

SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS AT HOME WORSHIP
APRIL 12, 2026 – “THOMAS”

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Risen God, you come into our midst and breathe on us your Holy Spirit. Empower us to believe at depth that you are with us, no matter how we experience you in our lives, and make us witnesses to one another of your very real presence among us. In your name we pray. Amen.



SCRIPTURE READINGS: FIRST READING: PSALM 145:13-21

¹³Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The Lord is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds.

¹⁴**The Lord upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down.**

¹⁵The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.

¹⁶**You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.**

¹⁷The Lord is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings.

¹⁸**The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.**

¹⁹He fulfills the desire of all who fear him; he also hears their cry, and saves them.

²⁰**The Lord watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.**

²¹My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord, and all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.

Word of God. Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

HOLY GOSPEL: JOHN 20:19-31

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” ²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.” ²⁶A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”

²⁷Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” ²⁸Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” ³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

This is the Gospel of our Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

REFLECTION ON THE GOSPEL BY ASSISTING MINISTER TIM KIRCHOFF

This week’s gospel from John 20, recounts what we often describe as the Doubting Thomas story. Jesus first meets with all the disciples except for Thomas and reveals to them his crucifixion injuries. Later, they meet Thomas to inform him they have seen the Lord. But Thomas refuses to believe unless he can witness the Lord’s wounds for himself. I just read an article by Professor Sean McDowell of Christian Apologetics at Biola University that makes two arguments for why we should not refer to Thomas as a doubter. It is an interesting read, and I’d like to try my best to summarize his points here for you.

McDowell’s first argument is that calling Thomas a doubter implies that *doubt is opposed to faith*. Most people can believe while carrying doubt. Matthew reports that just before the Great Commission, eleven disciples worshiped Jesus but some doubted. Given Thomas was firm in his belief (and unbelief), McDowell suggests Thomas was not one of the doubters Matthew referred to. Thus, the irony here is that there may have been apostles even more doubtful than Thomas.

McDowell’s second argument calling Thomas a doubter implies that *certainty is required for belief*. If we refer to Thomas as a doubter when he was not a believer, then aren’t we implying that people with doubts don’t genuinely believe either? When people think belief requires certainty, it can raise all kinds of paralyzing and painful questions leading to doubt and despair. The Bible does not teach that certainty is required for faith.

Jude 22 says “and have mercy on those who doubt”. This implies that doubt is not the opposite of faith (argument #1) and that certainty is not required for belief (argument #2). I love how McDowell concludes this article with this question: How should we approach people with doubts? We ought to extend care and grace for people with questions. No doubt about it!

So maybe instead of calling him Doubting Thomas, maybe we could try Skeptical Thomas or Disbelieving Thomas. They don't have the same flair as Doubting Thomas though do they?

HYMN OF THE DAY | YOU RESTORE IT ALL

[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/411L40HUD7Y?SI=GRFZs4OINVLAYQWH](https://youtu.be/411L40HUD7Y?si=GRFZs4OINVLAYQWH)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

With renewed confidence in your power and love, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

(A brief silence).

Loving God, in a world where proof is everything and faith often seems foolish, give us courage to proclaim what the Spirit has revealed to us. God of new life, **hear our prayer.**

We cannot doubt that this blue planet is steadily changing and the effects of our abuse and neglect are made plain. Teach us to recognize and heed the warnings while we yet have a chance to be part of the solution in preserving our cosmic home. We praise you for the awesome power and quiet beauty of the world's waters and humbly ask that you bless the earth with moisture wherever it's needed. God of new life, **hear our prayer.**

Breathe new life and inspiration into leaders at every level, that they might work to govern with equity and justice, for the good of every human being on earth. Forgive us for engaging in the atrocities of war which result in the suffering of the innocents. We pray for the world, and especially those engaged in war: the United States, Israel, Iran, Ukraine, Russia, and all others known to you. God of new life, **hear our prayer.**

