



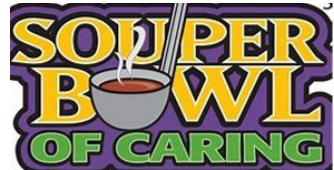
Highlights

Highland Presbyterian Church
2380 Cloverdale Avenue
Winston-Salem, NC 27103-2012
Volume 59, Issue 2

Phone 336-724-6303
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www.highlandpres.org
February 2, 2025

Souper Bowl of Caring Offering, February 9 Following Worship, Chili Luncheon, Fellowship Hall

Highland's youth are gearing up for the Souper Bowl of Caring, a tradition that goes beyond football and fun to unite the community for a greater cause: fighting hunger. This year, we are supporting City with Dwellings, Samaritan Ministries and Moore School Food Pantry with non-perishable food items and donations. Our goal is to raise \$2,000 and collect 500 food items.



After worship, join us for warm chili and grilled cheese sandwiches in the Fellowship Hall. We will have three kinds of chili: beef, white, and vegetarian. We hope the flavors and good fellowship will draw you to join us in addition to supporting our youth and our community!

Celebrating Debbie Layman's Anniversary Sunday, February 9 During Our Souper Bowl Congregational Lunch



Please plan to join us as we celebrate Debbie's 20th Anniversary at Highland. Throughout her years as our Associate Pastor, Debbie's compassionate and loving spirit have left a lasting impression as she has supported Highland's ministries in the church and community alike.

Members and friends of Highland are invited to contribute to a financial offering in honor of Debbie's ministry. See the [Giving page](#) on Highland's website, or contact [Joy Hohmann](#) in the church office for more details.

Worship

11:00 a.m.

February 2

Hosea 11:1–9

1 Corinthians 13:1–13

Sermon: Randy Harris

February 9

Isaiah 6:1–8

Luke 5:1–11

Sermon: Randy Harris

February 16

Psalms 1

Luke 6:17–26

Sermon: Randy Harris

February 23

Psalms 37

Luke 6:27–38

Sermon: Debbie Layman

Highland Worship Online

There are several ways to access worship:

- Click the link in the Sunday morning email;
- Go to [Highland's website](#) and find the "[Highland Worship Online](#)" page;
- Subscribe to Highland's YouTube channel where the worship videos are posted (Highland PCWS).

On our Worship Online page, there are links for the Bulletin, a virtual "Friendship Pad," as well as a virtual "offering plate."

Wheelchair Assistance on Sundays

If you or a loved one need assistance on Sunday mornings to church school and/or worship via wheelchair, please contact Mike Culler, 336-413-8414, remember-church@gmail.com, no later than noon on Saturdays to make arrangements for the next day. The morning of, you would park in the Activity Building parking lot, and someone would meet you with a wheel chair.



Hunger Offering

On **February 2** don't forget to bring your gifts for our monthly Hunger Offering — pasta sauce for Crisis Control and your 5 Cents a Meal for our Presbytery! Thank you for your generous donations supporting neighbors who hunger in our community and around the world.



Office hours are Monday–Thursday, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Randy Harris, *Pastor*, Ext. 210,
rharris@highlandpres.org

Debbie Layman, *Associate Pastor*, Ext. 212,
dlayman@highlandpres.org

Courtney Stevens, *Associate Pastor* Ext. 218,
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Joy Hohmann,

Business Manager, Ext. 205,
jhohmann@highlandpres.org

Gidget Payne,

Administrative Coordinator, Ext. 201,
gpayne@highlandpres.org

Winter Walk, February 2, 2:00 p.m.

Our Winter Walks were big hits last year, and we look forward to the weather cooperating so we can enjoy the fellowship and exploring again this season. Our next walk will be **Sunday, February 2 at 2:00 p.m.** We will discover Reynolda Gardens and Trails. On this walk, we will explore what is growing in the winter gardens and throughout the winter landscape. Get cozy at Dough-Joe's Doughnuts & Coffee for coffee, tea, and treats afterward.

Mark your calendars for our final walk which will be Sunday, March 9. We hope you will join us for these fun gatherings!



Acoustic Café, Sunday, February 23

Mark your calendars for our 2025 Acoustic Café in which we celebrate God's gift of music through the leadership of musicians from our congregation.

