

# HIGHWOOD HIGHLIGHTS

July-August 2025

The Newsletter of Highwood Lutheran Church



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## Pastor's Message

### SCIENCE AND FAITH

The punchline to one of my father's favourite jokes about God and creation was this:

"No, no, no... create your own dirt."

It's a line that has remained with me not only for its humour but also for the deeper truth it illustrates. It suggests a boundary: a limit to what human ingenuity can achieve apart from God. As a pastor with a science degree, I often reflect on the captivating interplay between scientific discovery and Christian faith. Some believe they are in conflict, but I respectfully disagree.

Before seminary, I studied geomorphology—the science of how water shapes the Earth. My academic training was rooted in chemistry and geology, although I had limited exposure to fluid dynamics. In other words, I spent a considerable amount of time learning about how rocks, rivers, and trees function. Throughout this, I developed a philosophical openness to the idea that the universe is both ordered and intelligible, a worldview shared by both scientists and theologians. As Psalm 19 begins, 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork.'

It was this ordered beauty that captivated me and drew me towards theology. Science asks, "How does the world work?" but theology asks, "Why is there a world at all?" For me, the answer to the second question led to the foot of the cross and the open tomb.

This conviction isn't mine alone. Consider Fr. Stanley Jaki (1924–2009), a Benedictine priest and physicist who won the Templeton Prize for his pioneering work on the relationship between science and religion. Jaki argued that the birth of modern science was not an accident of history, but rather something that could only have occurred within a Christian worldview. This worldview affirms an ordered universe created by a rational God. Without such a foundation, science flounders or falls into mysticism. With it, we are free to inquire, experiment, and gain a deeper understanding.

Johannes Kepler (1571–1630), the devout Lutheran astronomer who discovered the laws of planetary motion, once wrote that in his scientific work, he was "thinking God's thoughts after Him." For Kepler, there was no contradiction between the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture. Despite the turmoil of the Reformation and personal tragedy, Kepler's Christian faith inspired and grounded his astronomical discoveries.

Others followed this tradition. Gregor Mendel (1822–1884), the Augustinian friar and father of modern genetics, dedicated his life to crossbreeding peas in order to understand the laws of heredity. Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), renowned for both Pascal's Triangle and his wager about faith, comprehended the heart's longing for meaning. Robert Boyle (1627–1691), the father of modern chemistry, affirmed that scientific research was a form of worship. Carl Friedrich Gauss (1777–1855), one of the greatest mathematicians in history, regarded his intellect as a gift from God.

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## **Continued from Page 1**

Even in the 20th century, this harmony remained evident. Fr. Georges Lemaître (1894–1966), a Belgian Catholic priest, physicist, and astronomer, was the first to propose what we now deem the Big Bang theory. He referred to it as the "hypothesis of the primaeval atom," perceiving no contradiction between the sudden expansion of the cosmos and belief in a Creator. "There is no conflict between religion and science," Lemaître once said, "because their fields are different."

Albert Einstein, who was not conventionally religious, famously observed, "Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind." Although Einstein's religious beliefs were not Christian, he recognised that science alone cannot satisfy the deeper questions of the human soul.

Our Lutheran tradition, rooted in the theology of the cross, makes a distinctive contribution to this discussion. Martin Luther asserted that we should find God not in abstract speculation but in the person of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. That same Lutheran realism applies to the natural world. We do not turn our backs on creation or reason; rather, we confess that "all things have been created through him and for him" (Colossians 1:16).

Bishop Robert Barron, although a Roman Catholic, makes a valuable distinction. He cautions against both scientism (the belief that only science can provide us with truth) and fideism (the rejection of reason in favour of blind faith). He reminds us that truth is singular and that both faith and reason are gifts from the same God. This unity of faith and reason should never be pitted against each other, especially not for the sake of clicks or ratings. Instead, we need to engage our intellect and fulfil our spirit.

In this thought process, we recognise a logical and practical implication for us as a congregation. When we baptise a child or mourn a loved one, when we reflect on the intricacies of our bodies or marvel at the night sky, we are not separating science from faith—we are living the integrated vision of a God who is both Creator and Redeemer. We worship the One who orders the universe and who becomes flesh to redeem it. This integrated vision is not merely a theoretical concept but a way of life that we can all strive to embody in our daily experiences.

