***The Newsletter of Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church***

***Lindy, Nebraska***

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**The Rod and Staff**



**May and June 2020**

**For Such a Time as This: God Behind the Scenes**

***“And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”***

* **Esther 4:14 ESV**

An interesting bit of trivia: Did you know that there are two books of the Bible that don’t mention God directly? These books don’t contain references to “God,” “Lord,” or any other title for God in any way. God does not play a direct role in the story.

The first is the odd book of love poetry in the Old Testament known as the Song of Solomon, sometimes called the Song of Songs. Actually, depending on how you translate one verse (8:6), it is possible that the Song of Solomon does refer to the name of God, but most Bible translations don’t go that route. Nevertheless, the association of the book with King Solomon from the Old Testament led to its inclusion in the canon of the Bible.

And the other book, interestingly, is the book of Esther, an Old Testament narrative about a woman of that name. During the rule of the Persian Empire, Esther secretly becomes the queen of the Jewish people and saves her people from destruction. Even among Jewish people later on, there was some debate about whether this book of Esther really belongs in the Bible, but it did finally make the cut.

How scandalous! Books of the Bible that don’t mention God?! At least for Christians, we aren’t content to leave it at that. Even though these books don’t mention God directly, that doesn’t mean that God isn’t present in the books. God is simply present in a different way, more “behind the scenes” than other parts of the Bible. As Christians, we confess that the entire Bible bears witness to God’s workings, most especially in the Good News of His Son, Jesus Christ. This is true in both the New Testament *and* the Old Testament. In the case of the Song of Solomon, for example, Jews and Christians over the years have understood this love poetry between a man and a woman to be an expression of God’s love for His people.

The story of Esther takes place toward the end of the time of the Old Testament, about 500 years before the birth of Jesus. The Jewish people (the remnant of the Israelites, God’s chosen people of the past), found themselves a minority occupied by the Persian Empire. I will leave it to you to read the entire story, but I simply want to highlight one part of the book, easily the most famous verse contained therein:

*And they told Mordecai what Esther had said. Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”* – Esther 4:12-14

Yes, it’s true that the book of Esther doesn’t directly mention God. But you can sense an awareness of His presence in the quotation above. The reference to “deliverance…from another place” suggests divine activity, God working behind the scenes. Mordecai asks that Esther ponder whether her presence is a part of some larger purpose: *“And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”*

Over time, I’ve come to appreciate some of these lesser-known parts of the Bible more and more. In the case of Esther, there is an important connection with our lives today. At times, it can be hard to see how God is working and how our lives fit into His purposes for the world. Many of God’s servants of old had the benefit of a direct encounter with God. Think of people like Noah, Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others, not to mention all of Jesus’ apostles in the New Testament.

But our lives seem to have more in common with Esther. We haven’t had the benefit of the same kind of dramatic encounter with God that these famous people had. Like Esther, we “walk by faith and not by sight.” We trust that God is working, but we usually can’t see how.

Especially in this strange and difficult time of dealing with the coronavirus and COVID-19 pandemic, it is hard to know how our society and lives will be affected for the long term. This creates anxiety on multiple levels, but perhaps most notably concern for health and finances. For example, I almost cringed last week when I opened my quarterly statement for my retirement account.

There is much that we can’t control in this time, and that has always been true. This situation has simply revealed how uncertain life can be. We wonder how God is working in our lives and world in this time.

The first thing we need to do is focus on the one place where God has revealed himself to the world for all to know: the death and the resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. Whatever happens, we draw our life from the living water and blood that flows from his pierced side, which he endured for our sake.

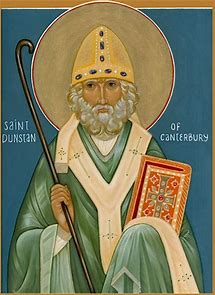
The second thing is that, even though we can’t see the whole picture, we should adopt the perspective of Esther. We should hear Mordecai’s words as those spoken to us. We know that our deliverance has come in the form of Jesus Christ. But while we await his revealing, we still live here. We should ask ourselves how we can serve God “in such a time as this.” How is God teaching us, his children, in this time? How is God calling us to respond? How is God deepening our perspective and faith?

God has done great things *for* us through Jesus Christ. And God can do great things *through* us in this world, even on our local level, even in our families and among our friends. God called and worked through Esther. How is God calling you?

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**Commemoration of the Saints**

Lutherans do not venerate (pray to) special people called “saints.” Our Lutheran confessional documents speak against that practice. However, those same documents that prohibit the veneration of saints encourage Christian people to look to the lives of significant Christians of the past as a source of encouragement for our lives in the present. They form a “great cloud of witnesses” as we remain pilgrims and strangers on earth (Hebrews 12:1).

