

HIGHWOOD HIGHLIGHTS

June 2025

The Newsletter of Highwood Lutheran Church



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Pastor's Message

The Challenge of Modern Heresy

I am disappointed by how often "heresy" rears its ugly head in unexpected places, as my pastoral conversations frequently become discussions of what we believe as Lutherans. We live in a time when the word heresy seems to have been all but retired from regular Christian vocabulary. Perhaps more surprisingly, I consistently find doctrinal error as I read commentaries and prepare my sermons for Sunday morning. I must vigilantly reconsider what is written. I must return to the "first principles" expressed in the Augsburg Confession. (I often joke that most modern commentaries are horrid and do more to enlighten on what "not" to preach as I assess whether I am venturing into heresy.) If our so-called theological experts can make such errors in theology, it becomes self-evident that we who rely on our experts will also likely find new ways to recreate the old errors.

As I mentioned last year, when I wrote about Pelagianism, the reality is that heresies are as alive and present today as they were in the days of the early Church, the Reformation, or any age in between. If you are one of the few people still using social media, you need only glance at what passes online for Christian teaching. We also encounter heresy in popular books, and sadly, even from some of our Lutheran pulpits. Indeed, I am regularly dumbfounded by the presentation of new ideas which are, upon examination, reworked examples of doctrines the Church has long recognised as false. Whether it is modalism disguised as creative imagery for the Trinity ("God is like water, ice, and steam"), or a denial of the full divinity or humanity of Christ in well-meaning attempts to make Him "relatable," the substance of ancient heresies walks among us again.

In many cases, the ancient errors are not merely being revived, but rebranded and passed off as new insights, progressive theology, or even harmless metaphors. In a world saturated with un-curated content, opinion, pseudo-spirituality, and heresy has become subtle, prevalent, and socially acceptable, making its danger even more acute. It is therefore crucial for each of us to exercise discernment against these false teachings. To assist our discernment, the Church has developed doctrine. Sadly, some doctrinal statements are also heretical.

Still, doctrine has a purpose. The intent is that it keeps us out of error and functions as shorthand for what took the holy Fathers centuries of debate to settle. The now-famous video, *St. Patrick's Bad Analogies*, illustrates how easily the faithful can, with good intention, stumble into heretical territory when they depart from the clear teaching of Scripture and the Creeds. The folk at Lutheran Satire do so with humour, but its theological warning is serious: misunderstanding who God is leads to misrepresenting what He has done for us. Firm adherence to *sound* doctrine is more than advisable; it is also essential for our spiritual well-being.

For example, the doctrine of Redemption should come as no surprise. It is core to our Lutheran teaching. As Luther teaches in the Small Catechism and the Formula of Concord elaborates in greater depth, our human nature is not neutral but bound by selfish (sinful) will and understanding until the Gospel frees it. Our susceptibility to bias is the theme in Luther's great treatise, *The Bondage of the Will*. If you are under the illusion that you have free will, think again. Interesting how modern brain scientists, such as Dr. Heather Berlin, (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtSZedpRiBA>) and renaissance Lutheran theologians like Martin Luther agree on our lack of free will. Sadly, this foundational work by Luther remains one of the most underappreciated truths in contemporary theology.

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We don't stumble upon truth on our own. Without Christ, we're not seekers but rebels; not impartial inquirers, but idol-makers. Our self-centeredness extends to become self-indulgent creeds as much as conduct. This is why 'I can do it only by my own' faith or piety expresses unrealised self-indulgence and sin. It's a stark reminder of why Christianity is communal. The Church's shared beliefs and practices bind congregations together, reinforcing the importance of community in our spiritual journey.

Being part of a community is also why repentance is not merely a one-time act or a sorrowful feeling, but a daily cycle of dying and rising again. As the Large Catechism reminds us, Baptism "signifies that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance, and that a new person should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever." This daily practice of repentance is essential for our spiritual growth and should be embraced by all.

More than just moral repentance, our doctrine of repentance expresses our appreciation of our human condition. We repent not only of sins of the flesh, but also of our false beliefs, our failure to learn and teach the truth, and our easy tolerance for error in ourselves and others. The rite of absolution plays a crucial role in our faith, offering an important insight into our context as we all deepen our understanding.

