

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

**17 May 2026**

**Seventh Sunday of Easter**

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

*Christians endure insults, trials, sufferings, and temptations. Living in an unbelieving world is tumultuous, as we are always struggling to stand firm against persecutors of Jesus. Judas succumbed to temptation and met destruction. Those who remain steadfast in Christ will be restored, confirmed, strengthened, and established. Jesus remains the fulcrum between God the Father and His people. He loves believers who treasure, uphold, and regard His Word as truth. For us, Jesus prays that we endure the strife and yet believe.*

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

**Hymns (LSB): 587 564 756 (563 623) 814**

**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 will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.  
Alleluia.

**Romans 6:9; John 14:18**

*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 587**

*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 68:1–10**

- <sup>1</sup>God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered;  
and those who hate him shall flee before him!**
- <sup>2</sup>As smoke is driven away, so you shall drive them away;  
as wax melts before fire, so the wicked shall perish before God!**
- <sup>3</sup>But the righteous shall be glad;  
they shall exult before God; they shall be jubilant with joy!**
- <sup>4</sup>Sing to God, sing praises to his name;  
lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts;  
his name is the LORD;  
exult before him!**
- <sup>5</sup>Father of the fatherless and protector of widows  
is God in his holy habitation.**
- <sup>6</sup>God settles the solitary in a home;  
he leads out the prisoners to prosperity,  
but the rebellious dwell in a parched land.**
- <sup>7</sup>O God, when you went out before your people,  
when you marched through the wilderness,**
- <sup>8</sup>the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain,  
before God, the One of Sinai,  
before God, the God of Israel.**
- <sup>9</sup>Rain in abundance, O God, you shed abroad;  
you restored your inheritance as it languished;**
- <sup>10</sup>your flock found a dwelling in it;  
in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.**

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

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

P 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



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



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

## Gloria in Excelsis

P Glory be to God on high

Luke 2:14; John 1:29  
LSB SETTING 4, 204



☐ 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.

## 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

**O King of glory, Lord of hosts, uplifted in triumph far above all heavens, leave us not without consolation but send us the Spirit of truth whom You promised from the Father; for You live and reign with Him and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

*Sit*

### First Reading

### Acts 1:12-26

<sup>12</sup>Then [the apostles] returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. <sup>13</sup>And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. <sup>14</sup>All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

<sup>15</sup>In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, <sup>16</sup>“Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. <sup>17</sup>For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.” <sup>18</sup>(Now this man bought a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. <sup>19</sup>And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) <sup>20</sup>“For it is written in the Book of Psalms,

““May his camp become desolate,  
and let there be no one to dwell in it’;

and

““Let another take his office.’

<sup>21</sup>So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, <sup>22</sup>beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.” <sup>23</sup>And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. <sup>24</sup>And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen <sup>25</sup>to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” <sup>26</sup>And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

**P** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C Thanks be to God.**

## **Second Reading**

## **1 Peter 4:12-19; 5:6-11**

<sup>12</sup>Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup>But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. <sup>14</sup>If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. <sup>15</sup>But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. <sup>16</sup>Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. <sup>17</sup>For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? <sup>18</sup>And

“If the righteous is scarcely saved,  
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”

<sup>19</sup>Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. . . .

<sup>6</sup>Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, <sup>7</sup>casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. <sup>8</sup>Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. <sup>9</sup>Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. <sup>10</sup>And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. <sup>11</sup>To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

**P** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C Thanks be to God.**

*Stand*

## Alleluia



Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

## Holy Gospel

P The Holy Gospel according to **John 17:1-11.**



Glo - ry be to You, O Lord.

<sup>1</sup>When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, <sup>2</sup>since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. <sup>3</sup>And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. <sup>4</sup>I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup>And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

<sup>6</sup>“I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. <sup>7</sup>Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. <sup>8</sup>For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. <sup>9</sup>I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. <sup>10</sup>All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. <sup>11</sup>And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.”

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.



Praise be to You, O Christ.