Come to the Fellowship Hall at 4:00 p.m. where we will enjoy live music from singers and songwriters from our church family. Something salty, something sweet, and a stellar coffee and tea bar will enhance our afternoon. Plan to bring a friend for this delightful afternoon!



Fling Fellowship Meal

Mark Your Calendar

Wednesday, March 5, Ash Wednesday, 6:00 p.m.

We hope you will join us for our next mid-week fellowship meal.

These monthly meals are a great time to check in with your Highland family – and to have a much needed break from the routine. The cost is \$10 per person with a maximum of \$30 per household. Our meal on Wednesday, March 5 will be right before our Ash Wednesday worship. We hope you will plan on joining us for both gatherings.

If you would like to volunteer for a Fling Team (prep or clean up!) contact [Debbie Layman](#). Sign up for the March 5 meal on our website or by calling the church office, 336-724-6303.



Joy for Our February Birthdays!

1 Theo Xu	5 Sara Herter	15 Carol Eickmeyer	23 Beth Barksdale
2 Jim Bass	6 Alta Brown	15 John Parsons	23 Kit Broadhurst
2 Missy Carroll	6 Daniela Miller	16 Daphne Davis	23 Justin Plaisted
2 Phyllis Clemmer	7 Debbie Lafferty	16 Michael Schmidt	24 Karlen Boring
2 Kyle Hansen	8 Robin Spainhour	17 Kevin Davie	24 Alice Bragg
2 Lori Murray	9 Stacy Pitcairn	17 Jay Jordan	24 Charlotte Grace Murray
3 Sydney Cannon	10 Susan Bowers	18 David Cesta	25 Heidi Gillis
3 Ross Davis	10 Chris Gottfried	18 Maddie Wagoner	26 Pam Hunt
3 Jim Middleton	10 Bruce Healy	20 Sienna Lambert	26 David McCall
3 Russell Plaisted	10 Brian Mendenhall	20 Zach Scott	26 Judy Pozniak
3 Kent Reeves	11 Royce Thompson	21 Pam Pepper	27 Becky Burke
3 Carla Romere	12 Chad Archer	21 Rich Smith	27 Loyd Elder
3 Rhenda Steele	12 Worth Byers	21 Jan White	
5 Mike Brown	13 Christina Heidtmann	22 Wilson Campbell	
5 Susan Doughton	13 Joy Hohmann	22 Gracen Pike-Werle	



Lost & Found

Please stop in the Gallery Hallway and check the lost and found for items that may be yours. We have items from the kitchen, sanctuary, and various other church rooms. All items not picked up by February 16 will be donated to those in need. Thank you!

Highlights Newsletter

If you would like to receive Highlights **online** only and no longer receive a mailed paper copy, please contact [Gidget Payne](#) and let her know.

Coffee & Conversation Tuesdays

On Tuesdays, Randy, Debbie, Courtney, or Heather will be hanging out at Panera, Cloverdale Avenue, from 10:00–11:00 a.m. for conversation with whomever shows up. We hope this will be a fun and varied group and invite all to consider stopping by. We are meeting at Panera during the winter months so that we can enjoy the warmth inside! When temperatures warm up again, we will return to Camel City Coffee. We hope you will stop by to check-in with your staff and meet other Highlanders.



News and Notes

In Our Prayers: *Carol West, Home; Nicole Gottfried, Home; Gilmour Lake, Memory Care, Arbor Acres; Leslie Sizemore, Home; Emelda Lawing, Home with Hospice; Curtis Patterson, Home; Parks Berryhill, Salemtowne Healthcare; Esther and Les Preston, Home; Jim Womble, Heritage Woods; John Anderson, Salemtowne Memory Care; Ruth Banbury, Carriage Club Assisted Living (Charlotte).*

Congratulations to Alex and Holly Barrett on the birth of their daughter Effie Thomas Barrett on January 4.

In Memoriam:

- ☞ Jimmy Hall, January 3, brother of Harry Hall;
- ☞ Carolyn White, January 22, mother of Shari Dallas;
- ☞ Perry Combes, brother of Debbie Cesta

Bless You! ~ Our prayers for one another. Each week we invite you to pray for members of our Highland family. We will pray not because anything is wrong, but because we care about each other.

