

HIGHWOOD HIGHLIGHTS

January 2025

The Newsletter of Highwood Lutheran Church



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Pastor's Message

ON UNITY

The prominent literary figure Jonathan Swift wrote on this topic in "The Examiner" in 1710:

Besides, as the vilest Writer has his Readers, so the greatest Liar has his Believers; and it often happens, that if a Lie be believ'd only for an Hour, it has done its Work, and there is no farther occasion for it. Falsehood flies, and the Truth comes limping after it; so that when Men come to be undeceiv'd, it is too late; the Jest is over, and the Tale has had its Effect...

*From Luther's **Small Catechism**:*

*The Eighth Commandment:
You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.*

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbour, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way.

Luther frequently referred to Jesus as the ultimate example of truthfulness and love in his teachings. Christ's perfect adherence to honesty, even when faced with false accusations during His Passion, serves as a model for Christians to live in unity while striving for integrity. The Bible, our theological foundation, provides numerous instances where unity was crucial, and pride and deceit exacerbated division from God, leading to the downfall. For example, The Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) vividly illustrates how division through the confusion of language scatters humanity, serving as a cautionary tale about the dangers of human pride and the chaos that division can bring about. In contrast, we look to Jesus' prayer, in John 17, for His disciples to be one in faith (John 17:20-23), which emphasises God's desire for us to collaborate and underscores the theological significance of unity among believers in their pursuit of Christ's mission.

The Apostle Paul repeatedly calls for unity in his epistles; for instance, Ephesians 4:3-6 emphasises one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all. This unity is considered essential for the Church's witness and effectiveness. Jesus tells us in Matthew 10:16, "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." Paul also warns against those who sow discord in Romans 16:17, "I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them." teaching that we are to be aware of those deliberately making efforts to cause division.

Christian unity, a cornerstone of the faith, has often been targeted by those employing division tactics to weaken collective resolve and foster discord. The Christian Church has faced numerous challenges to its unity throughout history. The Great Schism of 1054, which resulted in the division between Eastern Orthodoxy and Western Catholicism, was both theological and geopolitical, involving the ambitions of empires and principalities. Initially aimed at uniting Christians against external threats, the Crusades often resulted in internal conflicts, with various European factions competing for control, resources, and prestige.

Continued Page 2

The Protestant Reformation in the 16th Century further fractured the Western Church. Much of the discord during this period was exacerbated by the political motives of rulers in Germany, England, and beyond. These historical narratives reveal the power of dividing, serving as cautionary tales that urge vigilance against such tactics and remind us that subterfuge can also be referred to as the devil's tool.

The need to structure and respond to his opponents led St. Augustine to develop the concept of a Just War. His writing provides a framework for ethically evaluating if and how one addresses engagement in physical and informational conflict. His criteria for a Just War included cause, comparative justice, legitimate authority, right intention, probability of success, last resort, and proportionality. Drawing from the principles presented by Augustine, we can see that when disinformation destabilises societies, the response must be to protect Truth and societal integrity and not merely retaliate or further one's agenda.

In the digital age, we struggle to assess who has the authority to combat disinformation and how responses can be proportionate when the battlefield is information itself. The concepts of Augustine underpin the Lutheran doctrine of the Two (or three) Uses of the Law. Addressing disinformation requires a realistic assessment of whether actions will counteract the spread of false information or escalate the situation. Ultimately, one's approach should be measured, focusing on education, transparency, and the resilience of democratic institutions. Transparency is crucial in the digital age; it is a powerful tool that promotes trust and helps combat disinformation, reassuring the audience and instilling confidence in the fight against falsehoods.

