let’s pray in Jesus’ name right now. *Dear Jesus, thank You for coming to die on the cross for our sins. We look forward to meeting You one day in heaven, and we are happy that You are here with us now. Watch over and protect our families and church. Give us hearts that always trust You. Help us tell others about You. In Your name, dear Jesus! Amen.*

SERVICE TIMES

10 May 6 Easter	14 May The Ascension	17 May 7 Easter
	Thursday	
8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR MS	7.30pm OAK HC	8.30am OAK LR MS 9.00am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am MARBURG LR

Sunday, 6 Easter		
READINGS: Acts 17:16-31; 1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21		
HYMNS: 779 567 588 (683 617) 812		
Thursday, The Ascension		
READINGS: Acts 1:1-11; Ephesians 1:15-23; Luke 24:44-53		
HYMNS: 821 494 492 339 637 477		
Sunday, 7 Easter		
READINGS: Acts 1:12-26; 1 Peter 4:12-19;5:6-11; John 17:1-11		
HYMNS: 587 564 756 (563 623) 814		

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wednesday, 6 May, 10.00am. Women's Guild at Lowood. Opening Devotion: *Helen*. Choose a Bible Verse from: *1 Samuel Chapter 1-7*. Item of Interest: "C" *Congratulations Message / Card*.

Saturday, 9 May, 1.00pm. Fellowship afternoons at Bethlehem, Toowoomba. All are welcome to attend. Please bring something for a shared afternoon tea.

Sunday, 17 May, 1.00pm. A Seminary Committee meeting has been called to be held at Bethlehem, Toowoomba.

Tuesday, 12 May, 7.30pm. Men's Fellowship resumes at Trinity Oakey.

Trinity Oakey members only: Could we please choose a date for a working bee?

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.

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.

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

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

Matthew Sippel – matthewsippel@aelc.org.au

Child Safety Officer – childsafety@aelc.org.au

WEEKLY READINGS

Sunday, May 3	Hosea 12-14	<i>Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (2017)</i> pp. 133 - 145, The First Article Part 1 Questions 113 - 130
Monday, May 4	Jeremiah 1-2 Matthew 20	
Tuesday, May 5	Jeremiah 3-5	
Wednesday, May 6	Jeremiah 6-8 Matthew 21	
Thursday, May 7	Jeremiah 9-11	
Friday, May 8	Jeremiah 12-14 Matthew 22	
Saturday, May 9	Jeremiah 15-17	

AELC Member Congregations Details

Contact: ddaalc@gmail.com

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