September 1, 2020

For the Living of These Days by Carol Harston

“When is the school year over?” was the first question out of his mouth on Monday morning. Here’s the harsh truth: we are only five days into school. “May,” I answered. He pulled his comforter over his head with a loud groan.

What happens when the ground doesn’t feel holy? What does holy even feel like?

I often assume Holy Ground to feel nourishing and peaceful. I remember experiences when the sacred has come to right my jumbled mess of a mind, strengthened my weak arms, and breathed life into my weary lungs.

Sunday afternoon, as I contemplated another week of online school, I didn’t feel nourished or at peace. I threw a pity party instead and laid on the couch. By Monday morning, I drove into work with a tender heart and a lump in my throat. The boys had begun a new week with a new school helper (Highland’s own Elizabeth Gribbins!) who will help them move through their online school days while I’m at the office. Elizabeth will do a fantastic job with them, but that reality can’t erase the experience of wishing for the comfort of Mom’s presence during this challenging season.

I tried to hold the tenderness of the moment with intentionality and permission. I exerted all the heart-energy I had to stop the tenderness from turning to anxiety or worry. I allowed the sensitivity, vulnerability, and fragility I felt to take up some space within me. By the time I got settled at my desk, I had a low-simmering prayer that marinated within – prayer that God be with them (and me!), no matter whether it felt holy or not.

What if Holy Ground is often known most after we’ve experienced it? We remember the peace but forget the pain into which it came. Maybe Holy Ground always begins with our minds are jumbled, our arms weak, and our lungs weary.

Wherever you stand today, may you hold out hope that the ground might be holy… even when it doesn’t feel that way. Today’s miracle will likely be less dramatic than you expect. Few of us know what Greater Story we’re participating in until much later. But it will be a miracle nonetheless as you survive today what felt unsurvivable yesterday.

To all the students, parents, teachers, and administrators walking this journey of online learning: know that our family is with you as we journey in search of Holy Ground. I hold you all in my tender heart as we live these days.

Weekend Services

Fourteenth Sunday
after Pentecost

Psalm 149
Romans 13:8-14
Matthew 18:18-20
Exodus 12:1-14

Mary Alice Birdwhistell, Proclaimer
Please Note:
All in-person services, activities, meetings and events at Highland Baptist Church are cancelled until further notice.

Staying Connected Outside These Walls

As we live through these days where we are rarely, if ever, physically connected with each other we make use of technology to bridge some of the gaps that exist between us. Below are some of the ways that you may use to stay connected to the community of Highland Baptist Church:

Worship from the sanctuary on our Facebook page at 7:00 p.m. on Friday nights and 10:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings. These streams also appears on our YouTube page.

Bible study & children’s gatherings via Zoom. Several adult Bible study classes and Pastor Renee are gathering weekly via Zoom which allows connectivity via computer or phone. If your child would like to connect, email Renee. If your Bible study class would like to begin meeting this way, email Carol at carol@hbclouisville.org or Walter at walter@hbclouisville.org.

Four-Week Journey Towards Holy Ground:

September’s Faith Formation

September’s faith formation opportunities for September invite us to see how the Exodus journey (1) intersects with American history, (2) connects with artists, (3) deepens our father through Psalm 105, (4) causes further reflection upon Mary Alice’s sermons, and (5) draws us together in conversation. All those who sign-up for this month will receive a weekly email with all five paths towards Holy Ground. Consider these “paths” to be opportunities before you – ready and available when you have a moment to be present on your faith journey.

Our journey is open for anyone – whether you attended Highland in the “before times” of this pandemic or you are new to our virtual space. If you missed out on the sign-up but you’re still interested, email carol at carol@hbclouisville.org.

Hopes and Dreams for Highland

I have many hopes and dreams as I begin my year as chair of Highland’s wonderful Deacons. How grateful I am to Bill Martin for his leadership this past year. Bill, you’ve led us well – thank you! Thanks also, to those who are rotating off – after 3 years of faithful service you deserve a rest! To our new deacons joining us, welcome! Even with our new way of doing church, we celebrate your willingness to serve and we’ll soon be putting you to work, caring for our church family.

Mary Alice, Carol, Bill Campbell (who has graciously agreed to be vice-chair this year) and I have been meeting to discuss our Deacon Ordination and deacon retreat which will need to be Covid-safe this year! Our hope is to have a combination of the two in early October, possibly outside on our church grounds. Laying on of hands obviously can’t be done, but we’re discussing ways to express our love and prayers for our new deacons in a different special way. More details on that later!