Today, Russia, China, and Iran are accused of manipulations using social media platforms. They intend to disseminate disinformation, aiming to sow discord and undermine Western democratic values and unity. Russia, now notorious for its sophisticated campaigns during the 2016 U.S. election, exploits social media to amplify political divisions, promote conspiracy theories, and erode trust in democratic processes. China has been shown to propagate narratives that support its geopolitical objectives, often concentrating on economic destabilisation or altering perceptions of human rights issues within its borders. Iran has been accused of engaging in cyber warfare to target infrastructure and disseminate propaganda, frequently addressing matters of cultural and religious significance to incite internal strife. We are not immune to these subversive actions. At Highwood, Russian and Belorussian bots attack our Sunday morning Facebook streams to the point where the broadcasts are unusable. These strategies resonate with biblical and historical examples of "divide and conquer" tactics employed to fracture societal cohesion from within through psychological warfare rather than physical force.

In addressing modern challenges, Christian communities must reconsider Christ's call for unity. Christians have a vital role in prioritising spiritual unity, moving beyond political or national identities to emphasise the shared values and goals expressed by Christ and the apostles. Luther's emphasis on the significance of truthfulness and avoiding dishonesty, such as lying, slander, or

gossip, is particularly relevant today. He regarded honesty as essential for maintaining trust and justice in personal and public relationships. Consequently, Christian communities are not just called to confront disinformation but are empowered to champion truth and foster unity, thereby playing a crucial role in the larger societal context.

Looking to scripture, we are reminded that in Ephesians 4:1-6, Paul urges believers to live with humility, gentleness, patience, and love, striving to maintain the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. He emphasises '*one body and one Spirit*' while highlighting the importance of unity in faith, baptism, and God the Father as central to the Church's identity. As Paul emphasises, this unity is not merely a desirable quality but a defining characteristic of the Church. Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, Paul addresses divisions within the Corinthian Church and calls for unity by urging believers to agree and avoid dissension. He reminds them that Christ is not divided, and their allegiance should be to Christ alone, rather than individual leaders (see also Philippians 2:2-8 and Romans 15:1-2). Luther's teaching on the Eighth Commandment goes beyond merely forbidding false testimony; it actively promotes the defence of others' reputations, encourages truthfulness, and interprets actions with kindness to nurture a just and loving community.

Churches can lead by example in teaching discernment, encouraging parishioners to evaluate information critically, and appreciating the Christian tradition of seeking Truth. In the face of disinformation, the need for discernment is immensely critical because sometimes, our responses demand more than a stern yet loving "No," A forceful "No" can mean taking up arms to oppose ideologies like authoritarianism and fascism. Following Augustine's principles for a Just War, Christians can direct and moderate their use of force by engaging the devil's tool in public discourse with integrity, advocating for policies and practices that promote truth, justice, and peace.

While interfaith and interdenominational collaborations present challenges, as we strive for peace, we must tackle disinformation and cultivate alliances within Christianity and across faiths and denominations, promoting greater societal resilience against manipulation. As Christians, we are called to uphold the divinely ordained and culturally vital unity of the faithful. This unity positions the Church as a beacon of hope and stability in a world rife with divisive tactics.

Pastor Mike

BISHOP'S MESSAGE FOR JANUARY

Bishop Trish Schmermund's message can be found [here](#)

TREASURER'S REPORT

12 months ended December 31, 2024

Financial Summary

December current offerings were \$14,126 and Christmas offerings were \$5,586 and church rental receipts were \$4,840. Synod benevolence receipts were nil and non-budget benevolence receipts consisted of \$110 for the Calgary Foodbank, \$50 for Lutheran Hospital Ministries and \$50 for CLWR and \$200 for Calgary Drop-In Centre. Total December 2024 current and Christmas offerings and church rentals of \$24,552 were \$1,542 more than last year.

December expenses of \$14,601 were \$403 under budget.

Highwood had a surplus of \$9,951 for Dec. 2024 compared to a surplus of \$7,483 last year.

For the year, Highwood had a surplus of \$1,420 compared to a surplus of \$3,905 last year. Church receipts for 2024 are \$8,643 higher than last year (\$3,301 higher on Offerings and \$5,342 higher on church rentals), but church expenses were \$11,128 higher than last year. Year to date church expenses of \$183,993 were \$3,943 over budget mainly because of higher repair and maintenance expenses.

