

# HIGHWOOD HIGHLIGHTS

May 2025

The Newsletter of Highwood Lutheran Church



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## Pastor's Message for May

With Easter comes reflections on the symbolism and significance of death and resurrection. As I approach the cross this year, I notice that the sanctuary feels heavy with memories and grief. In both the silence and the liturgy, I hear echoes of loved ones' voices, now stilled, along with something deeper: a question, a cry, and, remarkably, a promise. Perhaps even more intensely, as this moment stands in the long shadow of my mother's death, which marked its first anniversary at the end of April. This year carries greater emotion as I write to you today, confronting another death in the family and mourning loved ones. Somehow, during this time and this season, training and experience only go so far as I feel emotions more intensely with the commendation to God of another member of the family, a week after Easter and a year after the death of my mother.

This past year has made death feel like an ever-present companion, hovering close, never quite satisfied. I miss my mother in a way that words cannot fully express. Yet, I also find a quiet relief in knowing that she no longer suffers. Over the past year, I walked alongside others as they wrestled with their grief. I am surprised by how often subdued thankfulness also accompanies it. I have witnessed many times how illness drained the body and spirit, and I now see, with eyes just clear enough, that the grave, while a bitter enemy, has also become the gateway through which our loved ones step into peace. While the grieving process is undeniably challenging, it is essential. As a pastor, I regularly remind the living that it's okay to experience such a range of emotions, including relief and thankfulness, amid the pain and that it takes time.

Martin Luther never shied away from the brutality of death. He called it the "final enemy," and yet, in the same breath, Luther spoke of it as defeated, stripped of its sting by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the Large Catechism, when he teaches on the Apostles' Creed—especially the third article: "I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." Luther insists that we do not merely look for "a spiritual life" after death; we look to the complete and final redemption of our bodies. While our grief is real, raw, and personal, it does not mark the end of the story.

In the Smalcald Articles, Luther powerfully describes Christ's descent into hell and His resurrection as doctrines to affirm and victories over our enemies: sin, death, and the devil. Remembering this gives me hope, even while seated in the pews of another funeral. Jesus did more than sympathise with our suffering; He entered it, drank its full cup, and conquered it. This means that even in our mourning, we are not abandoned. We are not wandering in circles. We are moving forward, albeit slowly, toward the restoration that Christ has promised.

In these moments, I find the paradoxes of the Christian life most acute: we are grieving and grateful, despairing and hopeful, broken and being made whole. Luther described this beautifully with the phrase 'simul justus et peccator'—simultaneously justified and a sinner and accurately describing our state. Indeed, we are justified by God's grace yet still struggle with sin. I believe something similar applies to our experience of grief: we are 'simul dolens et gratias agens'—at the same time, grieving and giving thanks. This theological shorthand helps us understand that it's okay to feel a mix of emotions in our grief and that our faith can sustain us through the difficult feelings.

**Continued Page 2**

The world does its best to sanitise and avoid any discussion or encounter with death. It denies the truth that it is right and proper to mourn. The world is not as it should be. Death is not as God intended; it is the visible curse of sin. The fathers of the church understood this. The Augsburg Confession, Article II, speaks plainly of our condition: we are born in sin and, therefore, are "under God's wrath and eternal damnation unless we are born again through Baptism and the Holy Spirit." Thankfully, the AC doesn't leave us there. Article IV focuses on the heart of the Gospel: "People are justified freely for Christ's sake, through faith." This justification grants us life and is our only hope in death.

This hope is neither vague nor sentimental; it is rooted in Christ's body and blood, given for us. Luther's Small Catechism reminds us that in the Sacrament of the Altar, we receive forgiveness and "life and salvation." What could be more comforting at a graveside than the promise that this body, now at rest, will rise again? Death does not hold the last word. The promise of resurrection is our ultimate hope, a beacon of light in the darkness of grief, reminding us that the grave is not the end.

