

Annual Committee Reports 2025



**Highland Presbyterian Church
Winston-Salem, North Carolina**

HIGHLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Pastor: J. S. Randolph Harris

Associate Pastor: Debbie Layman

Associate Pastor: Courtney Stevens

Pastor Emeritus: Steve McCutchan

Director of Christian Education: Heather Ferguson

Director of Music: Chris Gilliam

Organist: Susan Bates

Music Associate: Haley Chapman

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Winston-Salem, NC 27103-2012

Christian Education Committee

Children's Ministry

The Children's Ministry provides Sunday morning programs and a nursery for children ages 0-4th grade. In the Preschool Class for ages 2-4, the children are welcomed by adult volunteers who read Bible stories from the "Growing in Grace and Gratitude" curriculum, followed by a related craft and free play. Children K-4th grade are in the Godly Play rotation program. Every other Sunday, the children experience the stories of God's people through the Godly Play method. Following each Godly Play Sunday, the children go deeper by focusing on the same scripture through drama, art, or mission.

Following these 45-minute programs, the children then go to children's choir to sing and learn new songs. The children's choir sings in the Sanctuary several times during the worship year.

Sally Brown has led our Preschool Class for the past 50 years, and we celebrated her as she chose a well-earned retirement.

Children of all ages are invited to the front of the Sanctuary during worship for A Time for Young Disciples, followed by Worship and Wonder, on the 3rd floor for Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd graders. In this program, the children learn about our worship and become prepared to participate in the full worship time when they reach 3rd grade. The PrayGround, located in the sanctuary balcony, offers activities and books for the children who wish to remain in the service.

Children are also invited to participate in worship as an acolyte and help collect our 5-Cents-a-Meal offerings. Children were invited to read scripture in worship during two Sundays in Advent.

On the 4th Friday of each month during the school year, parents are invited to bring their children ages 0-4th grade to the Fellowship Hall from 5:30-7:30 p.m. for 4th Friday Fun Night. The children have story time, dinner, and supervised safe play, along with some special events. The purpose of this program is two-fold: first, to gather the children together to build and strengthen friendships with other children of the church, and second, to build relationships between the children and the adult and youth volunteers. This also gives parents time for their own relationship by enjoying dinner, running errands, or simply resting.

Our Gathering Garden and Playground was completed in the Spring of 2025, and we celebrated its completion with Wednesday Night Live in July. On the first Wednesday in July, families were invited to share a meal and fellowship in the newly completed space. On each of following four Wednesday evenings, the entire congregation was invited to come for a light dinner and enjoy music by Highland members while the children enjoyed the playground.

Mum's Night Out is a new program that began in the fall of 2025. Mothers of babies, children, and teens gather at a congregation member's home monthly for fellowship, deepening relationships, and sharing ways to address the challenges of parenting together.

Our annual Advent Event was again held in the Gathering Garden on the Sunday morning before Advent began. Members and guests had several craft projects to participate in, highlighted by making ornaments for a Jesse Tree that they could take home. The ornaments tell the stories of Jesus' lineage from the stump of Jesse to his birth.

All members and guests were invited to the 4:00 p.m. Christmas Eve worship service where children, youth, and adults participated in a drama around the Jesse Tree.

Judy Parro, our paid Nursery staff member, has been a consistent presence not only in the nursery on Sunday mornings but also through supporting volunteers during the 4th Friday Fun Night gatherings.

Children's Ministry Team members: Jim Swing (elder), Diana Smyrl (elder), Mary Anna Davis, Kathleen Hansen, Lola Culler, Sally Brown, Lauren Eberle, and Heather Ferguson (Director of Christian Education)

Adult Christian Education

The Adult Christian Education (ACE) committee continues to provide a rich array of educational and faith-forming opportunities for Highland members and guests. From Sunday morning classes to studies through the week and quarterly forums, the ACE committee has worked to balance offerings in bible study, justice topics, and spiritual enrichment classes that engage the hearts, hands, and minds of participants.

Sunday morning includes three ongoing classes: The Present Word, The Lectionary Café, and the Parents' Coffee and Conversation class.

Electives this year have included the following:

- The Life and Legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, facilitated by Randy Harris and Joe Blankinship
- *A Hidden Wholeness* with Parker Palmer, facilitated by Heather Ferguson
- *Hard & Holy Work: A Lenten Study*, by Rev. Mary Alice Birdwhistell, facilitated by the Highland Staff
- Created in Love: Exploring Gender and Sexuality in Faith, facilitated by the Highland pastors
- *From Judgment to Hope: An Introduction to the Prophets*, by Walter Brueggemann, facilitated by Randy Harris and Joe Blankinship
- *What We Can Do: A Climate Optimist's Guide to Sustainable Living*, by Charlie Sellars, facilitated by Highland's Earth Care Team
- *Mystical Hope: Trusting in the Mercy of God*, by Cynthia Bourgeault, facilitated by Heather Ferguson and Janny Gauss
- The Jesse Tree: An Intergenerational Experience to Deepen the Meaning of the Coming Christ Child, facilitated by Debbie Layman
- *A Child Is Born: A Beginners Guide to the Nativity Stories*, by Amy-Jill Levine, facilitated by Heather Ferguson

Studies offered throughout the week included:

- **Thursday Women's Study Group** – *Jesus for Everyone, Not Just for Christians*, by Amy-Jill Levine; Study papers from the PCUSA, "Presbyterian Understanding and Use of Holy Scripture" and "Biblical Authority and Interpretation;" *Embracing Divine Flow: Exploring Trinitarian Spirituality*, by Richard Rohr; *From Widows to Warriors: Women's Stories from the Old Testament*, by Lyn Japinga
- **Matthew 25 Book Group** – *You Are Changing the World, Whether You Like it Or Not*, by David LaMotte; *The Time is Now: A Call to Uncommon Courage*, by Joan Chittester; *Just Faith: Reclaiming Progressive Christianity*, by Guthrie Graves-Fitzsimmons; *Eleanor: A Spiritual Biography*, by Harold Ivan Smith
- **The Men's Breakfast and Bible Study Group** – The Wired Word
- **Poverty Book Group** – *White Privilege: How Exposing Myths about Race and Class Can Reconstruct American Democracy*, by Rev. William Barber; *What We Remember Will Be Saved*, by Stephanie Saldana; *When We Walk By*, by Kevin Adler and Donald Burnes
- **Listening to Black Voices Book Group** – *Why We Can't Wait*, by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; Pulitzer-Prize-winning novel *James*, by Percival Everett; *The Three Mothers: How the Mothers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and James Baldwin Shaped a Nation*, by Anna Malaika Tubbs
- **LGBTQ Book Group** – *Letter to My Transgender Daughter*, by Carolyn Hays
- **Intergenerational Summer Book Group** – *Outcasts United: The Story of a Refugee Soccer Team that Changed a Town* by Warren St. John

