



What's Happening at *Highland*

FEBRUARY 2021

Resurrection

A word from Pastor Alan

No, it isn't Easter yet, but Lent will soon be underway. It was during Lent last year that we saw cancellations and changes in everything from church to school to work, even how we shop. It is going on a year since we have been able to meet together physically.

I am excited to let you know that while we are not yet through the worst of the pandemic, we do have hope for change in the near future. We are looking forward to new opportunities in worship. While we often observe Lent with a penitent's heart, this year we may do so in anticipation of what God is doing in our midst. Yes, the changes may seem small and incremental, but they are cause for celebration.

Last year we could not gather together

to celebrate our Lord's resurrection. Even then most of us had no idea of how long the pandemic would last. But now, it is in hope that we look forward to celebrating resurrection on many levels. In the cold of winter, we know spring is coming. In the midst of pandemic we see the rollout of vaccines.

I am reminded of the words of Saint Peter, who wrote, "You now rejoice in this hope, even if it's necessary for you to be distressed for a short time by various trials. This is necessary so that your faith may be found genuine." (1 Peter 1:6-7) I invite you to be in prayer for Highland as we move forward.

Grace & Peace, *Alan*

Observing a Holy Lent

Scriptures remind us of God's redemption story through history and of God's covenants with God's people. These covenant promises are steadfast, even when we fail to be faithful, even when we feel like our whole world has grown distant from God. We hope you can hear again this Lent the promises of God: to be present with us, to redeem us, and to work in and through us, promises written on our hearts. We will recall these covenant promises in worship, in scripture readings, in devotions, and in studies, beginning with Ash Wednesday on February 17. May we all find new ways to observe a holy Lent this year.

The Highland family of faith is figuring out new and different ways to stay connected during this global pandemic. More and more of our congregation are leaning on electronic communications (our website, the e-news) to keep up with what's happening at Highland. However, we know some folks are less comfortable with all these digital means. While we are not producing a full Ridge Rider right now, this newsletter offers a glimpse of what's been happening lately at Highland and brings well wishes to folks we haven't been able to see lately.

What's Happening to the Steeple?

In mid-January, you may have seen the crane at Highland and several construction trucks in front of the church and wondered, "What in the world's happening?" We have two cell phone companies who lease space in the steeple for their cell antennas: AT&T and T-Mobile. Highland receives \$23,000 in annual rent from T-Mobile, and in return they get a certain amount of space in the steeple for their equipment.

The relationship with T-Mobile and AT&T has been an extraordinary blessing for Highland. Following the plane wreck some 30 years ago, the steeple was leaking, and when the first cell carrier installed their equipment, they custom fabricated the steeple in fiberglass to hold their antennas. The T-Mobile antennas have been covered by 4 custom-made louvered cases that were quite attractive and hid the existence of the antennas. As T-Mobile upgrades their network to 5G, they require larger antennas, and unfortunately the new antennas are larger and will require new louvered cases to be custom made. For the next month, the antennas will be exposed while the new boxes are fabricated. T-Mobile will then return with the crane to install the new louvered cases to cover their new antennas. The four openings where T-Mobile has located their antennas used to be a roost for pigeons and you can imagine the by-product of lots of pigeons. When T-Mobile finishes this installation, they will power wash the steeple at no expense to the church. The rent from the cell companies over the years has already surpassed a cumulative one million dollars. Having a 165' steeple on a hilltop near a busy interstate highway, hospital, mall, and university makes this an ideal location for a cell company. The neighbors would be up in arms if there was a really ugly cell tower near by (there is one at Meredith College with Verizon). This relationship has been great for the church, the neighborhood, and the cell carriers.

Someone asked me last week what was happening in the steeple and I said "it was manna from heaven" How else can you describe leasing space in a steeple for something that is used everyday but is otherwise invisible?

~ Tom Lamb, Facilities Manager

Family Promise

We are grateful for the work of Family Promise in our community and their creative commitment to housing homeless families safely through a pandemic. Through the last week of January, Highland partnered with West Raleigh Presbyterian to provide meals for six families housed in Family Promise apartments. Thank you to the Seekers Class, UMW Circle 7, and the Youth Group for helping to provide those meals. Please be in prayer for these families with young children in this challenging season.

Outdoor Worship

We look forward to adding an outdoor worship service at the beginning of Lent

Young adults led an outdoor worship service at the beginning of January, which was very well-received, and it has inspired our church leadership to explore ways we can offer additional worship opportunities for our church family and larger community. We will continue to offer streamed worship online, but, beginning on February 21, Highland will also hold a weekly service in the parking lot on Sundays at 1 PM. Congregants will stay in their cars and be able to hear the service on their FM radio. As the weather warms up and Covid numbers improve, we will explore adding outdoor seating for this service. We are excited about being able to move in this direction. We so look forward to seeing each other at worship, even if it is at first limited to staying in our cars.

Highland's Covid Taskforce continues to monitor the pandemic's impact on our local community, discerning when and how we will be able to safely return to in-person worship. The timing of that return depends on the timely distribution of Covid vaccines and its availability to all who want it. The taskforce will keep the congregation apprised of their work as it continues through the spring.



We give thanks for the witness and leadership of our young adults who led our outdoor worship on January 3, including worship leader Adam Mottershead and preacher Alexandra Ellison.