Consider how Luther's warning in the *Smalcald Articles* still rings true: "In these matters that concern the spoken, outward Word, we must firmly hold that God gives no one His Spirit or grace except through or with the external Word." Heresy in contrast, often arrives with the telltale sin-tainted waffle language in words like; *for me, inner light, individual experience, I feel or in untethered reason*. Commonly we see a call their ideas to merit value as being some form of enlightenment, new revelations, higher thinking, or some other formula of popular spirituality, but such revisions of theology are far from new and hardly spiritual. Those espousing the need for something new (to say that we must update our doctrines or liturgy or worship to keep up with the times, or that fidelity to Scripture is old and an obstacle to love) betray their heretical beliefs because such calls are the statements most often based in some form of antinominalism or self-serving idolatries which undermine love. Such ideas may sound *nice* or *appealing*, but they are ultimately selfish and deny God's law, consequently leading people away from Christ, the Christian community, and the real grace Christ offers.

In his *Antinomian Disputations*, Luther addressed the role of the law in Christian life. He reaffirmed the "second use of the law," which is the law's role in the Holy Spirit's work of creating sorrow over sin in the believer's heart, thus preparing them for

the Gospel of Christ. Luther insisted that even if the Ten Commandments were not preached explicitly, the law's condemning effect remains active in the consciences of Christians. Consequently, claiming that the law should no longer be taught to Christians is tantamount to denying that Christians are sinners in need of repentance or the need for a saviour.

As your pastor, I have a duty to urge you to cling to Christ in your heart and mind. I appreciate how many of you have expressed your appreciation for our catechetical moment (Christian teaching moment) at the beginning of worship, as it offers explanation and guidance at the beginning of every service.

Teaching doctrine is far more important than an inspirational morality tale. With the guidance of clear doctrines, you will already know how to strive to love your neighbour. Gathering for worship allows us all to remember the doctrines and histories of being a Christian and why we, in particular, do what we do as Christians with our Lutheran "spice." To be in the world is to prepare to face the world, and that preparation is our call to catechesis, to humble learning and diligent discernment. Bo Giertz, in his pastoral novel *The Hammer of God*, vividly depicts how even sincere Christians can be led astray when they substitute subjective feelings for the objective Word of God. This temptation is stronger than ever in a world where feelings reign supreme. We need to recognise what is false and why it matters.

The danger of heresy is not that it offends our traditions, but that it obscures or denies the Gospel. Gustav Aulén's *Christus Victor* recovers the biblical vision of the atonement as the victory of Christ over sin, death, and the devil. Christ's victory is not metaphorical, nor is it conditional upon our performance. I am disappointed at how many modern theologies present a Christ who is more therapist than Saviour, more cheerleader than a Redeemer. (I pejoratively call most Christian self-help books Pelagian Christo-flavoured pop culture cr*p.) These self-centred writings fail to deliver the very thing we need most: deliverance from the powers we cannot overcome on our own.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, writing during the rise of Nazi ideology and the co-opting of Christianity for political gain, warned against what he called "cheap grace," a grace without discipleship, baptism without repentance, communion without confession. Today, we might also speak of "cheap doctrine," a truth without testing, faith without formation, and teaching without accountability. Bonhoeffer's call to costly discipleship is a call to clarity, courage, work, and confession in all areas of our life and witness.

Fellow sinners, I ask you to pray for discernment, wisdom, The danger of heresy is not that it offends our traditions, but that it

obscures or denies the Gospel. Gustav Aulén's *Christus Victor* recovers the biblical vision of the atonement as the victory of Christ over sin, death, and the devil. Christ's victory is not metaphorical, nor is it conditional upon our performance. I am disappointed at how many modern theologies present a Christ who is more therapist than Saviour, more cheerleader than a Redeemer. (I pejoratively call most Christian self-help books Pelagian Christo-flavoured pop culture cr*p.) These self-centred writings fail to deliver the very thing we need most: deliverance from the powers we cannot overcome on our own.