2025 Highland Forums included:

- **Winter Forum** - Assistant Dean of Development at Wake Forest University School of Divinity, Hannah McMahan King. Her topic, Lessons on Life & Leadership from a Humble Sunday School Teacher: What We Can Learn from Jimmy Carter
- **Spring Forum** - Reverend Dr. Jan Edmiston, General Presbyter of the Presbytery of Charlotte. Her topic, Reflections on the Film *Join or Die: A Film about Why You Should Join a Club and How the Fate of America Depends on It*.
- **Fall Forum** - Microsoft Director of Sustainability, Charlie Sellars, author of *What Can We Do: A Climate Optimist's Guide to Sustainable Living*

Other programs with Christian Education oversight included:

- **2025 Highland Women's Retreat**, March 14-16, Montreat, NC, theme "Circle of Stones: The Friendships of Women" with 29 women participating.
- **2025 Highland Men's Retreat**, April 24-26, Montreat, NC, theme "Sabbath" with 25 participants.
- **Presbyterian Women**, 2025 Horizons Study, *Finding Resilience, Joy, and Our Identity in Jesus Christ*

Adult Christian Education Committee members: Richard Howerton (elder), Barbara Bowman, Grady Elliott, Heidi Hart, Annie Cahoon, Jane Sobie, Rita Ennis, and Heather Ferguson (Director of Christian Education)

~ Respectfully submitted by Heather Ferguson, Director of Christian Education

Community Service Committee

Our committee obtained four new members, bringing the total number of committee members to 14! We started the year with a service project of providing a meal and "to-go bags" for Our Lady of Salem Shelter at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church. A sub-committee reviewed our budget and made the following adjustments to assist agencies with meeting their demands: increased the Moore Food Pantry from \$2,500 to \$3,500; increased the Shalom Project from \$1,000 to \$2,000; increased Action for Equity from \$3,000 to \$4,000; decreased the Heart Force from \$4,000 to \$3,000.

March Madness Pasta Sauce collection for Crisis Control Ministry was a big success with a total of 388 jars/cans of sauce collected, and NC State was the winner. Pasta sauce collection takes place on the first Sunday of every month and is delivered to Crisis Control Ministry later the following week by a committee member. Our diaper drive took place mid-May through mid-June, and the collected items of diapers and wipes (5 large trash bags) were split between the Shalom Project and the Clemmons Food Pantry. Additionally, we collected a selection of requested toys for Care Net Counseling.

Our committee collected about 75 servings of dessert which were delivered to Ashley Elementary School for teachers and staff at the end of the school year. We held 3 documentary films with expert panelists during the summer months. The films were related to autism, homelessness, and education. These were mostly well-attended except for the education series, but we did not identify a specific cause for low turnout. The Long-Range Planning Committee charged us to come up with a few suggestions we would like to make as a committee for the church's future. These are the top 3 ideas we had: providing a home for adults with special needs to live independently; transitional housing for folks released from prison; supplying food for low-income families as they enter juvenile court proceedings.

Our annual agency Mission Fair was held in September along with a catered lunch. We had a very good turnout of agencies; with only a few not in attendance. In late October several committee members provided and served a meal for the women enrolled in the Flourish Program at the Shalom Project. In early winter we hosted a card-writing event in the library after church. Cards were made with kind sentiments to our friends at El Buen Pastor who have been threatened by Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The congregation of EBP was very appreciative! As is Highland's custom, a Christmas meal was served for about 60 seniors through

The Shepherd's Center. A lovely meal was had while guests enjoyed Christmas music being played by a pianist and each received a large gift bag of necessities. During the season of the Christmas tree in the sanctuary, we collected about 75 twin blankets for the Domestic Violence Shelter and dozens of items for arts and crafts for ABC of NC. Our committee closed the year with the collection and delivery of 250 servings of dessert for the Samaritan Ministry meal on Christmas Eve.

Community Service committee. ~ Gillian Thomas, Chair

Congregational Care Committee

In 2025, the Congregational Care Committee supported our Highland family by reaching out with love, care, and generosity in many different capacities - all to serve God.

Our care team provided meals, transportation to doctors' appointments for those unable to drive, visits to members, flower deliveries, caring cards, birthday cards and birthday phone calls to members 65 years and older, special birthday deliveries to members 90 years and above, and a yellow rose with baby books to families with new babies. We also sent volunteers from our committee to help support the Children's Ministry family Friday Fun Nights. One of our members, Molly Williams, is also a member of the new LGBTQ Ministry Team which falls under our committee.

Here are the other ways that we showed our love and support to our congregation:

- In February, we mailed handmade Valentine's Day cards to Highland members who needed some extra love.
- In March, our members facilitated making cards with our children to send to older folks.
- In April, we delivered Easter lilies to Highland members.
- In May, we sent handwritten cards to our college students.
- In July, we gave out popsicles to parents and children at the gathering for young families.
- In August, we hosted a Back-to-School Bash for teachers and educators at the home of Summer Riley.
- In September, we went to our 90+ members to celebrate them through pop-up parties.
- In October, we hosted the 80+ birthday celebration in the Activity Building, featuring special decorations, along with the congregational luncheon food, birthday cake and lemonade. We also hosted Dr. Ed Shaw to speak about Alzheimer's and dementia.
- In November, we wrote and mailed out cards to our choir members.
- In December, we shared the love and joy of the season by delivering beautiful poinsettia plants to congregational members. We also hosted a Christmas Caroling send-off party for our Highland Carolers. Our last meeting was a Christmas dinner hosted at the home of Susan Doughton.

In Conclusion: We are immensely thankful for the beautiful work from the Prayer Shawl Committee and the Caring Friends too, as they helped support our Congregational Care initiatives.