## 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.**

*Christian:* the ancient text reads "catholic," meaning the whole Church as it confesses the wholeness of Christian doctrine.

## Hymn 564

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

**SUFFERING AS A CHRISTIAN**  
**Sermon for the 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, 2026**  
**1 Peter 4:12-19; 5:6-11**

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 4:12-19; 5:6-11

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.  
Dear friends in Christ,

While here in Australia we aren't likely to be burned at the stake, thrown to the lions, or beheaded anytime soon for confessing the Christian faith, unfortunately, *throughout history we find numerous examples of Christians being put to death.*

In the Apostle Peter's lifetime, Jews who saw Christ as a major threat to their religious beliefs and way of life carried out persecutions against Christians. The same Sanhedrin that had put Jesus to death ensured that the deacon Stephen became the first martyr (Acts 7). After that murder, the floodgates of hatred and persecution were opened, and most Christians were driven from Jerusalem. However, taking their faith with them, they planted new congregations wherever they went. The new centre of the church came to be Antioch in Syria.

At first, the Roman government ignored Christianity, thinking that it was just a weird offshoot of Judaism, which had official permission to exist, but by the time Peter was writing his First Letter, the split between Christianity and Judaism was apparent to all, and Christianity was viewed as a *dangerous and subversive movement*. To encourage the Christians, Peter wrote, "<sup>12</sup> **Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.**"

Peter wrote his Letter from Rome a few years before his death. Persecutions were common here or there, and, as bad as they were, they were confined to small, local events. Often, the persecution took the form of insults. The big prosecutions by the Roman Empire would not start for a couple more years, under the violent and wicked emperor Nero. Peter was anticipating that day by warning his fellow believers, particularly his fellow pastors, that *they needed to be prepared*, and made the point that persecution should not be viewed as strange. Rather, persecution is the norm. Those who are of the devil, the world,

and the sinful flesh will always hate anyone who trusts in Christ. Look how Christians are treated in the world today, as many countries continue to resist the Gospel.

Even in Australia, persecution of Christians exists. Sure, we are not locked up or sentenced to death—our persecution is not severe—yet what happens when we, or another Christian, speak up for the unborn? Many an outspoken person in the public spotlight is mocked if they are pro-life. And how often are we dismissed by other Christians for not agreeing with their way of thinking, whatever it may be? Yes, sometimes the persecution comes from others who are supposed to be brothers and sisters in Christ.

This seems strange, doesn't it? But God has a purpose in allowing such persecutions. Peter says that through these fiery trials, *we are being tested.* There's the sense here that suffering purifies the Christian. Because we are always sinners and saints, *we are continually being refined.* Christ is always striving to purify our hearts and our minds. In standing firm, we share in Christ's life and death. We suffer and die with Christ. And this fellowship does not end in this life, but continues into eternity, where there is no longer any suffering or death. Remember Peter's words we heard a couple of Sundays ago, "*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession*" (1 Peter 2:9). We belong to Christ, even in the midst of persecution, yet we continue to be wary because the devil will use such persecutions to his advantage. Peter reminds us that he "**prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**"

Usually, a lion will prowl quietly, but the devil here is one who makes a lot of noise. He is letting his frightful roar sound forth. He roars loudly to create fear. His will is that, through much fear of persecution, he would get us to deny Christ. He does not easily attack an entire congregation, but he will single out anyone who seems to offer the best chance for a successful onslaught. The devil "*tries every trick and does not stop until he finally wears us out, so that we either renounce our faith or throw up our hands and put up our feet, becoming indifferent or impatient*" (Large Catechism V 26). Therefore, we need to be "**sober-minded**" and "**watchful.**" This means we should never be carried away by our own or others' notions. We should never give the devil a chance to devour us.

