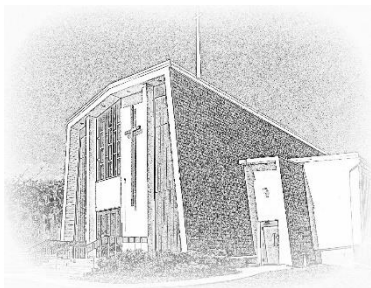


# HIGHWOOD HIGHLIGHTS

October 2023

The Newsletter of Highwood Lutheran Church



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## PASTOR'S MESSAGE

### Confession Needs Absolution

The profound essence of the relationship between law and gospel in Lutheranism is rooted in Augustinian perspectives on the essence of humanity. The understanding and practice of confession and absolution as described in the Augsburg Confession (Article XI, XII, XXV) and the Small Catechism accentuate the vital distinctions between the law, which unveils our sins, and the gospel, which extends forgiveness and salvation through unwavering faith in Christ. They exalt the paramount role of God's grace in the salvation process while acknowledging the inherent human condition of sinfulness. These enduring perspectives have left an indelible mark on Protestant theology, shaping the beliefs of numerous Christian denominations to this day.

Martin Luther fervently emphasised the dichotomy between the law and the gospel. The "law" signifies God's moral directives and righteous demands, which humanity inherently fails to fulfil. On the other hand, the "gospel" embodies God's gracious offer of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, forming the bedrock of the concepts of Condemnation and Forgiveness. Luther contended that the law exposes our sinful nature and incapability to meet God's standards, ultimately leading to condemnation. Only within the gospel does God tender the message of forgiveness and salvation through faith in Christ's redemptive work on the cross. This forgiveness is a free gift of God's grace, unattainable through virtuous deeds or strict adherence to the law. These theological tenets give rise to the description of the Christian as "Simul Justus et Peccator," a phrase coined by Luther to elucidate the simultaneous state of being justified through faith in Christ while grappling with the innate sinful nature. Hence, forgiveness is rooted not in personal righteousness but in the righteousness of Christ imputed to the believer.

This theological understanding comes to life in our religious practices, particularly in the liturgy's ordo of confession and absolution. The confession rite is a platform for explicitly expressing the interplay between law and gospel. It is here that absolution becomes indispensable, offering resolution to both the sinner and making one a saint. Absolution represents the clergy's tangible and formal proclamation of forgiveness, facilitating spiritual and emotional healing for the penitent. Additionally, it reinforces the significance of baptism and its sacramental essence while elevating confession as a foundational element within the Lutheran framework of faith.

The incorporation of absolution into the liturgy for confession serves a multitude of essential purposes. Confessing one's sins can be an emotionally intense and vulnerable experience. Absolution provides a comforting, unequivocal declaration of forgiveness by a representative of the faith, alleviating the burden of guilt and imparting spiritual solace. The response to absolution is a sacramental act symbolising the restoration of the penitent's relationship with God and the community. Its inclusion in the liturgy underscores the profound nature of forgiveness and the paramount role of the confession process in the believer's life. These liturgical words and structures are purposeful, shaping religious experiences and establishing a clear system and process for the faithful to follow. Involving clergy in administering absolution underscores the concept of "in persona Christi" while emphasising the communal aspect of forgiveness, highlighting the interconnectedness of believers.

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For Lutherans, confession formalises a method for individuals to receive the forgiveness of sins. So profound is this rite that for some branches of Lutheranism, it is considered the third sacrament, while all viewed it as an extension of Holy Baptism. While the practice of confession in the Lutheran Church shares similarities with other Christian traditions, it is important to note that there are differences in emphasis and theological understanding. The Lutheran Church views confession as an opportunity for individuals to receive forgiveness for their sins rather than a requirement or obligation. Confession is seen as a means of receiving God's love and grace, repairing one's relationship with God and the Church.

Moreover, absolution offers closure and relief to the penitent by formally acknowledging their repentance and extending God's forgiveness. It can catalyse psychological and spiritual healing, fostering a healthier spiritual and emotional state. Confession is a beautiful testament of God's mercy and should not be considered a "requirement" but an "opportunity" to receive God's love. It allows us to repair our relationship with God and the Church, opening us up to a shower of God's grace. We should confess because we love God, not because we "have to," though the requirements are there to lead us along the path of eternal life. This grace demands a response; it cannot be received passively. In this framework, receiving absolution also addresses personal guilt, holding the penitent accountable for their actions and motivating them to earnestly pursue transformation and growth. The fault is recognised and transcended, propelling individuals toward positive change, life, and a renewed spiritual journey.