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The peace of Christ be with you all,

Pastor Mike

Further Reading and Sources:

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(Tappert translation): <https://bookofconcord.org/>
- Lutheran Satire, *St. Patrick's Bad Analogies*
(YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQLfgaUoQCw>
- Bo Giertz, *The Hammer of God*
- Gustav Aulén, *Christus Victor*
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer,
The Cost of Discipleship and Life Together
- Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (1525)



LADIES BIBLE STUDY

The Ladies Bible Study group will have lunch at PaSu Farms on Tuesday, June 3rd. Members are to meet at the church at 11:00 AM.

Pat Fedkenheuer

BASEMENT RENOVATION



The Korean God's Family Church (GFC) is celebrating ten years as a congregation in 2025. Praise and thanks be to God!

For most of this time they have been using the church office building as a place of worship and Christian education. Their membership has steadily increased to the extent that they need a bit more worship and classroom space.

They want to stay at Highwood and have proposed a simple renovation project in the office basement area. In doing so, they have agreed to cover all construction costs for the renovation. The only cost to Highwood is the City of Calgary building permit (under \$500) as we are the owners of the office building. On May 12th Vern Schnell, Cam Schneider, and Pastor Mike attended a kick-off meeting with Korean GFC Pastor Kihyeong Lee and their (Korean) construction team from J S Construction led by Jesse Seo. The current project schedule shows a start in early or mid-June, with the exact date depending on having the city permit in place.

Cam Schneider

COME AND GO BOOK DROP

We thank Shannon Freisen for the generous donation of a larger bookshelf. It comfortably houses a wide variety of books with room for more. We invite you to check out what is available. With summer around the corner this is a great resource.

Help yourself to a book (or several) to read. Return the book or pass it on. Leave a book (or several) for others to read.



Sunday 15 June 2025

OUR FATHER'S LOVE LETTER

MY CHILD....

You may not know me, but I know everything about you. *(Psalm 139:1)*

I know when you sit down and when you rise up. *(Psalm 139:2)*

I am familiar with all your ways. *(Psalm 139:3)*

Even the very hairs on your head are numbered.

(Matthew 10:29-31)

For you were made in my image. *(Genesis 1:27)*

In me you live and move and have your being. *(Acts 17:28)*

For you are my offspring. *(Acts 17:28)*

I knew you even before you were conceived. *(Jeremiah 1:4-5)*

I chose you when I planned creation. *(Ephesians 1:11-12)*

You were not a mistake, for all your days are written in my book. *(Psalm 139:15-16)*

I determined the exact time of your birth and where you would live *(Acts 17:26)*

You are fearfully and wonderfully made *(Psalm 139:14)*

I knit you together in your mother's womb. *(Psalm 139:13)*

And brought you forth on the day you were born. *(Psalm 71:6)*

I have been misrepresented by those who do not know me. *(John 8:41-42)*

I am not distant and angry but am the complete expression of love. *(1 John 4:16)*

And it is my desire to lavish my love on you. *(1 John 3:1)*

Simply because you are my child, and I am Your Father.

(1 John 3:1)

I offer you more than your earthly father ever could.

(Matthew 7:11)

For I am the perfect father. *(Matthew 5:48)*

Every good gift that you receive comes from my hand.

(James 1:17)

For I am your provider, and I meet all your needs. *(Matthew 6:31-33)*

My plan for your future has always been filled with hope.

Jeremiah 29:11)

Because I love you with an everlasting love. *(Jeremiah 31:3)*

My thoughts toward you are countless as the sand on the seashore. *(Psalm 139:17-18)*

And I rejoice over you with singing. *(Zephaniah 3:17)*

I will never stop doing good to you. *(Jeremiah 32:40)*

Love, God



Four months ended April 30, 2025

Financial Summary

April current offerings were \$12,356 and church rental receipts were \$3,230. Synod benevolence receipts were \$135 and non-budget benevolence receipts consisted of \$80 for the Calgary Foodbank, \$345 for Lutheran Hospital Ministries and \$100 for Lutheran Campus Ministries. Total April 2025 offerings and church rentals of \$15,586 were \$111 less than last year.

