

*Where transformed people are joining the work of God.*



**HIGHLAND BAPTIST CHURCH**  
1101 Cherokee Road  
Louisville, KY 40204



#### Inside This Issue...

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#### Please note:

All *in-person* services, activities, meetings and events at Highland Baptist Church are cancelled until further notice.

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## Highland Celebrates Pride in Worship This Sunday

This Sunday, we celebrate LGBTQ Pride and God's inclusive love in worship! Covid-19 and the current historical movement for black lives have radically altered what Pride month looks like this June in our city and country. As trans health care was attacked last Friday by the current administration, the Supreme Court ruled just yesterday that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects LGBTQ rights and prohibits LGBTQ discrimination in the workplace. Pride is always celebrated amidst the long, hard fight for justice; to do so in worship is to proclaim God's love and ongoing participation in the work of LGBTQ liberation.

In worship, we will hear a Gospel message from guest preacher Rev. John Russell Stanger, liturgy crafted by Highland member Lillian Glover, and LGBTQ pride woven throughout the service. We hope you will celebrate and worship with us!

The Rev. John Russell Stanger is a minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and a psychotherapist in private practice in Louisville, KY (<https://www.johnrussellstanger.com>). He has previously served as the pastor of United Presbyterian Church in Lebanon, KY, and the executive director of Parity, a faith-based LGBTQ advocacy organization in New York, NY. John Russell's call story and the work of Parity are featured in the documentary *Out of Order* (<http://www.outoforderdoc.com/out-of-order>), which tells the story of LGBTQ people claiming their place in the pulpit. He takes part in the life of Highland Baptist Church alongside his husband and HBC deacon Guthrie Graves-Fitzsimmons.



## Church Approves Rev. Mary Alice Birdwhistell As Pastor

On Sunday, the Pastor Search Committee announced that Highland Baptist Church overwhelmingly approved Rev. Mary Alice Birdwhistell as the next Pastor of Highland Baptist Church. Voting via online and phone calls to the church, members and voting affiliates voted 380 in favor and 7 opposed. The approval rate was just over 98%. The church bylaws require at least an 80% "yes" vote to call a pastor. Joy overflows as we look to end these days of interim and see what God has in store as we begin living out our faith with a new Pastor.

A starting date has yet to be determined, but the Personnel Ministry Group and the church staff have already begun work to make sure that everything is in order when she arrives. Until she begins her work among us, you may continue getting to know Mary Alice by way of the wealth of videos and documents produced as part of the Call Weekend. Some are listed below.

A huge word of thanks to the entire Pastor Search Committee for the tireless work they have done over the past two years. Their countless research, phone calls, interviews, meetings, and discernment made the call process and voting possible, and all of us in the Highland Baptist community owe them a huge debt of gratitude. Committee Members include: Bob Cunningham (chair), Alecia Fuller, Kathy Belcher, Tyler Swim, Earl Shelp, Noah Cooksey, and Carolyn King.

### Online Resources About Rev. Mary Alice Birdwhistell

Baptist Women in Ministry and Ethics Daily profile of Mary Alice  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RaZQHqNsMzE>

Words of Affirmation for Mary Alice by HBC Staff, Emily Hull McGee, and Julie Pennington Russell  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGUqiA3wh-U>

Pastor Search Committee members' recommendations of Mary Alice  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDH3AUg-n30>

Church Wide Zoom Meeting with Mary Alice #1 on Friday, June 12, 10:00 a.m.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ty2Rd7onpls&feature=youtu.be>

Church Wide Zoom Meeting with Mary Alice #2 on Saturday, June 13, 10:00 a.m.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYL-IUikXFo&feature=youtu.be>

Church Wide Zoom Meeting with Mary Alice #3 on Saturday, June 13, 2:00 p.m.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WGE0P77Fk0&feature=youtu.be>



## Staying Connected Outside These Stone 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:

- **Our ministry staff is offering a word every weekday at 10:00 a.m. on our Highland Facebook Page.** Our schedule is as follows: Lauren Jones Mayfield on Monday, Jim England on Tuesday, Carol Harston on Wednesday, Renee Purtlebaugh on Thursday, and Perry Dixon on Friday. These are also being uploaded to our YouTube channel within a day or two of their creation.
- **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](mailto:carol@hbclouisville.org) or Walter at [walter@hbclouisville.org](mailto:walter@hbclouisville.org).

