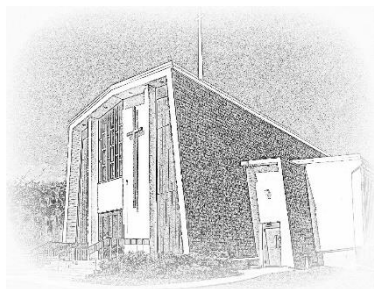


HIGHWOOD HIGHLIGHTS

May-June 2024

The Newsletter of Highwood Lutheran Church



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1340591 PW: highwood

Zoom by Telephone

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Passcode: 592794 #

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

COSTLY GRACE

Martin Luther, leaning into his Augustinian teaching, became a powerful symbol in the firestorm of the Reformation in the 16th century. Luther challenged the idea that earning God's favour was a matter of good works and religious transactions. As an economic exchange with God made no sense, he championed the concept of "sola gratia" – salvation by grace alone. From God's grace, we enter the world to face the challenges placed for us as a means of thank you for the grace we have already received. This revolutionary perspective is the focus that resonates with Dietrich Bonhoeffer's notion of "costly grace."

Bonhoeffer argued that grace isn't cheap. It comes at a cost – the cost of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. This costly grace isn't just about securing a heavenly ticket; it's about transforming our present lives. Following Jesus isn't a path we take for future rewards; it's about embracing a richer, more meaningful existence here and now.

So why respond to Jesus? Why walk this path of faith? The answer lies not in escaping a bad future but in embracing a vibrant present. Our lives, devoid of Jesus' teachings, can feel shallow and uninspired. We wander through our days, disconnected from something larger than ourselves. Following Jesus changes our perspective and draws us into a grand narrative – God's dream for humanity and the world.

The Bible tells us we were created in God's image (imago Dei)—reflecting God's character. We understand, therefore, that sin has distorted this reflection. Through Jesus, we have the opportunity to become what is intended for us and embody His love, justice, and truth in our daily lives. The grace of your baptism is more than a one-time event; it's a lifelong process of transformation fuelled by grace.

Eternal life, then, isn't just an afterlife promise; it's a present reality. It's a life infused with the vibrancy of God's spirit, untouched by the sting of death—the death of selfishness, hatred, and apathy. It's a life overflowing with gentleness, truth, and a relentless pursuit of justice.

Imagine a wellspring of love overflowing within you, a wellspring that compels you to extend kindness to a stranger, forgive a transgression, or stand up for the defenceless. Grace from God expressed through our compassion is the essence of eternal life pulsating within you, a life that transcends the limitations of the physical world.

The concept of being "born again" doesn't require a dramatic conversion experience. It's the ongoing act of choosing love over hate, forgiveness over resentment, and generosity over self-preservation. In the grip of sin, we become addicted to patterns and behaviours that ultimately lead to emptiness. These behaviours, like parasites, slowly steal our joy and purpose.

Jesus, through his costly grace, offers us liberation from these destructive cycles. He offers life in all its fullness – a life abundant and overflowing with meaning. It's a life where the power of the Holy Spirit fuels our decisions and actions, transforming us from the inside out.

Continued Page 2

Continued from Page 1

The question for the follower of Jesus is not “Am I saved?” but rather “I am saved, so how will I live out this salvation?” Conversion isn’t about achieving a certain level of piety; it’s about accepting God’s unconditional grace. It’s about surrendering to the transformative power of his love. This faith allows us to embrace the reality of God’s grace for all people and creation.

The Bible redefines death not as the cessation of a heartbeat but as the absence of love. When we live a life guided by love, compassion, and service – that’s when we are truly “born again.” We become agents of God’s love in a world desperately needing it. Following Jesus isn’t a burden; it’s an invitation to participate in God’s grand story, a story whispered in acts of kindness, echoed in voices raised for justice, and etched in the everyday decisions that ripple outward, transforming the world around us.