April expenses of \$15,346 were \$105 under budget.

Highwood had a surplus of \$240 for April 2025 compared to a surplus of \$591 last year. Year to date, Highwood has had a shortfall of \$3,121 compared to a shortfall of \$5,491 last year. Church receipts for 2025 are \$2,324 higher than last year (\$2,336 higher on Offerings and \$12 lower on church rentals) and church expenses are \$46 lower than last year.

Capital Account – \$103 was donated to the Highwood Lutheran Women's account (current balance - \$861) and \$130 to the Building Fund (current balance – negative \$349). The balance in the accumulated surplus account at the end of April was \$28,234.

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

OUR HIGHWOOD FAMILY



June Birthdays

Sandra Beaupre
Medinatu Conteh
Mariette Erasmus
Shelly Ford
Tiegan Ford
Mason Giacomini
Jarrod Hanson
Jerry Laboret
Ken McTavish
Kelli Moen
Vivian Morrison
Bruce Nagel
Matthew Whitehead
Yosef Yohannes



DAY OF PENTECOST

8 June 2025

The name of the day itself is derived from the Greek word "pentecoste," meaning 50th.

Pentecost customs around the world

Typically, clergy will wear red vestments on Pentecost, symbolic of the burning fire of God's love and the tongues of fire that descended on the apostles.

However, in some parts of the world, Pentecost is also referred to as "Whitsunday", or White Sunday, referring to the white vestments that are typically worn in Britain and Ireland. The white is symbolic of the dove of the Holy Spirit, and typical of the vestments that catechumens desiring baptism wear on that day.

An Italian Pentecost tradition is to scatter rose leaves from the ceiling of the churches to recall the miracle of the fiery tongues, and so in some places in Italy, Pentecost is sometimes called Pascha Rosatum (Easter roses).

In France, it is tradition to blow trumpets during Mass to recall the sound of the driving wind of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost the "Birthday of the Church"

On the Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection—ten days after Jesus had ascended into heaven—the apostles and other believers were gathered in one place, when they were suddenly empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel. They went out into the crowds and attracted attention by preaching in the native languages of all the people present. This created quite a stir. Peter seized the opportunity to address the crowd, preached Jesus' death and resurrection, and won several thousand converts. These events are recorded in Acts 2:1-41.

Accordingly, Pentecost is celebrated by Christians as the birthday of the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit. Since the Jewish Pentecost is the fiftieth day of Passover, the Christian Pentecost is the fiftieth day of Easter.

Pentecost is *not* the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit made His first appearance in Genesis 1:2. Rather, Pentecost is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on human flesh to give birth to the Church.

We encourage members to wear red on June 8th.

SCIENCE SUNDAY

22 June 2025

Interesting Facts

16 April - Scientists report a new method of generating electricity from falling rainwater using plug flow in vertical tubes, converting over 10% of the water's energy into electricity and producing enough power to light 12 LEDs.

21 May 2025 - The discovery of 2017 OF201, a new dwarf planet candidate in the outer Solar System, is reported.

22 June 2025 – The Royal Observatory Greenwich will celebrate its 350th anniversary.

Georg Cantor: A Biography

Georg Ferdinand Ludwig Philipp Cantor (1845–1918) was a pioneering German mathematician whose revolutionary work laid the foundations for modern set theory and introduced the concept of transfinite numbers—mathematical infinities of different sizes. His intellectual journey was profoundly intertwined with his devout Lutheran faith, which both inspired and sustained him during periods of professional isolation and personal hardship.

Cantor was born on 3 March 1845 in St. Petersburg, Russia, to a Danish Protestant father and a Roman Catholic mother from a family of musicians. The Cantor family relocated to Frankfurt, Germany, in 1856 due to his father's illness. Raised in a religious household, Cantor received disciplined Lutheran instruction and was confirmed in the Lutheran Church at the age of fifteen. [2][6] His early education included private tutoring and attending gymnasien in Darmstadt and Wiesbaden, where his mathematical talents quickly became evident [1][6]. Despite his father's initial wish for him to become an engineer, Cantor was drawn to mathematics and, after some negotiation, pursued this passion at university.