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We remember in May and June **Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury** in England. He is commemorated on May 19 and died that day in 988 A.D. Dunstan played a significant role in the politics of the church and the state in tenth century England. He is known as a faithful pastor, but more than anything for the reestablishment of monasteries in England. As a result of Viking invasions from Scandinavia, most English monasteries, which were at the time the main centers of learning, were destroyed. Through his work as a bishop, Dunstan revived the tradition of monks living in monasteries, emphasizing that they should serve their local communities.

*Almighty God, who raised up Dunstan to be a true shepherd of your flock, a restorer of monastic life, and a faithful counsellor to those in authority: give to all pastors the same gifts of your Holy Spirit, that they may be true servants of Christ and all his people; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (Prayer from justus.anglican.org)*

**When You Walk in Danger**

*Note: I wrote this on March 19 in response to the coronavirus pandemic and thought I would share it here. It is also posted on my blog: theelectronicconventicle.weebly.com*

Anyone who knows me well knows that I love Christian hymns from a variety of different places and eras. Over the years, these hymns have sustained me and given me words with which to express my faith, especially when my own words fail me. When we have these songs written on our hearts, they are there for us when we need them, and we can find in them comfort from God’s Word. Of course, not all hymns are equal. Some I would say are real clunkers, but there are those that have endured for even hundreds of years and for good reason. They have a way of taking the message of the Bible and expressing it honestly and with beauty. They have the ability to feed our souls.

Every so often, I run into someone who has a negative attitude about these kinds of hymns. They think they are old-fashioned and that contemporary music is the only way to be relevant. I have nothing against modern music. I often listen to contemporary Christian music on the radio, and I am convinced that such music does have its place. However, I am appalled by the dismissive attitude that many have toward these hymns, these treasures of our faith. When we neglect these hymns, we are depriving ourselves of much of the great wisdom of those saints who have gone before us. In times of joy and trial, these hymns speak to us and comfort us with God’s promises, as they did for the generations that have gone before us.

As our society is currently dealing with the fallout from the outbreak of the coronavirus that causes the COVID-19 illness, our lives have been significantly altered for the moment and for an undetermined length of time. School has been cancelled in many places, meaning that parents are taking on additional responsibilities for education. Work responsibilities have changed. Social lives have been disrupted. Even churches have had to alter their worship schedules in order to allow for “social distancing.” The economy has been negatively affected. All of this, of course, is on top of the very real fear of people getting sick. For many, there is a new or renewed awareness that we do indeed live in a dangerous world filled with uncertainty. We walk in danger as we go through this life.

Hans Adolph Brorson (1694-1764), active in the eighteenth century, was the Lutheran bishop of Ribe, Denmark. However, much more than his work as an ecclesiastical official, he is known for his many hymns. Some of his more well-known contributions to Christian hymnody are as follows: the Christmas hymn “Your Little Ones, Dear Lord, Are We”; another Christmas hymn “My Heart Is Filled with Wonder”; yet another Christmas hymn “I’ve Found Now the Fairest of Roses”; an Ascension Day hymn “I See You Standing”; a hymn giving thanks for the departed faithful based on Revelation 7 “Behold the Host Arrayed in White”; and a hymn praising God for His creation “Rise Up, All Things that God Has Made.” These six barely scratch the surface of Brorson’s voluminous collection of hymns. They were used especially by later generations of Scandinavian Lutherans, and over the years a few of them, such as those listed above, have been translated into English.

Yet there is one more hymn by Brorson with which English-speaking Lutherans developed some familiarity. At our little church in Lindy, Nebraska, we have sung this one a few times over the years. I love it. I would sing it much more often, but I try to restrain myself from using it too much. The reason is that it is far from a “feel good” hymn. In fact, it is brutally honest about life. It can be said that this hymn is roughly based on the words of 1 Peter 5:8-10 in the New Testament:

*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 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. (English Standard Version).*

The hymn by Brorson to which I refer goes by the title “I Walk in Danger” (Danish: *Jeg gaar i fare hvor jeg gaar*). Far from being a “day brightener,” the first three verses speak honestly about the danger a Christian faces in the world from the devil, various trials, and death:

*I walk in danger all the way, the thought shall never leave me: that Satan, who has marked his prey, is plotting to deceive me. This foe with hidden snares may seize me unawares if I should fail to watch and pray. I walk in danger all the way.*

*I pass through trials all the way, with sin and ills contending; in patience I must bear each day the cross of God’s own sending. Oft in adversity I know not where to flee; when storms of woe my soul dismay, I pass through trials all the way.*

