

Ridge Rider

HIGHLAND UMC NEWSLETTER
SPECIAL EDITION
MARCH 19, 2020

A Word from Pastor Alan:

Dear Highland Family,

Thank you for your understanding as we seek to sacrificially love our neighbors and protect the most vulnerable in our community. This upcoming week we will continue to be cancelling any in-person activities at the church except for OA and AA (our twelve-step groups).

Elements of our shared life together will continue. The office will be open in the mornings for phone calls and immediate questions, or you may call me directly (919-210-9120). Leaders of groups and classes may be in touch soon with some options and plans for continuing to study and fellowship together. We will be exploring different ways that we can continue “meeting” together with online tools. The Friday morning women’s Bible study group has already had their first online meeting using Zoom and had great success.

Please be sure to join us online for worship on Sundays at 11:00. (See more inside.) While it isn’t the same as gathering to worship in a shared space, it still provides a sense of community. Before each Sunday, consider this: think about the people you normally “share the peace” with on Sunday mornings. Give

those people a call and greet them.

In the book of James we read: “My brothers and sisters, think of the various tests you encounter as occasions for joy. After all, you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. Let this endurance complete its work so that you may be fully mature, complete, and lacking in nothing. But anyone who needs wisdom should ask God, whose very nature is to give to everyone without a second thought, without keeping score. Wisdom will certainly be given to those who ask.” (James 1:2-5, CEB)

Indeed, we pray for wisdom as we continue to discern our way forward. While social distancing may feel unnatural to us, it is an important part of living out our Christian witness of loving our neighbor. Let us continue to lift up prayers for each other. Let us continue to be in touch with each other. May our Lord richly bless us all.

Grace and Peace,



Office Hours

The church office will be open modified hours as we navigate this period of isolation: Monday - Friday, 9 AM - 12 PM. The narthex doors will be open; if you have business with the staff, please call ahead (919-787-4240), as the church staff and pastors will be splitting their time between the office and working from home.

Stay Connected

Website: highlandumc.org

Facebook: HUMCRaleigh

Regular updates

can be found at

highlandumc.org/coronavirus

Live-streaming Worship

Join your church family online at 11 AM on Sunday mornings to worship together.

If you have internet access, we hope you will join us for Sunday morning worship from the comfort of your own home. There is a link on the front of our website or you can go directly to our streaming site:

humcralnc.sermon.net. Look for the Connection Service link for that day and tune in around 11 AM on Sundays.

Two notes: 1) the countdown timer might not read what you expect it to...that's okay.

We start at 11 AM. 2) Yes, go to the Connection Service link. Thanks to our recently finished renovations in Bradley Hall, we have wonderful new audio and visual equipment which makes live-streaming in that space very effective. Even though each week will be a combined service drawing on elements from all our worship styles, the streaming site will list it as a Connection Service.

Worshipping in front of a computer screen may feel weird or awkward at first, but please try it! It's a good time to remember that our worship is an offering we make of ourselves to God. So sing along, hear the scriptures, and join in the prayers. Make your offering of worship to God!

We are also very grateful for those who have made the streaming ministry possible over the years at Highland. We remain indebted to Bill Babcock, Ron Klein, and Seth Troxler, who continue to provide leadership and critical support for this ministry.

HUMC Library Open

Need a good read while social distancing? You can come by the church library during church office hours (Monday - Friday, 9 AM - 12 PM) and pick up a book to enjoy at home.

Praying Together in Lent

Join Pastor Amanda for Morning Prayer

During this Lenten season, we have committed anew to being a people of prayer. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are people and situations around the world who are greatly in need of prayer.

For centuries, some within the Christian tradition have practiced gathering together for Morning Prayer. Pastor

Amanda has offered to lead such a time of prayer on Highland's Facebook page, Mondays through Thursdays, at 9 AM beginning March 23. You'll find Highland UMC will be "live" and all are invited to join Amanda in praying for our community and our world in the days ahead.



With Thanks to Gail

Highland wishes to offer its heartfelt thanks to our receptionist Gail Parrish, who is retiring this month. Gail has been a vital presence in the church office for almost three years and she will be greatly missed. Gail is looking forward to having time to devote to her twin grandbabies, whose arrival is anticipated in early April. Sadly, the conclusion of Gail's service at Highland falls amidst cancellations and social distancing, so many folks were unable to wish her well before her last day. Happily, you can still send your words of gratitude and well wishes to her at gail@highlandumc.org.



Financial Update

At its last meeting the Finance Team set benchmarks to use each month in monitoring our general fund contributions revenues through the year. As long as we are meeting those benchmarks or targets, we should finish the year with no more than a small, manageable deficit (and maybe even a small surplus), and thus no drastic expense reductions will be necessary.