We are also exploring ways to have a more intentional approach to staying in touch with everyone as we continue to be separated from one another. Do you feel disconnected at times? I think we all do! Some Sundays as I worship virtually, it brings tears as I remember the days of being in our beautiful sanctuary full of people I love. Most Sundays though, I give thanks for Facebook Live, YouTube and Zoom as they bring us together in ways that would not have been possible in earlier years.

I encourage each of you on the days you feel a disconnect, to pick up the phone and reach out to someone you know. That person may be feeling disconnected too, and your call will be a gift to them!

My hopes and dreams for Highland are for us to continue to be who we are – a thinking, feeling, healing community of faith, loving and caring for all! The peace and love of Christ to each of you! ~ Doris Hornbuckle
Highland’s Word To Our Community

... on NPR: ... with worship leadership by new pastor Mary Alice Birdwhistell; on YouTube and Facebook Sunday mornings and Friday evenings.

... on our marquee:

![Marquee Image]

Children’s Corner

Discovering the Stories of God at Home

Beginning in September, families with children at Highland will have the opportunity to center your week around a single story of God via a recorded video. Families are intergenerational, and so each member of your family will bring their own gifts, abilities, life experiences and development to this story of God.

Within that story, there will be a variety of paths by which you can draw closer to and listen for God in the story. Each one will take a different amount of time, and you are invited to choose what works best for your family (just choose one!). The path you choose may even vary from week to week. We’ll provide a bag of faith formation materials to support these paths. If you were not able to pick up your Faith Formation bag this past Sunday evening, I’ll be reaching out to you to arrange a way for it to get to you.

- Conversation prompts.
- Creating a sacred “Holy Ground” space in your home.
- Wondering questions.
- Work (individual reflection) time with a variety of materials.
- Storybook videos
- “Storying” your family’s story alongside the story of God.

For more details about this experience, an introductory video for parents is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZGOHbqO6TA&feature=youtu.be.

There is also a video for your family to watch together that will introduce your whole family to this way of connecting with God, as well as take a tour of the Godly Play room which will serve as our backdrop for the stories of God we will hear. You can find this video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNqpQB9T2N4&feature=youtu.be.
Young Adult Corner

**Who Tells Your Story?**

The Young Adult Ministry invites all members of our community to participate in a night of welcome and storytelling for our new Pastor, Mary Alice Birdwhistell, on Thursday, October 1st.

During this pandemic season, we want to share all the ways in which our community has transcended beyond our building to love and support one another through the years. Plan to join us for this unique event as it will be another way for us collectively to introduce Mary Alice to our congregation.

Members of all generations throughout our community are invited to submit pitches to be one of the 8 storytellers on our “stage” for a night that we hope will be unforgettable.

Participants will have the opportunity to work with Steven Michael Carr and other members of the Louisville Storytelling community to hone their stories before the night of the event. Do you have a Highland story to share? We hope so!

The pitch prompt is: Tell us about a time that the community of Highland embodied home for you. For questions regarding the event, or to submit a pitch, please email Rebecca Street Smith.

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Mission Corner

**La Casita Donations**

Dear Church,

What a marvelous turnout at the Drive ‘Round event this past Sunday. Your generosity was once again Highland at its best - Thank you! Not only will your gifts offer direct support to those who will receive them, but they are donated and given in memory of Michael French, who as we know, was committed to the services La Casita provides in all manner of ways. Check out the number of diaper boxes and baby wipes that Lina Campbell and I stuffed into my car. The bars of soap filled another car trunk entirely! It is so fun serving as one of your pastors, and it was really lovely to see so many of you this weekend. Warmly, ~ Lauren

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Faithful Giving Moment

Greetings from the Faithful Giving Ministry Group,

2020 continues to be a unique and disjointed year for all of us. It is with great hope and anticipation that we look ahead at next year!

“Stewardship” is the time when the church and its members begin to think about our financial commitment to the continued work of Highland Baptist Church. Please know that your gift, every gift, is important and makes a difference.

In the coming months, you will hear from fellow members about the importance of our financial generosity, even in times of such global uncertainty. Thank you for your generosity now and in the future.

Sincerely, ~ Faithful Giving Ministry Group
• Congratulations to Adam Brown and Sarah Bice on the birth of their baby on August 25.
• Last Sunday, Ben took the director’s chair for technical leadership of streaming worship. Ben and his father John are serving as Highland Baptist Church’s Sunday Tech Interns Extraordinaire during these days of pandemic.