As we honoured my mother a year ago and this year my wife's aunt, I do so not merely with memories but with the Word of God. In the funeral liturgy, we said, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," not because their lives were perfect but because they were sealed with the cross of Christ. Baptism marked them, and nothing, not even death, can unmark what God has claimed.

I imagine you also carry your grief—whether fresh or long-settled. I write this letter not to provide easy answers or Pollyanna stories but to share what I have learned is at the heart of Lutheran theology: death is terrible but no longer final. The resurrection of Christ has changed everything, including how we mourn. We are not alone in our grief; we share a common experience that binds us in Christ's love. This shared experience of grief connects us, reminding us that we are not alone in our mourning.

Pastorally, I offer some understanding of the grief process. Relief is not found in pretending we are not sad or in impatiently trying to "move on." There is a process to grief - one that needs to be honoured. Luther once said, "Even amid death, we are surrounded by life." Life resides in clinging to Christ, the promise that what we lay to rest in weakness will be raised in glory (1 Cor. 15), and the love we offer each other.

Our loved ones will rise—not as mere shadows of themselves, but as whole and holy beings, clothed in the righteousness of Christ. The liturgy speaks the truth: "For your faithful people, O Lord, life is changed, not ended." The liturgy is more than poetry—it is a proclamation. At times, I have continued to grieve within that proclamation, but not without hope. I mourn, yet not as one lost in darkness. Most importantly, I give thanks, not because I wish to say goodbye, but because I trust that goodbye is not forever. This promise of resurrection is our ultimate source of hope and comfort.

I hope this reflection provides you with comfort and guidance. Grief can isolate us. Allow the Spirit to strengthen you, keeping your heart open to gathering- even in silence- and experiencing the communion of saints, both those still here and those who have gone ahead, through a faith that unites us in Christ's love.

Remember that you are not alone amid all the uncertainty of this age. We are all embraced by God's promises, as are those who have gone before us. On that last day, my family—including my mother, my cousin, and my wife's aunt—along with our loved ones and all the redeemed saints, will stand together before the Lamb who was slain, who lives, and who will wipe every tear from our eyes.

Peace be with you all,  
Pastor Mike



**Three months ended Mar 31, 2025**

### **Financial Summary**

March current offerings were \$11,967 and church rental receipts were \$2,825. Synod benevolence receipts were \$45 and non-budget benevolence receipts consisted of \$100 for the Calgary Foodbank, \$100 for Lutheran Hospital Ministries and \$100 for CLWR. Total March 2025 offerings and church rentals of \$14,792 were \$2,121 less than last year.

March expenses of \$17,566 were \$2,115 over budget because of higher utilities and printer costs. Buyout of the current printer (Konica Minolta) mounted to \$989 but Toshiba will be reimbursing us for \$777.

Highwood had a shortfall of \$2,774 for Mar/25 compared to a surplus of \$438 last year. Year to date, Highwood has a shortfall of \$3,361 compared to a shortfall of \$6,081 last year. Church receipts for 2025 are \$2,435 higher than last year (\$2,888 higher on Offerings but \$453 lower on church rentals) and church expenses are \$285 lower than last year.

Capital Fund – \$114 was donated to the Highwood Lutheran Women's account and \$80 to the Building Fund. The cost of the vent cleaning project was \$3,549 so there is a current shortfall in the Building Account of \$479. The balance in the accumulated surplus account at the end of March was \$28,234.

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

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

## OUR HIGHWOOD FAMILY

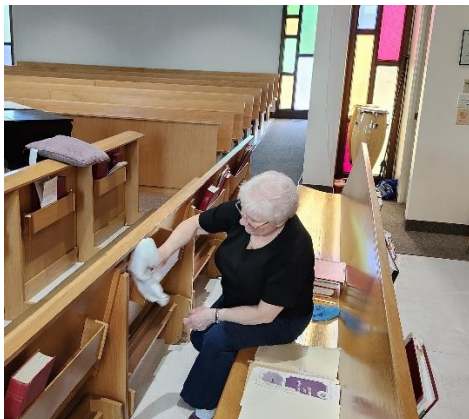


### MAY BIRTHDAYS

Mark Anderson  
James Berwanger  
Anna Berwanger  
Jack Davis  
Ron Forth  
Ava Hanson  
Elenora Lahoda  
Jim Rasmussen  
Norman Wong