Special appreciation goes out to Debbie Layman, our supporting pastor over Congregational Care. We were so graciously blessed to have Debbie's love and support as she guided our committee throughout the year. We could always count on her being there with her ongoing thoughtfulness and dedication to our team! We also wish to note our sincere appreciation to Gidget Payne and Joy Hohmann for their continued assistance in so many capacities.

Our committee this year consisted of: Emma Link (Chair), Summer Riley (Vice Chair), Rebecca Schwartz (First Year Deacon), Molly Williams, Diana Smyrl, Pam Carter, Jan Penick, Susan Doughton, Carrie Scott, Patricia Murphy, Mary Mendenhall, Linda Schroeder, Sue Sevin, Becky Reynolds

~ Respectfully Submitted by Emma Link, Congregational Care Committee Chair

Fellowship and Communications Committee

In 2025, the Fellowship Committee increased the number of Fling meals on the first Wednesday and Fellowship meals on the third Sunday each month.

The Fling Meal for January was moved to Wednesday, January 29 to fit holiday schedules. Marshall and Randy Harris's Cook Team provided the meal.

The first Winter Walk at the Downtown Strollway took place on February 2, with 22 walkers and their dogs. On February 9, we supported the youth's Souper Bowl Chili Lunch fundraiser; we also celebrated Debbie Layman's 20th anniversary following the meal. On February 23, we hosted the Acoustic Café featuring our musicians and served popcorn, Chex Mix, baked goods, and a coffee/tea/cocoa bar.

On March 5, we hosted the Fling Meal provided by the Richard and Susie Andrus Cook Team. This event preceded the Ash Wednesday Worship Service. Our second Winter Walk at Long Branch Trail took place on March 9, and our first Fellowship Lunch, catered by Yamas Bowl Buffet, was held on March 23.

Wednesday, April 2, we hosted the Fling Meal provided by the Moore/Fisher Cook Team. On Sunday, April 13, a Spring Stroll took place at Crossnore Park. Sunday, April 20 we hosted an Easter Potluck Breakfast.

On Sunday, May 18, Providence Catering provided a Fellowship Meal. Starting May 25, "Lemonade in the Shade on the Patio" was held after worship each Sunday through Labor Day. This event is once again hosted by the Mike and Summer Riley family.

The committee organized a Winston Salem DASH baseball game for the church community, which took place on Thursday, June 12 and was enjoyed by those who attended.

On July 12, a Summer Walk and Guided Tour took place at Doughton Park near Winston Salem. On July 16, 23, and 30, we celebrated the new Playground and Gathering Place with three evening events featuring kids' activities, food, and live music. Highlights of these events included hot dogs and music by Highland's Acoustic Café (July 16), chicken tenders with music by Celtic Session and Highland Ukelele Strummers (July 23), and hot dogs and Kona Ice treats with performances by Spencer Ascue and other local musicians (July 30).

The annual church picnic at Bolton Park was held on Sunday, August 24. The committee purchased chicken, coleslaw and baked beans from Publix Grocery Catering, along with iced tea from Bojangles. Participants brought either salad or dessert dishes to share.

On Sunday, September 7, Rally Day, Highland committees shared volunteer opportunities for members, and the Men of the Church Cook Team provided breakfast. On Wednesday, September 17, a Kitchen Orientation offered instruction on equipment use, and maintaining cleanliness and food safety in the kitchen. On Sunday, September 21, our committee provided the meal, and the Community Service Committee coordinated the Mission Fair with about 20 of the agencies Highland supports financially being represented. The meal was catered by The Loop Catering.

The October 1 Fling Meal was hosted by the Richard and Susie Andrus Cook Team. Real Q Catering provided the Fellowship Meal on October 19, which also honored church members aged 80 and above.

The November 5 Fling Meal was served by the Moore/Fisher Cook Team. On November 9, a Fall Afternoon Walk took place at C.G. Hill Memorial Park. The Fellowship Lunch was on Sunday, November 16 and catered by Yamas Bowl Buffet, which was also Stewardship Dedication Sunday.

The December 3 Fling Meal was provided by the Marshall and Randy Harris Cook Team. On Saturday, December 13, thirty-eight congregants attended a performance of "A Christmas Carol" at the Little Theatre,

featuring cast member Glenn Otterbacher. On Sunday, December 21, a Potluck Breakfast was held before 11:00 a.m. Worship Service, where participants shared breakfast foods and treats.

~ Respectfully Submitted by Steve Moore, Chair

Finance Committee

In early 2025 the Finance Committee recommended that the Session approve a final budget of \$1,282,108 representing a 3.7% increase over our 2024 budget. The Session approved this budget on January 21, 2025.

During the remainder of 2025, the Finance Committee monitored and reviewed the financial reports of the church. The first half of 2025 saw giving fall below the levels of 2024 by roughly 13%. On the recommendation of the Finance Committee, Highland's Treasurer, Miles Abernethy, communicated this concerning trend to both the Session and the congregation in the form of an email letter in June.

The next five months saw collections improve to the point where, through November, we had received \$1,139,280 vs \$1,053,191 in 2024, approximately an 8% increase YoY. That said, December is historically the church's largest revenue month, and generous giving this December enabled the church to finish the year in a strong position.

The summer of 2025 saw the Finance Committee contemplate long-range planning. We began to consider ways to ensure the continuity of Highland's ministry during an unexpected financial shortfall. One idea we explored was the creation of a Ministry Fund that would operate like the Permanent Fund but without the same restrictions. A few members of the Finance Committee expressed concerns about this model and its alignment with their understanding of scripture. We agreed that an exploratory task force should form to study this idea and gather feedback. Miles is due to form this task force in early 2026 and to begin those conversations.

During the fall of 2025 the Finance Committee collected budget numbers from Highland's other committee chairs to formulate a 2026 Asking Budget. That budget was presented to the Session and Diaconate in October both of whom approved. The recommended budget for 2026 is \$1,325,980.00, representing a 3.55% over the approved 2025 approved budget, is due to be presented to the Diaconate and the Session in January 2026 for final approval.

2025 Finance Committee Members: Neil Gargis (Chair), TR Bowers (Vice-Chair), Megan Ayscue (first year Deacon), Miles Abernethy (Treasurer), Bill Kay, Patrick Simpson, Debbie Patton, Cathy Shaffner, Robin Spainhour, Robbie Grier, Erin Doyle. Ex Officio Members: Randy Harris (Pastor), Joy Hohmann (Business Manager)

My sincere thanks to each committee member for their time and service.