FOR THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 2, please pray for Jonathan Black and Peter Kinton; Jason Bragg, Kelley Gondring, Audrey and Alice Bragg; Ann Dixon Coppage and Jeff Coppage; Cathy and Craig Richardson and

Ben and Sarah Dupont; Jane Suitt; Carol Tash; Jason, Joanna, Bodhi and Luke Whittler.

FOR THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 9, please pray for David and Lisa Alley; Mark, Amy, Milo and Luke Archambault; Hank and Betty Barnum; Kim, Jesse, Sierra, Zora and Corinne Fontenot; Dave and Cathy McCall; Natalie Sevin, Anh, Willoughby and Annika Rose Nghiem; Royce, Annette and Henry Thompson; Catherine Upchurch; Jim, Jordan and Theo Xu.

FOR THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 16, please pray for Bruce Ayres and Patsy Livingston; John Calhoun; Andy and Margaret Cundiff; Steve and Ellen McCullough; Steve and Marty Moore; Aaron, Eileen, Madeline and Matthew Ronsheim; Rebecca and Bob Schwartz; Steve Zorn.

FOR THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 23, please pray for John, Katina, Ellis, Finn and Cate Marler Barksdale; John and Ellen Doyle; Hannah Duane; Joe Holbrook; Kelly, Ben and Nicholas Parish; Katrina and Darius Pope; Mark Queen and Harry Hall; Gary and Carol Simes; Henry and Cynthia Tysinger. *The Lord bless you and keep you. Numbers 6:24*



Inclement Weather Policy

As winter begins, please remember that announcements of cancellations of worship or other programs will be made through email, WXII (both on TV and www.wxii.com), and through a link on Highland's website.



2024 Membership Report

John Bain, Clerk of Session

In the wake of all the division and discourse in the country, I can't begin to give my report on the 2024 membership changes at Highland without a few words about something that has been debated for almost fifty years. It is a topic that is disputed by friends and enemies, in person and online. It's even a source of disagreement for some couples. That matter, of course you have all figured it out by now, is the meaning of part of the lyrics of Bruce Springsteen's song, Thunder Road. No, I'm not talking about whether Mary's dress "sways" or "waves" as she dances across the porch after the screen door slams. It sways. The divisive question is whether the line "You ain't a beauty but hey you're alright and that's alright with me" is a compliment or an insult. I always thought it was a put-down and was surprised that it took my following Esther as Clerk to understand what a great compliment it can be! In that first year after Esther retired as Clerk, one of my fellow elders sent me a very funny note that I shared with the Session which concluded by saying that I was no Esther, but I was alright! I considered that the biggest compliment I had received in years and still consider it an honor to serve Highland and try to follow Esther's legacy of service! While our membership numbers may not have the beauty of the financial report, I think you will find the membership numbers for 2024 to be better than "alright".



You may recall that in 2023, the Session acted to remove a number of folks from the roll who had been inactive a long time and Highland active membership dropped from 773 persons to 713. In 2024, we received 15 new members, 9 by transfer, 5 by reaffirmation, and 1 by Profession of Faith. We lost 7 members by transfer, 7 by death, 1 was moved to the inactive roll, and 1 asked to be dropped from the church roll for a loss of 16 persons. Our total active membership at the end of 2024 is 712. However, we also added 6 people to our baptismal roll this year (with one person moving from the baptismal roll to active membership). We added 2 affiliate members this year as well. Esther always reminded us of all the persons who are in our care, which includes not only active members, but those on our baptismal roll, ordained clergy, and affiliate members- so we share responsibility for 820 souls, up from 815 at the end of 2024.

2024 Financial Report

Miles Abernethy, Treasurer

Decades ago, my dad conveyed some valuable wisdom to me.....it's the busiest of people who can always find time for what's important. I think this applies to the Highland family in another important way. Regardless of the financial pressures most all of us feel or the various demands for our resources, you always demonstrate incredible and steadfast generosity towards the life and ministry of Highland Presbyterian Church. It's obvious you make the church a priority. As treasurer of the church for the past 30+ years, each year I still get a little knot in my stomach at the end of November when we seem to be falling uncomfortably short of our year-end budget. Questions start swirling in my head like: Can we once again go against the trend of many churches struggling financially? Will we have to trim our budget? Where would we cut? How would that affect our ministry? There are certainly ways we can improve our ministry. We can't be complacent, but none of us wants to see us shrink our ministry either.

You provided a resounding response to all of these questions in December. Not only did we have our biggest December ever, we exceeded the previous historic record by \$45,000. To provide more context, our monthly pledge budget was approximately \$96,000, and we collected \$247,000 in December. We exceeded our yearly budgeted giving by nearly 6%, which I believe is a record as well. The timing was especially good because we had some extra expenses in 2024 related to addressing significant drainage issues in the playground area and all the glorious and memorable celebrations regarding our 75th Anniversary. I'm still in disbelief with what all the 75th Anniversary Committee was able to accomplish.



Now we need to turn our attention to 2025. Both the Finance Committee and Diaconate recommended and the Session approved an asking budget of \$1,282,108 which represents an approximate 3.67% over 2024's budget. This budget accommodates a 3.5% cost-of-living increase for our incredible staff, and some increases in other areas of ministry such as Christian Education, Music, and benevolences. Regarding benevolences, once again, as has been our long supported goal, we budgeted 20% of our expenses to support the ministry that happens beyond the doors of Highland both locally and far beyond.

We indeed are a vibrant, thriving, caring, and generous church family. I pray the gift that Highland represents will continue to thrive for another 75 years. Members then can look back 75 years before and give praise for the legacy we have left them. Praise be to God for Highland's ministry and your enduring devotion.

♥ Service Opportunities

Moore School Food Pantry

Highland, alongside Temple Emmanuel, supports Moore Elementary School by providing a food pantry for students of Moore School and their families. For the month of **February**, we are asking for donations of **pasta**.



Support for Our Unhoused Neighbors This Winter

Numbers have been high at the women's overflow shelter hosted by St. Timothy's; because of this, they are seeking additional folks to help welcome the women. This hospitality shift is from 6:15-9:00 p.m. The ministry is rewarding as well as eye-opening. Please prayerfully consider if you can help in this way. You can sign up now by visiting the Upcoming Events page of our website, highlandpres.org.



Another way to serve our unhoused neighbors is through providing a meal for the overflow moms and kids shelter which City with Dwellings is overseeing and Calvary Moravian is hosting. Contact [Debbie Layman](#) if you have questions or find the meal sign-up link on the [Support Our Unhoused Neighbors page](#) on our website. Thank you for your practical support as we work with our neighbors in need.

☀ Children

God's Good Neighborhood

On Sunday mornings, Highland's Preschoolers gather for stories from the "God Loves Me" series, including arts, activities and creative play. This is a wonderful time of learning about God's love and how the church is a safe and loving place to be.

Elementary aged children are welcomed into *God's Good Neighborhood*, located on the third floor. Every other Sunday, children will experience a biblical story beginning in Godly Play. The following week the children will move to a different workshop to experience the same story from a different perspective through things like Art, Drama, Cooking, or even Cinema. *God's Good Neighborhood* is the place where children and leaders grow in faith and understanding of what it means to be the people of God.

At 10:15 a.m., all children will go to the Worship Center (third floor, White Door) for Children's Choir. Parents can pick up children there at 10:45 a.m.



Friday Fun Night

Friday, February 28, 5:30–7:30 p.m.

Mark your calendar today for the next Friday Family Fun Night at Highland when parents can drop children off and enjoy the evening with Highland friends or running errands.

In Highland style we will have tasty food, fun games and activities, surprises around each corner, and friends are always welcome! Reach out to [Heather Ferguson](#) for more information or if you would like to volunteer for a Friday event.



Youth

Youth and Parents Sexuality Retreat

February 16

Join us for a transformative day designed to explore how faith connects with the beauty and complexity of our bodies and relationships. This retreat offers separate sessions for parents, middlers, and senior highs, led by an experienced outside facilitator. Parents will gain tools to guide their youth with confidence, while youth will discover how faith celebrates their identities and relationships. Together, you'll build stronger connections through shared learning and meaningful conversations. Don't miss this opportunity to grow in understanding, love, and respect—together!

Confirmation Sunday February 23

We rejoice as members of our church family take an important step in their faith journey through Confirmation! Heidi Gillis, Bo Gore, Madelynn Gore, Sam Michel, and Maddie Grace Wagoner spent this year learning, growing, and deepening their connection with God. As a church, we are dedicated to walking alongside them, offering love, guidance, and support every step of the way. Join us for this special service and celebrate what God is doing in their lives and in our community. See you there!

Parenting the Teen Years: Friendships

February 3, 7:00 p.m. by Zoom

Each first Monday of the month let's connect as parents! Join us as we share experiences and explore how to guide our teens in building healthy friendships. Let's support each other on this journey. For the Zoom link or to share questions in advance, reach out to Courtney at cstevens@highlandpres.org.

Young Adults

Our ministry meets weekly in a variety of locations. We gather for fellowship, study, service and faithful conversation. Contact [Courtney Stevens](#) for more information.

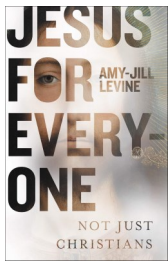
February 6: Bookmarks and Footnote Book Swap, 7:30 p.m.

February 16: Prepare and Serve Meal for St. Timothy's Shelter 4:00 p.m.

February 21: Thunderbirds Game, 7:35 p.m.

February 27: Little Richards, 7:30 p.m.

Adults



Thursday Morning Women's Study

10:00–11:30 a.m., Ardmore Room

Why Jesus's historic and cultural influence makes him fascinating, provocative, and relevant for everyone, not only Christians

Two thousand years after his birth and death, Jesus of Nazareth continues to be of vital interest. Yet much of the scholarship around Jesus focuses on his religious significance. *Jesus for Everyone* examines his most famous teachings from a fresh perspective, exploring how they have continued to shape ethics and civilization in the West for two millennia. Even for those who reject faith, Jesus's life and his philosophy are important to study, writes renowned biblical scholar and author Amy-Jill Levine, because of the insights they hold for us today. If you are looking for a fun, engaging group of women to study alongside while building life-long friendships, please join us. For more information or to purchase a book for \$15 contact [Heather Ferguson](#).

Matthew 25 Book Group

Being a Matthew 25 congregation means intentional focus on *building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism, and eradicating systemic poverty*. One way we are addressing these issues is through our new Matthew 25 Book Group; our book is *You Are Changing the World: Whether You Like it or Not* by David LaMotte. Kathleen Norris has written, "This book serves as an antidote to the hopelessness so many of us feel about our world today." If you are in need of an antidote, join us! The group is off to a strong start and will meet on February 17 and March 17. Reach out to [Debbie Layman](#) if you would like to join in.



Faith & Film: *Manchester by the Sea*

February 10, 7:00 p.m., The Sherwood Restaurant

Join us for this monthly gathering as we reflect on the visual parables of movies. Our movie for February is *Manchester by the Sea*. It is available to stream on Amazon Prime. Contact [Randy Harris](#) for more information.



Listening to Black Voices Book Group

Join us via Zoom at 7:00 p.m. February 18 as we continue reading and reflecting on the experience of our African American neighbors and consider what our faithful responses might entail. In February we will continue with selections from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s book *Why We Can't Wait*. If you are interested, please contact [Randy Harris](#).



Men's Breakfast

February 19, 7:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall

Join with the Men of the Church for a time of fellowship and study. Look for an email with details, and contact [Randy Harris](#) if you have questions.

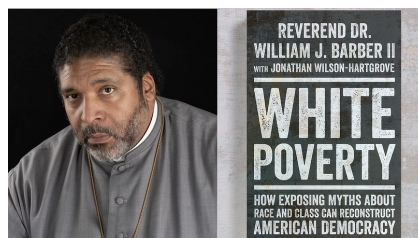


Spring Poverty Group

White Poverty, by William Barber, Beginning February 24

Our spring Poverty Book Group book will be *White Poverty* by Reverend Dr. William Barber. Dr. Barber began the Moral Mondays movement in our state and now is co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign:

A National Call for Moral Revival. Bishop Michael Curry says of the book: Barber "raises his clarion voice to amplify the cry of America's poor, especially the invisible majority of impoverished white Americans." The group will meet for discussion on Mondays February 24, March 24, and April 28. Each person will be responsible for providing their own book. Please let [Debbie Layman](#) know if you have questions or if you would like to join the group.



Dolorosa Gathering

Sunday, February 23, 4:00–5:00 p.m., Highland Chapel

The word, dolorosa, in Latin means “sorrowful way.” Jesus shows the way to hope, healing, and wholeness through journeys of sorrow and pain. This season can be particularly grief-filled for those who have experienced loss. If you would benefit from a time of sharing your experiences of grief and your hopes for healing and wholeness with Highland friends on similar paths, we invite you to join us in the Chapel on the 4th Sundays at 4:00 p.m.