Capital Fund – \$10 was donated to the Highwood Ladies group (current balance - \$1,709) and \$1,100 was donated to the Organ Fund and \$40 was donated to the Building Fund. Adopt a Family had donations of \$615 while expenses were \$1,478 with a small negative balance carry forward to next year of \$183. The balance in the capital account at the end of December was \$28,234.

Memorial Fund – No changes. The balance at the end of December was \$12,000.

MEET GRACE KARSTEN



I was born to a family of Dutch immigrants in 1964. I have three brothers and three sisters, one of whom is my identical twin sister. I have great memories of growing up right here in Calgary in the community of Westgate. My parents were faithful Roman Catholics, and we attended church every Sunday at St. Michael's Parish. Going to school, I attended Elementary and Junior High at St. Michael's Catholic School. Later, I went to High School at St. Mary's and Bishop Carrol where I graduated.

My sisters and I greatly enjoyed horse-back riding, and we all had our own horses. We used to ride at what is now called Griffith Woods. That was my favourite pastime as a teenager.

After high school, I had numerous seasonal jobs, such as ski lift operator, chamber maid, tree planter, working retail and bakery helper. I even worked at a fly-in fishing camp in northern Saskatchewan for a summer. It was a very exciting and interesting time in my life.

At the age of 21, I started working for Co-op in the meat department. It was actually a lot of fun in those days. I moved around to a lot of different stores to get more hours. I never thought I would stay there that long, but as the years rolled by, I purchased my first property, and I realized that changing careers would be very hard.

I felt very grateful to be working for a company that really offered great benefits and opportunities to change. I did move to the grocery dept. for a while and then to being a cashier. There, I finished my career of 37 years. I made many friends along the way.

I just recently retired in 2023. When I look back, I really feel that I was lucky to have found a place to work that provided everything I have today, and a good pension on top of it.

Now that I am retired, I would like to work on improving my health. But, more importantly, I want to work on my relationship with God and to find more opportunities to serve others.

OUR HIGHWOOD FAMILY



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Redatte Aberra
Alma Bietz
Avriana Crisanti
Pat Fedkenheuer
Kevin Ford
Judith Nagel
David Wong

THANK YOU

Thank you so much for the wonderful celebration of my 60th Anniversary of Ordination held on November 17th. Highwood is an amazing congregation. Your thoughtfulness and caring are very much appreciated.

Jim Rasmussen

DROP-IN CENTRE DONATIONS, Christmas 2024

A very big THANK YOU for all the donations of socks, toques, scarves, gloves and mittens, and sets of shawls and hats. The count for the above is:

Toques: 144
Socks: 120
Scarves: 13
Sets: 12
Gloves and mittens: 11

Many of the above were hand knit. Thank you for all the knitters that make this possible.

These were all delivered to the Drop-In with a big "Thank you" from the volunteer who came to the door to collect the bags. It always makes our hearts glad to be able to do this. It means many warm heads, hands and feet through our Calgary winter.

Pat Fedkenheuer

OUR ADOPT-A-FAMILY 2024



The Family is pictured above along with Pastor Mike, Cam Schneider, and Walter Anderson, who led the project.

The family was very appreciative of everything that was given to them. Thank you all for your generosity!



THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION

will be held on
Sunday, February 9th
following the worship service.

The AGM Report Booklets are now available for parishioners. PDF copies have been sent by email. Printed copies are in the Narthex. Please send any questions to Cam Schneider or the office secretaryhlc@outlook.com by 31 January 2025, so that research may be done to answer your inquiry.

A MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIRMAN

Greetings fellow servants of Jesus Christ - called to be saved, to believe, to worship, and to serve.

We are looking to fill the following church council positions in the upcoming HLC Voters meeting.

- President/Chairman - Cam Schneider has agreed to another two-year term. Nominations open.
- Treasurer - Darcy Anderson has agreed to another two-year term. Nominations open.
- Secretary - Barbara Patyчук has agreed to another one-year term. Nominations open.
- Board of Elders - Helga Weissenberger and Bill Strand have agreed to another two-year term. Nominations open.
- Board of Trustees - Vern Schnell and Phil Tang have agreed to another two-year term. Nominations open.

