

Highland Presbyterian Church

Maryville, Tennessee



A Congregation of The Presbytery of East Tennessee
The Synod of Living Waters
The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Annual Report of 2024

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**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PASTOR OF
HIGHLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MARYVILLE, TENNESSEE
AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION, JANUARY 19, 2025**

At a Presbytery meeting in 2024, I found myself talking with another pastor and he asked me, “So Highland is a Matthew 25 Church, a More Light Congregation, and Earth Care too???” I smiled and told him it was true, and he responded, “Highland should get some sort of medal declaring yourself “Justice Church.” I laughed, but also agreed he was onto something.

We obviously don’t do what we do for medals or the affirmation of other churches, we do what we do because we have felt God’s calling on our life. The mission priorities of Highland have helped guide this congregations for many years and our current one reflect our sense of where the Holy Spirit is guiding us to do work now. I’m so proud of our congregation and the work that has been done these past few years, but in order for us to continue the work and continue helping people, we need your involvement more than ever.

As we enter 2025, one of my big goals will be for us to strengthen our committee structure at the church. It’s always a good Presbyterian joke to say that we will form a committee to make sure that something is taken care of, but there is a lot of truth behind the humor. Our committees are where the heart of our work and mission lie, and it is in these spaces that we have a greater understanding of the work that needs to be done. Each committee has a particular focus in the church to ensure that mission continues, our heaters are working, our Sunday school class has a good lesson plan, and so much more. My hope and prayer for this year is that you will find a place where you can serve and feel God’s Spirit moving among us.

I give thanks to God all the time for being called to be your pastor and for the work we have done together.

Thanks and blessings,

Rev. Matthew Benz-Whittington

Pastor, Highland Presbyterian Church

HIGHLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT

Highland Presbyterian Church seeks to be a diverse and inclusive Christian Community as we embody the love and forgiveness of Jesus by serving the community and the world, drawing people to Christ.

The Staff

Pastor	Rev. Matthew Benz-Whittington
Choir Director & Organist	Jussara Horton
Office Administrator	William Martin
Bookkeeper	Rebecca Wade
Nursery Worker	Macy Hunt
Sunday School Teacher	Jenny Ribble

The Session

Class of 2024	Elan Lloyd, Susan Ambler, Jeff Bayy
Class of 2025	Charlie Wortman, Tracey Farr, Eleanor Wills
Class of 2026	Bruce Clifford, Sarah Dennis, David Kemp
Treasurer	Pat Woody
Clerk of Session	Elan Lloyd

Nominating Committee Jeff Bay, Elan Lloyd

Nominating Committee's recommendation of the following members for class of 2027 are Catherine Raspberry, Martha Vargas, David Woody.

The Nominating Committee needs three volunteers for 2025.

**Highland Presbyterian Church
Maryville, Tennessee
Annual Congregational Meeting Minutes
Sunday, January 28, 2024**

Moderator/Call to Order/Opening Prayer: Moderator Rev. Matthew Benz-Whittington called the Stated Annual Meeting of the Congregation of Highland Presbyterian Church to order with prayer on Sunday, January 28, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. in the church sanctuary.

Attendance/Quorum: The Clerk verified that the meeting quorum was met, with more than 23 members attending.

Reason for Stated Meeting: the Stated Annual Meeting of the Congregation of Highland Presbyterian Church was held in accordance with the Book of Order G-1.0501, which requires "The congregation shall hold an annual meeting...for any or all of the purposes appropriate for congregational consideration." The February 28, 2024, meeting was held to elect the next class of elders, announce the 2024 Nominating Committee, approve the pastor's Terms of Call, and present the new budget for 2024.

Business: The congregation was provided copies of the Annual Report of 2024, which included the Pastor's Report, 2023 Called Congregational Meeting Minutes, Highland's Mission Statement, the Membership Report, Committee Reports, the Pastor's Terms of Call, the Budget, and the Funds report.

Pastor Matthew Benz-Whittington introduced the nominees for the elder class of 2026: Sarah Dennis, Bruce Clifford, and David Kemp. Also introduced were Susan Ambler and Jeff Bay, who will fill 2 vacancies left in the class of 2024. All nominees were unanimously approved by member vote.

Pastor Matthew Benz-Whittington announced the Nominating Committee for 2024: Jan Bell, Elan Lloyd, and Jeff Bay. Two additional positions on the Nominating Committee will need to be filled from the congregation at a later date, as there were no volunteers from members at the meeting.

After introducing the Pastor's Terms of Call, Pastor Matthew Benz-Whittington left the room while members voted on the Terms. The Terms were unanimously approved by member vote, without question.

The 2024 Budget, approved by Session, was presented. There were no questions or discussion.

Rich Schenk, long-time Treasurer at Highland Presbyterian Church, was honored for his service. He was presented a plaque by Pastor Matthew Benz-Whittington. Going forward, treasurer duties will be performed by a Finance Committee.

Adjournment: It was moved and seconded to adjourn the Annual Congregational Meeting. The Meeting adjourned with prayer by Pastor Matthew Benz-Whittington at approximately 10:15 a.m.

Rev. Matthew Benz-Whittington, Moderator

Elder Diane Brown, Clerk of Session

Membership Report

January 21, 2024

104 Members

o Transfer of Membership

+4 New members

-2 Death

January 19, 2025

106 Members

Annual Report from Building & Grounds Committee

Members and friends of Building and Grounds include David Kemp- chair, Don Kilgore, Sandy Kilgore, Leonard Blankner, Abigail Blankner, Bruce Clifford, Diane Brown, Sarah Dennis, Martha Vargas, Whitney Erickson, David Woody, Pat Woody, Darrin Devault, Rich Schenk, and Matthew Benz-Whittington ex-officio. Many hands make the work light!

Last year we did not do any major renovation or remodeling. The 2023 Committee left the physical plant in good shape, and there were no major surprises to deal with. We took care of maintenance items in the physical plant as they came up, and solved a few problems with the building, among them being a leaky toilet, a broken window, a sagging gutter, and a misdirected downspout pouring rainwater into the Burchfield House cellar. The pastor's office is overheating in summer. After investigating adding interior storm windows we decided to have solar film installed on the windows in the pastor's office and the two parlors. An estimate was accepted, and now we are waiting for the work to be done. Outside we kept the shrubbery trimmed and did some heavy pruning in several areas. A dead dogwood tree was removed. Some of us worked on the garden in concert with Sustainability. A permanent sprinkler system on a timer was installed.

This February we will have new mulch delivered to add to our playground. The congregation is invited to help shovel and rake this into place.

Respectfully,
David Kemp

Mission Committee, Annual Report

The Mission Committee worked in 2024 on the following:

- Continued to support local missions of Family Promise, Good Neighbors, Sunset Gap, Gateway to Independence, Habitat for Humanity.
- Financially supported programs of PCUSA through the Theological Education Fund, East Tennessee Presbytery, General Assembly of PCUSA.
- The Mission Committee provided Moment for Missions for the four PCUSA Special Offerings: One Great Hour of Sharing, Pentecost Offering, Peace and Global Witness, and the Christmas Joy Offering.
- The Malipo Family continued to be a Mission focus with monthly funds being sent to the family and emergency needs addressed as needed.
- The Mission Committee continues to support the Free Little Neighborhood.
- Mission continued to support our Matthew 25 initiative as evidenced by the programs we support.

Goals for next year:

- Continued support of organizations that work to alleviate poverty and address food insecurity in Blount County.
- To broaden our support of programs in support of Matthew 25 and the LGBTQ+ community.

Hospitality Committee, Annual Report

The Hospitality Committee was happy to start the new year off with a potluck lunch after our Congregational meeting. Fellowship meals at Highland are always special and uplifting. The monthly snacks that we provide on Communion Sundays seem to be another wonderful fellowship time. We were all sorry to see Sandy Miller make the decision to move to North Carolina but enjoyed sending her off with a reception after church. Our annual Easter egg hunt is always a treat for so many and stuffing the eggs for this event is a pleasure. We were honored to be asked to help with the reception after Bruce Watt's funeral, one of our founding members. His wisdom and jokes are sorely missed. Fred Erickson was honored and remembered by many at a delicious lunch provided by his family. Our committee was privileged to be able to help serve at this wonderful gathering of his family, friends and church family. We once again had graduating seniors and were happy to provide a small reception for them after church where they were recognized. Our last fellowship gathering was our annual soup lunch. With many choices and wonderful fellowship it was declared a great success. The money raised was all given to help pay down the accessibility fund balance. Our committee once again was happy to provide opportunities for fellowship for our dedicated congregation.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy White for the Hospitality Committee

2024 Sustainability Committee Report

Presented by Élan Lloyd

In 2024, with the grace of God, the Sustainability Committee accomplished a great deal. We are pleased to report some of the highlights from the past year. Highland's small and mighty efforts around Earth Care and the Bounty Garden include:

- In March, Highland was recertified by the PCUSA as an Earth Care Congregation.
- The Sustainability Committee hosted two compost sales that brought in close to \$2,000 toward our accessibility entrance payoff goal.
- This year, our primary focus was on the Bounty Garden. After Bruce Clifford installed a water connection to save on manual watering efforts, the garden crew planted seedlings and seeds with help from the Highland children.

We estimate that the garden grew 30 lbs of green beans, 50 lbs of okra, 20 pounds of peppers, 50-plus pounds of tomatoes, and about 15 pounds of watermelon. The garden also produced flowers for about 8-10 weeks of worship bouquets.

The congregation also helped us harvest after worship on a handful of Sundays through some "crop mobs," which helped lighten the load during the most productive months. Each week, Marie Erickson collected what we harvested and drove it to Community Food Connection.

Our efforts were noticed by the Blount County Food Connection, which said we were the only church in town growing food for the food bank. This notable distinction earned us a cover story in The Daily Times, which helped us spread the word about Earth Care and food justice as one part of Highland's mission.

To wrap up the garden season and honor the past work of the Bounty Garden at Highland, the Sustainability Committee dedicated a framed art print to the church. At the close of the season, we made the decision not to pursue a garden in 2025, but rather to work toward making the entire effort more sustainable through seeking community partnerships and grants.

- Elan was invited to speak about Highland's sustainability efforts at the summer Presbytery Meeting at John Knox Center. There, she talked about how we became an Earth Care Congregation, our focus on justice, and our efforts with the Bounty Garden. This opportunity put her in connection with other green teams throughout the Presbytery.

Our connection with the green team at New Providence Presbyterian Church was reinforced through this meeting, and we are now working with them on a film screening

for 2025.

- It was determined at the end of 2024 that Highland would have enough points to retain the Earth Care Congregation designation.

Faith Formation, Annual Report

We continue to be thankful for the partnership with Maryville College and the Church and Scholars Scholarship that provides one to two Maryville College students to teach our children's Sunday school class. In Spring of 2024, we had two students with us, Rachel Ealy and Jenny Ribble. Our Lenten education series was the book study *The Desert of Compassion* which featured a Tuesday night Zoom session and a Wednesday in person session. A big decision was made to bring back a Sunday school hour before worship with an adult class taking place in the Parlor and Pastor Matthew and Jenny Ribble teaching an adult class upstairs in the Burchfield House. We let the children throw out options for what we would study this year, and Jewish history and Jewish Holidays were how we decided to begin the year. Participation in the Small and Mighty Youth partnership in our presbytery continues to be a great addition for our youth ministry.

Worship Committee, Annual Report

We had another wonderful year of worship and continue to stream our worship online for those who cannot make it for in person or those who are traveling. We celebrated communion every month on the first Sunday. Our Easter worship was well attended as was our Christmas Eve Service. Thanks to the elders who helped to serve communion and clean up afterwards. Pastor Matthew led us through a Lenten sermon series on *The Pastoral Care of Jesus* and we used Sanctified Art's Advent series *Words for the Beginning*.

Pastor's Terms of Call for 2025

Effective salary

Cash Salary	\$25,360
Automobile expense	\$750
Housing Allowance	\$27,000
Social Security/Medicare	\$ 4136
Pension and Medical	\$22,514
Continuing Education Allowance	\$ 2000.00

Total \$74,815

Paid Vacation Five (5) Weeks

Two (2) Weeks of Study Leave

Budget 2024	2024 Budget		2025 Final
INCOME			
Building Use Donations	2,000		2,000
Carryover from prior year	0		6,094
Non-Pledged Giving	25,000		25,906
Pledged Giving	126,804		119,290
Investment Income	10,000		12,500
GRAND TOTAL, INCOME	163,804		165,790
EXPENSES			
Pastor Effective Salary			
Salary	27,360		25,360
Housing	25,000		27,000
TOTAL	52,360		52,360
Pastor Other Expenses & Prof. Expense Acct			
Medical and Pension	15,569	20,420	22,514
Social Security	4,136		4,136
Pastor Car/Mileage	750		750

Pastor's Education	2,000	2,000
TOTAL	22,455	29,400
Staff Payroll & Payroll Taxes		
Administrative Manager	8,923	9,102
Bookkeeping	3,600	4,800
Choir Director/Organist	14,190	14,474
Church Portion Social Security (Payroll Taxes)	2,500	2,500
Nursery & SS Teachers	4,500	2,500
Organist Supply	750	750
Pulpit Supply	1,200	1,000
TOTAL	35,663	35,126
Utilities		
Electricity & Water (City of Maryville)	5,000	5,000
Gas (Atmos Energy)	3,300	3,300
Telephone & Internet (Bellsouth)	1,200	1,200
TOTAL	9,500	9,500
Office		
Insurance	10,000	10,000
Office Equipment	1,000	1,000
Office Supplies	1,750	1,500
Payroll Service	900	900
Software & Computer Maintenance	1,000	1,000
TOTAL	14,650	14,400
Maintenance		
Church Maintenance Inside	5,000	3,500
Custodial Maintenance	2,400	2,400

Grounds Maintenance Outdoor		8,000	6,000
TOTAL		15,400	11,900
Faith Formation			
Adult Education		150	100
Sunday School Materials		200	100
Education & Devotional Materials		100	100
TOTAL		450	300
Worship & Music			
Choral Sheet Music (Adult & Children Choir)		200	200
Copyright Licenses		515	515
Organ Repair		200	0
Piano Tuning		600	600
Worship Supplies		0	0
TOTAL		1,515	1,315
Hospitality, Caring and Concern		300	150
TOTAL		300	150
Outreach		100	100
TOTAL		100	100
Sustainability		300	200
TOTAL		300	200
Highland Mission			
Local Mission	Blount EAC	0	0
	Family Promise	1,000	1,000
	Gateway to Independence	600	600

Good Neighbors	1,000	1,000
Habitat for Humanity	500	500
Maryville College (campus ministry)	100	100
A Place to Stay	500	500
Sunset Gap	100	100
Earth Care	250	250
More Light Presbyterian	250	250
Matthew 25	250	250
Undesignated	1,000	1,000
Shared Mission	2,000	2,000
Refugee Outreach	4,200	3,600
TOTAL	11,750	11,150
GRAND TOTAL, EXPENSES	164,443	165,901

Highland Presbyterian Church

Budget vs. Actuals: 2024 Budget - FY24 P&L

January - December 2024

	TOTAL		
	ACTUAL	BUDGET	REMAINING
Revenue			
INCOME			
Building Use Donations	1,221.00	2,000.00	779.00
Investment Income		10,000.00	10,000.00
Non-Pledged Giving	27,866.50	25,000.00	-2,866.50
Pledged Giving	140,044.95	126,804.00	-13,240.95
Total INCOME	169,132.45	163,804.00	-5,328.45
Total Revenue	\$169,132.45	\$163,804.00	\$ -5,328.45
GROSS PROFIT	\$169,132.45	\$163,804.00	\$ -5,328.45
Expenditures			
66000 Payroll Expenses			
Company Contributions			
Health Insurance	65.00		-65.00
Total Company Contributions	65.00		-65.00
Total 66000 Payroll Expenses	65.00		-65.00
ADMINISTRATION			
Pastor Expenses			
A Pastor's Effective Salary	0.00		0.00
Housing Allowance	24,999.96	25,000.00	0.04
Pastor's Salary	27,360.00	27,360.00	0.00
Total A Pastor's Effective Salary	52,359.96	52,360.00	0.04
Pastor's Other Expenses			
Medical and Pension	14,806.45	15,569.00	762.55
Pastor Social Security	4,136.04	4,136.00	-0.04
Pastor's Car	814.01	750.00	-64.01
Pastor's Expense and Education	2,000.00	2,000.00	0.00
Total Pastor's Other Expenses	21,756.50	22,455.00	698.50
Total Pastor Expenses	74,116.46	74,815.00	698.54
Staff Payroll			
Administrative Manager	8,218.57	8,923.00	704.43
Bookkeeping	5,327.51	3,600.00	-1,727.51
Choir Director	13,812.56	14,190.00	377.44
Church Portion Social Security	2,131.43	2,500.00	368.57
Nursery & Sunday School Teacher	3,308.11	4,500.00	1,191.89
Organ Supply	1,350.00	750.00	-600.00
Pulpit Supply	986.05	1,200.00	213.95
Total Staff Payroll	35,134.23	35,663.00	528.77
Total ADMINISTRATION	109,250.69	110,478.00	1,227.31
FAITH FORMATION			
Adult Education	128.87	150.00	21.13
Education and Devotional Material		100.00	100.00

Highland Presbyterian Church

Budget vs. Actuals: 2024 Budget - FY24 P&L

January - December 2024

	TOTAL		
	ACTUAL	BUDGET	REMAINING
Sunday School Materials		200.00	200.00
Total FAITH FORMATION	128.87	450.00	321.13
Highland Mission			
Local Mission			
A Place to Stay	500.00	500.00	0.00
Earth Care	179.98	250.00	70.02
Family Promise	1,000.00	1,000.00	0.00
Gateway to Independance	600.00	600.00	0.00
Good Neighbors	1,000.00	1,000.00	0.00
Habitat for Humanity	500.00	500.00	0.00
Maryville College		100.00	100.00
Matthew 25		250.00	250.00
More Light Presbyterian	250.00	250.00	0.00
Sunset Gap	100.00	100.00	0.00
Undesignated	752.32	1,000.00	247.68
Total Local Mission	4,882.30	5,550.00	667.70
Refugee Outreach	4,200.00	4,200.00	0.00
Shared Mission	1,000.00	2,000.00	1,000.00
Total Highland Mission	10,082.30	11,750.00	1,667.70
HOPITALITY, CARING AND CONCERN	50.97	300.00	249.03
MAINTENANCE			
Church Maintenance Inside	2,671.26	5,000.00	2,328.74
Custodial Maintenance	2,380.00	2,400.00	20.00
Grounds Main Outdoor	4,440.00	8,000.00	3,560.00
Total MAINTENANCE	9,491.26	15,400.00	5,908.74
OFFICE			
Insurance	9,702.50	10,000.00	297.50
Office Equipment	1,092.60	1,000.00	-92.60
Office Supplies	2,984.84	1,750.00	-1,234.84
Payroll Service	104.65	900.00	795.35
Software & Computer Maintenance	1,715.18	1,000.00	-715.18
Total OFFICE	15,599.77	14,650.00	-949.77
OUTREACH	20.54	100.00	79.46
SUSTAINABILITY		300.00	300.00
UTILITIES			
Electricity and Water	5,505.13	5,000.00	-505.13
Gas	2,497.63	3,300.00	802.37
Telephone and Internet	1,146.76	1,200.00	53.24
Total UTILITIES	9,149.52	9,500.00	350.48
WORSHIP & MUSIC			
Choral Sheet Music	44.98	200.00	155.02
Copy Licenses		515.00	515.00