Lamentations and Laughter

Wednesdays, 11:00 a.m., Activity Building, Room AB 5

Lamentations and Laughter is a men’s weekly gathering to focus on the positives in life, even during challenging and difficult periods. The idea behind Lamentations and Laughter is to encourage paying attention to one another, to share and be heard, and to listen. All are invited and encouraged to attend! If you have questions, contact [John Woodmansee](#).



Highland Ukuleles

Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m., Room 126

Life is definitely more enjoyable with a ukulele! Come and join us for some fun, regardless of your age or skill level. If you don't have a ukulele, let [Heather Ferguson](#) know and we can arrange for you to borrow one. We're all learning and having a great time together. For more details, please contact Heather.



ArtRageous! A Celebration of Creativity

June 15–19, 2025

We believe in a creative God, that we are made in God’s image and we share in God’s creative work. ArtRageous! is a celebration of this creativity. Classes in cooking, music, sewing, growing, and so much more will be part of the lineup. Some of the classes offered will be “stand-alone,” while others will be sequential, over 2 or 3 days, building on your skills each day. We are building our lineup for the 2025 Artrageous. Contact [Heather Ferguson](#) if you would like to teach a class or have an idea for a class or tour. The sky is the limit, so be creative! This summer art program is open to children, youth, and adults. On-line registration will begin soon at www.highlandpres.org.



Men's and Women's Montreat Retreats

Montreat is rebounding from the impact of Hurricane Helene, and we are excited about our retreats there this spring. Our hope is to spend at least part of our retreat time taking part in ongoing relief work in Western North Carolina.



Highland's retreats provide much needed time to get-away and unwind and experience peace. At the retreats, our hope is that you experience God in a new and powerful way, learn something new about yourself, meet new friends, and grow relationships.

Women's Retreat, March 14–16

To reserve your spot for the Women's Retreat, call Gidget in the church office or [click here](#) to sign up through SignUp Genius.

Men's Retreat, April 25–27

To reserve your spot for the Men's Retreat, call the church office, 336-724-6303, or contact [Jim Swing](#).

Retreats will be located at the Reynolds Lodge at Montreat Conference Center beginning on the Friday evening before dinner and concluding on the Sunday morning after worship. The lodge has 16 rooms with two single beds in each room. More details for both of these retreats will be coming soon, but we hope you will mark your calendar, and let us know that you plan to join us!

Drinks for Four Informal Gatherings for Men of Highland

This idea for small group fellowship was born at last year's Men's Retreat. Participants in a group of four will choose when to gather, where, and how often. Coffee in the morning? Tea at lunch? An adult beverage at the end of the day? Any and all of these are possible – but getting together is the point!



We will re-form groups in February, with our next round of groups encouraged to meet three to four times from March through June. There will be an email sent soon with information about the next round, including an opportunity for those who want to join in, or to sit out the next round. If you are participating now and want to keep going, you do not have to do anything! Watch upcoming emails for a sign up link. If you have questions, please contact [John Loftis](#).



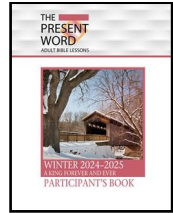
Sunday Adult Christian Education

9:30-10:30 a.m.

The Present Word Class, Room 124 and Zoom

The winter quarter, “A King Forever and Ever,” explores the broad sweep of biblical teachings about God’s reign and connects to Jesus as the earthly exhibition of the divine Kingdom.

Facilitators: A Variety of Class Members and Guests



The Life and Legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

A recent movie (*Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Spy, Assassin*, 2024) has brought Dietrich Bonhoeffer back into public view. Using the book *Bonhoeffer for Armchair Theologians* as a guide to his life and work, participants in the class will also read selections from Bonhoeffer’s writings as we consider what his work meant in his time, and what he might say to our time. Books are available for purchase in the Gallery Hallway.