Give our leaders faith in the people they serve, that they would listen carefully to the needs of their constituents and craft policies that see to the flourishing of all people. God of new life, **hear our prayer.**

You are near to all who call on you. Be now with all those who need to feel you close, and long for your healing touch. We pray especially for Devon Warren, Pastor Phil, Matt, Brett, Rick and Kelly, Terry, Jim and Sally, Dave, Dorothy, Clover, and all those named on our Prayer Chain. God of new life, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for strength for all those who provide care for their loved ones, especially James and Chris Elkins, and Kirk, Clare, and Gwen Fallon. God of new life, **hear our prayer.**

God of wholeness, we pray for the work of the Joshua School. May our relationship with them reflect your love and care for those with special needs. We pray that all those on the Autism Spectrum, especially those in our faith family, might find fulfillment, joy, and love. God of new life, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

With Thomas, Mary, the other disciples, and all the witnesses of the resurrection we join in thanksgiving, united in your love and held forever in the power of your eternal life. God of new life, **hear our prayer.**

Hear all our prayers, spoken and unspoken, and gather them into your loving arms, for the sake of our risen savior, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

EASTER BENEDICTION

Go forth with renewed hope, trusting in the transforming love of God.

God does not leave things as they are; with God, all things are made new.

All creation responds to God's presence. The world is alive with possibility.

We open ourselves to this truth: With Christ, we trust our whole lives to this power.

Nothing is beyond the reach of God; neither evil, nor hardship, nor death.

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

This is Christ's church. There is a place for you here.

We are the church that shares a living, daring confidence in God's grace.

Liberated by our faith, we embrace you as a whole person—questions, complexities and all.

Join us as we do God's work in Christ's name for the life of the world.

CLICK LINK TO ACCESS READINGS, SERMONS & SPECIAL EVENTS FROM PAST SUNDAYS:

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/@SHEPHERDOFTHEHILLSLUTHERAN6221/VIDEOS](https://www.youtube.com/@shepherdofthehillslutheran6221/videos)

SHEPHERD CALENDAR OF EVENTS APRIL 12 – APRIL 19, 2026

Sunday, April 12th – Thomas

9:30 a.m. – Hybrid In-Person/Zoom Worship with Holy Communion
Coffee & Conversation immediately following Worship

Wednesday, April 15th

11:00 a.m. – Amazing Grace Book Study by Zoom

Friday, April 17th

7:00 a.m. – Men’s Zoom Breakfast Bible Study

5:00 p.m. – Friday Night Perspectives Zoom Gathering

Sunday, April 19th – Paul’s Conversion

9:30 a.m. – Hybrid In-Person/Zoom Worship with Holy Communion
Coffee & Conversation immediately following worship

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>APRIL</u> <u>BIRTHDAYS</u></p>
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SHERILYN W. 4/6

KAY W. 4/9

DOROTHY F. 4/13

CINDIE S. 4/27

DAILY NARRATIVE LECTIONARY READINGS: WEEK OF APRIL 12, 2026

Monday, April 13, 2026

<https://clergystuff.com/nl-devotions/acts-61-7-seven-chosen-to-serve2026>

Acts 6:1-7 Seven Chosen to Serve

Tuesday, April 14, 2026

<https://clergystuff.com/nl-devotions/acts-68-15-the-arrest-of-stephen2026>

Acts 6:8-15 The Arrest of Stephen

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

<https://clergystuff.com/nl-devotions/acts-71-22-stephens-speech-to-the-council2026>

Acts 7:1-22 Stephen’s Speech to the Council

Thursday, April 16, 2026

<https://clergystuff.com/nl-devotions/acts-723-43-stephens-speech-to-the-council2026>

Acts 7:23-43 Stephen’s Speech to the Council

Friday, April 17, 2026

<https://clergystuff.com/nl-devotions/acts-744-53-stephens-speech-to-the-council2026>

Acts 7:44-53 Stephen’s Speech to the Council

Saturday, April 18, 2026

<https://clergystuff.com/nl-devotions/acts-75481-the-stoning-of-stephen2026>

Acts 7:54-81 The Stoning of Stephen

Sunday, April 19, 2026

<https://clergystuff.com/nl-devotions/acts-91-19a-pauls-conversion2026>

Acts 9:1-19a Paul’s Conversion

WELCOME! *Thank you for worshiping with us today!*

GUESTS

Please sign our Guestbook and/or fill out the brightly-colored Info Slip and place it in the offering plate. This helps us get to know you better so that we can serve you more effectively.

