

Reclaiming Our Birthright ~ Introduction

Dear friends,

Grace be yours and peace.

Thank you for this opportunity to introduce “*Reclaiming our Birthright: Pastoral Letters on the every-Sunday celebration of Holy Communion.*” This series of pastoral letters reminds us of what we have inherited through our baptism. I thank Bishop Michael Pryse and the other writers of this series for urging this church in the direction of the every-Sunday celebration of Holy Communion.

Of the singing of Easter’s “This Is the Feast,” Bishop Pryse writes in his letter:

“How strange, then, to sing such a stirring and anticipatory hymn, only to find —thirty or so minutes later— that the feast is not to be celebrated; at least not on this day. It isn’t a ‘communion Sunday’ —a strange phrase in itself!”

I have felt the same way about the singing of “Let the vineyards be fruitful” when there is no meal to “give us a foretaste of the feast to come.”

In the *Reclaiming Our Birthright* letters you will read about the practices of the very first Christian communities and their celebration of the Lord’s Supper. You will be reminded of our Reformation heritage. You will also learn why the weekly celebration of Holy Communion, which was the norm for Luther and other reformers, was reduced to an infrequent event in most Canadian congregations. Most importantly, you will read about the many aspects of the joyful celebration we have been given in our gathering around bread and wine —the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Holy Communion: It is who we are. It is what we do. It shapes our ways of prayer and our daily living in the world.

I hope that this very fine series of pastoral letters will be shared with the members of every congregation in this church. There is a sumptuous feast awaiting you. Taste and see!

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

+ Raymond

Raymond L. Schultz
National Bishop, ELCIC

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Raymond Schultz was Bishop of the British Columbia Synod from 1998 until his election to the office of National Bishop in July, 2001. He is a graduate of Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon and pursued graduate studies at Vancouver School of Theology. He is married to Laila. They are the parents of three adult children and four grandchildren.

ELCIC + Worship Matters

ELCIC + Worship Matters is an occasional publication of the Program Committee for Worship of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. Each issue of *ELCIC + Worship Matters*—including those containing the *Reclaiming Our Birthright* series—is made available online at Lift Up Your Hearts <www.worship.ca>, the worship and spirituality site of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the home page of the ELCIC's Program Committee for Worship. Simply go to Lift Up Your Hearts and follow the front page links.

Hard copies of *ELCIC + Worship Matters* are also available from the ELCIC worship desk at 302-393 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba. R3B 3H6. Phone, toll-free, 1-888-786-6707.

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Suggested Uses

ELCIC + Worship Matters is published in Portable Document File format (PDF). Access to a reader for PDF files is available at the Lift Up Your Hearts website. The PDF file format makes possible the copying of each issue of *ELCIC + Worship Matters* on a single 8.5 x 11 inch sheet of paper. (Occasionally, an issue may require a second sheet of paper.) This format is well-suited to enclosure in parish newsletters and/or distribution in parish classes and similar venues. We encourage the broad distribution of *ELCIC + Worship Matters* and discussion of the important matters contemplated in each issue.

Supplemental Resources

There are two significant collections of potentially useful supplemental resources available at Lift Up Your Hearts. The one is the lovely series of *Pastoral Essays on the Statement on Sacramental Practices*. They were published in 1992. Several of the essays presage and complement the work done on *Reclaiming Our Birthright*. The series of essays is available in the Sacramental Practices section of the ELCIC Resources & Helps page at Lift Up Your Hearts. The full address is <<http://www.worship.ca/sec3.html#sacprac>>.

A second body of helpful material is that of Paul Bosch's essays in the Worship Workbench series. Here again, several of the items will prove timely and helpful. Pastor Bosch's essays appear on a dedicated page at Lift Up Your Hearts. The full address is <<http://www.worship.ca/workbench.html>>. Of the sixty or so essays in the Workbench collection those which most closely bear on *Birthright* matters are flagged on the *Worship Workbench* page.

Program Committee for Worship

The national worship work of the church is overseen by the ELCIC's Program Committee for Worship. Members are André Lavergne [lavergne@telc.ca], pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in New Hamburg, ON (chairperson); Jann Boyd [bugboyd@hotmail.com], Assistant Professor of Worship and Homiletics at Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon, SK (secretary); Karen Johnson-Lefsrud [johnsonlefsrud@shaw.ca], Director of Pastoral Care, Luther Court Society and Housing Foundation, Victoria, BC. The national office's Kolleen Karlowsky-Clark [kkarlowskyclark@elcic.ca] serves as Program Coordinator for Worship. We welcome conversation related to our work. Drop us a line!