Absolution is a key component of the sacrament of confession in many Christian traditions. By inclusion in our liturgy, we maintain a strong connection with the historical practices of the faith, anchoring believers in the rich tapestry of spiritual heritage and is a reminder that forgiveness is an essential part of Christian life and that we are all called to forgive others as we have been forgiven.

In summation, including absolution in the liturgy for confession reinforces the transformative potency of forgiveness, provides avenues for psychological and spiritual healing, and fortifies the sense of community and continuity within the faith.

At Highwood, we strive to offer "Corporate Confession and Absolution" or "Commemoration of Baptism" with every communion celebration. The pastor offers personal "Confession and Absolution" at any time, by appointment.

See you on Sunday.  
Pastor Mike



## Church Financial Report

8 months ended August 31, 2023

### Financial Summary

August current offerings were \$10,211 and church rental receipts were \$3,950. Synod benevolence receipts were \$145 and non-budget benevolence receipts consisted of \$150 for CLWR. Total August 2023 offerings and church rentals of \$14,161 was \$3,063 more than last year.

August expenses of \$13,811 were \$661 under budget.

Highwood had a surplus of \$350 for August 2023 compared to a shortfall of \$2,928 last year. Year to date, Highwood has a shortfall of \$2,861 compared to a shortfall of \$16,272 last year. Church receipts for 2023 are \$12,475 higher than last year (\$2,662 higher (up 3%) on offerings and \$9,812 higher on church rentals) and church expenses are \$935 lower than last year.

Capital fund – \$20 was donated to the Building Fund. The balance in the capital account at the end of August was \$46,808.

Memorial Fund – The balance at the end of August was \$10,375.

## CLERGY VESTMENTS

Have you ever wondered what is the name of some of the vestments that clergy wear?

**A cassock** is a long garment worn by members of the clergy, especially in the Latin rite Churches. A cassock may have 33 buttons down the front, which symbolize the 33 years of Jesus Christ's life on earth. Some clergy may also attach other meanings to the buttons, such as the five wounds of Christ, the ten commandments, the oneness of God, and the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Not all cassocks have 33 buttons, and there has never officially been any assigned any liturgical significance to the number of buttons on a cassock. The colour and style of the cassock may vary depending on the rank and office of the clergy member. For example, cardinals may wear a scarlet cassock, while bishops may wear a purple one. Cassocks are often worn under other vestments such as a surplice or an alb.

## OUR HIGHWOOD FAMILIES

### Meet Edward Smith



I send my warmest greetings to the pastor, executives, and members of the Highwood Lutheran Church.

My name is Edward Smith, and I was born in Freetown, Sierra Leone, situated in West Africa. I have spent most of my life on my native land in Sierra Leone. I immigrated to Canada in September 2013, just a decade ago.

My parents were Emeric and Marina. My father was an educator, and my mother was an administrative assistant. She was also a seamstress, which she found great passion for. Both are now deceased.

I completed my Junior and Senior high school in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and further acquired a Diploma in Accounting in Business and Management. In my twenties, I worked as an account clerk and auditor in different institutions. While I was working at the Lungi International Airport Hotel as an Auditor, one of the most brutal wars broke out in Freetown, the capital City of Sierra Leone in 1999. The Rebel war lasted for about 11 years, and about 50,000 people died, with the most atrocities committed. When the war entered the capital City of Freetown my home and others were burnt down, and I fled to Guinea, our neighbouring country, where I sought refuge for about nine months. The war officially ended in 2001.

When I returned home, the private and public sectors were completely devastated because of the war, with fewer opportunities for jobs and businesses. With all post-war challenges, I was able to set up a private business dealing in office supplies in stationeries, office equipment and computer accessories, until I immigrated to Canada.

I immigrated to Canada through family sponsorship by my ex-wife. Sadly, we divorced in 2017 because of incompatibility. We have a son, Joel Smith, 11 years old, and in Grade 6. He is a brilliant and jovial boy who always excels in mathematics. I'm always in his life to ensure he grows up to be a responsible, God-fearing, and successful individual.

I work at Matrix Logistics Ltd in the supply chain industry, where I contributed immensely to ensure people get their medications and basic essentials in a timely manner, especially the challenges we encountered during the Covid pandemic period. I'm a proud worker who served the province of Alberta, British Columbia,

Manitoba, and Saskatchewan through Shoppers Drugs Mart and Loblaws.

I was baptized and confirmed in Sierra Leone through the West African Methodist Church doctrine. I served in various capacities in our Church as follows, Serving Steward, Chorister, President of Steward Union, Church Secretary, Men's Union, and Assistant Senior Society Steward which is the second highest position in the Church Executive Council.