I recognise that many of you work or have worked in fields informed by science, such as healthcare, engineering, agriculture, education, and more. Some of you may have engaged in discussions with friends or neighbours who believe that faith is anti-science. May this letter affirm your identity first as a Christian and then specifically as a Lutheran. This affirmation strengthens our connection to our faith community, which is rooted in asking questions, critical thinking, and being unafraid of the microscope or the telescope. We embrace both, as each can lead us to wonder and to worship.

This interest in the profound nature of the physical world led me to contemplate the larger questions of existence. In response to the question of why we exist, I discovered my path to the seminary and became your pastor.

Death arrives when we stop learning or questioning. Let us continue to ask questions as we seek knowledge in praise and gratitude to God for the gift of reason. Furthermore, may we teach our children that they can be both scientists and saints, thinkers and believers. After all, it is all God's dirt.

In Christ,  
Pastor Mike



**5 months ended May 31, 2025**

### **Financial Summary**

May current offerings were \$11,708 and church rental receipts were \$2,650. Synod benevolence receipts were \$nil and non-budget benevolence receipts consisted of \$150 for the Calgary Foodbank, \$150 for CLWR and \$250 for Lutheran Hospital Ministries. Total May 2025 offerings and church rentals of \$14,358 was \$1,749 more than last year.

May expenses of \$14,492 were \$959 under budget.

Highwood has a shortfall of \$135 for May 2025 compared to a shortfall of \$4,620 last year. Year to date, Highwood has a shortfall of \$3,255 compared to a shortfall of \$10,111 last year. Church receipts for 2025 are \$4,073 higher than last year (\$4,300 higher on Offerings but \$227 lower on church rentals) and church expenses are \$2,782 lower than last year.

Capital Account – \$117 was donated to the Highwood Lutheran Women's account (current balance - \$978) and \$250 to the Building Fund (current balance – negative \$99). The balance in the accumulated surplus account at the end of May was \$28,234.

Memorial Fund – No changes. The balance at the end of May was \$13,000.

### **ON THE WEB**

The Bishop's message for July and August can be found [here](#).

### **Pastor's Message Continued**

Some links:

Johannes Kepler:

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Johannes-Kepler>

Blaise Pascal:

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pascal/>

Bishop Barron on science and religion:

<https://www.wordonfire.org/articles/fellows/bishop-barron-on-science-and-religion/>

## **OUR HIGHWOOD FAMILY**



### **BIRTHDAYS**

#### **JULY**

Walterbeth Anderson  
Nelsy Ferrerosa-Salcedo  
Laura Mutschlechner  
Ruby Panser  
Jerry Rasmuson  
Monica Rasmuson  
Linda Schnell

#### **AUGUST**

Liesel Fedkenheuer  
Blake Ford  
Shannon Friesen  
Al Gummo  
Jenny Laboret  
Brett Patychuk  
Amber Rasmuson  
Clarice Rasmuson  
Emma Tang  
Christian Tang

## **LEAD TRUSTEE**

We are pleased to welcome David Richardson as our new Lead Trustee, overseeing the care and maintenance of our church building. We give thanks to Vern Schnell for his 30 years of faithful and devoted service in this role. His dedication has been a true blessing to our congregation, and we are deeply grateful.

## **CALGARY DROP IN CENTER**



The Drop In Center has run critically low on towels. With over 600+ individuals accessing our shelter and hygiene facilities daily, we are now having to provide t-shirts and other alternatives for guests to dry off after showers. Can you donate new or gently used towels?

Donation Drop-Off: 3640 11A Street NE, Mon-Sun, 9 AM-5 PM.

## **LADIES BIBLE STUDY LUNCHEON**



The ladies enjoyed lunch at PaSu Farms on June 3<sup>rd</sup>

## **FATHERS' DAY BREAKFAST**



Fathers' Day, June 15<sup>th</sup>



The men's breakfast will continue to meet in July and August at the Ace Casino Airport at 10:00 AM on the first Saturday of the month. Come out on July 5<sup>th</sup> and hear Art Wildeman talk about the Stephen Ministry program and how it is benefiting thousands of people across North America.

# ONE FOUNDATION OF CHRIST

The Church of Christ exists for a singular and joyful purpose: to proclaim the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. As the Augsburg Confession opens, "Our churches teach that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. People are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith" (Augsburg Confession IV). This is not merely a theological claim—it is the very heartbeat of the Church's life and mission.

