



What's Happening at *Highland*

APRIL 2021

A Note from Pastor Alan:

It is Easter! We have devoted ourselves to the 40-day Lenten journey to arrive at this destination. It is true that, as Janet said in her sermon on Palm Sunday, this past entire year has seemed like Lent. We disciplined ourselves to listen again to God's call and claim on our lives. The purpose of the intense process is to prepare us to live as Easter People, people of the resurrection, people of the New Creation. One of the best descriptions of Easter People can be found in the second chapter of Acts: "The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. All the believers were united and shared everything. They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. They praised God and demonstrated God's goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved." (Acts 2:42-47 CEB)

From this brief paragraph we learn so much about what it means to be Easter People.

Easter People are Communal. Almost everything Easter People do is in the context of community. We have had to reimagine what community looks like during a pandemic. The community of faithful believers and devoted followers of Jesus is vital to everything we are as the Easter People of God. We learn and grow in community. We fellowship and share in community. We worship and praise God in community. We serve each other and the world in community.

Easter People are Generous. Isn't it amazing that this early community of believers found places to gather to worship and learn and pray together in each other's homes? They opened their homes to others to gather for meals and fellowship; for teaching and worshiping. Not only did they share their homes and food, they also shared their possessions that people would not go in need. We have been able to continue in ministry because of the generosity of so many people like you. Throughout the scriptures – the Old and New Testaments – the people of God are marked by their generosity. This is especially evident in this text: Easter People are marked by their generosity.

Easter People are Visionary. They were in awe of what the Holy Spirit was doing in their lives. They were in awe of what

the Father was doing in the world around them. They were in awe of people's response to the incredible gift of love through Jesus Christ. Because Easter People have the eyes to see what God is accomplishing, they also share the vision of what it means to live and be the people of God. It was the living out of this vision that enabled them to be loving, generous, and faithful.

We are Called to be Easter People. This is not just to be a first century phenomenon. God is at work today. The Holy Spirit continues his work in the lives of believers, pre-believers, and unbelievers. We are called to reclaim that sense of community, not just at the church building on Ridge Road, but in the opening of our homes in all our neighborhoods and by using the tools available to us to connect. We are called to gather to worship and praise God; to break bread and fellowship; to serve each other and our communities. God calls us to be generous with our homes, our food, our possessions, in our loving. Our eyes are opened to the work of God all around us and we carry God's vision into our lives in all we do.

Let us be Easter People.

Grace and Peace,



Worship Updates

As more people are vaccinated and pandemic conditions change, our life together changes too

Highland is looking forward to the loosening of pandemic restrictions that will allow us to expand and change how we have been worshipping as of late. The outdoor service on Sundays is moving to 9 AM beginning Easter Sunday, April 4. In addition to being able to drive-in, if the weather is pleasant then people are welcome to bring lawn chairs and sit outside

their cars in the parking lot, still wearing masks and maintaining social distances. If local COVID numbers continue to improve, we look forward to being able to return to a limited in-person worship experience as soon as Sunday, May 30. Additional details about those services will be included in the May newsletter.

Finance Update

The Finance Committee is pleased to announce that Highland has received a second PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) loan, this one for 2021, which will help prevent any shortfalls for this year's budget. The

Highland community is grateful for the continued faithfulness of all of our givers, whose contributions continue to make ministry happen, even throughout this pandemic season.

Easter Season

Join us in worship through April and May for our worship series Living the Resurrection

Of all the high holy days on the calendar of faith, Easter is by far the highest and the holiest. There is no exuberance that is too loud, no expression of joy that is over the top, no exercise of new life that can be shut down. Easter calls for excess. Don't let it slip in silently; it needs brass accompaniment. And not just on one day. Easter is not a day; it is a season. It is part of our Christian identity; we're an Easter people. Join us in worship as we practice living the resurrection.



Holy Week:

Maundy Thursday

Outdoor Communion service in the parking lot at 7 PM, April 1.

Good Friday

Online service sharing the stories and songs of Jesus' final days at 7 PM, April 2.

Easter Sunday

Outdoor Communion service in the parking lot at 9 AM; Live-streamed online service at 11 AM; Flowering the Cross—drive up by the narthex, outside the sanctuary doors between 8:45 & 10:45 AM.

Remember in Prayer

Mark Adamson, Bonnie Anderson, Lisa Anthony, Melva Armstrong (Amy Massey's cousin), Jason Christian Bayer (Wanda Easley's nephew), Brady Beck (son of Bev and Keith Beck), Debbie Beavers (friend of Harriet Mills), Paul Braun, Charles Chapman, Charles Cimerro, Archie Clark (Joyce Hicks's brother), Helen Cook, Dot Correll, Liz Deaton Crossley (Beth and George Deaton's daughter), Sharon Cox (Amanda Bunce's mother), Ginny Davis, Beth Deaton, Phyllis and Alex Edwards, Bill George, Cleo Flowers (Kevin Flowers mother), Harold Fuller, Grace & Jim Haven, Doug and Pat Hoffman, Brenda Holden (Linda Piper's sister-in-law), Michael Hughes, Glenda Johnson, Jeffrey Kivisto (Cheri Kivisto's father-in-law), Sarah Jean Letchworth, Jeanine Lueke, Georgie McKenzie, Dennis McLain, Dot McGee, Linda Moran, Hannah Marie Morgan, O'Dell Massey, Rob Parady (Tristan Parady's father), Gail Pritchard (Vicky Earp's mother), Diane Racey, Jessie Saunders (Johanna Wilson's mother), John Schmith (friend of Beth and George Deaton), Candi Scott, Jean Shorter, Frances Shutt, Marge Walker, Mary Ward, Preston, Conor & Sarah Mann Willcox, Charles & Anona Williams (friends of Whitney White)