I have a passion for sports, especially soccer and tennis. I also love traveling. I have visited various tourist destinations in Alberta and have traveled to Winnipeg and Toronto and Niagara Falls. I have traveled to some countries that includes Ghana, Guinea, Banjul, Malaysia, and the USA.

I was introduced and started worshipping at the Highwood Lutheran Church by the Walter Anderson family. I thank the pastor and members of the church for their great hospitality and pray that God will continue to increase our faith and make his infinite service our delight. May God continue to bless us all.



We've been told this since our days in Sunday school:  
We want to give, and we need to give gladly.  
A spirit of generosity isn't enough to guide us in our decisions.  
What else does Scripture have to say on the subject?  
Three kinds of financial giving are mentioned in the Bible:  
offerings, tithes, and alms. Understanding what they mean helps us achieve a thoughtful, balanced plan for our cheerful giving.

#### Offerings

*On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come (1 Corinthians 16:2).*

The faith practice of making a regular financial offering to your congregation is grounded in a "first fruits" philosophy. We might think of this giving as "business as usual." You pay the rent; you buy groceries and you contribute regularly to help carry out God's mission in the world. Your generosity isn't an afterthought; it's part of your day-in-and-day-out joyful response as a child of God.

#### Alms

*Sell your possessions and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, and no moth destroys (Luke 12:33).*

Alms are our compassionate, heartfelt response to the people Jesus mentioned in Matthew 25: those "least" of our sisters and brothers who are "less" than we in circumstance only and always our equal in their humanity. This is our most personal and spontaneous kind of giving in response to people in need.

***Continued next page.***

Think about the homeless man you see everyday by the bus stop or the family in your congregation whose home was lost during a fire. Your outreach makes God's love for them feel very real and very immediate; your kindness reveals Christ's presence within them as well.

### Time and Talent

It's also important to remember that when we focus exclusively on giving in terms of money alone, we lose sight of the bigger picture. God calls us to be generous in all areas our lives and invites us to explore the many opportunities to share ourselves through our time and talent. When we ground our giving in a biblical context, our financial generosity becomes an expression of our love for God, for our neighbor and for ourselves. We are new people in Christ: compassionate and eager to share. We give cheerfully because God has given us so much.

## OCTOBER COMMEMORATIONS

### HENRY MELCHIOR MUHLENBERG



Henry Melchior Muhlenberg was born September 6, 1711, and died October 7, 1787. He was a German Lutheran clergyman and missionary. Born in Einbeck, Muhlenberg immigrated to the Province of Pennsylvania in response to demands from Lutherans for missionary work in the colony. Integral to the founding of the first Lutheran church body

or denomination in North America, Muhlenberg is considered the patriarch of the Lutheran Church in the United States. Muhlenberg and his wife Anna Maria had a large family, several of whom had a significant impact on colonial life in North America as pastors, military officers, and politicians. His and Anna Maria's descendants continued to be active in Pennsylvania and national political life. Muhlenberg is commemorated on October 7<sup>th</sup>.

### PHILIPP NICOLAI



Philipp Nicolai (1556 – 1608) was a German Lutheran pastor and a hymnodist. He was the son of a Lutheran pastor, and he himself was ordained in 1583. He served as a pastor in Herdecke, Hessa, Unna, and Hamburg. He received his Doctorate Degree in Theology from the University of Wittenberg in 1594. Nicolai is best known for the writer of hymns, three of which are in our hymnal. They are

*Oh Morning Star, How Fair and Bright* (308), *Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying* (436), and *Oh Holy Spirit, Enter In* (786). Nicolai is commemorated on October 26<sup>th</sup>.

### WILLIAM TYNDALE



William Tyndale (1494 – 1536) was an English biblical scholar and linguist who became a leading figure in the Protestant Reformation. He is well known as a translator of the Bible into English and was influenced by the works of prominent Protestant Reformers such as Martin Luther. Tyndale's translation was the first

English Bible to draw directly from Hebrew and Greek texts, and the first English translation to take advantage of the printing press. The 47 scholars who produced the King James Version of the Bible drew extensively from Tyndale's original work. Tyndale is commemorated on October 6<sup>th</sup>.

### SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

*“Great and glorious God, my Lord Jesus Christ! I implore Thee to enlighten me and to disperse the darkness of my soul. Give me true faith, firm hope, and perfect charity. Grant me, O Lord, to know Thee so well that in all things I may act by Thy light and in accordance with Thy holy will. Amen.”*



St. Francis was born in central Italy in the 12th century. The son of a wealthy merchant, his early life was indulgent and frivolous. At age 20, he was set for a military career until a series of visions redirected him. While praying before a crucifix at the Church of St. Damian, St. Francis heard Christ tell him to “go and rebuild my Church.”