Highland Presbyterian Church

Budget vs. Actuals: 2024 Budget - FY24 P&L

January - December 2024

	TOTAL		
	ACTUAL	BUDGET	REMAINING
Organ Repair		200.00	200.00
Piano Tuning	270.00	600.00	330.00
Total WORSHIP & MUSIC	314.98	1,515.00	1,200.02
Total Expenditures	\$154,153.90	\$164,443.00	\$10,289.10
NET OPERATING REVENUE	\$14,978.55	\$ -639.00	\$ -15,617.55
NET REVENUE	\$14,978.55	\$ -639.00	\$ -15,617.55

FUNDS REPORT

As of December 31, 2024

Funds Available for Budget Needs

Checking Account	\$	36,225.49
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Amount available for other funds and budget items

\$36,225.49

SPECIAL FUNDS

Computer Equipment

Accounts Payable

-
-\$287.48

Building and Grounds Committee

Accessibility Fund

\$7,502.86

(Used for loan payments of \$416.67 per month to Presbytery; loan balance: \$28,915.83)

Playground Fund

1,402.66

8,905.52

Faith Formation Committee

Education

\$135.00

Payroll Fund

\$0.00

Youth Fundraising Account

48.18

Youth Conference Fund

13.07

196.25

Worship and Music Committee

Music Department Fund

-

(\$250 added in memory of Diane Robinson, Melissa Meade's mother)

Hospitality Committee

-

Mission Committee

Refugee Fund

Refugee General

(7.26)

Refugee Housing

PCA: Disaster Assistance

-

Cuba Fund

473.30

Garden Fund

478.73

PCA: Presbyterian Giving Fund

-

Free Little Neighborhood

57.49

More Light

2.20

Hunger Offering

Heifer International

100.00

1,104.46

PCUSA Special Offerings

Christmas Joy

\$889.00

Pentecost Offering

373.00

One Great Hour

-

Peace and Global Witness

-

1,262.00

Outreach Committee

Gateway to Independence

111.31

(from Presbytery Grant, designated for parties hosted by Highland for Gateway)

Sustainability Committee

3,258.21

Happy Highlanders	21.35	
Maryville College Scholarship Fund	1,092.00	
Total Special Funds & Accounts Payable		<u>\$15,663.62</u>

MEMORIALS AND BEQUESTS

Designated Memorials

Jeff Schenk Children & Youth Church Camps	1,650.00	
Jennifer White: Children's Books	\$163.64	
Lloyd Fretwell: Landscape and Building Exterior	4,963.13	
Moonyean Bell: Fellowship Transportation	122.32	
Ronald Fretwell: Children and Youth Programs	1,665.37	
Ruth & Bill Schenk: Building Interior	<u>2,658.92</u>	11,223.38

Undesignated Memorials

Wanda Hatcher	\$ 435.79	
(Up to \$500 approved by Session for bells, chimes, and piano maintenance, not yet spent)		
Mildred Engelhart	100.00	
Chuck and Pat Pollock	-	
Colwell Family	-	
Fannie Boruff	-	
Nancy Davis	-	
Carol Blankner Memorial	-	
Dotty Bushing Memorial	<u>2,708.68</u>	\$3,244.47

Undesignated Bequests

Catherine Strawbridge Foundation	-	
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Total Memorials & Bequests		14,467.85
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Total Special Funds, Memorials & Bequests		<u>\$30,131.47</u>
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Funds Available for Budget Needs		<u>\$6,094.02</u>
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INVESTMENT ACCOUNT (Balances as of 12/31/2024)

Designated Investment (Presbyterian Foundation Account)

Cecile Oesterman Memorial:	77,027.56	
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Undesignated Investment

Presbyterian Foundation Account	<u>115,863.21</u>	
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Total Investment Accounts		<u>\$192,890.77</u>
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