

HIGHWOOD HIGHLIGHTS

November 2024

The Newsletter of Highwood Lutheran Church



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PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Martin Luther's love for Christmas was profound and multifaceted, deeply ingrained in his theological outlook, sermons, and hymns. Luther's writings, rich with references to Advent and Christmas and his hymns, reflect his heartfelt connection to the season and its significance, as he expressed a passion for this festive season. Evident in his numerous Christmas sermons, which go beyond the themes of joy, are elaborations of hope and explorations of the depths of faith, humility, and the miraculous nature of the Nativity.

The centrality of Christ is a noticeable element in the Christmas sermons as he often emphasises the challenge of putting Christ before exploring the beauty of faith. One of his most renowned sermons, preached on Christmas Day in 1530, delves into the miraculous nature of Christ's birth. Luther spoke of the angel's message to the shepherds, "To you is born this day in the City of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." He highlighted the difficulty of believing in such a profound and divine event, noting that it was no easier for Mary and the shepherds than for us today.

For Luther, faith was a sacred gift, a light in the darkness of doubt, and the essence of Christmas was this act of faith in God's incredible promise. When he came to discuss Mary, the mother of God, he focused on her humility and simplicity.

Luther's emphasis often drew inspiration from the humble circumstances of Christ's birth—the manger, the swaddling clothes, and the modest surroundings. In his sermon on Luke 2, delivered in 1544, Luther marvelled at the incarnation. The paradox of the Almighty God choosing such a humble entry into the world by emphasising that true greatness lies in humility and simplicity, a stark contrast to the pomp and ceremony often associated with power and divinity. Such reverence for the incarnation is a recurring theme in his writings. He frequently reflected on the mystery of God becoming man, the Word made flesh, and the significance of this miracle for humanity. This theological cornerstone focused his thinking on doctrine. It grounded a source of wonder and inspiration, profoundly shaping his Christmas sermons and hymns.

With Luther's intentional focus on Christ, the proclamation of God's love and grace remained central to his Christmas message. He frequently reminded the congregation that Christ's birth was an expression of divine love and grace available to everyone, regardless of status or wealth. Luther's 1522 sermon vividly described the "precious and sacred things of all nations" coming together in Christ's birth, emphasising this event's universal nature and that Christmas was a time to reflect on God's boundless love and the gift of salvation brought by Christ.

Music was another vital element of Luther's love for Christmas. His hymns, such as "Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her" (From Heaven on High, I Come) and "To Shepherds as They Watched by Night," are enduring legacies of his musical contributions. These hymns, filled with joy and wonder, were not merely liturgical pieces but expressions of Luther's deep love for the season, inspiring a similar sense of awe and wonder in his audience. "Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her" captures the essence of Christmas, narrating the angelic announcement and the shepherds' journey to see the newborn Christ.

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Luther's personal experiences during Christmas profoundly influenced his writings and hymns. He was known to cherish the festive season, seeing it as a time to celebrate the coming of the Saviour with joy and music. His family traditions and the simple yet profound celebrations in his household often found echoes in his public messages. The warmth and intimacy of these personal experiences gave his Christmas sermons a relatable and heartfelt touch, resonating deeply with his congregation and fostering a sense of shared experience. This emphasis on shared experience fosters a sense of connection and understanding among his audience.

While the theological debates of his time often focused on abstract doctrines, such as the nature of Christ and the role of faith in salvation, Luther brought the narrative of the virgin birth to the forefront of his teachings. Regularly expressing his views on the Nativity set him apart from many of his contemporaries, as he emphasised the tangible, relatable aspects of the Nativity—the humble stable, the simple shepherds, and the tender image of the newborn Christ. By focusing on the humanity and humility of the Nativity, Luther deliberately presented the divine as more accessible, highlighting God's action and willingness to enter the human condition fully.

Moreover, Luther's insistence on Christmas celebrations having personal and communal aspects was a departure from his day's more austere religious observances. He encouraged joyous, heartfelt worship filled with song and community spirit, reflecting his belief that Christmas was a time to rejoice in God's love and grace. Luther saw Christmas as a time for families and communities to come together, to share in the joy of Christ's birth, and to express their faith through shared experiences and traditions.

Luther's love of the Nativity shaped his teachings and made the story of Christ's birth accessible and meaningful to his listeners. This approach resonated with ordinary people, making Christmas a theological concept to be lived as a joyful reality. Finally, his love for Christmas was deeply embedded in his sermons, hymns, and writings. He explored the themes of faith, humility, and divine love, emphasising the profound mystery of the incarnation making a legacy that continues to inspire, reminding us of the meaning of Christmas and the joy and reverence with which we celebrate.

Pastor Mike



NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Elizabeth Anderson
Ethan Cress
Ruth Gummo
Nicki Mutschlechner
Jennifer Primmer
Anna Sribney

ON THE WEB BEYOND OUR WEBSITE

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

The **Bishop's Message** for November may be found [here](#).