Respectively submitted, J Neil Gargis, Committee Chair 2025

Global Service Committee

The mission of the Global Service Committee is to support mission work and ministry as well as members of the international community here and abroad. We help our church connect with others in the US and around the world in times of hunger, poverty, war, or natural disasters. We educate the congregation about the needs of people through Moments for Mission, coordinating Special Offerings, *Highlights* articles, organizing an Intergenerational Book Club, and Crop Walk organization.

In 2025 this is how we endeavored to fulfill our mission:

On the first Sunday of each month, we collected Five Cents-a-Meal with the children/youth collecting (primarily Cora and Claire Eberle) and GSC members counting the money given. We noted that since having children/youth participate in the collection, the amount given for the Five Cents-A-Meal collection has increased on average from previous years. We continue to use the cannisters the children decorated. There is a Sign-Up Genius for committee members to sign up to assist with the collections.

The Climate Corner articles were submitted by GSC members or members of the Earth Care Team monthly to identify areas that individuals could incorporate into their lives to support climate care initiatives. The Highland website, managed by Barbara Bowman, added helpful links for members to access various resources.

- **January:** The committee did not meet formally. Members of the Committee, Debbie, Terry, Andy and Jim Xu attended the Bread for the World (BfW) State Conference in Raleigh, which was informative, inspiring, and energizing. The focus was on past and current work of the organization and encouraging involvement for Bread For the World(BFW)BfW future goals and work by reaching out to legislators via calls and letters. Their new theme is “Nourish our Future” which has Four main initiatives: College student food insecurity; Global Hunger, WIC, and Child Tax Credit. On January 21, 2025 representatives of the Earth Care Team presented to the Session and Diaconate information on the Earth Care Team initiatives along with the completed application form for the PCUSA. Session and Diaconate approved the submission of the application for Highland to be designated an Earth Care Church through the PCUSA.
- **February:** The GSC members welcomed Jim Xu as our new Deacon on the committee. We approved an advance donation to World Relief in our area of \$2,000. The Committee discussed ways to help in efforts around Helene Recovery through PCUSA. Debbie and Randy are keeping in touch with the needs around the recovery effort. Debbie shared the PCUSA is restructuring the World Missions program and will limit missionaries to 30. Our application for Earth Care Church designation was submitted to PCUSA. ECT has a Sign-Up Genius for collecting for compost coffee grinds, cups, and filters after church each Sunday.
- **March:** Debbie shared Highland’s approval as an Earth Care Church through PCUSA and the designation is now listed on the church website. The Earth Care Team has been meeting and presented financial quotes to GSC on the Memorial Garden project for removing current plants and replacing them with native plants and environmentally minded plants (low water and maintenance needs). The Session approved the quotes and funds which will come from the Memorial Garden Fund for this project.
BfW letter writing was discussed as requests were sent out by the BfW organization. The committee agreed to the plan for information on writing letters to be presented at the Women’s and Men’s Retreats (March and April respectively) to encourage participation. Terry will collect the letters and take to local Legislative offices. Janny will provide the One Great Hour Offering Moment for Mission for the Collection in April. PDA update on Hygiene Kits collection in April discussed and will have information in Highlights for collecting the items during April with packing items on May 4.
- **April:** We collected items given for Hygiene kits. The One Great Hour of Sharing Offering was collected. Twenty-One BfW letters from Women’s retreat were received. ECT initiatives are to use compostable plates, and cups during Fling, dishes that will be washed during the monthly Sunday lunches and compostable take-out containers. Compostable paper towels in restrooms will be collected each Sunday with the coffee grinds collection. The Earth Day Theme was picked for the April 27th sermon with the ECT members doing the Moment for Mission about our church’s climate care initiatives.
- **May:** The committee discussed and proposed ideas for the Long-Range Planning Committee Survey which requested each committee share goals and hopes. The committee appreciated brainstorming and submitted a list including support in these areas: refugee and immigrant involvement, support for Western NC recovery, El Buen Pastor, and solar panels for Highland.
Also in May, **Hygiene items** were collected and packed by Highland’s children and completed by members of the GSC. Bags were taken to the Raleigh office by Terry Sink for distribution.
Budget items discussed included PCUSA discontinuing Pentecost offering (HPC will continue this

offering), making line items of Christmas Joy offering, giving \$500 to ECT work, CWS (Greensboro to receive \$1,000 and \$5,263.18 from Global Mission Endowment Fund to be given to PDA for Helene Relief.

Intergenerational book for Highland's congregation is chosen, *Outcasts United: The Story of a Refugee Soccer Team That Changed a Town* and is scheduled for discussion after church on a Sunday in July or August with invitations given to ALL ages.

Terry Sink and Andy Cundiff presented the work of the GSC via a power point presentation to the Diaconate and shared the opening prayer, devotion and closing prayer.