*Death does pursue me all the way, I cannot rest securely. He comes by night; he comes by day, and takes his prey most surely. A failing breath and I in death’s strong grasp will lie and face my own eternity; death does pursue me all the way (Lutheran Hymnal for Church and Home # 250)*

Compared to the eighteenth century, we live in a pretty sanitized world. We live in the most prosperous time in human history, with lifespans far exceeding that of previous generations. Modern medical care and vaccines have given us a sense of security, and we sometimes forget that it was not all that long ago that people had a much more precarious existence. Things such as sinus and ear infections that are today mostly considered minor inconveniences were sometimes fatal. Childbirth was much more dangerous. People faced real physical dangers every day in their struggle to survive. And so Brorson’s hymn would not have sounded nearly as shocking to those of his time as it does to us.

Because of our sanitized world, we might be tempted to dismiss “I Walk in Danger” as a relic of a bygone era. But this recent scare with COVID-19 reveals that in spite of all of our technology and advancements in medicine, we still face physical danger. And in the end, no matter how much technology we have at our disposal, we still face death. This is one of the reasons that the annual observance of the season of Lent is so important. It is a constant reminder of our limitations, our mortality, and our need to be connected to the God who has created us and all things.

And this leads us to the most important point: aside from whatever physical danger we face, our Christian tradition affirms the reality of a greater danger, expressed in that verse from 1 Peter: Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 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.

God calls us to “be sober; be watchful.” There are always spiritual forces of darkness that seek to pull us away from God and lead us to spiritual ruin, and at times dealing with crises can lead us to cling to our Lord more tightly. In trying times, may our eyes be opened even more to the greater danger that we face. And with faith, we trust that God does not abandon His people to ruin. The first three verses of Brorson’s sobering hymn speak of the danger we face, but the last three verses speak of the comfort we find in God’s promises in Christ:

*I walk midst angels all the way; they shield me and befriend me, and keep the devil’s strength at bay when heavenly hosts attend me. They are my sure defense, they send my sorrow hence! Unharmed though foes do what they may, I walk midst angels all the way.*

*I walk with Jesus all the way, his guidance never fails me; within his wounds I find a stay when Satan’s power assails me. With Jesus there to lead, my path I safely tread. I spite of ills that threaten me, I walk with Jesus all the way.*

*My walk is heavenward all the way. Await, my soul, tomorrow when you will see a brighter day without your sin and sorrow. All worldly pomp be gone; to heaven I now press on. For all the world I would not stay; my walk is heavenward all the way.*

I cannot guarantee that our lives will be untouched by COVID-19 or any other calamity. And it is good to take the danger posed by this illness seriously. But I can communicate the message of our faith that God always looks upon us with love and desires to keep us in His grace. In times of trial, let us also look to what God might be trying to teach us about our lives and also how we might be of service to others. In the words of the German Lutheran pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who lost his life in the struggle against Nazism in his country, “May God in his mercy lead us through these times; but above all, may he lead us to himself.”

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**From Martin Luther’s Small Catechism:**

**Confession of Sin**

***What is confession?***

*Confession consists of two parts. One is that we confess our sins and the other is that we receive absolution, or forgiveness, from the confessor as from God himself, in no way doubting, but firmly believing that our sins are thereby forgiven before God in heaven.*

***What sins should we confess?***

*Before God we should acknowledge ourselves guilty of all kinds of sins, even those of which we are not aware, as we do in the Lord’s Prayer. To the confessor, however, we should confess only those sins which we know and which trouble us.*

***What are such sins?***

*Here examine yourself in light of the Ten Commandments whether as father or mother, son or daughter, employer or employee, and consider whether you have been disobedient, unfaithful, lazy, angry, sexually unfaithful, or quarrelsome; whether you have injured anyone by word or deed; stolen, neglected, or wasted anything; or done any other evil.*

**Featured Hymn for May and June**

***Easter Morrow Stills Our Sorrow***

*Lutheran Hymnal for Church and Home, 162*

1. Easter morrow stills our sorrow, Stills our sorrow forevermore. Light ever glowing, Life ever flowing Floods from the dawn on the darkest shore. Easter morrow stills our sorrow, Stills our sorrow forevermore!
2. From his prison, Christ has risen, Christ has risen in morning light. Hell weeps in sadness; Heav'n sings with gladness, Heav'n sings with gladness and great delight. From his prison, Christ has risen, Christ has risen in morning light.
3. Anthems glorious, joy victorious, To our great Redeemer rise. Christ interceding, Upward is leading Leading us home to his paradise. Anthems glorious, joy victorious, To our great Redeemer rise.
4. Angels 'biding Bring good tidings, Bring good tidings at break of day. Sunbeams awaken; Death is forsaken. Heralds of heaven the news relay. Angels 'biding Bring good tidings, Bring good tidings at break of day.
5. Sin confounded, grace abounded, Grace abounded and set us free. Tombdreads are ended; Jesus ascended, Jesus ascended the shadows flee. Sin confounded, grace abounded, Grace abounded and set us free.