Led by Randy Harris and others

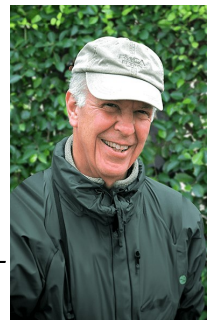
Parents’ Conversation and Coffee, Room 126

After settling children into Sunday school, parents can gather for coffee and conversation. It's a chance to connect, share parenting experiences, and on the first Sunday of each month, enjoy a special speaker or resource on faith and family. Other Sundays offer relaxed time to chat and exchange tips on parenting.



Beginning February 16, a New 3-Week Elective *A Hidden Wholeness, featuring video discussions with Parker Palmer*

In a world often marked by division, fear, and uncertainty, this series invites you into a journey of rediscovery – a journey toward a deeper connection with God, yourself, and others. Through the wisdom and reflections of Parker Palmer, these sessions explore themes of hospitality, grace, and hope as pathways to wholeness in our lives and communities.



Community and Global Service

Climate Corner

Almost an Earth Care Congregation!

In their January stated meetings, Highland's Diaconate and Session pledged to support Highland in becoming a PC(USA) Earth Care Congregation. Our application has been submitted, and we await word after the February 15 deadline as to our status. (Watch for our new Earth Care logo in the weeks to come!)



As we wait, our work of caring for this fragile and amazing earth continues. One way our Earth Care Team wants to do that is by helping you find a good next home (and not the landfill) for small items. We will have collection boxes in the Gallery Hall to receive your used printer cartridges (ink-jet and toner) and your natural wine corks. Feel free to bring these items in to drop off any time you come to the church. We know these are small items, but every little bit we can keep out of the landfill will help! Let [Debbie Layman](#) know if you have questions.

~The Earth Care Team for the Global Service Committee

Gratitude for Christmas Generosity

The spirit of giving richly flowed through Highland during the Advent and Christmas seasons. Thank you for your generosity to those in need in our community and beyond. You shared many art supplies, jackets, and other items with neighbors in need connected with El Buen Pastor.



Highland's giving to our denominational Christmas Joy Offering totaled \$3,011; our Christmas Eve offering supporting Crisis Control was \$2,520. And because of you we raised over \$5,100 in Alternative Giving, meaning neighbors near and far will have more reliable homes to live in and will have more secure shelter after devastating weather crises.

In addition, following the devastation of Hurricane Helene, you donated nearly \$9,000 through Highland for Presbyterian Disaster relief work in that region. Thank you for your generosity and the ways all of these gifts are bearing witness to God's light and love to our neighbors in need.

Presbyterian Disaster Response in California

The beginning of this year has brought unprecedented challenges for our neighbors in California, who are now facing a devastating disaster. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance has provided grants and other support to three presbyteries in the affected region (Pacific, San Gabriel, and San Fernando Presbyteries) and has been meeting regularly with local executives who are assessing needs and compiling resources to help those affected. One Presbyterian church was among several churches burned by the fires, Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterian Church (USA) issued a formal appeal, encouraging members and friends to support PDA's response by giving to the ministry's wildfire fund. You may contribute through Highland (marking 'wildfire' in the memo) or directly through PDA on their website.

Please continue to hold in prayers the people of Southern California, the emergency responders, and the aid groups like PDA who are there. *God who creates scenes of beauty and wonder, we call upon your mercy and grace to protect the people, the creatures, and all your creation from the fires that rage in Southern California and beyond. In the face of destruction, remind us that hope cannot be extinguished. Surround the people, creatures, and creation with your grace and peace. Comfort all who mourn the death of loved ones. Stand with those who grieve the loss of beloved pets or dreams and hopes. Hold close in your care those who are evacuating, unsure of what awaits them. Accompany all who have been displaced, and sustain those whose homes, businesses, and communities have been consumed by flames. Strengthen the firefighters, first responders, and volunteers working tirelessly to control the fires. Guide their efforts and grant them endurance and safety. We ask that you also bless leaders in these impacted communities, whose courage and compassion are beacons of hope amidst the smoke and ashes. Lead us to discern ways we can offer tangible help to those affected – both in this moment of crisis and in the long journey of recovery ahead. Stir our hearts to action and open our eyes to the deeper changes we must embrace to reduce the risk of future fires. Even when the skies are clouded with smoke, may we trust that your light cannot be dimmed. May your promise of renewal and restoration sustain us all. In Christ, our forever hope, we pray. Amen.*

Prayer by Rev. Mark Koenig