## THANK YOU

Thank you to all who pitched in to help clean the church in March. Pictured below are some of the helpers,



## SPRING CELEBRATION CONCERT

Sunday May 4<sup>th</sup>

1:30 PM

First Lutheran Church

7102 – 14 Avenue SW

Calgary, Alberta

*Admission by Donation*

## ASCENSION DAY



So, when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven. Acts 1:6-11

Ascension Day celebrates Christ's exaltation. While on earth, he was a servant. Now in heaven, he is the ruler and Lord of all. By entering heaven as the representative of mankind, he completed the work of our salvation and guarantees the eventual glorification of all who believe in him. Ascension is celebrated forty days after Easter, and therefore, it always occurs on a Thursday. This year it is celebrated on May 29<sup>th</sup>.





**Sunday, 11 May 2025**

## **SOMEBODY SAID**

Somebody said it takes about six weeks to get back to normal after you've had a baby. Somebody doesn't know that once you're a mother, normal is history.

Somebody said you learn how to be a mother by instinct. Somebody never took a three-year-old shopping.

Somebody said being a mother is boring. Somebody never rode in a car driven by a teenager with a driver's permit.

Somebody said "good" mothers never raise their voices. Somebody never came out the back door just in time to see her child hit a golf ball through the neighbour's kitchen window.

Somebody said you don't need an education to be a mother. Somebody never helped a fourth grader with his math.

Somebody said you can't love the fifth child as much as you love the first. Somebody doesn't have more than one child.

Somebody said a mother can find all the answers to her child-rearing questions in the books. Somebody never had a child stuff beans up his nose.

Somebody said the hardest part of being a mother is labour and delivery. Somebody never watched her "baby" get on the bus for the first day of kindergarten.

Somebody said a mother can stop worrying after her child gets married. Somebody doesn't know that marriage adds a new son or daughter-in-law to a mother's heartstrings.

Somebody said a mother's job is done when her last child leaves home. Somebody never had grandchildren.

Somebody said your mother knows you love her, so you don't need to tell her. Somebody isn't a mother.

## **SOME QUOTES ABOUT MOTHERS**

Moms have the kindness of angels and the patience of saints. All the more reason to thank God for them. —*Matt Gowen*

Love is patient. Love is kind. Love is Mom. —*Keely Chace*

Blessed are the moms, for they are the ones who bless everybody else. —*Andrew Blackburn*

God can be everywhere, because he lives in the hearts of moms. —*Bill Gray*

Moms give us the blessing of belonging. —*Megan Haave*

A woman of faith with praise on her lips and joy in her heart... my beautiful mom. —*Jeannie Hund*

For every dream that has taken flight, there's a mother who believed. —*Jennifer Fujita*

A mother teaches us that there is no end at all to what love can do. —*Keely Chace*

They go beyond. They go above. Mothers have mastered how to love. —*Keion Jackson*

She's a woman of purpose, compassion, and strength... my hero, my mom. —*Suzanne Berry*

A mother's love is the sun for growing, the moon for dreaming, the stars for guiding the way. —*Barbara Loots*

You don't have to earn it or try to impress her... she loves you just because she's your mama, God bless her! —*Diana Manning*

Mama's hands tend you when you're tiny, guide you as you grow, fold in prayer as you find your way, and never let you go. —*Jeannie Hund*

Faith is the foundation of a strong, loving family and Mama is the cornerstone. —*Renee Daniels*

Mamas are proof that God is good. —*Melvina Young*

## **REMEMBERING POPE FRANCIS**

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) joins Catholics and other faith communities across the world in mourning the loss of Pope Francis, who died on Easter Monday, 21 April 2025, at the age of 88. The Argentinian pontiff was recovering from bilateral pneumonia in his Vatican residence at the Casa Santa Marta.