DO YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW NEED PRAYERS?

Prayer Changes Things. The Shepherd Prayer Chain members stand by ready to help. You'll find our Prayer Box on the table to your left as you enter the building, as well as paper and pencils. Please write your prayer request and place it in the box. *You are not required to sign your request or give the name of the person for whom we will pray, unless you wish.* If you desire a private conversation with Pastor Janet, please contact the Church Office or call her on her cell phone at 507-360-1625. **All prayer requests will remain confidential.**

CHILDREN ARE CHERISHED AT SHEPHERD!

In our Sanctuary, you'll see a coloring table and soft toys. Children's bulletins are available on the table just outside the Sanctuary. If at any time you wish to take your child out for some quiet time, our Nursery/Library is stocked with supplies for playing, coloring, studying the Children's Bulletin, or reading.

REMEMBRANCE

On the north wall of the Sanctuary a table is set with candles. You are invited to light a candle in memory of a loved one at any time before, during, or after our worship service.

COMMUNION

At Shepherd of the Hills, we recognize that the Table of Communion is not our table. It is not a Lutheran table. It is our Lord's Table – a meal prepared for all – prepared in love. *Please come.* All who long for the Good News in Jesus Christ are truly welcome at this table. As Jesus called children to be close to him, we, likewise, extend this invitation to all children. Should you not feel comfortable receiving the Sacrament, please come forward indicating that you wish to receive a blessing by folding your arms over your chest.

COMMUNION OUTSIDE OF WORSHIP

Arrangements can be made to bring communion to you at a time convenient for you. If, for any reason, you are unable to attend normal services, such as a hospital stay or for personal reasons, and wish to have communion brought to you, please contact the Church Office or Pastor Janet at 507-360-1625.

MEMBERSHIP

At Shepherd, we worship as one Faith Family. If you wish to extend your worship to include membership, please see Pastor Janet.

Shepherd of the Hills

LUTHERAN CHURCH

PARTNERS IN WORSHIP

THE MINISTERS: ALL THE PEOPLE

PASTOR: REV. JANET COLBY KETTERING

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT: CAROLINE MICHALAK

ALTAR GUILD: KEN & GERRY MOORHEAD, LYNN TRUMBLE & KAY WERPY

ASSISTING MINISTERS: TIM KIRCHOFF & REV. PHIL KETTERING

PIANIST: MARGARET SCHARFF

PRAYER CHAIN ADMINISTRATOR: KATHY WOOTTON

SHEPHERD COUNCIL:

MICHELLE KIRCHOFF, PRESIDENT

JANICE IRISH, VICE-PRESIDENT

KELLY MAUER, SECRETARY

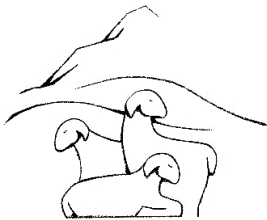
REV. PHIL KETTERING, TREASURER

JIM TIMMERMANN, BUILDING & MAINTENANCE

CINDIE SCOPY & PASTOR JANET KETTERING

ZOOM TECHNICIAN: FUZZ NEWKIRK

OUR MISSION STATEMENT



Marked by the Cross of Christ Forever, we

† *Gather in Love*

† *Grow in Faith*

† *Share God's Love & Grace*

† *We are Empowered to BOLDLY*

Proclaim & Witness God's Word



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Check out our Facebook page at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran