



HIGHLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Pastor: Randy Harris
Associate Pastor: Debbie Layman
Associate Pastor: Courtney Stevens
Pastor Emeritus: Steve McCutchan
Director of Christian Education: Heather Ferguson
Director of Music: Chris Gilliam
Organist: Susan Bates

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2380 Cloverdale Avenue
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DECEMBER 15, 2024 • THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

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DECEMBER 15, 2024

11:00 a.m.

THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

A WORD OF WELCOME

PRELUDE *Savior of the Nations, Come*

Hugo Distler

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom.

All: Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God.'

One: The ransomed of the Lord shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;

All: they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

SUNG RESPONSE

Come fes-tive-ly sing while a - wait-ing the birth,
Join an - gels in danc - ing from heav - en to earth.
Wave ban-ners of good news, lift high thank - ful praise.
One can dle is lit for the joy of these days.

The primary symbolism of the Advent candles has to do with light growing in darkness—leading up to the coming of Jesus Christ, the light of the world.

(*) When this symbol precedes an element of the service, you are invited to rise in body or spirit.

PRAYER OF PRAISE

[2]

*HYMN 107 *Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn*

REJOICE, REJOICE

THE CONFESSION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

CALL TO CONFESSION

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of mercy, so often we have the opportunity to be gracious,
to assume the best in others, to give the benefit of the doubt.
So often we could choose the better way, but we don't.
Fear and greed kick in. Assumptions and insecurities take over.
Comparison and critique lead the charge.
Forgive us for losing sight of our identity as people of grace.
Forgive us for forgetting to embody mercy and compassion.
Forgive us for failing to recognize that all belong to you.
Give us the courage to love even more than before,
and the wisdom to choose a better way.

The prayer continues in a time of silent confession.

KYRIE

Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son. Ky - ri - e e -
le - i - son. Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.

During Advent, we sing Kyrie Eleison (“Lord, have mercy”) as a reminder of the penitential nature of this season of preparation for Christ’s birth.

ASSURANCE OF GOD’S LOVE

*A TIME OF SHARING GOD’S PEACE

*RESPONSE 301

All Are Welcome

TWO OAKS

Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
all are welcome; all are welcome; all are welcome in this place.

THE WORD FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

A TIME FOR YOUNG DISCIPLES

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Isaiah 35:1-10

Page 663

One: The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL SONG Isaiah 12:2-6

Jeff Ostrowski

A cantor will sing verses of the psalm; the choir and congregation are invited to sing the response.

CRY OUT WITH JOY AND GLADNESS FOR A -
MONG YOU IS THE GREAT AND HO - LY ONE OF IS - RA - EL.

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON Matthew 1:18-25

Page 1

One: The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

SERMON

*From Generation to Generation:
We Can Choose a Better Way*

Debbie Layman

THE RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

*HYMN 129

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

ES IST EIN' ROS'

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

from A Declaration of Faith (PCUSA)

God sent God's Son to proclaim release to those who are bound,
to announce that God's promised kingdom is at hand,
to urge everyone to repent and believe the good news.

The Lord is moving toward the time
when the glorious liberty of the children of God
will be manifest throughout the whole creation.

We must not distort the gospel by weakening its promises
or demands, by identifying it with oppressive structures,
by pointing to ourselves instead of Christ.

We must not restrict our proclamation to persons
just like ourselves. We invite people everywhere
to believe in Christ and become his followers.

We urge them to join us in telling others the good news
and in struggling for justice, compassion, and peace. Amen

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, forever. Amen.

OUR GIFTS TO GOD (Including Our Christmas Joy Offering)

ANTHEM

O Come, Divine Messiah
Chancel Choir

Howard Helvey

O come, divine Messiah; the world in silence waits the day when hope shall
sing its triumph and sadness flee away.

*Dear Savior, haste! Come, come to earth. Dispel the night and show your face, and
bid us hail the dawn of grace. O come, divine Messiah; the world in silence waits
the day when hope shall sing its triumph and sadness flee away.*

O Christ, whom nations sigh for, whom priest and prophet long foretold,
come, break the captive's fetters, redeem the long-lost fold. *Refrain*

You come in peace and meekness and lowly will your cradle be.
All clothed in human weakness shall we your Godhead see. *Refrain*

*DOXOLOGY

GREENSLEEVES

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
Praise God all creatures here below.
Praise God above ye heavenly host.
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

THE SENDING FORTH OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

* HYMN 100 *My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout* STAR OF THE COUNTY DOWN

*CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

*POSTLUDE

Toccata and Chaconne

Hugo Distler

*Our annual
Christmas Joy Offer-
ing provides support
for Presbyterian
church workers and
their families in their
time of need, and
leadership develop-
ment and education
for communities of
color at Presbyterian-
related schools and
colleges equipping
communities of color.*

WELCOME TO HIGHLAND

We extend a warm welcome to all who come to this sanctuary today. May you find in this place and among the people gathered here grace and peace from the living Christ who has promised to be present with us. To learn more about Highland, scan the QR code with your phone.



If you are visiting with us today, please include your contact information on the Visitor Card that you can find in the pew rack. You may place the card in the offering plate when it is passed. If you are a college or graduate school student, add your school name to the card as well.

Large-print Bibles, bulletins, and hearing aids are available. Please ask an usher for assistance.

A Loop Assisted Hearing System is in place in Highland's Sanctuary. You can access this service by switching your hearing aid's T-coil to "On" and adjusting the volume control if needed; you may also request a headset from an usher.

Childcare is available during the worship service. Children up to age five are welcome in Room 112 located on the first floor near the Chapel. All volunteers are vaccinated and will be masked. During worship we also offer a room for Children & Parents, Room 216, which is a friendly space near the Sanctuary where parents can tend to the needs of their child and still share in the livestreamed service.

We offer online ways to give in addition to our traditional giving in the offering plate. To give via smart phone, you may text the word *highland* to 73256 or scan the QR code. We are thankful for your generous sharing!



We are a Matthew 25 Congregation of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Matthew 25:31-46 calls all of us to engage actively in the world around us, helping our faith come alive. As a Matthew 25 congregation we pledge to work on *building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism, and eradicating systemic poverty*. Learn more at pcusa.org/matthew25.

CHRISTMAS WREATHS

*The Christmas wreaths on the outside doors have been given to the glory of God
in memory or in honor of Highland friends, family, and loved ones.*

- * In memory of his friends, John Kelleher, Frank Murphy, and Dick Opdyke, by John Doyle
- * In memory of her twin brother and his wife, David and Janet Alexander, her parents, Genetha and Paul Alexander, his parents, Lily and Pierce Johnson Sr., by Nancy and Pierce Johnson
- * In memory of her husband, John Penick, by Jan Penick
- * In honor of a Joyous Christmas and a Blessed New Year, by John and Katie Paterson

WORSHIP NOTES

Lighting the Advent Wreath today are members of the Young Adult ministry: Tory Daniel, Stacy Pitcairn, and Dominic and Elizabeth Veconi.

Today's bulletin cover is *The Courageous Choice*, by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity. It is inspired by Matthew 1:18-25. © A Sanctified Art, 2022.

The musicians accompanying the last hymn are Spencer Ayscue, Randy Harris, Henry Heidtmann, Steve McCullough, and Scott Templeton.

***Bless You!*—Our prayers for one another.** FOR THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 15, please pray for Marshall Beane; Mary Bland; Kelsey Bradshaw; Kristen and Kyndall Brown; Thomas Bullock; David Christenbury; Lauren Corbett. *The Lord bless you and keep you. (Numbers 6:24)*

CALENDAR

Sunday December 15

- 9:30 a.m. Christian Education for All Ages
- 10:45 a.m. Pre-Worship Caroling, Sanctuary
- 11:00 a.m. Worship Service (Nursery provided), Sanctuary
- 3:00 p.m. Christmas Caroling, Fellowship Hall

Monday December 16

- 9:30 a.m. Staff Meeting, Parlor
- 5:30 p.m. Long Range Planning Committee
- 7:00 p.m. Advent Class, Zoom

Tuesday December 17

- 10:00 a.m. Coffee & Conversation, Camel City Coffee
- 1:30 p.m. Moore Food Pantry, Curbside
- 6:30 p.m. Adult Christian Education Committee
- 7:00 p.m. Listening to Black Voices

Wednesday December 18

- 7:00 a.m. Men's Breakfast, Fellowship Hall
- 11:00 a.m. Lamentations & Laughter, AB 5
- 5:30 p.m. Highland Ukuleles, Room 126
- 6:30 p.m. Choir Rehearsal, Room 100

Thursday December 19

- 10:00 a.m. Women's Bible Study, Ardmore Room
- 6:00 p.m. Finance Committee
- 7:30 p.m. Young Adults, Little Richard's

For more information about the events in this calendar, please pick up a copy of *Highlights*, the church newsletter, in the Narthex or Gallery Hall. Check www.highlandpres.org, for changes or cancellations.

LIFE AT HIGHLAND



Churchwide

Christmas Caroling, 3:00 p.m., today

All are invited to join us as we gather in the Fellowship Hall for hot cocoa and a warmup before we head out to sing Christmas Carols for some of Highland's members in need.

Advent Potluck Breakfast, December 22,

9:30 a.m. We will gather in the Fellowship Hall for a festive potluck breakfast before Worship. Please bring your favorite breakfast dish to share with others. Please note that we will not have regular church school on this day.



Service

Alternative Giving, through Advent

The focus for our Alternative Giving this year is caring for God's earth and for those impacted by the devastating effects of climate change. Our Global Service Committee and Earth Care Team are providing gifts of mangrove trees in Madagascar, as well as support for Black Mountain Counseling, and Be-Loved Asheville in Western North Carolina.

Gifts Under the Tree: The Community Service Committee is collecting gifts to share with the children and community of El Buen Pastor. Please bring unwrapped gifts to place under the Christmas tree in the Sanctuary. They may be brought between now and Christmas Eve. Items requested for their children's art classes include: paper towels, Kleenex, metallic markers, small canvases, letter foam stickers, markers, and acrylic paint.

Desserts for Samaritan Ministries

We hope you will sign up to contribute desserts for Samaritan Ministries' Christmas Eve meal. The drop-off will be December 23 from 4:00-5:00 p.m.; we still need more!

To sign up for service work and more, scan this QR code.



Children

Sunday Mornings, 9:30 a.m.

Children ages 2 through 4th grade are invited to *God's Good Neighborhood*, the third floor of our Education Building, for exciting new faith formation experiences and choir.



Youth

Youth Fellowship, December 15

Youth are encouraged to attend all-church caroling at 3:00 p.m.



Adults

Church School Offerings

Sunday Mornings, 9:30 a.m.

Calling All Angels, Ardmore Room

The Present Word, Room 124

The Lectionary Café, Salem Room

Parents' Conversation, Room 126

Coffee & Conversation

Tuesdays, 10:00 a.m.

Camel City Coffee, 110 Oakwood Dr.

Join us for drop-in conversation with friends and Highland staff. All are welcome!

Scan this QR code for more information in our current *Highlights* newsletter