9 Months Ended Sept. 30, 2024

Financial Summary

September current offerings were \$11,790 and church rental receipts were \$3,950. Synod benevolence receipts were \$120 and non-budget benevolence receipts consisted of \$250 for CLWR, \$400 for Lutheran Campus Ministries and \$50 for Calgary Foodbank. Total September 2024 offerings and church rentals of \$15,740 were \$2,677 more than last year.

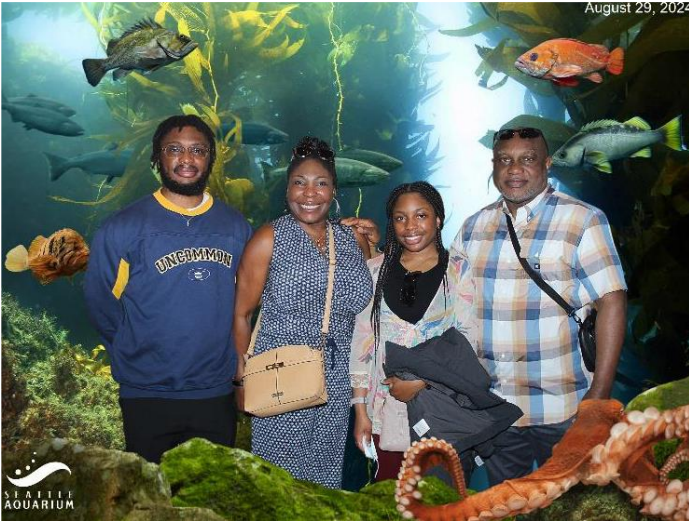
September expenses of \$14,796 were \$1,711 more than last year as the major expense for the month was \$1,029 for the replacement of the church humidifier.

Highwood had a surplus of \$944 for Sept. 2024 compared to a shortfall of \$22 last year. Year to date, Highwood has had a shortfall of \$9,485 compared to a shortfall of \$2,883 last year. Church receipts for 2024 are \$4,323 higher than last year (\$1,137 higher on Offerings and \$3,187 higher on church rentals) but church expenses are \$10,925 higher than last year (up 8%) relating mainly to higher repairs & maintenance (up \$4,543 or 196%), compensation costs (up \$4,897 or 5%) and Synod convention fees and study conference (up \$1,695).

Capital Fund – \$207 was donated to the Highwood Ladies group and \$100 to the Building Fund. The Highwood Ladies group donated \$500 to the Fear Is Not Love Society (Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter) which leaves \$1,507 in their account. The balance in the Accumulated operating surplus account at the end of September was \$25,888.

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

OUR HIGHWOOD FAMILY The Poromon Family



Baridiilo (Diilo), Nale, Ziga & Christopher

By the grace of God, we are Christ bearers whose faith in him makes us his beloved and we know God is with us always.

I, Christopher, am the fifth of seven children born to Late Rt. Rev. and Mrs. Johnson Badom Poromon, who hail from the Ogoni Kingdom of the oil rich Rivers State of Nigeria. I grew up in a Christian home, my father being a minister and later a Bishop in the Methodist Church Nigeria.

My six siblings and I were always on the move with our parents to whatever station my father was posted to within the conference area of the Methodist church Nigeria. In my teenage years I was confirmed in the Methodist Church in Lagos Nigeria. I was involved in various activities of the Church such as the Boys Brigade, the youth Fellowship and joined the Cathedral choir in Port Harcourt, Rivers State Nigeria. It was while as a member of the choir I developed interest in playing the organ and later became the organist and then choirmaster of the Banham Methodist Cathedral in Port Harcourt.

With respect to career, I trained as an Architect earning a Bachelor of Technology Degree in Architecture then went on to obtain a Master of Science degree (MSc) in Architecture. I practiced Architecture for the better part of my career in Nigeria focusing on Urban Strategy, planning, Construction and design working with companies in several cities in Nigeria for 20 years and eventually starting and running my own firm practicing for another 10 years in Nigeria. Nale and I met in 1999 and got married in 2000 then immigrated to Dublin Ireland. While in Ireland, I continued with my private practice in Architecture and construction.

Nale was born and bred in Nigeria. She is the first of six children born to Sir and Lady Finor K Puene, a Lay Preacher and knight of John Wesley of the Methodist Church Nigeria. She studied Microbiology earning a Bachelor of Science Degree (BSc Hons)

from the University of Port Harcourt. For the first 3 years after graduating, she worked with the Water Corporation then as a Sales Executive in a leading Engineering company marketing submersible and surface pumps used in construction, oil exploration, water projects etc. She then had a career change to Banking which spanned about 10 years. In that time, she obtained a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree. While in Nigeria, Nale was actively involved in the church, a member of the Cathedral choir in Lagos owing to her love for singing. In Dublin, she commenced studying for an accounting designation while working as an Accountant in Ireland's sole distributor for Roland and Sennheiser products.