Recalling the significant progress made on the journey "from conflict to communion" during his 12-year pontificate, Lutheran World Federation General Secretary Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt gave thanks for the pope's commitment to strengthening ecumenical and interfaith relations and to witnessing to the gospel through compassionate service to the neighbor. She said: "As we mourn his death, we give thanks for his life and legacy of reform, renewal, unity, which opened doors of dialogue and brought the church closer to people from all walks of life."



Turn this page upside down to view this image a second time. What do you see? There's always a brighter side to every situation. It's in your power to change every bad situation. Just Believe!

## LUTHERAN HOSPITAL MINISTRIES EDUCATION LUNCHEON

### Caring for the Pessimist – Speaker: Jessica Tonn

St. Matthew Lutheran Church Basement  
Saturday, 31 May 2025  
Luncheon and Fellowship: 11:30 AM.

Presentation: 12:30 PM Cost: Free will offering.

Please join us for this interesting and educational event. Parking is available in the back of the church. This topic is of interest to anyone who provides care for someone else either formally or informally.

Please RSVP to the office of Lutheran Hospital Ministries by phone 403-264-4045 or by email [lhmsac@gmail.com](mailto:lhmsac@gmail.com) on or before 22 May 2025. Please indicate if you have allergies.

## NATIONAL PIPE ORGAN DAY



There is no specific "International Day of the Pipe Organ." However, there is an event called "International Organ Day," which was celebrated on April 23, 2022. This day aims to celebrate organs, organ music, and organists around the world. The Royal College of Organists (RCO) promotes this day to encourage people to explore and enjoy organ music, seek out performances, and support the development of new generations of musicians and enthusiasts.

National Pipe Organ Day, on the other hand, is observed on May 4th, 2025, according to the information provided. This day is dedicated to showing appreciation for and learning more about the pipe organ, a unique and special musical instrument with a rich musical heritage.

For more information on pipe organs and related events, you can visit the websites of organizations such as the RCCO or Pipe Up, which campaigns for the conservation and appreciation of pipe organs in Britain

Royal Canadian College of Organists – [www.rcco.ca](http://www.rcco.ca)

Pipe Up for Pipe Organs – <https://www.pipe-up.org.uk>

## FOR DEEPER THOUGHT

We often think solely of Dietrich Bonhoeffer when considering influential 20th-century Lutheran theologians. This viewpoint overlooks the development of Lutheran theology in Sweden. Here, I introduce two prominent Swedish theologians from the 20th century: Gustaf Aulén and Bo Giertz.

Gustaf Aulén (1879–1977) was a prominent Swedish Lutheran theologian, bishop, and composer. He served as the Bishop of Strängnäs in the Church of Sweden and was a leading figure in the Lundensian school of theology, emphasising a balance between orthodoxy and critique of 19th-century liberal theology.

Aulén is best known for his influential book *\*Christus Victor\** (1931), in which he reintroduced the "classic" view of atonement. This theory, grounded in the early Church Fathers, depicts Christ's death and resurrection as a divine victory over sin, death, and evil powers, contrasting it with the Satisfaction theory (which focuses on legal justice) and the Moral Influence theory (which emphasises ethical transformation). Aulén argued that the classic view accurately reflects the true biblical and early Christian understanding of atonement.

In addition to his theological work, Aulén contributed to liturgical reform and composed hymns for the Swedish Church. He authored significant works, such as *The Faith of the Christian Church and Reformation and Catholicity*. Aulén retired in 1952 but continued his academic pursuits until he died at the age of 98.

Bo Giertz (1905–1998) was a contemporary figure. He was also a Swedish Lutheran bishop, theologian, and author renowned for his orthodox adherence to Christian doctrine and impactful writings. Born in Råplinge, Sweden, he initially identified as an atheist before converting to Christianity during college. His theological journey eventually led him to become a pastor and, in 1949, the bishop of the Göteborg Diocese, where he served until his retirement in 1970.