The Latin phrase *Lex orandi, Lex credendi*, which means "the rule of prayer is the rule of belief," conveys a profound truth: the way we worship influences what we believe. Some extend it further to *Lex orandi, Lex credendi, Lex vivendi*—"the rule of prayer is the rule of belief is the rule of life." This ancient saying reminds us that worship and theology are closely connected. Over the centuries, the Christian Church has recognised that what is prayed, sung, and celebrated shapes beliefs, and those beliefs, in turn, influence how we live. In this way, worship is not simply decorative but genuinely formative.

It follows, then, that any practice which contradicts, clouds, or diverges from this Gospel-centred mission must be lovingly but firmly examined and, if necessary, set aside. Among such practices is the celebration or incorporation of non-Christian civic holidays—those familiar occasions which, while common in culture, are foreign to the Church's sacred story. While it may seem harmless, or even charming, for a congregation to host a Mother's Day tea, acknowledge Canada Day, or decorate for Valentine's Day, these observances can gradually shift our focus away from Christ and towards sentimentality, nationalism, and civic religion. The concern is not with the intentions behind them, which may be kind and heartfelt, but with their impact upon our proclamation.

The Church is called to something greater: to speak with clarity and conviction about Christ. Martin Luther expressed this plainly in his *Large Catechism* when reflecting on the Third Commandment: "We keep holy days not for the sake of intelligent and learned Christians... We keep them... that [people] may assemble on a day of rest to hear the Word of God" (LC I.85). For Luther, the Church's calendar is not a cultural accessory but a theological necessity. Its holy days are to be filled with the hearing of the Gospel—not replaced with other messages.

Luther's *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (1520) reflects this conviction. He warns that anything not founded on God's Word is, by its nature, against God. There is no neutral ground in Christian worship. Either Christ is proclaimed—or He is not.

Today's secular calendar is packed with observances—Valentine's Day (instead of the Feast of St Cyril and St Methodius), Mother's and Father's Days, Canada Day, Labour Day, and even some light spiritual yet non-Christian celebrations like Thanksgiving or Halloween. These days might not be inherently wrong, but the question remains: do they serve the Church's mission when incorporated into her worship or community life?

When the Church replaces the proclamation of Christ crucified with a celebration of human vocation, she risks shifting the focus from God's saving work to human achievement. This is not innocuous, and it subtly encourages idolatry. It unintentionally teaches that being a good parent or a loyal citizen is of equal importance to being a forgiven child of God.

As Dr John T. Pless of Concordia Theological Seminary observes, "The liturgy does not exist to serve the culture; it exists to catechise the culture into the Gospel." If we let the world's calendar dictate the Church's priorities, we're no longer evangelising—we're being evangelised.

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of civic holidays is their tendency to foster a kind of civil religion. Such religion promotes salvation through sentiment, morality, or patriotic virtue. However, these cannot provide true salvation. As Luther reminds us in the *Smalcald Articles*, "The Gospel gives guidance and help against sin in more than one way... through the spoken word, by which the forgiveness of sins is preached in the whole world" (SA III.IV). There is no room here for national pride or sentimental niceties to take the pulpit.

The Apostle Paul writes in Galatians 1:8: "Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse" (Greek: *anathema*). Strong words, yes—but words that ring true when anything competes with the Gospel for the Church's attention.

In his *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), Luther states plainly: "There is no middle ground between Christian righteousness and works-righteousness." Civic holidays, however well-intentioned, tend to elevate human virtue: the righteousness of motherhood, hard work, or patriotism. These are respectable civil vocations, but they cannot justify anyone before God.

The answer, then, is not to become bitter or joyless, but rather to discover our deepest joy in Christ. The rhythm of the Church Year, from Advent to Pentecost and beyond, celebrates the joyful story of salvation. The Church already observes a Mother's Day in the Feast of the Annunciation. She already has a day of liberation in remembrance of baptism. She already offers thanks at the Eucharist as the most profound act of gratitude.

Dr Arthur Just writes in *Heaven on Earth*: "The liturgy is not a tool for expressing our culture, but a gift for forming us into citizens of heaven." When the Church forgets this and adopts the world's celebrations without discernment, she risks losing her true identity.

In the Reformation cry *Solus Christus*—Christ alone—the reformers made it clear: nothing may share the throne with Jesus. Today, as always, the temptation is to swap the cross for popularity, the resurrection for relevance, and the Gospel for good feelings. Let us not make that exchange.

Instead, let the Church remain true to herself. Let her calendar be marked not by greeting cards or government edicts but by the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord. Let her preachers exalt not earthly heroes but Christ crucified. And let her people gather not to



praise one another, but to worship the Lamb who was slain. For anything less than Christ is not the Gospel, and anything less than the Gospel is not good news.