He began his studies at the University of Zürich in 1862 and then transferred to the University of Berlin in 1863 to focus on mathematics, philosophy, and physics. There, he was influenced by prominent mathematicians such as Karl Weierstrass and Ernst Eduard Kummer. Cantor earned his doctorate in 1867 with a thesis on indeterminate equations, tackling a problem left unresolved by Carl Friedrich Gauss [1][6]. Following a brief teaching stint in Berlin, he joined the University of Halle, where he remained for the rest of his career.

Cantor's most significant contribution was the creation of set theory, a branch of mathematics that studies collections of objects, or "sets." He introduced the concept of one-to-one correspondence between sets, enabling mathematicians to compare the sizes of infinite sets—a radical departure from previous thinking [1][4]. In 1873, Cantor proved that rational numbers are countable, while real numbers are uncountable, demonstrating that there are different sizes of infinity [4][6]. He developed the arithmetic of cardinal and ordinal numbers and introduced the now-standard notation of aleph (\aleph) for cardinalities and omega (ω) for ordinals [4].

Cantor's theory of transfinite numbers was initially met with scepticism and even hostility from prominent mathematicians like Leopold Kronecker, who dismissed the idea of actual infinities. Despite this opposition, Cantor remained persistent, convinced of the mathematical and philosophical importance

of his ideas. His work had a profound impact on analysis, topology, and the philosophy of mathematics, and the continuum hypothesis he formulated became one of the most renowned unsolved problems in mathematics [1][4].

Cantor's Lutheran faith was central to his life and work. He believed his insights into the infinite were divinely inspired, often expressing that his theory of transfinite numbers was communicated to him by God [2][3][4]. Cantor saw no contradiction between the mathematical concept of infinity and the theological notion of God's infinite nature. In his correspondence, he argued that the existence of different sizes of infinity reflected the perfection and creative freedom of God, and he rejected accusations of pantheism, insisting that his views were consistent with orthodox Christian doctrine [3][4][5].

Cantor's religious convictions provided him with resilience during times of professional isolation and mental illness. He frequently engaged with theologians, discovering in their support a counterbalance to the scepticism of his mathematical peers. Cantor believed that Christian philosophy offered the "true theory of the infinite," and he viewed his mathematical work as contributing to a deeper understanding of divine transcendence [2][5].

Georg Cantor passed away on January 6, 1918, in Halle, Germany. Although his ideas were contentious during his lifetime, they have since become fundamental to the field of mathematics. His exploration of infinity transformed both mathematics and philosophy, and his integration of faith and reason remains a compelling example of the interplay between science and spirituality [1][2][4].

Cantor's life story epitomises intellectual courage, spiritual conviction, and a lasting impact—a testament to the power of ideas to transcend both mathematical and metaphysical boundaries.

Sources

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[4] Georg Cantor - Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georg_Cantor

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- [10] Georg Cantor - an overview | ScienceDirect Topics <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/mathematics/georg-cantor>
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- [12] Georg Cantor: His Mathematics and Philosophy of the Infinite <https://www.amazon.com.br/Georg-Cantor-Mathematics-Philosophy-Infinite/dp/0691024472>
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Blind Chance versus God's Command

Part 1 / 2

"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." (Psalm 139:14)

Could life as we know it – plant, animal, and human life – have spontaneously happened by chance? Could our

amazing solar system be the result of an accident? The more advanced science becomes, the more evidence there is for a Master Designer. Researchers continue to uncover the divine order in each tiny human cell. American biochemist Bruce Alberts, former president of the National Academy of Sciences, writes, 'We have always underestimated cells; undoubtedly we still do...Cells are the basic unit of life...indeed the entire cell can be viewed as a factory that contains an elaborate network of interlocking assembly lines, each of which is composed of a set of different protein machines in defined positions.'

The psalmist David wasn't a scientist, yet he recognized that each of us is a complex product of God's amazing hands! 'You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb...You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion...woven together in the dark of the womb...How precious are your thoughts about me...They cannot be numbered!...And when I wake up, you are still with me!' (vv. 13, 15, 17-18).