In 2010, we immigrated as Permanent Residents to Canada landing in Calgary and have since called Calgary home. Over the past 14 years since coming to Calgary, Nale and I have worked in various industries - Oil and Gas, Non-Profit, Banking, Healthcare and Government. In her quest for career growth, Nale obtained her professional designation in accounting as a Certified Management Accountant (CMA)/ Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA). She is currently an Accountant in the Finance Department of Calgary Police Service where she provides support for financial analysis and budget as well managing grants/funding from both the Federal and Provincial government. I am a Corporate Asset Researcher in the Facility Department of the City of Calgary supporting the City's Asset management. In our spare time, we love taking long walks and do some volunteering.

Diilo our eldest child at present attends the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM) studying for a double majors degree in Economics and Sociology. He is also on the UTM men's basketball team. Growing up he loved to play football or soccer as it's called in Canada. He is a very talented athlete. His passion for sports has earned him various awards from a young age through to high school and to the University one of which is the Academic and Athletic Achievement Award from the Ontario Colleges Athletic Association (OCAA). He has participated in many sports such as volleyball, track - making Jr. High School records, and basketball. Diilo is also a small business owner of the brand Uncommon Soul - an apparel company for T shirts, sweaters and sweatpants.

Ziga is currently a Law and Society major student (with a minor in Sociology) at the University of Calgary. She is the Communications Initiatives Coordinator of the Sociology and Law and Society Association. Ziga was the 2019-2020 winner of the Optimist International Scholarship Essay contest and winner of the 2022 Hanford Monologue Slam. She was also the Assistant Producer of the Festival of Animated Objects and Assistant Technical Director of the Sled Island Music Festival. She continues to use the skills God has blessed her with to entertain others and bring justice for vulnerable communities. Ziga grew up loving music and dance. She really loved Irish dance back in Dublin and got awards as early as age 4. She plays the piano and enjoys watching Chelsea FC play football. Ziga has always been an introverted dreamer with ambitious intentions. She always knew she had a passion for the arts and

helping others. She played various sports in school such as, football, Rugby, basketball, and track. In Grade 11, she was part of a Dual Credit Program that allowed her to earn credits in Criminal Justice at Bow Valley College. You can find Ziga acting in TV, film, commercials and theatre or writing poetry and blogs on websites such as Substack and Medium. She also loves to read, listen to music, and watch documentaries.



LADIES ADVENT LUNCHEON 30 November 12:00 noon



Mark your calendars for this year's Advent Luncheon. Invite your family and friends. Invitations are in your mailboxes and the sign-up sheet is downstairs. Also, a reminder to all knitters, crocheters, and quilters as the Mitten Tree will be going up for donations (scarves, toques, mittens) as well as the boxes for new warm socks for men and women all to be donated to the Drop-In Centre.

ADVENT

What Is Advent?

Advent is a four-week season in the Church calendar dedicated to anticipating the arrival, or "advent," of Jesus of Nazareth, the long-awaited Messiah and King. Christians from many backgrounds celebrate this time with reflections on hope, peace, love, and joy. And while their practices may look different, all focus on the hope-filled arrival of Jesus.

What Does Advent Mean?

Advent means "arrival" and signifies the start of an event or the arrival of a person. In Christian communities around the world, Advent refers to a four-week season of remembering and celebrating the arrival of Jesus on Earth. It's a time to reflect on the unexpected nature of Jesus' humble birth and join in the anticipation of when he will come again to reunite heaven and earth once and for all.

Why Is Advent Important?

Advent can be a simple and fun tradition of counting down to Christmas. But for others—particularly those who believe Jesus to be the incarnation of God and the long-awaited Messiah—Advent is a shared experience of meditation and prayer that celebrates the arrival of Jesus.

Who Celebrates Advent?

People from Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and other Christian traditions celebrate Advent, though the specific practices may vary from community to community. Additionally, some people celebrate Advent without the focus on Jesus' arrival, seeing the tradition as a fun way to countdown to Christmas.

How Is Advent Typically Celebrated?

In some traditions, followers of Jesus devote the first two weeks of Advent to remembering Jesus' promise to return and renew Heaven and Earth. Then, during the last two weeks of Advent, these communities focus on the birth of Jesus.

In other traditions, people reflect on the concepts of hope, peace, love, and joy—one for each week leading up to Christmas. People may light Advent candles, prepare unique wreaths, hold special church services, or read specific Scriptures each day to reflect on the arrival of Jesus on Earth.

Biblical References to Advent

From the first story to the last, the Bible is full of narratives, poetry, prophecy, biographies, and personal letters that inform our understanding of Advent. When the Bible talks about humans waiting for the promised anointed King who would deliver them, it can help us connect with their anticipation (Amos 9:11-13). When we read about people choosing joy and hope in God's promises despite their circumstances, the meaning of Advent can take on a deeper meaning (Isa. 9:6-7, 11:1-5; Luke 1:26-2:20). And when the New Testament talks about a second advent, the return of Jesus, we can join in that time of waiting, shared by Christians throughout history (Rev. 21:1-5).

ADVENT LESSONS AND HYMNS SERVICE



As we prepare for the Advent season, join us at Highwood on the First Sunday of Advent **1 December 2024 at 7:00 PM**. Family and friends are welcome to attend.