Please also remember in prayer those serving in our military: Christian Bugger, Robert Boone, Erich Dix, James Noneman, Matthew Bawden, Ryan and Margarita Shorter, Aaron Piratzky

Inclusion Next Steps

For several years, Highland UMC has been having conversations about human sexuality and Christian teaching. We've spent time studying the Bible, talking during Sunday School and gathered around tables in the Conference Room. Back in February 2020, Church Council approved an Inclusion Statement and asked the Congregation to give feedback and to vote on whether or not to adopt the statement. Due to Covid, that vote did not take place until the fall of 2020. With over 200 votes cast, the statement to "fully welcome, accept, and affirm each and every person into full fellowship, without regard to their age, economic class, educational level, gender identity, marital status, mental ability, nationality, physical ability, race, or sexual orientation" passed with an 80% vote in our congregation.

In thinking through how we might live into this Inclusion statement, Church Council voted to pursue becoming a "Reconciling Church" and join Reconciling Ministries Network. Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) has been actively involved within the United Methodist Church working for the full inclusion of the LGBTQ Community into the life and service of the UMC.

Before taking this step, we will offering education and conversations at Highland because we want to move together as one church body. These meetings will be hybrid meetings - in person and online. You can reserve a spot in the Conference Room by emailing or calling Pastor Amanda (amanda@highlandumc.org, 910-622-7335), or you can join the session via Zoom from your own home (link in the E-News).

There will be three opportunities for learning and discussion about Reconciling Ministries Network and what it means to be a Reconciling Church:

April 21st, 7 PM - Helen Ryde from Reconciling Ministries Network will join us to talk about RMN and its role in the United Methodist Church .

April 28th, 7 PM - Join us to hear from some of other Reconciling United Methodist Churches in the Triangle area as they talk about what it meant for them to become a Reconciling Church.

May 5th, 7 PM - Join us for Holy Conversations as we hold space for questions and dialogue about our next steps.

During the week of May 16 - 23, we will be holding another congregational vote in much the same way as the vote we took last fall. There will be an online option to vote and those who request a paper ballot will be mailed one in advance of the vote to fill out and return to Highland.

We hope that you will be in prayer for us as a congregation as we discern where the Holy Spirit is leading us and how we might continue to seek to love, serve, and share Christ with our community and the world.

Celebrating Children's Ministry

Our Children's Ministry Team has done a great job continuing to serve our children and families through a variety of creativity activities and events. They enjoyed a drive-in movie on March 12, waved palm branches for a Palm Sunday video, and are enjoying a letterboxing scavenger hunt across Highland's campus throughout Holy Week. Many thanks to Amy Takahashi and the dedicated Highland adults that make this ministry happen!



April Birthdays

Jenny Johnson	04/02	Alexandra Ellison	04/17	Carol Blue	04/29	Joshua Crouse	04/30
Paula Berryann	04/03	Caroline Dove	04/18	Ella McCarthy	04/29	Jeanine Lueke	04/30
Joyce Hicks	04/03	Rick Richards	04/18	Inabelle Sides	04/29	Dee Maronpot	04/30
Janet Stuber	04/03	Laura Black	04/19	Nancy Zweigart	04/29	Hadley Myers	04/30
Larry Wilson	04/05	Malinda Stallings	04/19	Steve Brown	04/30		
Bonnie Anderson	04/06	Brian Dilley	04/21				
Matt Tucker	04/06	Kevin Flowers	04/21				
Dot Anderson	04/08	Sarah Wallace	04/21				
Lian Lian	04/08	Madison Hagen	04/22				
Kenley Myers	04/08	Pat Hoffman	04/22				
Meliene Bawden	04/09	Perry Safran	04/22				
Lauren Krueger	04/09	Karen Hudson	04/23				
Angie Martin	04/09	Bob Smith	04/23				
Ray Stocum	04/09	Levi Wood	04/23				
Ryan Baucom	04/10	George Dodson	04/24				
David Beam	04/10	Paul Blomquist	04/25				
Amanda Bunce	04/10	Peggy Kearns	04/25				
Carolyn Shropshire	04/11	Alice Perry	04/25				
Hilary Wilkinson	04/11	Joyce Tynes	04/25				
Vickie Dunn	04/12	Margueritte McDonald					
Leslie Hobbs	04/12		04/26				
Bob Wells	04/12	Hal Barnes	04/27				
Dudley Marchi	04/14	Graham Anderson	04/28				
Dale Matzinger	04/14	John Robinson	04/28				
Isabella Templeton	04/15	Karen Seymour	04/28				
John Cummings	04/16	Ann Vodicka	04/28				

Youth News

Our youth are taking to the trees on April 11! Youth and adult volunteers will be venturing to TreeRunner Raleigh Adventure Park for an active afternoon of exercise and adventure off the ground and up in the trees.

On Sunday, April 18, youth group will return to Sunday evenings outdoors, including dinner, faith-oriented activities, and fun times together.

Plans are in the works to complete last year's Confirmation Class, as well as plan summer mission weeks for youth. Stay tuned!



Another Successful Food Drive

Highland collected another bus-load of food for Interfaith Food Shuttle on Sunday, March 21. Thank you to everyone who helped receive donations that day and to everyone who contributed non-perishable food for families in our community.

