



What's Happening at *Highland*

MAY 2021

A Note from Pastor Alan: A Refreshing Breeze of Hope

Gracie (our new dog) and I were walking to a commons area in our neighborhood so that she could “do her business.” It had been rather warm this afternoon, but we were able to walk in some shady areas. We were standing in place for a moment when a cool and refreshing breeze wafted over us. Wow! That felt good! As we stood in place, Gracie lifted her face up into the breeze and I could tell how much she enjoyed it. After a while, we moved back into the sun to begin the walk home.

That is the way I am feeling about other matters. We are beginning to meet more and more people face to face — a breeze of hope. We are making plans for groups and committees to begin hybrid meetings so people can

participate at the level they are comfortable with — a breeze of hope. We are soon beginning our in-person worship services — a breeze of hope. This past year has been described in many ways — a period of darkness and loneliness — a long season of Lent — unprecedented times (didn't you get sick of hearing that one?). But we now know that changes are coming. I see signs of hope all around. As a congregation, we are moving forward. Do you feel the breeze?

Grace and Peace,



Pentecost Picnic: Save the Date Sunday, May 23, 12 :15 PM

The Pentecost story tells how the Holy Spirit poured out on the early followers of Jesus and gave birth to the Church. The Holy Spirit is still at work and moving at Highland. After over a year of so much separation, we are finally moving into a season of being reunited and reborn as a church. It's the perfect time to gather outdoors for a time of fun, fellowship, and celebration. Details are still being finalized, but expect activities for families and young people and plenty of time for adults to catch up with one another.

Highland's worship life is evolving to reflect the rapidly changing situation we find ourselves in at this point in the pandemic. As local COVID rates are steadily improving, we are looking forward to gathering again in person.

For now:

9 AM Outdoor Worship
11 AM Live-streamed
Worship

Beginning May 30:

9 AM Connection Worship
in Bradley Hall
11 AM Traditional Worship
in the Sanctuary
(Find the details inside as
we move worship indoors)

Resuming In-person Worship

As COVID-19 numbers have improved and vaccinations have become more widely available, we happily anticipate returning to in-person services and beginning May 30: a 9 AM Connection contemporary service in Bradley Hall and an 11 AM traditional service in the sanctuary. Both services will also be live-streamed each week.

Safety protocols

While vaccinations make gatherings much safer, there is still some risk, and we are taking measures to ensure the safety of our whole worshipping community. Out of love and respect for those attending services, all will be asked to wear a mask while indoors and wash or sanitize their hands upon entering the church. Ushers will guide people in sitting at appropriate social distances and will also dismiss the congregation as worship concludes. We know that everyone will want chances to talk and visit with one another before and after services; we ask that those conversations take place outside.

How many people will be present?

At least at the beginning, the in-person congregation will be restricted to 50 people and will require signing up in advance. Our COVID Task Force meets regularly to revise congregational guidelines as recommendations from the CDC and local officials are changing frequently. We anticipate these numbers will grow and restrictions will lessen as we move through the summer. Worship registration will be done through a Sign-up Genius in the e-news and website or by calling the church office weekday mornings beginning May 19. These sign-ups will greatly assist with set-up and planning for Sunday mornings as we adjust to new circumstances.

What will worship be like?

Several aspects of worship will be different from our pre-pandemic life together. We will refrain from shaking hands and hugging, as typically practiced during the passing of the peace. Instead of passing offering plates or baskets, there will be receptacles to receive offerings near entryways as you enter or exit worship. Given improvements in our air circulation systems and additional precautions being taken, vaccinated worship leaders may remove their masks while speaking to lead worship. Following health expert's current advice, there will be no congregational singing at this time. Everyone agrees — this is the hardest one! The organ will swell in the sanctuary and the Connection band will be leading from the stage. Soloists and small groups of performers will lead music, but we ask the congregation to hum, read the lyrics, or otherwise sing within your hearts. Rest assured that we will reintroduce congregational singing as soon as we are able to do so safely.