- **June:** The Children's Offering was received on June 22 for the Children's Hope Alliance. Jim Gallaher, who does legal work on behalf of children, gave the Moment for Mission. Pentecost Offerings Moment for Mission was given by Maggie Collins, a young adult who worked through PCUSA as an intern at the United Nations. Plans were made for the July Intergenerational Book Club. Sue Sevin shared that a new family from Afghan will use a classroom in the Fellowship Hall for tutoring lessons on English. Terry reached out to a PDA representative about work group opportunities for Helene impacted areas. The representative indicated they were looking for week-long commitments from groups at this time.
- **July:** The committee did not meet. The Noticing Nature walk was held July 12 at Doughton park for church members to enjoy and reflect on nature. Intergenerational Book Discussion group met and had a good turn out and discussion of the book *OutCasts: A Soccer Team that Changed a Town*.
- **August:** The Memorial Garden entry area has been prepped (pachysandra pulled with help of youth, Barbara Bowman, Courtney Stevens and Terry Sink) in preparation for planting later in summer. ECT and the Education committee are working on presenting a Sunday class on Winston Salem Recycling done by a representative and a class on the book: *What We Can Do: Climate Options to Guide Sustainable Living*. The committee discussed considerations for the Intergenerational Group planning for 2026 by reaching out to Parents in May/April and for youth to choose a book they would like to discuss in May of 2026 and for dates they can commit to for discussion. Planning work began for the Crop Walk, and it was decided that HPC will be a sponsor again this year. The Crop Walk luncheon was attended by Debbie Layman, Terry Sink and Sue Sevin worked at the Crisis Control Table during the luncheon.
- **September:** Crop Walk planning with dates for inserts to be placed in bulletins and assignments were made for staffing tables at both the Narthex and the Cloverdale doors during October. Thanks to Gidget for help with tri-fold boards. GSC had a table at Rally Day highlighting composting and 5 Cents a Meal. Terry presented on the Crop Walk to the children at the Fourth Friday Fun Night this month, and children make wickets to take home to talk to their parents about the Crop Walk and its importance for helping to reduce hunger. El Buen Pastor did a Moment for Mission on September 14.
- **October:** The ECT along with Highland's Christian Education Committee presented a six-week class on *What we Can Do: Climate Options to Guide Sustainable Living*. The Peacemaking Offering on October 5 was collected, and Triad Restorative Justice was selected to receive the offering. Valerie Glass from this organization provided the Moment for Mission on Sunday morning. A Crop Walk Moment for Mission was presented by Cam Kent. Crop Walk tables were staffed and members gave monetarily either in person or online. The walk was held on October 19 and was a success. Highland collected \$8,550. Planning for the Alternative Gift Market was discussed and areas of gifts were chosen for the congregation to select from. These options include Counseling Center for Children in Black Mountain, Winston Salem Foundation to reduce Winston Salem, Forsyth County Schools debt and Teacher Training in Somalia through PCUSA.
- **November:** The ECT reported the garden has been planted with native plants and that the area looks very nice. The area was watered for the first two weeks. The ECT is also working on environmentally friendly soap and soap dispensers for the restrooms in the Education Building. Terry has been communicating with Heather to consider a Sign-up process for 5 Cents collection and inviting more

children to participate in the collection. Sue Sevin is working on the ornaments for the Alternative Gift Market in December. Funds were given from our Miscellaneous budget line to El Buen Pastor to complete the new floor of their sanctuary.

- **December:** The Alternative Gift Market tables were met with interest and giving! Thanks to Gidget for helping with bulletin boards and trifold. Debbie, Terry, Jim and Jim met to discuss disbursement of remaining funds in the GSC budget; the committee decided on support for the United Nations Food Programme for Gaza; BeLoved Asheville, and Bread for the World. Debbie reminded the group that the Christmas Joy Offering is a line item in our budget this year. Missionary support funds (budgeted line item) previously given to specific missionaries will now be sent to PDA for East Africa work due to missionaries' work ending through the PDA. In these concerning times the congregation sent El Buen Pastor cards showing care, drawing and greetings and were delivered by Gillian Thomas to encourage them in this time. They were well received.

Committee members: Chair Terry Sink, Vice Chair Andy Cundiff, Jim Xu, Jim Gallaher, Sue Sevin, Janny Gauss, Judy Noll, Janice Howerton, and Debbie Layman staff.

~ Submitted respectfully by: Terry Sink

Long-Range Planning Committee

Following the celebration of Highland's 75th anniversary, the Long-Range Planning Committee recognized this milestone as a meaningful moment to pause, give thanks, and look ahead. Inspired by the strong spirit of commitment to our church and its mission, the committee asked an essential question: *What is God calling Highland to be in the years ahead?*

Rather than beginning with predetermined answers, the committee invited the congregation into a shared season of reflection and discernment. We gathered input through conversations with committees and staff, informal dialogue with members across all stages of life, brainstorming with church officers, and a congregational survey of members and friends. This broad and prayerful listening process helped us better understand Highland's strengths, experiences, and hopes for the future.

Several clear themes emerged from what we heard, themes that reflect both Highland's enduring faithfulness and the congregation's aspirations for the years ahead. These include:

- Growing in faith and spiritual formation
- Living our faith beyond the church walls
- Strengthening connection and engagement across generations
- Practicing hospitality, care, and welcome
- Ensuring long-term sustainability and faithful stewardship

Together, these themes provide a framework to guide ministry priorities and decision-making.

Recognizing that some hopes are ready to be pursued now while others will unfold over time, the committee identified four focused initiatives that can realistically be addressed in the new year. Project charters were developed to clarify purpose, goals, and scope, with attention to alignment with Highland's mission and available resources. These initiatives focus on ministry with youth, young adults, and young families; enhancing communications and technology; addressing facility needs; and strengthening the church's financial sustainability.

As we continue this work, the committee is committed to developing a comprehensive Strategic Plan that serves as a living document. A plan that offers direction, focus, and shared purpose while encouraging new energy and faithful action.

One message from the congregational survey stood out clearly: *participation and connection are essential to spiritual nourishment and a true sense of belonging*. That insight affirms what Highland seeks to embody each day.

Together, we are building a future for Highland that is vibrant, faith-filled, and full of promise.

With many thanks and appreciation to committee members Nancy Payne, Tory Daniel, John Bain, Ken Chalk, Ken Fisher, Randy Shields, Mark Whitley and Randy Harris.

Respectfully submitted, Alice Milam, Chair

Membership Committee

The Membership Committee's primary purpose is to recognize and welcome visitors to Highland Presbyterian Church (HPC) and then to shepherd them through the membership process.

New Members:

The Membership Committee focuses on potential new members by:

- Assigning a Visitor Greeter to the Narthex each Sunday responsible for recognizing folks who may be visiting and specifically greeting and helping.
- Providing name tags for the first Sunday of the month and special events.
- Seeking out and welcoming visitors during church services.
- Making phone calls or sending emails to visitors based on visitor card information.
- Hosting new member classes as needed.
- Welcoming groups of new members who join HPC.
- Assigning Fellowship Friends as liaisons to help new members integrate into church life: social gatherings, Sunday school, book groups, etc..
- Sending emails to new members inviting them to specific events such as the annual church picnic or Meet and Eat groups.
- Introducing new members to the congregation by displaying new member photos on the Gallery Hall bulletin board.
- Maintaining the visitor information QR code card displayed in pew racks and on the Visitor Table in the Narthex.