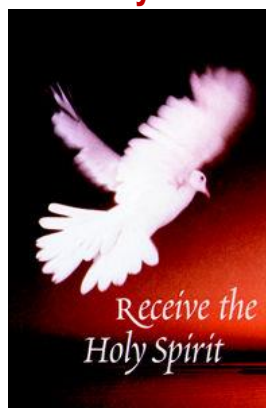
This journey of faith isn’t about following a set of rules or achieving a state of perfection. It’s about a continuous process of growth, fuelled by grace and sustained by love. It’s about surrendering to the transformative power of Jesus Christ. This power breathes life into our present and grants us the privilege of participating in the creation of a more just, loving, and hope-filled world.

As we follow Jesus, we become instruments of peace in a world filled with conflict. We become advocates for the marginalised, a voice for the voiceless. We become agents of reconciliation, mending broken relationships, and fostering forgiveness. We are Jesus’ hands and feet, carrying his message.

Pastor Mike

DAY OF PENTECOST

19 May 2024



When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Acts 2:1-4

You are encouraged to wear red to church on May 19th.



3 Months Ended March 31, 2024

Financial Summary

March current offerings were \$13,493 and church rental receipts were \$3,420. Synod benevolence receipts were \$80 and non-budget benevolence receipts consisted of \$340 for the Calgary Foodbank and \$370 for CLWR. Total March 2024 offerings and church rentals of \$16,913 was \$2,955 greater than last year.

March expenses of \$16,475 were \$1,470 over budget because of higher utilities. Federal carbon tax was \$691 for March.

Highwood had a surplus of \$438 for March 2024 compared to a shortfall of \$1,509 last year. Year to date, Highwood has a shortfall of \$6,081 compared to a shortfall of \$5,003 last year. Church receipts for 2024 are \$2,353 higher than last year (\$482 lower on Offerings but \$2,835 higher on church rentals) but church expenses are \$3,434 higher than last year relating mainly to higher Synod convention fees, Synod study conference and worship expenses. Of note is that our Telus Fiber 1.0G internet charges are increasing from \$100 to \$160/month as our three-year promotional discount is over. They are offering us another three-year promotion for Fiber 1.5G internet for \$125/month.

Capital fund – \$77 was donated to the Highwood Lutheran Women’s account and \$180 to the Building Fund. The balance in the capital account at the end of March was \$50,658.

Memorial fund – No changes. The balance at the end of March was \$11,375.

ON THE WEB BEYOND OUR WEBSITE

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

Bishop Larry Kochendorfer's Message for May:
<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:US:bbf06ad6-728a-4304-a627-6c8c639e4bb8>

Some "Light" Summer Reading. By light I mean very dense theology. The theological banter and relationship between Kark Barth and Hurd bon Balthasar is fascinating:

<https://theotherjournal.com/2015/10/saving-von-balthasars-conversation-with-barth-a-review-of-saving-karl-barth/>

We may have a very smoky summer. This is a link to how to make boxing filters: <https://www.ohcow.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/corsi-rosenthalBox.pdf>

Curious why your well researched purchase was not as expected. Have a read. <https://housefresh.com/david-vs-digital-goliaths/>

2024 SYNODICAL CONVENTION

The Nineteenth Convention of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories will be held in Edmonton at The King's University, **Saturday, June 22, through Monday, June 24.**

CONVENTION THEME

The 2024 Convention theme is One Body, One Spirit, One Hope. This Convention will feature meaningful worship and fellowship, an election for Synod Bishop and a banquet celebration of thanks for the service of Bishop Larry Kochendorfer and Cathy Kochendorfer. We will also be celebrating a large number of ordination anniversaries, announcing the recipient of the Stephen D. Wildfang Leadership Award and electing delegates for the National Convention.

MORE INFORMATION

Please pray for God's blessings on the convention, and for those who are planning and preparing for it. We look forward to seeing you there! If you require more information please call the synod office at 780-439-2636 (toll-free at 1-866-430-2636.)

With Deepest Sympathy

We offer our heartfelt condolences to Pastor Mike and his family on the passing of his mother, Katherine Wellman on 23 April 2024.