## Weekend Services Pride Sunday Third Sunday after Pentecost

Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17  
Matthew 10:24-39

Rev. John Stanger,  
Guest Proclaimer

## Call for LGBTQ Voices at Highland

In recognition of Pride, Highland invites LGBTQ community members to offer daily devotional/reflection videos to be shared at 10:00 a.m. on Facebook starting next Monday, June 22, through next Friday, June 26. The videos do not have to be long, just 15 minutes or less, and Perry will help those interested in contributing. Email [perry@hbclouisville.org](mailto:perry@hbclouisville.org) and he will communicate submission guidelines and offer a framework to use.

## Groups Work on Plan for Safe Opening of Pews

While our state released guidelines in May for in-person worship to resume, Highland's leadership is working diligently to think through carefully how we can welcome people back into the pews. Highland's staff have formed two groups of church members to work on plans for how we safely welcome people back into our pews. These two groups will research and create recommendations for staff, deacons, and Ministry Council. Once leadership discerns that Highland is ready to invite people back into our pews for worship safely, we will include a re-opening date and guidelines in the newsletter. Throughout this process, worship will continue to be open online for all people to participate safely from home. We anticipate that worship will continue online throughout these months as the pandemic presents risks to many people in our community.

The first group is our **Attendance Group**. They are exploring the number of people who can attend at one time, the process for registration to attend, and a covenant for how we can be together safely. This group includes David Bannister, Amber Burke, Phil Collier (chair), Jan Forren, and Doris Hornbuckle. The second group is our **Logistics Group**. They are exploring how we safely welcome people into the building, abide by state guidelines, offer appropriate hospitality, and help people exit the building. This group includes Kathy Belcher (co-chair), Vaughn Bell, Lauren Blackwell, Bruce Carroll, Jeff Grey, Bill Martin, and Tyler Swim (co-chair).

## For the Living of These Days—A Word from Renee Purtlebaugh

What a historic week in the life of Highland this has been! Looking back on this past weekend and to Sunday, after 30 months of interim life, it feels almost like a dream where I have woken up wondering, “did that really happen?” Yes, yes it did!

I’m overjoyed to welcome Mary Alice as our next pastor at Highland, the first woman to be called (virtually no less) by our congregation into the lead pastor role in our history. The celebration is happening far and wide as I’ve heard from some of her extended family that I’ve known since childhood, as well as from some of our mutual connections at Georgetown College. One celebratory social thread has even sent me back to the history books as someone names that their grandfather was the interim at Highland years ago and the baptistry is named after someone’s grandmother—all connections I haven’t known about and am eager to make in my mind. I’ve been fascinated to watch those who have traveled through Highland at some point on their journey being reminded of their fond connections to our community of faith in these moments.

More than anything though, I’m being reminded that Highland’s story has had so many chapters prior to this moment and recognizing that there are still many, many chapters to be written in the beautiful future God has for us. I’m grateful for Mary Alice’s call to us to wonder—what if God’s wildest impossible dreams might actually still be before us?!

Beloved Highland, God has held our congregation up to this point and I am confident God will hold us and carry us into our beautiful and bold future with Mary Alice, giving us strength for today and bright hope for our tomorrows. Rest there today. Breathe deeply this trust and lean into the Spirit as together we begin to wonder what wild, impossible dream God has for us next. ~ Renee

## Reflections on Pastor Search Process

I took a long walk Monday morning, savoring the reality that for the first time in two years I did not have work to do for the Pastor Search Committee. It has been quite a journey with a joyous completion as the church overwhelmingly affirmed Mary Alice Birdwhistell as our new pastor. Amidst the celebration, I want to take the time to say a word of thanks to many people. First, I am deeply grateful to Alecia Fuller who served as co-chair of the Committee with me. Countless times she stepped up and took care of tasks in a way that lightened my load. I will be forever grateful for her leadership and support. I am indebted to the other five members of the committee: Kathy Belcher, Tyler Swim, Earl Shelp, Noah Cooksey, and Carolyn King. Each of them has given a considerable amount of time and energy to this process. I want to emphasize what a team process this has been as we reviewed over 50 applications, read resumes and essays in response to our questions, conducted numerous interviews, talked with countless references, and discussed the gifts of those applying. I give thanks for the Committee and their hard work and affirm each of them for the gift they have given to the church.