February Birthdays

Baby Day 2021

On January 10, Highland celebrated “Baby Day” as we also remembered Jesus’ baptism. Baby Day serves as a reminder to all of us of our responsibility to pray for our children and their parents, to find ways to help them grow in faith, and to live our lives in such a way that these children will experience God through us. Our youngest children at Highland include the beautiful faces below.

Alex Martin	02/01	Gail Flowers	02/20
Jude Martin	02/01	Alice Fowler	02/20
Tamara Brubaker	02/03	Steve Gergen	02/20
Richard Moore	02/03	Kerry Havner	02/20
David Hood	02/05	Don Uap	02/20
Vicky Earp	02/07	Nem Vung	02/20
Amy Takahashi	02/07	Carter Mills	02/21
Mary Bugger	02/08	Shirley Rocha	02/21
Kennan Mottershead	02/08	Bill Francois	02/22
Laura Pace	02/08	Allen Smith	02/22
Beverly Marchi	02/09	Janine Wood	02/22
Will Krueger III	02/10	Minda Griffin	02/23
Brooks Ratledge	02/10	Mark Adamson	02/25
Alan Swartz	02/10	Christian Dickens	02/25
Henry Taylor	02/12	Austin Fee	02/25
Sabra Andrews	02/13	Allen Smith	02/25
Caroline Crouse	02/13	Elizabeth Stocum	02/25
Jim O'Donnell	02/13	Rhonda Wilkerson	02/26
Susan White	02/14	Virginia Childs	02/27
Magara Boisvert	02/15	Owen Cole	02/27
Nuam Don	02/15	Reid Gray	02/27
Harriet Roland	02/15	Ryan Philmon	02/27
Linda Taylor	02/15	Colin Bross	02/28
Patrick Horn	02/16	Mike Dove	02/28
Jeff Mann	02/16	Dim Huai	02/28
Vung Kim	02/18	Sophia Lieng	02/28
Judy Wilson	02/19		



Levi Wood (left)
Parents: Molly & Jarrett

Mia and Gabbie Gojanovich (below)
Parents: Morgan & Greg



Harris Patterson (left)
Parents: Katie & Kyle



Will Krueger (left)
Parents: Lauren & William



Hannah Morgan (right)
Parents: Allison & Arlyn



James Gordon Morrison
(left)

Oscar Taylor
(right)
Parents:
Christine
Taylor & Ben
Franklin



Sydney Belle White (above)
Parents: Rebecca & Zach



Financial Update

Wrapping Up 2020, Looking Forward to 2021

As our business office completes an internal year-end review of 2020 finances and prepares to close out the books for the year, it looks like we would have had an operating deficit of approximately \$25,000. Thankfully, we will instead have a surplus of well over \$100,000 due to PPP loan funds made available to us early in the pandemic. We have also been able to make use of restricted Endowment Fund grants for certain much needed capital repairs and improvements—especially over the last few

weeks. However, our general fund pledges for 2021 continue to be significantly lower than last year's, with a 23% reduction in pledging households, and a more than 15% reduction in total amount pledged. That means \$120,000 less in dollar amount pledged than at this point last year. It is not yet clear what kind of budget cuts this might require and how deeply this might impact ministry at Highland. That is why your on-going financial support for our

shared ministry continues to matter very deeply! It is not too late to pledge for 2021. If your financial situation allows you to increase your gift to the congregation or to make a gift to a special fund supporting those impacted by COVID-19, please consider expanding your generosity. If your finances have changed and you need to change your pledge, you can contact Jim Duke through

the business office at Highland or reach him directly on his cell phone (919-606-0135).

Our Ash Wednesday service will be online this year, February 17, at 7 PM, available at Highland's streaming site:
humcralnc.sermon.net

Ministry Updates

All Highland's ministries are adapting to this season of social distancing.

Youth Group: Outdoor weekly meetings have moved to 2 - 4 PM on Sundays, taking advantage of the daylight and warmer temperatures.

Sunday School: Some of our Sunday School classes continue to meet online, including the Upper Room Class, Fellowship Class, Seekers Class, SALT Class, and Connectors Class.

Bible Studies: Several online studies are now being held or are beginning soon: Women's Bible Study group is reading *Revival* by Adam Hamilton, led by Rev. Janet Baucom and meeting on

Monday mornings; Pastor Alan is leading a study of 1 & 2 Peter and Jude on Monday nights beginning February 1; Amy Takahashi is leading a study for parents of young children reading *Little Steps, Big Faith* on Monday evenings beginning February 1; Pastor Amanda will lead a Lenten study of *Entering the Passion of Jesus* by Amy Jill Levine on Wednesday nights beginning February 24.

If you would like assistance connecting to any online ministry, please reach out to Pastor Alan (919-210-9120).

Contacting Staff

Even though the church office is not fully open for the safety of our staff and community, your pastors and staff are still working and available to assist you. They all check their e-mail regularly. If you need to get in touch with someone promptly, texts and direct calls are most effective:

Pastoral concerns - Alan's cell - 919-210-9120
Business Office concerns - Jim's cell - 919-606-0135
Facilities concerns - Tom's cell - 919-624-1405

Sanctuary Updates

The work is progressing quickly to expand the chancel steps and replace floor coverings throughout the sanctuary.