Highlights of 2025:

1. Early in the year the committee decided to welcome new members on the day they joined right after Worship Services. A reception in their honor gave the new members a chance to meet other Membership Committee members as well. At the reception, new members received a church directory as well as an HPC memento (coffee cup, decals, etc.). Two of these receptions were held in 2025.
2. In February our committee received a request from our Pastors to consider making a recommendation to the Session for Highland Presbyterian to have a presence at the Winston Salem Pride Festival for 2025. The recommendation was made and the Session approved. The committee set up a booth on June 14, 2025 and handed out HPC literature that emphasized how our congregation and church welcomes everyone. The committee felt like our presence at the Festival was appreciated and well received by all.
3. Rally Day, September 7, 2025. Rally Day hosts a Ministry Fair Breakfast before Worship with tables set up throughout the Fellowship Hall for different ministries that Highland supports to be able to highlight their services and ministers while answering any questions from church members. Most committees were in attendance, and we were pleased with the interest shown. Seventeen people signed up to participate in our Membership ministries. A sub-committee was formed to see how these extra helping hands can be put to work.

Summary of the 2025 Membership Statistical Report:

- active members as of January 1, 2025: 712
- gained new members: 15

- transferred to other congregations: 7
- members transferred to the Church Triumphant: 7
- transferred to the inactive roll: 1
- active members as of December 31, 2025: 726

Committee members included: Chair Jim Lancaster; Vice Chair Margaret Pendrich; Secretary Kathy Black; Phil Payne, Katie Paterson, Susan Burroughs, Peggy Dunlap, Myra Hannah, Lyn Hux, Gordon Jenkins, Alice Milam, Jamie Blankinship, Lucy Lancaster, Barbara Whitley, with Debbie Layman, ex-officio.

~ Respectfully submitted by Jim Lancaster, Committee Chair

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is charged with nominating church members for elections as Ruling Elders and Deacons. The committee also nominates people to serve on program staff search committees which are elected by the congregation as needed.

It is the only church committee that is mandated by the Book of Order and whose membership is clearly defined. The number of congregational members is always greater than the number of active officers on the committee. At Highland, the committee is composed of three active Elders, one active Deacon, and five congregational members. These congregational members serve staggered three-year terms and are elected at the annual meeting of the congregation. The Pastor serves as an ex-officio member.

We met in March 2025 to begin discussing the process for compiling our slate of officer candidates for the class of 2028. To fulfill this responsibility the committee:

- solicited and received suggested names from the congregation
- compiled a slate of candidates willing to be placed in nomination
- developed an informational brochure about the candidates to share with the congregation
- requested the Session call congregational meetings to place in nomination and to elect the slate of officers as listed below:

Deacons, Class of 2028	Elders, Class of 2028
Megan Bryant	Chad Archer
John Calhoun	John Bain
Caitlin Carr	Linda Collins
Adam Eberle	Erin Doyle
Sue Kent	Jim Gallaher
Pat Kirkman	Elizabeth Gee
Linda Schroeder	John Loftis
James Thomas	Carrie Swing

The above slate was elected by the congregation on August 8, 2025. Randy Harris, Pastor, conducted officer training classes in the Fall of 2025. Officer candidate examinations and approval occurred on December 9, 2025.

Other responsibilities completed by this committee in 2025 included:

- Assigned committee positions for all new officers
- Appointed members for the Permanent Fund Committee: Don Thorup to serve a 3-year at-large term; Megan Ayscue to serve as the Diaconate representative; and John Loftis to serve as the Session representative

- Nominated Corporate Officers who were elected by the Session at the December meeting: Scott Walker, President; Kathy Black, Vice-President; John Bain, Secretary; Miles Abernethy, Treasurer

At the Annual Congregational Meeting in January 2026, the committee will place in nomination the name of two members from the congregation to serve a three-year term on the Nominating Committee, ending in 2028: Jordan Xu and Mike Culler.

Many thanks to the committee for a dedicated year of service. We are very excited about these newly elected officers and grateful for their willingness to serve Highland in this manner.

Committee members, 2025: Officers: Scott Templeton (Vice-Chair), Leslie Kamtman (1st Year Elder), Carol Tash (Diaconate Representative); At-large members: Roberts Bass (2025); Becky Reynolds (2025), Spencer Ayscue (2026), Martha Neely (2026), Mary Mendenhall (2027), and Randy Harris (ex-officio)

Respectfully submitted, Melanie Adams, Committee Chair

Permanent Fund Committee

The Permanent Fund Committee met quarterly via Zoom to review the investment performance and asset allocation for the six funds shown below. A summary of the results of these funds are listed below:

Fund Name	12/31/2024 Balance	Income/Loss Earned	Donations/Bequests	Disbursed Funds	12/31/2025 Balance	2025 Annual Return
Permanent Fund	\$ 850,733	\$ 131,948	\$ 950	\$ 78,970	\$ 904,661	14.6%
Ministry Fund	\$ 271,495	\$ 43,030	\$ 1,000		\$ 315,525	13.6%
Bus Fund	\$ 108,283	\$ 16,299		\$ 3,119	\$ 121,463	13.4%
Global Mission	\$ 103,167	\$ 8,672			\$ 111,839	7.8%
Eleanor Weeks	\$ 33,864	\$ 4,138		\$ 1,920	\$ 36,082	11.5%
Gunn Memorial	\$ 30,189	\$ 4,093		\$ 1,208	\$ 33,074	12.4%
Scholarship Fund	\$ 14,029	\$ 2,422			\$ 16,451	14.7%

In 2025, Highland was able to use monies from the Permanent Fund to finish paying for our new playground as well as the new street sign in front of the sanctuary. In total, \$78,790 in Permanent Fund resources were used in 2025. Additionally, the Gunn Fund made a small distribution, the Bus Fund was utilized, and the Weeks Fund paid for repairs to the pipe organ.

As of December 31, 2025, the Permanent Fund floor amount was \$749,604, which was \$950 higher than the prior year, due to receipt of a bequest. With the total fund balance at December 31, 2025 standing at \$904,661, there is \$155,057 still available to pay for ongoing capital needs of Highland. The available balance fluctuates due to donations and bequests, as well as gains and losses in the stock and bond markets.

The members of the Permanent Fund Committee are grateful for all the donations and bequests that have been made to the Fund over the years. We also want to extend our gratitude to John Hunt for his long service as financial advisor and investment manager for Highland’s investment portfolio.

2025 Members:

Roberts Bass, Chair, At Large
 Scott Walker Elder Representative
 Bryan Link, At-Large

TR Bowers, Diaconate Representative
 Jeff Reynolds, At-Large
 Randy Harris, Ex-Officio

Personnel Committee

As a committee of our Session, the Personnel Committee works closely with our Pastor as Head of Staff to establish and implement the personnel policies of Highland Presbyterian Church. We endeavor to encourage and support each of our staff members as they serve the church in ministry. Each committee member is

assigned to a staff member in the role of Advocate, charged with keeping in regular contact with that staff member and relaying to the Committee ways that we can offer support throughout the year.

In addition to offering regular staff support, in 2025 the Committee:

- Finalized updates to the Personnel Policy Manual in keeping with changes made by PCUSA General Assembly and Board of Pensions regarding pastors' compensation and benefits. Additionally, the committee clarified and updated Highland's own policies to define part time staff roles, compensation and benefits. This completed document was presented to and approved by Highland's Session in March 2025.
- Celebrated Debbie Layman's twentieth anniversary at Highland with a reception at the Super Bowl of Caring Lunch February 9th. Debbie had requested we postpone recognition of her October 2025 anniversary so she would not overshadow Highlands' 75th anniversary!
- Committee member Ken Chalk also serves on the Long-Range Planning's Strategic Planning Committee. Ken championed Personnel's thoughts and concerns back to Long-Range Planning.
- Gidget Payne was presented with a gift card in April in recognition of her 10th anniversary.
- Honored the entire staff with a staff appreciation dinner August 9th.
- Randy's 30th Anniversary of ordination was October 8th. Randy was ordained at First Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Georgia on October 8, 1995.
- On Monday, October 20th as part of Staff Appreciation Month the staff received breakfast and gift cards of appreciation.
- We submitted to Session a budget request to include a cost-of-living adjustment to staff salaries for 2026.

Our committee is thrilled yet saddened to accept Joy Hohmann's retirement announcement effective in February. The Session has approved a search committee of Miles Abernethy, T.R. Bowers, Cathy Shaffner, Garry Russ (chair) and staff liaison Randy Harris.

Highland is blessed to have such a dedicated, talented and creative staff. It is the great pleasure of the Personnel Committee to work with them and support them as they strive to bring their best to their jobs. We thank God for the gift of Highland and the family of ministry that we are together!

Respectfully submitted, Gary Russ Committee Chair 2025

Elders Garry Russ, John Barksdale and Ken Chalk; at-large members Miles Abernethy, Kristine Elliott and Cathy Shaffner; and staff liaison Randy Harris.

Property Committee

Property Committee Members: Debbie Cesta, Marshall Harris, John Halverson, Jon McKinney, Jim Wilson, Steve Zorn, Ralph Burroughs, Jim Swing, Mark Whitley, and Bob Collette
Joy Homann and Randy Harris (Staff Liaisons)

The mission of the Property Committee of Highland Presbyterian Church has been to glorify God through the care and protection of God's house, and to be responsive to concerns of the congregation we serve. In so doing, we honor a facility that is a physical representative of our Lord in our community; and those of First Presbyterian, Winston-Salem and others, who, in 1949 established the Highland community of Christians, and in 1955, gave us the beautiful facility in which we worship today. Our goals include responding responsibly to the needs and being accountable for treating God's physical gifts to us with respect and conscious good judgement."

The Property Committee worked on many projects this year, including:

- Spring Clean-up Day in April
- Fall Clean-up Day
- Paver bricks in walkway leading to main entrance of AB and pothole in parking lot have been repaired.
- Our new Playground and Gathering Garden has been born!
- A kitchen task force has been formed – to monitor and make sure the kitchen is in working order and well cared for
- Peeling/rot on front of church and narthex has been repaired
- Mail room floor has been replaced
- Patio lights have been adjusted to lowest setting
- New lights have been installed at Chapel and Office entrances
- Sheds in back lot were cleaned out and organized
- Step lights leading up to the main entrance of the Sanctuary have been repaired
- Consideration has been given to establishing a “Technology Committee”. Discussion and plans for this will be carried into 2026

~ Respectfully submitted by Marshall Harris and Debbie Cesta (co-chairs)

Stewardship Committee

In 2025, the Stewardship Committee membership included Kyle Hansen (Chair), Pam Collette (Vice-Chair), Andy Scott (First-year Deacon), Jim Gallaher (Member At-Large), Scott Walker (Member At-Large), and Randy Harris (Staff Liaison).

The Stewardship Committee is charged with: (1) the development and planning for the annual stewardship campaign, securing a commitment of money, time, and talent from the congregation, (2) coordination with the Membership Committee on Time and Talent Dedication Form submissions from all active members, and (3) evaluation of giving modalities and updating materials where necessary. The budget for this committee covers its reading materials, printing and postage costs, and the annual review audit.

Early in the year, the committee completed a book study highlighting church stewardship processes and strategy – *Ask, Thank, Tell*. This was used to assess opportunities to improve the existing structure and process.

The stewardship theme was developed and planned during the spring and summer. “For Such a Time as This,” from the story of Esther, was selected as the theme. When Queen Esther faced a moment of decision, Mordecai reminded her that perhaps she had come to her position “for such a time as this.” It was a moment that required courage, trust, and a willingness to step into God’s purpose.

The campaign was supported throughout the fall via communication in *Highlights*, an updated Stewardship Brochure showcasing the budgeted areas of ministry, and during Worship through Moments for Mission. Areas highlighted included children’s Sunday school, worship technology, and Crisis Control. We celebrated Stewardship Dedication Sunday, on November 16th, with excitement and anticipation of Highland’s continued growth and service.

At initial intake in December, we received 176 pledges totaling \$943,676.00. Committee members began direct outreach to members who had yet to return pledges and encouraged support of Highland *For Such a Time as This*.

Respectfully submitted by Kyle Hansen, Stewardship Committee Chair 2025.

Worship Committee

The Worship Committee is responsible for coordinating preparation for and execution of all the elements of the worship services at Highland, including Sunday morning services and all special services during the year

such as Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Our duties are varied, from ordering lilies for Easter to hanging streamers “in mid-air” for Pentecost to cleaning melted wax from the carpet and upholstery after the Christmas Eve service, all of which bring our committee members joy. Some of our most significant activities for 2025 are detailed below.

Communion is a key responsibility of our committee, with preparation for the communion services on the first Sundays of the month and as well as for any special services. Our committee members are dedicated to giving their time and energy to make sure that everything is ready and in place for every communion service. We coordinated the scheduling of Elders to serve communion and ensured that they were comfortable with their tasks. We prepared the elements and placed them on the communion table. We prepared baskets of communion elements so that the Elder of the Month and the Deacon of the Month could take communion to members who were not able physically able to be at the service.

Prelude Participation is relatively new at Highland, and our committee was responsible for enlisting Highland members and their family members of all ages to light the candles on the retable, place the Bible on the lectern, pour water into the baptismal font, and place the Communion chalice and plate on the Communion table during the prelude. We had enthusiastic support in this first full year, with 55 members of the congregation taking part in 2025, and there is always room for more!

Members of the committee attended a Fourth Friday family event and brought several of the children across to the sanctuary to show them how the Prelude Participation was done each Sunday. The children were given the opportunity to try all of the duties and seemed anxious to participate on a Sunday morning.

The Arts in Worship team made significant contributions to the beauty of our sanctuary for worship with several new members of the congregation joining this active group. The team created beautiful new Easter banners, and they coordinated changing the banners in the sanctuary as needed for the occasion and dates of the church year. The team also took on the task of updating the Chrismon’s that are on the sanctuary Christmas tree each year. The members of the team found that many of them needed refurbishing or replacing. They planned and held a Chrismon’s workshop in which Highland members repaired a number of existing Chrismon’s and made about 25 new ones for this year’s tree. Beautiful new paraments for the lectern, pulpit, and communion table were another project of this team. They designed and made the paraments, which are beautiful and unique to Highland Presbyterian Church.

Beautiful music has been a part of Highland Presbyterian Church’s identify for years, and our committee worked with Chris Gilliam, the Music Director to support the music programs at Highland, including the Chancel Choir, the Children’s Choir, and the Handbell Choir. All these choirs enhanced our worship experiences, with Chris recruiting musicians to add their talents to our special services.

Members of the Worship Committee in 2025 were Betty Jones (Chair), Scott Miller (Vice-chair), Hannah Duane (Secretary), Susan Burroughs, Miriam Davie, Wendy Guerry, Leslie Kamtman, Pat Kirkman, and Sara Smith. Randy Harris and Chris Gilliam served as ex-officio members. The committee strived to provide a welcoming, safe and inclusive worship environment for the Highland church family and visitors.

Respectfully Submitted, Betty Jones, Chair

Youth and Young Adult Ministry Committee

Committee members for this year included Robbie Grier, chair; Terry Mixon, vice chair; Emily Collins, first year elder and at-large member Katina Barksdale.

In the Summer of 2025, Courtney established a Youth Advisory Council responsible for planning/facilitating youth activities.

OVERVIEW:

During 2025, our committee focused on building relationships throughout our church family with intergenerational offerings. As noted below, some of the highlights of this included the churchwide Souper Bowl lunch provided by the youth; walking in the annual CROP Walk, and participation in the annual Christmas Caroling.

The Y&YA Committee and Youth Advisory Committee worked closely with Courtney to plan ahead and establish a calendar for the parents and youth. With all the demands placed on our Youth with school and sports activities, we strived to give parents a heads-up on our planned activities. We feel this gave us the best attendance possible for each of our gatherings.

Each month we strived to provide a mix of both spiritual/faith-based and fun activities. As part of our planning ahead process, we chose the one Sunday of each month as a time for family sabbath time. Other Sundays included a fun night, service project, and lunch out after church for fellowship.

YOUTH HIGHLIGHTS

Spring 2025

- Sexuality Retreat for Parents and Youth
- Mystery Trip
- Volunteering/serving/worshiping at Samaritan Ministries
- Souper Bowl of Caring Offering and Churchwide Lunch
- Youth Sunday
- Youth Bowling Outing
- High Ropes Course
- Rekindling Kindness Family Event
- Senior High End of Year Dinner and Senior Celebration at home of Mark Queen and Harry Hall
- Middler Youth Fellowship Celebration at Surge Trampoline Park
- Graduate recognition

Summer 2025

- Eurovision Final Watch Party
- Senior High Montreat
- Youth Ice Cream Week
- Massanetta Middle School Conference
- Youth Service Week
- Senior High Service Trip to Northern Georgia
- Quest for the Best - French Fries
- Big Chill Ice Cream

Fall/Winter 2025

- Youth fall kickoff with family Kickball/cookout at Miller Park
- Youth Outing to Corn Maze
- Middler Service Retreat
- CROP Walk
- Youth Agape Meal
- Senior High Fall Retreat
- Christmas Shopping for Brenner Children's hospital
- Participation in Church Caroling

YOUNG ADULTS

The Young Adult group continues to organize frequent opportunities for service and fellowship, meeting most Thursday nights. We are happy to see many of them stepping into leadership roles with Highland. Their participation is critical for the future of our church.

The Youth and Young Adult Committee is proud to be an active group, serving such a vital role within the youth and young adults of our church. We appreciate the support, both financially and through the active involvement of our church family.

~ Respectfully submitted, Robbie Grier, Committee Chair



Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Loving God and Serving our Neighbors as
a Grateful • Vibrant • Connected • Responsive people
through the *grace* of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the *love* of God, and the *fellowship* of the Holy Spirit

As *grateful* people of God,
we prayerfully shape our common life
around corporate worship that is
refreshingly traditional,
musically alive,
deeply biblical and
joyfully intergenerational.

As a *vibrant* community of faith,
we are a diverse priesthood of believers where
inquisitive children,
lively youth, and
faithfully searching adults
come together as we
thoughtfully consider scripture, tradition, and
what it means to live as God's people
engaging pressing issues of our day.

As a *connected* fellowship of believers,
we reach out enthusiastically with love and care.
Rejoicing in times of celebration,
bearing one another's burdens in times of struggle,
we share in the wondrous workings
of God's grace in our lives.

As a *responsive* household of faith,
we are sent forth to bear witness
to God's reconciling reign in our community and our world.
Joining with Christ in his work of love, peace and justice,
we seek to overcome the barriers that divide us,
particularly the challenges of racism and poverty.
Inspired by the Spirit, we share God's good gifts
with generous and energetic commitment.

Highland Presbyterian Church is a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
This is a statement of our mission and vision as a congregation, approved by the Session on August 11, 2009