But God also uses these same fiery trials for *His* purpose. Peter writes, “**14 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.**” Strange as it may seem, *it’s actually a great blessing to be counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ.*

However, suffering is not *in itself* to be viewed as a good thing. Peter isn’t speaking of physical ailments or the like here. True, in Peter’s day, persecution was severe, and included floggings, imprisonment, and even being put to death by being fed to the lions in the arena—Peter himself would experience some of these things. But there were other reasons, apart from being a Christian, why these things could be done to a person. Peter is clear to make this distinction when he writes, “**Let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.**”

If one were a murderer or a thief, they would be punished according to the law. This is not a blessing. This is not a good thing. It is merely *retribution* for committing a crime. Christians should not be criminals. Committing crimes is not how we show love for our neighbour. If one is arrested for being a criminal, this is shameful, and the punishment is just. But if one is arrested for being a Christian, *this is worthy of praise before God.*

Strangely enough, some early Christians took Peter’s words and the words of other apostles so to heart that they would actually *go out of their way to be arrested and put to death in times of persecution*. While suffering for Christ is a great honour for a Christian, it is an honour we cannot seek. The Early Church began to teach that Christians should avoid persecution if they can do so without compromising their faith. It was wrong to be a martyr if one had the opportunity to escape. So, for example, if a person knew Christians were being arrested in his town but not in another, he was to flee. Always, though, *if confronted and arrested, he was to confess Christ.*

Dear friends, we do not *actively seek* out persecution. Again, Peter here is not telling his readers to *put up* with persecution or *take one for the team*. No, here Peter is telling the Christians of that time, and us today, that we are preserved by Christ in the face of trials. When trials come along, we do not preserve ourselves. Christ keeps us safe from true harm. And what is true harm? True harm is denying Christ. We cannot save ourselves. Christ must save us. If we deny Him, we are lost. Peter reminds us that God is also our Creator and is ever faithful to us. Furthermore, Christ Jesus Himself is no stranger to persecution.

He gave His life on the cross so that we would never be separated from God. So we can entrust ourselves to God’s care, even in the face of death, and need not lose faith. Rather, “**rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed. ...therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.**” Our sufferings are for but a little while; the glories of heaven last forever.

As we move from the Season of Easter into Pentecost, the so-called Time of the Church, we are reminded that the Christian is always under pressure from the world. The world does not want to confront its own sin or inhumanity. From the time of Peter, beginning with Stephen, to the present day, Christians have been under attack. It is said that more Christians died for Christ in the twentieth century than in all the previous centuries combined, and the twenty-first century shows no let-up. The persecutions have not ended. They will never end until the return of Christ at the final judgement of this world. The world will be condemned. Those who reject Christ will be rejected by Christ and cast into hell. But those who stand with Christ will remain with Christ forever. There is nothing strange about being persecuted, because Christ, who suffered all, will always be right there with us. We stand with Christ because Christ will stand with us.

We shall not be left to stand on our own. Christ never abandons us, for He is our Creator and Redeemer. He is the God of all grace, the One who will restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish us. Amen.

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

## Hymn & Offering

### Hymn 756

*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 Seventh Sunday of Easter

[1 Timothy 2:1-4]

O Lord, You resist the proud and give grace to the humble. Grant us true humility after the likeness of Your Son, that we would never be arrogant or prideful and thus provoke Your wrath, but in all lowliness be made partakers of Your grace.

O God, You have provided pastors to preach Your Word, administer Your Sacraments and shepherd Your people. Guard them from leading Your sheep astray. Grant that, through their preaching, Your people may be pierced by the Law and saved by the Gospel. Finally, shield them from the assaults of the devil, who would silence Your Word.

Heavenly Father, You settle the solitary in families in order to nurture their faith and train them in righteousness. Bless and strengthen parents to bring up their children to resist temptation and to endure all things for the sake of Your name.

O God, Father of all, rule for the cause of the needy and the outcast. Set the world's rulers against oppressors and all evil, that we may live together in peace, joy and holiness.

Gracious Lord, have mercy on the sick and those in any need. Let the dawning light of the new creation in Christ sustain them in faith. In accord with Your will, grant them renewed health — a foretaste of their eternal healing in Him.