Confirmation Returns!

As with so many things, our 2020 Confirmation Class was greatly disrupted by the shutdown at the beginning of the pandemic last year. Thankfully, the whole group and their mentors are committed to seeing their journey together completed. The group has resumed meeting since Easter on the breezeway at the church and will complete their work in May. Schedules are still in flux, but we're hoping that most of the group will be confirmed on Pentecost Sunday, May 23, in worship.



Spring Rhapsody

You're Invited to *Spring Rhapsody: A Virtual Concert* Premiering on YouTube

Sunday May 23 at 3 PM

Presented by The Highland Chamber Musicians:

George Deaton, tenor; Ann Pearce, flute; Jo Anne Swartz, soprano; Phyllis Vogel, piano; Sarah Mann Willcox, violin

Music by Bach, Beethoven, Handel, Massenet, Verdi and others

Find the link that day on [HighlandUMC.org](https://www.HighlandUMC.org)

Reconciling Ministries

Highland is holding conversations about how we will live into the inclusion statement adopted last fall and in response to the Church Council's recommendation to become a Reconciling Church. A congregational vote on this question will be held May 16 - 23, electronically and by paper ballot. If you receive this newsletter in the mail, a paper ballot will automatically be sent to you in the next week or two.

Listed here are answers to some of the most commonly asked questions during this process:

What does it mean to be a "Reconciling Church or Congregation?"

A Reconciling Church is one that embraces, affirms, and works for the full participation of all people in the United Methodist Church, including full equality in membership, ordination, and marriage for God's LGBTQ children. Reconciling Churches make a public declaration welcoming all persons, regardless of sexual orientation, to participate fully in its congregational life, and they work for change within the denomination for full inclusiveness and equal rights and privileges for all.

What is Reconciling Ministries Network or RMN?

Reconciling Ministries Network is a growing movement of United Methodist individuals, groups, churches, and campus ministries working for the full participation of all people in the United Methodist Church to transform our Church and world into the full expression of Christ's inclusive love. Established in 1984, RMN works for full equality in membership, ordination, and marriage for God's LGBTQ children. There are over 1,000 Reconciling Ministries and over 43,000 Reconciling United Methodist individuals.

Does Highland already have a Reconciling Group within the congregation?

Yes! We do! The Fellowship Class became a Reconciling Group in 2019 with a unanimous vote. The Fellowship Class is one of our oldest classes at Highland.

Why did we explore becoming a reconciling congregation?

In preparation for what was supposed to be General Conference 2020, Church Council decided that rather than guess the outcome of the upcoming conference, we should know where Highland stood. Many concerns had been expressed after the special General Conference in 2019 and conversation intensified in its wake. This felt like a faithful step as we seek to live into who we are as a family of faith at Highland, and as we discern who we are as a body within our community in Raleigh.

After the adoption of an inclusion statement, Church Council voted to pursue joining Reconciling Ministries Network as a way of publicly living into that statement. It would declare who we are and what we believe to our LGBTQ members past, present, and those yet to come, and create a sacred space for all to worship and be a part of Highland UMC.

Does taking this step put us in violation with the Book of Discipline or change our United Methodist affiliation?

No it does not! Joining RMN does not change our United Methodist affiliation. We would still be within the United Methodist denomination.

Making a statement of inclusion actually supports the Book of Discipline which calls for the inclusion of all persons who are viewed as individuals of sacred worth. Official United Methodist policy bars the ordination and appointment of "self-avowed practicing homosexuals". The Board of Ordained Ministry and bishop of each annual conference must decide how to handle this mandate. The Book of Discipline also "prohibits ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions". Each local church must decide for itself how it will handle this matter.

Will "Reconciling" become the sole focus of our ministries at Highland?

