



A Pastoral Letter on the Alberta Referendum

August 14, 2026

The Lutheran Church began in a time of political and religious upheaval. It was a movement that challenged oppression and the misuse of power, while calling people of faith to persevere in lives shaped by Scripture and the teachings of Christ.

Today, political ambition, greed, racism, and fear continue to shape the world around us. Recent movements, including the upcoming October referendum, point toward a vision of the future centred on economic expansion at all costs, hoarding of assets, fear of the other, division and exclusion.

Christian theology and all that we have been called to as people of faith give us a different standpoint from which to engage difficult questions. We do not need to be afraid of complexity or disagreement. In all things, we turn to the teachings of Christ to guide our way.

Many of us are concerned about the upcoming Alberta referendum. We may hesitate to speak with others about it because we feel uncertain, divided, or even unsafe raising difficult questions. But I encourage you not to retreat from the conversation. Pray. Listen. Discuss the questions, as challenging as they may be. We learn by listening to one another and by speaking honestly about what we believe and why.

What might God be thinking?

That is, of course, a difficult question to answer. But Scripture gives us some solid clues about what God asks of us and how we are called to live together.

Unity

Scripture speaks often about our unity. We are the *family* of God. Even with all our differences, we are one body¹. Jesus consistently sought to bring people together rather than divide them, welcoming even foreigners into the community of faith and extending the gospel beyond the boundaries people had established.

¹ 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

There is strength in community. “Two are better than one,” Ecclesiastes² reminds us, because we can support one another, share one another’s burdens, and accomplish more together than we can alone.

Our faith does not call us to build walls between ourselves and others. It calls us to seek the bonds that make us one.

Sharing

Scripture also reminds us of our responsibility to work together for the good of all. When we have been gifted with much, we are given an opportunity for generosity and sharing³. We are encouraged to look beyond our own interests and to consider the needs and well-being of others⁴.

Christian faith asks us to consider not only *What is good for me?* but *What is good for all of us?* The common good matters. The well-being of our neighbours matters. The measure of a faithful community is not simply how well it protects what it has, but how generously it shares what it has received.

The Stranger

Hospitality to the stranger is another strong and consistent theme throughout Scripture. God commands the people of Israel to treat foreigners living among them as native-born citizens and to love them as themselves⁵.

Jesus takes this teaching even further. In Matthew 25, Jesus tells us that when we feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, and care for those in need, we are doing these things directly for Christ⁶.

The stranger, then, is not simply someone who is *other*. The stranger is someone through whom we encounter Christ.

A Faithful Response

I encourage you to vote in the upcoming referendum. But before you vote, take time to pray. Consider carefully the implications of the questions before us.

What would it mean to reduce immigration? What would it mean for people who live among us to have limited or no access to healthcare, education, or other essential services? Who would benefit from these changes? Who might

² Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

³ 1 Corinthians 12:7

⁴ Philippians 2:3-4

⁵ Leviticus 19:33-34

⁶ Matthew 25:35-40

bear the greatest burden? And how do our answers reflect the Christian values we proclaim?

These are not simple questions. They deserve more than slogans or political talking points. They deserve prayerful reflection, honest conversation, and a willingness to consider how our decisions affect our neighbours.

Albertans have before us an opportunity to stand for the justice we have studied, proclaimed, sung, prayed, and embodied in every baptism and every holy meal. Our faith tells us that we belong to one another.

All are welcome. All are family. All are one. All are God's.

In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus expresses the heart of our calling:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Dec. Karen Wedman (ABT Synod Chair) notes that "Do not be afraid" is used many times in the Bible and although we acknowledge it [we are] really [experiencing] it." When the world around us is shaped by fear, division, competition, and exclusion, Christians are called to a different way.

That is the standpoint from which we enter this difficult conversation. Not fear. Not hostility. Not certainty that we alone have all the answers.

May faith, love and courage bless us as we listen, speak, pray, and act as people who belong to one another and to the wider human community.

In peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bishop Trish Schmermund". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and personal.

Bishop Trish Schmermund