Eternal Lord, thanks be to You for victory over death through our Lord Jesus Christ. Remember all who mourn. Comfort them with the promise that You love them with an everlasting love, and that Christ will raise His people from the dead.

Lord God, heavenly Father, inasmuch as the adversary continually afflicts us and as a roaring lion walks about, seeking to devour us: We implore You for the sake of the suffering and death of Your Son, Jesus Christ, to help us by the grace of the Holy Spirit and to strengthen our hearts by Your Word, that our enemy may not prevail over us, but that we may evermore abide in Your grace and be preserved unto everlasting life; 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.

## Hymn 563

### Preface

LSB 194  
2 Timothy 4:22



**P** The Lord be with you.



**C** And with Your spir - it.



**P** Lift up your hearts.

[Colossians 3:1]



**C** We lift them up un - to the Lord.



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

[Psalm 136]



**C** It is meet and right so to do.

## 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



**☞** 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



**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



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 623

After the Distribution, we stand

### Nunc Dimittis

LSB 211 Luke 2:29-32

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

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

*LSB 201  
2Timothy4:22*



**P** The Lord be with you.



**C** And with Your spir - it.

## Benedicamus

*LSB 202  
[Psalm 103:1]*



**P** Bless we the Lord.



**C** Thanks be to God.

## 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 814

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## ARTICLE: Persecution

As children of Adam, we tend to be hedonists. We want to be immersed in comfort and pleasure. While it is true that God created people to bestow His good gifts on them, by turning away from God through the serpent's lie, people sought an alternative source of pleasure, which was destined to fail. All people found was death; there is not, and may never be, life apart from the One who is the Giver of life.

That is why we should not be surprised when our understanding of Christian life becomes distorted in many ways. Christ said He came so that people "*may have life and have it abundantly*" (John 10:10), and we are tempted to interpret this in terms of possessions in this life. St Paul said, "*I can do all things through Him who strengthens me*" (Phil. 4:13), and we find delight in thinking that we must be successful in this life, for our God is strong and powerful. Alas, by our nature, we do not want to recognise that the Lord's "power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

We naturally want to be on the winning side, all the more so in our Christian life, both individually and collectively. The old man in us is eager to see growth, prosperity, respect and admiration from everyone, Christians and non-Christians alike.

The Christian message, however, and the God in whom we believe run contrary to our human aspirations of the old Adam. The scandal of Christianity lies in its insistence on exclusivity. There is only one truth, only one way to salvation. By default, all other religions are misleading and pave the way to hell. That makes Christians not "friendly" in the eyes of the world. That is embarrassing. And so it may prompt some to compromise on matters of faith, hoping it will result in more peace and stability in society. That is unlikely to happen. The perception of being part of a "Christian society," once fairly common, is quickly disappearing.

As Western society rapidly reverts to non-Christian moral values, it becomes increasingly important to study the Church's rich experience of persecution and martyrdom. The main lesson we can learn from it is that this is extremely serious. It is a matter of life and death. And shallow Christianity, individualistic and psychologically oriented, is absolutely doomed in that period.

For many, Christians seem increasingly small and miserable in this world. We should not be surprised. After all, our Lord looked miserable on the cross, and only with the eyes of faith can we see Him there for what He is: the Almighty Lord and King.

It is important to realise that our sufferings caused by persecution are not incidental to our faith. If they were, the cross of Christ would also be incidental, just one step in the "salvation plan" to get over and forget about.

So, you are a Christian? Congratulations! You belong to the faith in which you are expected to suffer in this life. Christian suffering is inherently Christological and, in that sense, reflects the nature of God as He truly is.

The cross is widely recognised as the central symbol of the Christian faith. In its original context, there was nothing noble about it: it served as a frightening reminder of the shameful execution reserved for the worst of criminals and enemies of the state. There is something profound about it being a special sign by which we, as Christians, have been marked at our Baptism. It shapes our Christian life. What is it? *“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”* (2 Tim. 3:12). All. No exceptions. Persecution for the faith is not something that should catch any baptised person off guard: it is inherent in the very nature of the Christian faith.