St. Francis shifted his life and originally began rebuilding ruined churches. Men and women, both religious and secular, joined him, and the Friars Minor, Poor Clares, and Third Order of St. Francis were formed. St. Francis modelled a life in relationship with Christ to ‘renew the People of God.’ St. Francis was canonised in 1228 by Gregory IX and is the patron saint of Italy, the environment, and animals. St. Francis is commemorated on October 4<sup>th</sup>.

### IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH



Ignatius of Antioch was also known as Ignatius Theophorus (“the God-bearing”), was an early Christian writer and Patriarch of Antioch. While en route to Rome, where he met his martyrdom, Ignatius wrote a series of letters. This correspondence now forms a central part of a later collection of works known to be authored by the Apostolic Fathers. Ignatius is commemorated on October 17<sup>th</sup>.

## ON THE WEB BEYOND OUR WEBSITE

Here are some links that may be of interest to you:

- The Society of the Holy Trinity, of which Pastor Mike is affiliated: <http://www.societyholyltrinity.org/about.html>
- The Barmen Declaration: <https://www.ekd.de/en/The-Barmen-Declaration-303.htm>
- A PDF of Martin Luther's statement on the Doctrine of Just War: <https://lcmiside.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/3-Rev.-Alex-Post-Martin-Luther-on-the-doctrine-of-Just-War-.pdf>
- An elder friendly took kit from Alberta Health Services: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/scns/Page13345.aspx>
- The Church of All Ages In Luther's Lectures On Genesis: <https://www.lutheranforum.com/blog/0dhqlyva0ltxw51tgydj7ho9sfanhf2>

## WHY WE COMMEMORATE THE REFORMATION

The Reformation was not an isolated event but the culmination of various factors brewing for centuries. It began over a century before Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church in 1517, with people such as Jan Hus, a Czech theologian and reformer. Hus challenged the authority and doctrines of the Catholic Church in the 15th century. He was influenced by the writings of John Wycliffe, an English scholar who also criticized the corruption and abuses of the Church. Hus preached in the vernacular language and advocated for the communion of both bread and wine for all Christians, not just the clergy. He also rejected the papal supremacy and the indulgences that the Church sold to the people and was condemned as a heretic and burned at the stake in 1415. Hus' followers continued his movement and were known as the Hussites. Jan Hus influenced Martin Luther and the Reformation in several ways. First, he was one of the predecessors of Luther, who paved the way for his reforms by questioning the Church's authority and doctrines. Second, he inspired Luther to stand firm in his convictions and to appeal to Scripture as the ultimate authority. Third, he provided Luther with some theological insights, such as the communion of both kinds and the distinction between the visible and invisible Church. Fourth, he showed Luther that reform was possible even in the face of persecution and martyrdom. About 100 years later, Martin Luther sparked the Protestant Reformation as he was also dissatisfied with the practices and teachings of the Catholic Church and, interestingly enough, the abusive selling of indulgences.

The reformers challenged the Roman Church's teachings and practices, specifically the sale of indulgences. They promoted the doctrine of justification by faith alone, arguing that salvation comes through faith in Christ, not human works or rituals. Another of the central ideas of the Reformation is often encapsulated in the Latin phrase "Ecclesia semper reformanda est," which means "the

church is always to be reformed." This concept emphasises that the church should continually examine itself and its practices, seeking to align more closely with the teachings of the Bible and the example of Jesus Christ. It underscores the notion that reform is an ongoing process, not a one-time event.

Furthermore, the idea of "Ecclesia semper reformanda est" reminds Christians that they should constantly examine their own lives, repent of their sins, and turn to Christ in humility for grace and forgiveness. It places an emphasis on personal piety and the individual's relationship with God. Such doctrines mean that reform continues today in each of us as we face new challenges and opportunities to live out our faith.

The legacy of the Reformation continues to shape various branches of Christianity today, with a wide range of denominations and theological perspectives. While the Reformation led to the formation of new Christian traditions and pieties, it also prompted the Roman Church to undertake its own internal reforms through the Counter-Reformation or Catholic Reformation. As we commemorate the Reformation, we also remember that the movement was multifaceted with deep historical roots as it emphasised the need for ongoing reform in the institutional church and the lives of individual believers.



### OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

Diane Anderson  
Walter Anderson Sr.  
Simret Bogale  
Ahmed Contah  
Ryan Ford  
Ida McConnell  
Bronson Patychuk  
Eden Tang



"Acme Excavating. Faith speaking."