Giertz is best known for his novel *The Hammer of God*, which conveys Lutheran theology through compelling fictional narratives. His works emphasise salvation by grace through faith and the centrality of Christ's atonement. He also wrote theological books and devotionals, including *To Live with Christ*, and retranslated the New Testament into Swedish alongside extensive commentary.

As bishop, Giertz faced controversy for opposing women's ordination in the Church of Sweden, a stance rooted in his interpretation of Scripture. Despite the criticism, he remained committed to sharing the gospel with humility and love. His influence extended beyond Sweden, with his writings gaining international recognition. Giertz passed away in 1998 but is still celebrated as one of Sweden's most influential church leaders of the 20th century.

The works of Bo Giertz and Gustaf Aulén had a significant impact on Lutheran theology in the 20th century, each shaping various

dimensions of the church's life and thought. Gustaf Aulén's Christus Victor revived interest in the early church's "classic" view of the atonement, portraying Christ's work as a victorious struggle against the powers of sin, death, and the devil. This emphasis contrasted with the juridical models of atonement that were dominant in Western theology, particularly the satisfaction theory.

It resonated deeply in a century marked by existential uncertainty and global conflict. Aulén's work influenced not only Lutheranism but also had an ecumenical impact, fostering renewed dialogue with Eastern and other non-Lutheran traditions. His critique of legalistic and overly rationalistic interpretations of the atonement created space for a more dramatic and cosmic vision of salvation that affirmed divine initiative and liberation.

Bo Giertz powerfully contributed to the confessional and pastoral renewal of the Lutheran Church, particularly in Scandinavia. Through his theological writings and pastoral fiction—most notably, *The Hammer of God*—Giertz offered a compelling vision of Lutheran ministry grounded in the objectivity of Word and Sacrament. His theology emphasised the incarnational reality of grace and the spiritual authority of the pastoral office, countering theological liberalism and the subjectivism of modern clericalism. Giertz's influence is especially evident in the formation of many Lutheran pastors, including myself. His vivid depictions of spiritual struggle and gospel comfort continue to shape pastoral identities and theological education.

Aulén and Giertz contributed to a renewed Christocentrism within Lutheran theology: Aulén through his cosmic and historical perspective, and Giertz through his sacramental and pastoral focus. Their work helped Lutheranism maintain a theological centre amid the crosscurrents of modernity, positioning it as rooted in (small c) catholic traditions and capable of fresh engagement with contemporary questions. These Swedish Bishops' complementary contributions provided a platform for Lutheran theology in the 20th century to remain confessional and dynamic.

- Pr. Mike

Sources

For Gustaf Aulén

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- To Live with Christ - Concordia Publishing House <https://www.cph.org/to-live-with-christ>
- A Year of Grace, Volume 1 - 1517 Publishing <https://shop.1517.org/products/9781948969192-a-year-of-grace-volume-1>



Get Cyber Safe is a national public awareness campaign created to inform Canadians about cyber security and the simple steps they can take to protect themselves online. The website is [www.getcybersafe.gc.ca](http://www.getcybersafe.gc.ca)

Phishing is one of the most common scams in Canada and is one of the easiest ways for cyber criminals to steal information and money from their victims. If you browse the internet, use social media, have a cell phone or smartphone, or have an email address, chances are you've received a phishing message. The simplest way to fight off phishing messages is to delete them, but it's also important to report them to your cellular provider to help protect yourself and others from the same attacks.

### Reporting suspicious text messages to 7726

The best protection against smishing attempts is to be cautious about any messages that you receive from phone numbers you don't recognize or that seem like a suspicious request. If you're in doubt about the legitimacy of a sender or message, contact the legitimate source using another medium. Most importantly, don't reply and never click on any links.

Instead, forward the spam message to 7726 (SPAM on most keypads). This will alert your cellular provider to open an investigation on the contents of the message. Canadian telecommunications companies take spam messages very seriously. Reporting to 7726 allows them to identify new types of smishing and block spam messages for all users. Forwarding methods will vary depending on your phone.