Happy Birthday

MAY BIRTHDAYS

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

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

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

SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

One of the banners that we display on Pentecost Sunday show seven flames. There represent the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Wisdom is the first and highest gift of the Holy Spirit because it is the perfection of the theological virtue of faith. Through wisdom, we come to value properly those things which we believe through faith.

Understanding is the gift of intelligence and enlightenment. It is the ability to perceive, comprehend, and interpret information; to have insight and discern meaning.

Counsel is good advice. It is the ability to teach and inform, guide and direct, warn and admonish, recommend, and encourage. Counsel is not only the ability to give good advice, but to receive it as well.

Fortitude is an unwavering commitment to God or a proper course of action, and it shows itself is moral strength, courage, determination, patient endurance, and long suffering,

Knowledge is the ability to study and learn; to acquire, retain, and master a wide spectrum of information; and to put it to good use for constructive purposes.

Fear of the Lord is awe, reverence, and respect for God. It downplays human self-sufficiency and acknowledges that everything comes from God. Consequently, those who "Fear the Lord" gladly offer their praise, worship, and adoration to God alone.

Piety is the only gift not part of Isaiah's original list. Piety is personal holiness, the ability to live a decent life, free of sin, devoted to God, and obedient to God's will.

OUR HIGHWOOD FAMILY

MEET DAVID O WONG



I was born in a small village in China, near the border of Hong Kong, the first set of twins born in the area, according to historical records dating back more than 400 years. With the arrival of the Communist regime, my family lost our small plot of farmland, so at the age of two, my mother took me and my sister to catch the last train to Hong Kong to reunite with my father and older brother. My two older sisters stayed behind in China so they could finish high

school at a Christian boarding school.

In Hong Kong, I attended a public school that I'm lucky enough to say that royalty was interested in! Prince Philip visited our school and I still have a photo of him, my principal, and me, which was taken after the opening ceremony performance! After grade six, my father sent me to the newly opened Concordia Lutheran School, which was in a low-income district. Most of my classmates were newcomer refugees who lived in public housing.

I worked at the school library after high school graduation, saving money for my airfare to Canada, while most of my classmates were busy planning for their post-secondary education. In my spare time, I volunteered at my church, assisting the reverend with missionary work amongst local youth in the community, volunteering at youth gatherings, and running summer camps. I was also part of the youth council, where we published a quarterly magazine called Morning Bell, which was distributed to all Lutheran congregations throughout the city. I was also part of the Lutheran Male Choir, and a few times a year, we performed concerts at the school or church to fundraise for youth projects.

The summer 1969, when millions witnessed the first man on the moon, I was busy preparing for my journey to Canada. I arrived on the Labour Day weekend in Toronto and my brother took me to a busy restaurant on Yonge Street. I was surprised to see most of the public spaces and movie theaters were closed. Since I arrived too late to apply to attend post-secondary for September 1969, I decided to repeat grade 12 high school. I signed up for music and joined the school senior choir, which was under the direction of a demanding, but dedicated teacher, Mr. John Ford. We won gold in 12 of the 13 competitions at Kiwanis Festival and were awarded prize money for a field trip. We had stopovers in Peterborough, Kingston, and Ottawa. While in Ottawa, we held a short concert in the lobby of parliament, closing with the national anthem in both official languages before the daily session.

I found a job working parttime at Food City to help pay for school (back then, the hourly rate was \$1.25!). A couple years later, The Bay opened its flagship store in midtown Toronto. My classmate and I applied for jobs at The Bay, and a day later, we were hired. That marked the beginning of a long career with The Bay that sent me across the country.

I continued to work at The Bay while I studied Photography Arts and Business at Toronto Metropolitan University, and Commercial Photography at Ontario College of Art and Design (then called Ontario College of Art). Within two years of working at The Bay, I was promoted to department supervisor; one of two visible minority in the entire region. I was responsible for half of the store at Fairview. My favorite area to supervise was tobacco, cigarettes, and candies, which was always busy during lunch hours.