## COMMEMORATIONS

**Johann Sebastian Bach**

**July 28<sup>th</sup>**



Johann Sebastian Bach (born March 21, 1685, Eisenach, Thuringia, Ernestine Saxon Duchies [Germany]—died July 28, 1750, Leipzig) composer of the Baroque era, the most celebrated member of a large family of north German musicians. Although he was admired by his contemporaries primarily as an outstanding harpsichordist, organist, and expert on organ building, Bach is now generally regarded as one of the greatest composers of all time and is celebrated as the creator of the *Brandenburg Concertos*, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, the *Mass in B Minor*, and numerous other masterpieces of church and instrumental music. Appearing at a propitious moment in the history of music, Bach was able to survey and bring together the principal styles, forms, and national traditions that had developed during preceding generations and, by virtue of his synthesis, enrich them all.

He was a member of a remarkable family of musicians who were proud of their achievements, and about 1735 he drafted a genealogy, *Ursprung der musicalisch-Bachischen Familie* ("Origin of the Musical Bach Family"), in which he traced his ancestry back to his great-great-grandfather Veit Bach, a Lutheran baker (or miller) who late in the 16th century was driven from Hungary to Wechmar in Thuringia, a historic region of Germany.

*Britanica.*

**Jan Hus**

**A Bohemian Reformer Ahead of His Time**

**6 July**



Jan Hus (c. 1370–1415) was a pivotal Czech religious reformer whose work served as a bridge between the medieval era and the Reformation, anticipating Martin Luther by a full century. Born to poor parents in Husinec, Bohemia, he rose through the ranks of academia, graduating from the University of Prague in 1394 and becoming dean of its philosophical faculty in 1401.

At the University of Prague, Hus encountered the philosophical and theological writings of John Wycliffe, an English reformer. Though Hus didn't embrace all of Wycliffe's radical views, he was deeply influenced by his calls for Roman Catholic clergy reform. This resonated with the widespread resentment in Bohemia towards the immense wealth and corrupt practices of the higher clergy, and the heavy taxation imposed by the church on the peasantry. The authority of the papacy itself was already undermined by the ongoing Western Schism (1378–1417), which saw multiple popes vying for power.

Hus quickly emerged as a prominent figure in the burgeoning Czech reform movement. From 1402, he led the Bethlehem Chapel in Prague, a hub for public sermons delivered in Czech rather than Latin. His public preaching made him a popular leader, and his influence grew when he became an adviser to Archbishop Zbyněk Zajíc of Prague.

However, conflict was inevitable. German masters at the university condemned 45 articles attributed to Wycliffe as heresy. While Hus didn't subscribe to all of Wycliffe's controversial tenets, like "remanence" (the belief that bread and wine in the Eucharist retain their material substance), his close associates did. Archbishop Zbyněk, initially supportive, eventually turned against the reformers.

The Western Schism further complicated matters. Hus sided with the Council of Pisa (1409), which attempted to resolve the schism by deposing the rival popes. This stance led to a mass emigration of German masters from Prague, leaving the university dominated by Czechs, and Hus was elected its rector in 1409.

His final break with the church came with his denouncement of the sale of indulgences in 1412, a practice sanctioned by Antipope John XXIII and supported by King Wenceslas. Hus's outspokenness cost him the king's crucial backing. Declared

excommunicated and facing an interdict on Prague, Hus voluntarily left the city. He spent his exile engaging in prolific writing, producing significant works like *De ecclesia* (The Church) and numerous Czech treatises that are now considered classics of Czech literature, contributing to a new, simpler orthography for the language.

In 1414, King Sigismund of Hungary invited Hus to the Council of Constance to explain his views, promising him safe-conduct. Despite this assurance, Hus was arrested shortly after his arrival in November 1414. He was tried as a Wycliffite heretic, and despite being allowed three public hearings, he refused to recant his beliefs, particularly his support for biblical authority over that of the Catholic Church and the doctrine of predestination. On July 6, 1415, Jan Hus was solemnly sentenced and burned at the stake. His followers, known as Hussites, continued his reform movement in Bohemia. [Matthew Spinka](#) [František M. Bartoš](#) Britannica

## HEADING AWAY FOR THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS?

It's time for many of us to plan our summer, with time away from home. Please remember that you can leave postdated cheques for your offering. You can also send your donations to the church using e-transfers through your bank. Unfortunately, our expenses don't take a vacation. Thank you for caring for the needs of our church.

## 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.

## what3words

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