The average human heart beats 115,000 times a day. Our blood travels 12,000 miles every day (about twenty times the length of the UK from northern Scotland to southern England!). Adults take an average of 18,000 to 30,000 breaths a day, and for the most part, all these functions take place without our awareness. Amazing! Today, stop and take a few minutes to acknowledge and thank your Creator for the amazing things He did with that first clump of dirt.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your marvelous work in creating me. Let me live in Your image each day and forgive me when I do not. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Tim Hetzner

Source: Daily Devotions *Lutheran Church Charities* April 8, 2025

<https://devotions1.lccportal.org/2025/04/08/blind-chance-versus-gods-command-part-1-2/>

Symposium Gathers Lutheran Scientists and Pastors

Sponsored by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) Alliance for Faith, Science and Technology, a major symposium titled "Sunday Scientists!" was recently held. Around 45 ELCA scientists and pastors, coming from a number of states have participated in the event.

Dr. Kevin Powell, a member of the Church's Alliance for Faith, Science and Technology, and symposium organiser and pediatrician at the University of Illinois, explained the two-fold aims of the symposium.

One of the aims was obviously to improve how Lutheran congregations relate to science and the other one would be on a more personal level, said Dr. Powell.

The symposium is thought to be a response to all the ethical issues aroused in recent years due to the advancement of medical research and technologies, such as stem cell research, abortion, and cloning. Dr. Powell said that inside many Christian scientists, there's been a conflict between science and religion, and they are people who really want to integrate the two.

The symposium was to give Christian scientists cognitive tools, emotional support and some affirmation from the institutional Church that what they are doing is in fact God's calling, Dr. Powell continued.

Certain controversial theological issues have also been discussed among the science and medical experts. Rev. George L. Murphy and Rev. Antje Jackelén, for example, had handled the topic of evolution and creation. They showed how creation and evolution could co-exist in the faith life of a Lutheran scientist.

Rev Murphy is an ELCA pastor and trained physicist, and pastoral associate at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Ohio while Rev Jackelén is an associate professor of systematic theology, religion and science, and director, Zygon Centre for Religion and Science, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

Other presentation topics included a history of the interaction between science and religion, neuroscience and theology, and genetically modified organisms. Small group discussions dealt with the minimum scientific and theological understandings of the modern Christian needs, a Bible study of the book of Genesis, and the United Methodist Church's position on science and creation theology.

Even though the symposium has only involved a very small and specific group of members in the Lutheran church, the insights that these Christian leaders have developed will be beneficial to the whole Church.

"Our aim is to make congregations friendlier to science so they can understand the world they are living in, which is so profoundly influenced by science," Dr. Powell said. "People in the congregations, especially the non-scientists, recognise how much their lives are affected by science, but they can be very frustrated trying to figure out how to impact that change," he said.

"This was a great opportunity for people to come together to think about what it means to be a scientist and a Christian and how to live this out in their daily lives," said Gail Bucher, retired pharmacologist and chairman, ELCA Alliance for Faith, Science and Technology, Belmont, Mass. "It met all of our expectations and probably exceeded them," she said.

Source: Faith Science & Technology *Christian Today*

<https://christiantoday.com.au/news/symposium-gathers-lutheran-scientists-and-pastors.html>

ELCIC NATIONAL CONVENTION



The 2025 ELCIC National Convention takes place July 10-13, 2025, at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, MB.

At the 2025 ELCIC National Convention, delegates will elect a new bishop following eighteen years of service from our current National Bishop Susan Johnson, who has indicated her desire to retire.

The ELCIC's National Church Council has approved a discernment process leading up to the election proceedings at convention. This process does not impact the ELCIC Bylaws process for elections of a bishop, rather, the discernment process is about an intentional process leading up to the election of consideration, prayer and pre-identification of potential individuals for election.

ON THE WEB

The bishop's message for June can be found [here](#).

Information about the Lutheran Historical Society:
<https://www.lutheranhistoricalsociety.com/featured-lutherans/>

The agenda for the National Convention can be found [here](#).