* N. F. S. Grundtvig, 1783-1872
* Trans. Oscar Overby, 1892-1964

Note: Written in 1843, this hymn text has a tight form with repetitions and rhymes that make it difficult to translate. Lindeman’s tune is much beloved and has made the hymn almost a requirement for Easter Sunday in Denmark and Norway.

**Monthly Watchword for May**

“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”

* 1 Peter 4:10

**Ushers for May and June:**

* Head Ushers (May):
  + Beth and Jeff Barger
* Ushers:
  + Marlin and Patty Kumm
  + Brad and Cindy Sage
  + Norman and Margo Poppe
  + Red Branstiter
* Head Ushers (June)
* Ed and Tina Sage
* Ushers:
  + Richard and Phyllis Beckmann
  + Jerry and Sandy Ziegler
  + Dennis and Judy Friedrichsen
  + Trenton Guenther
  + Makenna Guenther

**Website:** The web address is as follows:

* **www.gselclindy.weebly.com**

**Martin Luther’s Morning Prayer**

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I ask you to protect me this day also from sin and every evil, that in all I do today I may please you. For into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all that is mine. Let you holy angel watch over me, that the wicked foe have no power over me. Amen.

**Birthdays for May and June**

*Note: This list of birthdays is a work in progress, as we are currently trying to gather membership information from the old congregational record into an electronic form. If your name is not listed in the appropriate month, please let pastor know your birthday so that it can be added in the future. If you would not like your name to be listed, simply let pastor know. The birthdays are provided here as a way of giving thanks for the lives of members of the congregation. Happy birthday to all!*

* May 2: Jamie Doerr
* May 3: Jacob Stewart
* May 10: Hope Stewart
* May 13: Venita Sage
* May 20: Mark McManigal
* May 23: Rydder Eckmann
* June 16: Makenna Guenther
* June 24: Christine Eisenhauer
* June 26: Gary Ermels
* June 28: Bonnie Paulsen

**Baptismal Anniversaries for May and June**

*Note: Just as it is important to acknowledge the beginning of our earthly lives with our birthdays, it is even more important for us as Christians to remember the day when God has given us a new birthday, a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3). Lutherans confess that baptism is the means by which God gives us as a part of sinful humanity a new relationship with him, a promise that our faith can look to all our lives. In turn, we are called to a life of repentance and faith that trusts in Christ as our salvation. As with the birthdays, this list is a work in progress. Blessed baptismal anniversaries to everyone!*

* May 4: Jeff Hanson
* May 8: Jamie Olson
* May 9: Jerrick Graber
* May 11: Trenton Guenther
* May 14: Randy Hanson
* May 19: Patience Teboe
* May 20: Leah Poppe
* June 4: Roger Guenther
* June 12: Sherri Ermels
* June 15: Alice Carlow
* June 19: Dennis Friedrichsen
* June 21: LaVonne Koltermann
* June 25: Donna Nielsen

**Worship Schedule**

* May 3: Fourth Sunday of Easter, no worship held; recording provided **(White)**
* May 10: Fifth Sunday of Easter, no worship held; recording provided **(White)**
* May 17: Sixth Sunday of Easter, to be determined **(White)**
* May 24: Seventh Sunday of Easter, to be determined **(White)**
* May 31: The Day of Pentecost, to be determined **(Red)**
* June 7: The Holy Trinity, to be determined **(White)**
* June 14: Second Sunday after Pentecost, to be determined **(Green)**
* June 21: Third Sunday after Pentecost, to be determined **(Green)**
* June 28: Fourth Sunday after Pentecost, to be determined **(Green)**

**Calling Sunday School Teachers!**

As the summer season has not even yet begun, it seems odd to be thinking of the coming school year already. But I simply wanted to get the ball rolling to give people adequate time to prepare. In order for the Sunday school ministry of this congregation to continue, we are in need of a team of Sunday school teachers to share that responsibility. Later this summer, Pr. Tom will call for a meeting of those interested in serving as Sunday school teachers and volunteers in order to make plans for the coming year. Please consider being involved in this important part of the life of the church!