These elections/appointments will be completed during our upcoming HLC Voters meeting scheduled for Sunday February 9th.

If you are a voting member and interested in serving on council in any of these positions, please contact Nominating Committee members Vern Schnell or Bill Strand.

Otherwise, if you cannot commit but are still interested as to what happens in our Church Council meetings, you are welcome to attend and observe by contacting your HLC Council Chairman or Council Secretary beforehand.

Cam Schneider

PIANO NEWS



Several years ago, the congregation at Highwood decided to donate its old grand piano (the Currier) to Heritage Christian Academy after receiving its current piano from the MacTavish family. This piano served the Highwood congregation well for many years and it was a blessing to find it a new home where it would be used.

However, the piano went into storage for 3 years to wait for a new building to be constructed on the HCA campus. In September 2024, that wait was over and the piano was set up in the new music practice room for the students. It has become a very popular and busy space for small group rehearsals, clinics, individual practice, and worship team meetings. The students, teachers, Music Parents Association and the administration of HCA are very grateful and thankful to the congregation at Highwood to have the use of this instrument.

FYI, the Currier and Co. piano manufacturer was an American company which had a long and successful run but went out of business in 1982. Their claim to fame was providing the personal pianos for President John Adams and President John Quincy Adams for use in the White House.

Rick VanderWoude

BEYOND OUR WEBSITE

In addition to our own website, Highwood Lutheran Church has three other web presences to view. Check out:

Tripadvisor https://www.tripadvisor.ca/Attraction_Review-g154913-d23614188-Reviews-Highwood_Lutheran_Church_Calgary-Calgary_Alberta.html

Calgary Tourism <https://www.visitcalgary.com/things-to-do/arts-culture/highwood-lutheran-church>

Travel Alberta <https://www.travelalberta.com/listings/highwood-lutheran-church-15978>

Please take a moment to have a look and leave a comment.

William Wright, Canadian Organist

Several years ago, the Calgary organists received a gift from William Wright, organist in Toronto: his entire organ music library. Currently, this library is housed here at Highwood Lutheran Church and it is substantial, filling two large filing cabinets. It contains music from Jesuits who came to Montreal in the 1500s to hand-written copies of compositions from organ composers today, as well as music from many countries in Europe and Asia. The library is called the Calgary RCCO William Wright Collection.

William Wright passed away in his sleep early in the morning of January 6th, 2025. We hold his widow, Patricia Wright, and all of William's family and friends in our thoughts and prayers.

The following biography appeared in the 2023 RCCO/OHS Convention book:

William Henry Montague Wright graduated from Victoria College with a bachelor's degree in Honours English and then took up studies in Theology in Emmanuel College. He graduated with a Master of Divinity in 1964 winning a scholarship in Church Arts. During this time, he obtained the Fellowship of the Royal Canadian College of Organists winning the Healey Willan prize for the highest marks in Canada. William studied Church Music in the Musikhochschule in Lübeck, returning to Toronto when he was appointed Organist and Director of Music in Deer Park United Church, St. Clair Avenue West. He was responsible for commissioning a large three-manual organ from Casavant Frères which was installed in Deer Park Church in 1970. This became the focus for 38 years of an annual series of concerts in which guest recitalists of international stature performed. This instrument now resides in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Toronto. In 1971 he was appointed to the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto. There he taught ten different subjects for 37 years and wrote two textbooks for the use of his students in courses there. He also continued as official organist for Victoria University, an appointment which lasted 20 years and he taught a History of Church Music course in Emmanuel College for ten years. He composed several hymns and hymn tunes, some of which are in Voices United and Hymns for the City. He had an extensive concert career across Canada, in the USA and also in Europe. In 2003 he was awarded the Distinguished Service Award from the national RCCO and in 2009 he was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Divinity by Victoria University for his work in Church Music.