When we think of persecution and public confession of faith in such circumstances leading to martyrdom, we tend to think of cruel events in modern countries in Africa and Asia. The glorious first centuries of the Church also come to mind: the third or early fourth-century Roman arena, the crowds shouting, “Christians to the lions!” as heroic men and women who would rather incur unspeakable suffering for the *“faith which was once for all delivered to the saints”* (Jude 3) than offer incense to the genius of the Caesar.

Indeed, both in ancient and in recent times, Christian faith and its adherents have experienced massive onslaughts. But does this affect modern Christian inhabitants of the West, particularly those of us living in Australia, on a personal level? We do not have lions roaming around us, and it is unlikely to reach that point in our lifetime. Major cataclysms may or may not occur. As Christians, we continually pray that, wherever we are, *“we may lead a peaceful and quiet life”* (1 Tim. 2:2) for as long as possible. That is our desire.

However, even in that relatively calm setting, persecution may still occur, albeit on a minor scale. Reality is usually more mundane than the lions, which does not make it irrelevant. Life consists of little things. God desires us to be faithful anyway. *“One who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much”* (Luke 16:10).

Likewise, persecution may manifest in small things we may hardly notice as they unfold. A typical example is the gradual rise of a hostile public attitude towards the Christian faith. At first, it may be reflected in the sentiment that Christians are generally inferior in education and knowledge to those who do not accept Christian claims. After all, “Today nobody believes in the Bible anymore.” “You must be ashamed to be a Christian. Who are you, a stupid person?” When our relatives and friends take such positions, it is especially hard, although Christians should not be surprised if they are hated for Christ’s name’s sake (Matt. 10:22).

Then this negative view of Christianity soon translates into legislation that makes life harder for Christians. For example, it may include stricter taxation policies and infringements on personal rights. It is worth remembering that part of the communists' takeover of the Lutheran church buildings and other property in Russia 80 years ago was not through direct prohibitions, but rather through peculiar tax policies, strict control by the fire department and city authorities, and mounting pressure on people who attended churches, so that eventually many people stopped coming to the churches and those who continued to do so could no longer afford to take care of the church buildings.

Finally, covert persecution may come through changing the educational model, which will seek to sow the seeds of discord within families by placing children in a new milieu culturally foreign to Christianity.

Do not think that by doing nothing and simply keeping quiet you will stay out of trouble. True, you may gain some time for yourself. But sooner or later you will face the consequences of your spiritual slumber. At the same time, there is nothing you can “do” about persecution, strictly speaking. If it happens, it happens. To be sure, we must be active citizens and raise our voices in the public square to defend traditional Christian values and attitudes, but we must not be overconfident that simply lobbying politically for Christianity will surely allow us to avoid persecution.

Thus, if a real battle is coming, make sure you don't enter it without proper training and ammunition. Persecutions often come when you least expect them. Be on guard!

As for the church, well, let us see how it all holds up when the trials come. Time will tell whether the house is built on sand or on stone. There are many places in the world that once had thriving worship communities, and all that is left for you to see now are the ruins of their churches. Why do you think you will surely get lucky compared to them?

Nevertheless, if you fail to confess Christ at the critical moment and make a shipwreck of your faith, there is still forgiveness for you. Return to your Baptism, as Luther wonderfully instructs in the Large Catechism. Come to confession and have your sins absolved. *“If we are faithless, He remains faithful—for He cannot deny Himself”* (2 Tim. 2:13).

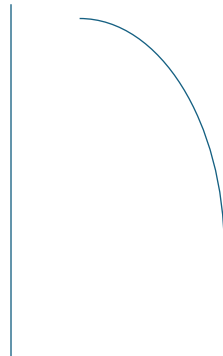
But by all means, do not think that way in advance. There are dangers in how the human mind and will operate. Once you fall and find yourself in a state of denial of faith, you may prefer to stay that way. It is like taking a drug that chemically alters your brain, making you an addict; it's better not to play with it. Going to the casino with Satan as your opponent at the gambling table is not a good idea. Don't take your chances.

God will wipe away all tears. Christ is the triumphant Victor. He triumphs on His cross, in His shedding of blood, and in His death. As Christ has risen and conquered death, so He will raise our bodies too and give them immortality, no matter what happens to them in this life. The Christian life is rather a marathon than a sprint. What matters is getting to the end, which is also the new beginning. *“Be faithful unto death, and I give you the crown of life”* (Rev. 2:10).

## Children's Address:

Can you answer these simple math problems for me? One plus one equals...? Two plus two equals...? Three plus three equals...? Let's try a harder one. The shortest distance between two points is a...? Answer: a straight line.

This isn't just how math works; it's also how life works. Think of a time when you knew what you needed to do and did it. Maybe your parents told you to make your bed, pick up your clothes off the floor, or brush your teeth. When we just do those things and make a straight line to get them done, everything goes well, right? Mum and Dad are happy, your bed is made, your room is clean, and your teeth are brushed. But when we don't, when we get distracted or are disobedient, it's like we take a different path, not a straight line. This is like when we try to do things our own way instead of God's way. It goes all over the place. It looks like a giant mess, don't you think?



In our Gospel for today, Jesus prays that God would keep us on the straight way. Before His crucifixion, He prays to our Father that His death would glorify the Father and Him. He prays that the eyes of the world would be opened and fixed on Him. He prays that we all might see—that we have faith in Him—for in Him there is everlasting life. This is what the straight line looks like.

But even on our best days, we know we'll stray from the path, weave, and wind around. Because of the sin that our first parents, Adam and Eve, gave us, and that your parents gave you, even if we try, we can't just go from "Start" to "Finish" in a straight line. We sin.

So Jesus went straight for us. He kept the whole Law of God as set out in the Ten Commandments. He fulfilled God's will by dying for the sins of the whole world. He gives you His cross-won forgiveness as a gift, out of love for you. He does this to point you straight to the Father and His love. So, while your life will have twists and turns that try to take you away from God, His love, and His forgiveness for you, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are there to walk alongside you. They're there to forgive and guide you for the rest of your life.

*Thank You, Jesus, for walking the straight path for me. Amen.*

## SERVICE TIMES

<b>24 May Pentecost</b>	<b>31 May Trinity Sunday</b>	<b>7 June 2 Pentecost</b>
<b>RED</b>	<b>WHITE</b>	<b>GREEN</b>
8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR MS 9.00am LOWOOD HC	9.00am OAK LR  10.00am MARBURG HC AELC Service	8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR MS 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR

Sunday, 24 May		
READINGS: Numbers 11:24-30; Acts 2:1-21;		John 7:37-39
HYMNS: 913 497 498 (532 619) 496		
Sunday, 31 May		
READINGS: Genesis 1:1-2:4a; Acts 2:14a, 22-36;		Matthew 28:16-20
HYMNS: 578 507 947 (565 622) 953		

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Bible Studies for May:

Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup>, 10.00am, Lowood. (note the day)

Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup>, 7.30pm, Greenwood.

Friday, 29<sup>th</sup>, 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](mailto:childsafety@aelc.org.au) for an online copy, or ask for a printed copy.

## WEEKLY READINGS

<b>Sunday, May 17</b>	Jeremiah 34-36	<i>Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (2017)</i> pp. 156 - 163, The First Article Part 3 Questions 140 -147
<b>Monday, May 18</b>	Jeremiah 37-39	
<b>Tuesday, May 19</b>	Jeremiah 40-42	
<b>Wednesday, May 20</b>	Jeremiah 43-45 Matthew 27	
<b>Thursday, May 21</b>	Jeremiah 46-47 Matthew 28	
<b>Friday, May 22</b>	Jeremiah 48-49 Philippians 1	
<b>Saturday, May 23</b>	Jeremiah 50 Philippians 2	

### AELC Member Congregations Details

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

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