**Important Announcements**

* As we continue to deal with the situation surrounding the COVID-19 illness, a lot of things in all aspects of life are still “up in the air.” For that reason, we can’t say for certain at this point when we will resume the regular worship schedule of the church. Presently, we will plan on not holding worship **until at least May 17**. However, it might be that we decide to wait until the end of May (31st). And while we anticipate that we will be able to do so by then, with as unpredictable as things have been, it is best for the moment to hold off on making concrete declarations. We will keep everyone updated as to what is decided.
* Even when we do resume our worship life, we will likely make some adjustments to our usual practice. We will have hand sanitizer available and will encourage some “social distance.”
* Until we are able to resume our regular worship life, Pr. Tom will continue to post a recording of a sermon and an abbreviated time of worship for people to view when they wish. They can be accessed on the Facebook page of the congregation as well as on the website.
* Offerings for the church can continue to be sent to the church office or to the Farmer’s and Merchant’s State Bank in Bloomfield.
* We will continue, once a month on the fourth Sunday of the month, having a time of adult education before worship, starting at 9:30 AM. **For May at least, because of the current situation, we will not meet**. Assuming that we are able to resume our regular schedule for June, it will be on June 28. For now, we will be doing a study of the assigned Scripture readings for those Sundays.
* We had begun in March with a time of fellowship and coffee before worship. **For the moment because of this pandemic, we will not be doing this** and hope to resume in July.
* The Church council meetings will be held on Wednesday, May 13 at 7:00 PM and June 10 at 7:00 PM.
* The Women of the Word/Women of the North American Lutheran Church will meet at times to be determined.
* We continue to gather used clothing for the Native American Heritage Association near Rapid City, South Dakota. We will continue collecting until the end of June. Please bring them in bags if possible. Thank you for your participation in this important ministry!
* The Rite of Confirmation and first Communion will be scheduled when we know when we will resume our worship schedule.

**Prayers in a Time of Pandemic**

Let us draw near the Throne of Grace, humbly beseeching God’s mercy for all people in this time of suffering and fear:

Most holy God, you are the source of all goodness, wisdom, mercy, and life. You have crowned us with honor and dignity. Yet we know how vulnerable we are. In this time of danger, bind us together in a fellowship deeper and stronger than death. Bind us together in Christ, crucified and raised from the dead for the salvation of all who trust in him.

Bestow your Spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel, and might upon all who take counsel for the nations in this time of crisis. Give them every spiritual, moral, intellectual, and social resource they need to act for the good of the people entrusted to their care.

We plead on behalf of the many people who are quarantined and isolated because of exposure to the virus, for everyone who is ill, and for those at greatest risk of severe illness or death. Hide them under the shadow of your wings, and grant them healing and hope.

Lord, give courage, patience, and ingenuity to everyone whose job or business is endangered by the quarantine and uncertainty. Most gentle and gracious Father, we pray for families with children in these difficult days. Let your Spirit brood over these troubled waters, and give us eyes to see and hearts to respond to the needs around us.

We know that other needs continue to be urgent, dear Father! For the sake of your dear Son, we pray that you would heed all our prayers and graciously answer them in accordance with your will, to your glory and the welfare of your people. Amen.

**May 2020**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|  |  |  |  |  | 1 | 2 |
| 3  No worship due to coronavirus  White | 4 | 5 | 6  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Confirmation class in afternoon | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10  No worship due to coronavirus  White | 11 | 12 | 13  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Church council, 7:00 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17  Worship, 10:30? (to be determined)  White | 18 | 19 | 20  Pr. Tom in Lindy | 21  The Ascension of our Lord | 22 | 23 |
| 24  Worship, 10:30?  (to be determined)  White | 25 | 26 | 27 28 29 30  Pr. Tom in Lindy | | | |
| 31  Worship, 10:30?  (to be determined)  The Day of Pentecost  Red |  |  |  | | | |

**June 2020**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3  Pr. Tom in Lindy | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7  Worship with Holy Communion, 10:30 at altar rail (to be determined  The Holy Trinity  White | 8 | 9 | 10  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Church council, 7:00 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14  Worship, 10:30 (to be determined)  Green | 15 | 16 | 17  Pr. Tom in Lindy | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21  Worship with Holy Communion (continuous), 10:30 (to be determined)  Green | 22 | 23 | 24  Pr. Tom in Lindy | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28  Adult education, 9:30  Worship, 10:30 (to be determined)  Green | 29 | 30 | Pr. Tom in Lindy  Confirmation class,  5:15-6:45 | | | |
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Good Shepherd Evangelical

Lutheran Church of Lindy

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