No. Highland is blessed with a very rich history of strong ministries and outreach within Raleigh and beyond through Family Promise, Habitat for Humanity, Rise Against Hunger, the Community Garden, Interfaith Food Shuttle, Disaster Response, and many many more! It is our hope that Reconciling Ministries will become another way in which our congregation can live into our mission to be an inviting family of faith seeking to love, serve, and share Christ with our community and the world. Like all of our ministries at Highland, the emphasis on reconciling work will depend on the commitment and energy of those in our congregation who choose to step up and step out to raise the level of hope for those who cry out for love and justice.

What is our statement of inclusion?

In the spring of 2020, HUMC's Church Council created a statement of inclusion that was approved and adopted by Highland after a congregational vote in August of 2020. It reads as follows:

"We recognize that as children of God all people are of sacred worth. Because Christ has opened the church to all people, we 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. It will be our position to support the candidacy and ordination of qualified persons regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Likewise, we will support the rights of the clergy of Highland UMC to perform marriages for all couples who seek to be married."

Additional information can be found at highlandumc.org/inclusion.

Questions or concerns? Contact Pastor Alan (alan@highlandumc.org, cell 919-210-9120) or Church Council Chair Chuck Stuber (ncstate82@hotmail.com).

Congratulations Eagle Scouts

Five scouts from Troop 357 earned the rank of Eagle Scout and were recognized for their accomplishments on Saturday, April 10, including Highland members Will Horn & Kennan Mottershead. Congratulations to James Stevens Dunn, Kennan Kirkwood Mottershead, William Henry Horn, Harrison George Brooks, and Samuel Vincent Shack.



Outdoor Worship

The 9 AM outdoor worship service in the church parking lot has been a welcome return to gathering for worship. The spring weather has been generally good and we've been fortunate to enjoy that time of worship together. As we prepare to return indoors for worship, we will no longer hold the outdoor service and the last outdoor service will be Sunday, May 23, at 9 AM. A special word of thanks goes to Pam & Aaron Brothers, Carlyle Teague, Don Carroll, and Tom Lamb for their faithful service and assistance at our outdoor services.



May Birthdays

Judie Ashbaugh	05/02	Scott Deuel	05/19
Chris Richards	05/03	Bud Driggers	05/19
Anderson La Rocca	05/05	Anna Letchworth	05/20
Georgie McKenzie	05/05	Ann Pearce	05/20
Andrew Tucker	05/05	Kay Burgess	05/21
Robert Hearn	05/06	Aidan Cronin-Hudgins	05/21
Mike Hughes	05/06	Allison Schuster	05/21
Helen Morrill	05/07	Maddie Driggers	05/22
John Hunter	05/08	Andrew Wilkinson	05/22
Junko Takahashi	05/08	Camilla Matzinger	05/23
Abby Bugger	05/09	Creighton Wellman	05/23
Linda Cooksey	05/09	Thad McDonald	05/27
Anna Yarborough	05/09	Debbie Sykes	05/27
Judy Allen	05/10	Sharon Lee	05/28
San Lian Lian	05/11	Kay Driggers	05/29
Peggy Reaugh	05/11	Lanny Piper	05/29
Mary Liner	05/12	Nathan Stocum	05/29
Kathy Langfield	05/13	Vance Clayton	05/30
Douglas Templeton	05/13	Ellen Fortenberry	05/30
Glenda Johnson	05/17	Joyce Faucette	05/31
Debbie Carroll	05/18	John Shutt	05/31
Ila Krueger	05/18	Sydney Belle White	05/31
Ken Schuster	05/18		

Opening the Office

Thanks to improved COVID numbers and available vaccines, we anticipate re-opening the church office the week of May 10 on a new schedule: Monday - Friday, 9 AM - 12 PM. Volunteers will be answering phones and some staff will be present, though it is still best to contact individual staff persons to make appointments in advance.

Thank you for your giving!

Highland's community remains faithful in their giving to the ministries of the church. Thank you for your faithfulness and stewardship!

Hybrid Meetings

Highland has purchased a new system that will allow people to participate in meetings online while also allowing people to participate in person in the Conference Room. This device is called a Meeting Owl and will allow in-person meetings to resume sooner, while still allowing people to join from home.