At the end of February we were \$9,500 ABOVE those targets for the year, which is great news. We lost a little ground the first week of March, but these things fluctuate from week to week, so that was no big concern. However, as you can imagine, given our suspension of Sunday Services and activities due to the coronavirus, we have since fallen behind our targets.

For the first weeks in March, we needed to receive \$56,682 in total general fund contributions. Our actual receipts have been \$51,526. So at this point we're about \$5,000 behind for the month—which is not all that serious. But we are likely to fall much further behind between now and the end of the month, and that could rapidly become more serious.

Some of our parishioners have either mailed or delivered their weekly offering checks to the church office over the last few days, and for that we are deeply grateful! Even with reduced office hours please know that we will be processing those check deposits at least once per week. Others have newly discovered the ease of using our on-line giving capabilities (see right for details). We would like to ask more of our congregation to make use of on-line giving. It will greatly help us maintain a healthy cash flow and continue to fund the ministries that are so important, especially during these challenging times.

Peace,
Jim

Cancellations Continue

Highland is following guidance from state and federal officials, as well as the guidance of our Bishop and Conference leadership. Most on-campus meetings and activities have been suspended at this time. If you have questions about a particular ministry or activity, please reach out to its leader or the associated staff person.



Live-streamed worship on March 15, 2020



Online Giving

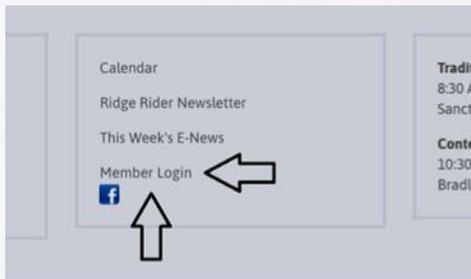
Paper checks are still welcome, but you can continue to support Highland from the comfort of your own home.

1. Click the Give Online option at the bottom right of our website, highlandumc.org.
2. Enter your gift amount.
3. Click "Select a fund" to choose what area you'd like to support.
4. Enter your email address.
5. Click "Continue."
6. Choose how you want to give:
 - a. To set up a recurring donation, choose "Sign in" or "Create an Account."
 - b. To give a one-time donation, click "Continue as Guest."
7. Choose your account type.
 - Credit/Debit Card
 - Checking Account
8. Enter your account information and billing address.
9. Click "Give" to complete your donation.



Staying Connected & Taking Care of Each Other

- It's time to start picking up the phone again! Many of our interactions have become electronic, and we can forget the power of hearing a friendly voice on the line. Think about the people you would have seen at church if you had been able to come. Give them a call! Who are the people you know from a musical group, a Sunday School class, a Bible study, or a committee you serve on at Highland? Give them a call! Our visitation team is doing their best to connect with elderly and vulnerable members of our congregation, but with so much upheaval and uncertainty at this time, it can't hurt to check in with one another, regardless your age or stage in life.
- Don't have someone's phone number or e-mail address? Highland's membership directory is available to members online. Access ACS is the online database system Highland uses for its membership and giving records. (It's also our primary online giving platform.) All church members can set up a username and password to gain access to your profile, your giving records, and contact information for other church members. Click on "Member Login" at the bottom of any page at highlandumc.org.
- Need something from grocery store but not sure that you should be out in public? Feeling stir-crazy and looking for a way to help out? We're trying to connect the needs in our community with the folks who are eager to help. You'll find links at the top of highlandumc.org/coronavirus to let us know about a need you have or a way that you are willing to serve at this time. If you can't get the forms filled out, give us a call in the church office at 919-787-4240.
- Amy Takahashi and Neil Smith are already working to stay in touch with children, youth, and families during what might be an extended time out of school. While we can't gather in person, they are exploring creative options to connect with children and youth and to continue discipling younger followers of Jesus. Neil plans to set up some Zoom meetings soon. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to them (amy@highlandumc.org, neil@highlandumc.org)
- Find ways to continue connecting! We encourage all of Highland's groups to think creatively about ways to keep "meeting" even as we practice social distancing for the sake of our larger community. Online tools such as Zoom, Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams, and freeconferencecall.com all offer ways to connect for anyone with internet access. Contact Rev. Janet Baucom (janet@highlandumc.org) if you have any questions about ways to help your group connect virtually.



Walking the Prayer Labyrinth

One silver lining of our current coronavirus cloud? We have been granted extended time to take advantage of the NC Conference's portable Prayer Labyrinth.

The labyrinth is available as a prayer tool during our modified office hours: Monday - Friday, 9 AM - 12 PM, in the conference room at Highland until at least March 31.

There are instructions sheets in the conference room to help guide you. To protect the fabric labyrinth, please only walk on it in socks. Individuals are welcome to come take advantage of this prayer tool during this Lenten season. Questions? Contact Rev. Amanda Bunce (amanda@highlandumc.org).