Shortly after graduation, I was offered a transfer with The Bay to the National Store Division, and thus began my trek towards western Canada. I was first sent to Yorkton, Saskatchewan. On my first Monday in Yorkton, I began to look for a church. The first one I stopped at was closed. On my way to scope out a second church, a young couple greeted me from their garden, and I stopped to chat with them. Larry and Marg had also recently moved to the prairies from Windsor, Ontario. It turned out that Larry was the pastor of this second church. The couple was very friendly and invited me for tea at the parsonage. I learned that his parents owned a motel back home, which was very close to where one of my good friends, Philip, ended up as well. It delighted me to learn these small coincidences.

I'm grateful for my job that took me to different places throughout western and northern Canada, and for the opportunities to learn, experience, and give back so much in each new place I lived. Along the way, I joined churches of many different denominations, including Lutheran, Roman Catholic, United, and Anglican. Each church family I joined was gracious and generous in adopting me into their folds. With my job, I was able to introduce new products to the regions I served, including rugby-style pants to the prairies, compact disc (CD) players to Vancouver Island at a time when all CDs were pressed in Europe under the Philips Label and most CDs only contained recordings of classical music. I spent time learning from generational communities who lived off the land by hunting, fishing, and trapping their food, creating their unique-to-me forms of art. I admired those I met who sustained their communities off the land. At the height of the Ethiopian famine in the early 1980s, I partnered with the local Salvation Army to form the first food bank in the Peace River, Alberta region.

I met my wife, Cindy, on one of my regular visits back home to Toronto. After more than a year of dating long distance, we got married at the city hall in Toronto. Unfortunately, my job required me to head back to remote communities to continue managing stores, so with my new bride in tow, we spent some time in Port Hardy, British Columbia, and Thompson, Manitoba. Cindy was a little less free-spirited than I was, and I knew she wasn't quite as comfortable living in remote communities as I was, so after spending a year in Thompson, we decided to move back south. By then, the mortgage rate hit 22%, and I knew there was no way we could afford to move to Toronto. My twin sister and her

husband had been living in Calgary for a while, and having no other place calling strongly to us, we ended up in Calgary as well.

When we moved to the Beddington neighbourhood, I was excited to find out the new Mount Calvary Lutheran Church located in the Sandstone Ecumenical Center was about to open. This was the first building in Canadian history that was specifically designed to allow two Christian denominations (Lutheran and Catholic) to worship in their own distinct sanctuaries, but office spaces, meeting rooms, administrative duties, and recreational spaces were shared by the two denominations. Eventually, the Catholic church family outgrew their half, while the Lutheran church family shrunk, thus leading to the Lutheran side selling off their half to the Catholic parish the Mount Calvary Lutheran Church disbanding.

While my four children, Norman, Lilian, Elaine, and Nelson, were in school, I volunteered with their school's reading program (elementary school) and band parents' council (junior high). In my later years, I started volunteering with Alberta Health Services at hospitals and senior living homes, as well as teaching health-related courses. I was a census enumerator for numerous municipal censuses and was a poll worker for two dozen elections for all three levels of government. Most recently, I was accepted in the White Hat Volunteer Program at the Calgary Airport, which gives me great joy to welcome visitors to our wonderful city.

My journey is not quite finished, but I know how much I have received from our Lord, and how blessed my family has been. The addition of two granddaughters, aged 1 and 5, gives us so much joy and pride. I remind my family to give thanks daily and remember how fortunate we are. It is comforting to know the promise Jesus gave all of us, "I am with you always even to the end of the age." Amen!

Have You Earned Your Place in Heaven?

After making a whopping \$50 million donation to a gun control initiative, and because of his work against obesity and smoking, former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg was quoted as saying: "I am telling you, if there is a God, when I get to heaven I'm not stopping to be interviewed. I am heading straight in...I have earned my place in heaven. It's not even close."

How does that sound to you? Presumptuous? Arrogant? The very idea that Mr. Bloomberg could think he could "buy" his way into heaven must be offensive to God. How less offensive is it when we believe and act like we can earn our way into heaven by:

- Going to church three times a week.
- Reading our Bibles daily.
- Giving generously each first day of the week.
- Helping the poor.
- Being a good father / mother / husband / wife / son / daughter.

The above list could go on and on. Do we, along with Mr. Bloomberg need to be reminded that after all we could possibly do, we are still unprofitable servants (Luke 17:10)? Do we also need to be reminded that our righteousness, the best we can offer, is as filthy rags to God (Isaiah 64:6)?

You see, heaven isn't a matter of attainment, it's a matter of atonement. If we're in heaven some day, it won't be because we earned it. It won't be because we wowed God with our own morality and righteousness. And it won't be because God's indebted to us. On the contrary, it will be because we're indebted to him!

Steve Higginbotham

"If any man ascribes anything of salvation, even the very least thing, to the free will of man, he knows nothing of grace, and he has not learned Jesus Christ rightly."

Martin Luther

PRAYERS SHAWLS BLESSED



The prayer shawls pictured above were dedicated on Easter Sunday. These shawls were knitted by the members of Highwood's knitting circle that meets monthly. The shawls will be given to those who are ill or shut-in and to senior care residences. Thank you, ladies, for your donation of time and talents.

Some One-liners to Make You Smile

The good Lord didn't create anything without a purpose, but mosquitoes come close.

If God is your co-pilot, swap seats.

Some people are kind, polite, and sweet-spirited until you try to sit in their pews.

Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.

In Loving Memory

Katherine Dorothy Wellman

January 15, 1940 – April 23, 2024



Katherine Dorothy Wellman, B.A., LLB, KC, age 84, died on Tuesday, 23 April 2024, in Calgary, AB, with her family at her side.

Katherine was born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. She graduated from the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan in 1963 as one of only three women in the entire college! Katherine then moved to Regina to practice corporate law, eventually becoming General Counsel for SaskPower for many years. Her passion for law drew her to teach law at the University of Regina School of Engineering. For a semi-retirement, she and Roy moved to Vancouver, B.C., where she taught law at several community colleges. A great lover of dogs, she became an avid breeder of Tibetan Terriers. Once fully retired, she became a keen Mah-jong player and enjoyed aquacise. Most notable was her kindly manner and her love for friends and her family. She was always ready to help if she could and had a passion for justice first.

We express our heartfelt gratitude to the amazing PLC teams in the ER and units 29 and 38 for their kind and compassionate care. Their dedication and professionalism during this difficult time was truly appreciated and will never be forgotten.

Katherine was predeceased by her husband Roy; her parents, John and Rosa; an infant sister, Mary Hedwiga, sister Rita and her husband Rex, and sister-in-law, Germaine. She is survived by her loving son, Michael (Tanya); her granddaughter, Serenity (Jordan); brother, Frank; several nieces and nephews, and many beloved friends. Her memory will forever be cherished.

Her Funeral service will be held at Highwood Lutheran Church in Calgary on Thursday, 2 May 2024, at 11:30 a.m., followed by a luncheon. Pierson's Funeral Home has been handling funeral preparations.

A private graveside service will be held in Saskatoon at a later date.

Instead of flowers, please consider these charities:

University of Saskatchewan; Women in Law Fund

<https://donate.usask.ca/online/law.php>

PADS Service dogs: <https://support.pads.ca/donate>

The Paradoxical Commandments

By Dr. Kent M. Keith
(Not Mother Teresa)

People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered.
Love them anyway.

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives.
Do good anyway.

If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies.
Succeed anyway.

The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow.
Do good anyway.

Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable.
Be honest and frank anyway.

The biggest men and women with the biggest ideas
can be shot down by the smallest men and women with the
smallest minds.
Think big anyway.

People favor underdogs but follow only top dogs.
Fight for a few underdogs anyway.

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight.
Build anyway.

People really need help but may attack you if you do help them.
Help people anyway.

Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the
teeth.
Give the world the best you have anyway.

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One is not righteous who does much, but the one who,
without work, believes much in Christ. The law says, 'Do
this,' and it is never done. Grace says, 'Believe in this,' and
everything is already done.

Martin Luther (2012).

*"Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings", p.56, Fortress
Press*