I also want to thank Michael DeWhatley and Billy Flood—both of whom served on the committee before moving away from Louisville. Both were a vital part of the process as we crafted profiles of Highland Baptist Church and the kind of person we were seeking as a pastor. I thank Roy Fuller, Diane Brewer, Chip Miller, and Molly Braun who served alongside us on the Transition Team earlier in the process. The four of them brought energy, wisdom, and insight.

I thank our current ministerial staff as well. Carol Harston, Lauren Jones Mayfield, Perry Dixon, Renee Purtlebaugh, Kathy Collier, and Austin Echols have inspired us, cared for us, and led us forward through this interim period. Each of them was a source of support and encouragement to me personally in leading the search process and I so appreciate all they have done and continue to do.

Thank you to Jim England. Jim has been like a pastor to our staff while providing us with words of comfort, challenge, and love over the course of this Interim. He has been the very voice of God on Sunday mornings.

A major word of gratitude to Walter McWhorter for both the endless hours and energy he has put into keeping us connected through worship on Facebook and YouTube, as well as a wonderful job with coordinating videos, documents, and Zoom meetings during the Call Weekend. The process could not have happened without him. Thank you to Andria Eadens for all her work in editing and putting out several publications as part of the Call Weekend.

At the risk of stating the obvious, thank you to Mary Alice for responding to God’s call to the ministry and listening to God’s Spirit in coming to Highland. I believe deeply she will be a gift to all of us and will lead us forward in being church, doing justice, and sharing God’s love with the world.

Two others I wish to thank. One, you—the members of Highland Baptist Church who shared with us your vision for the church and a new pastor; who prayed for us and waited with hope over this two year process; who asked us important questions and offered us support and encouragement. We are so grateful you stuck with us as we navigated Zoom meetings, emails, video introductions, a technological voting process, technical difficulties on Sunday morning, and then embraced Mary Alice and celebrated by overwhelmingly affirming her as our new pastor. Two, God’s Spirit, for I believe when all is said and done, it was the work of the Spirit that led us to Mary Alice and her to Highland. I am grateful and give thanks to God for the moving of the Spirit and with high hopes I trust that same Spirit to lead us on.

Thanks be to God. ~ Bob Cunningham, Chair of Pastor Search Committee



## BSK Online Course, “America in Crisis”

Baptist Seminary of Kentucky is offering a new online course, “America in Crisis: White Silence, Black Suffering, Protest and Transformation.” Led by Dr. Lewis Brogdon and Dr. Laura Levens, “America in Crisis” is a six-week workshop series that includes one-hour live Zoom meetings with BSK faculty guests (beginning this evening), preceded and followed by readings, pre-recorded videos, and action opportunities. Carol Harston is attending alongside several Highland members. If you are interested in attending, please seek out information online at <https://tinyurl.com/y9ftaqa>.

*Class Description:* What is going on right now? Where do we go from here? The United States is in a moment of chaos. Communities are divided along racial lines, and there is disagreement and division everywhere. Protests against racially targeted arrests and killings, police brutality, and racist public policy are rapidly increasing across the nation. Many are feeling anger, sadness, grief, and confusion. How do we make sense of this moment? What must we do, if anything can be done, for change and transformation? Is there hope for justice and peace?

In this six-week workshop series, the Baptist Seminary of Kentucky wants to walk with you through these difficult issues. The life and theology of Martin Luther King Jr. inspires the arc of the course as a pilgrimage of pain, hope, and transformation. Dr. King boldly described protests as “the language of the unheard” and prophetically asked, “What is it that America has failed to hear?” He challenged all, especially white America, to move from chaos to community through transformation.



## Voting in the Primary

It is now too late to request an absentee ballot. But you can vote early in person. Before Election Day (Tuesday, June 23), you can vote in person from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, at two sites:

- \* Kentucky Exposition Center, 937 Phillips Lane. No appointment is necessary.
- \* Jefferson County Election Center, 701 West Ormsby Avenue. To vote here, you must call to make an appointment at (502) 574-6100.

On Election Day, you can only vote at the Kentucky Exposition Center, 6:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. As long as you are in line by 6:00 p.m., you will be able to vote.

If you vote any day at the Kentucky Exposition Center, you can enter through Gates 2 and 4 (off Crittenden Drive) and 6 (off Preston Highway). Voting will happen at the South Wing of the center.

On Election Day, TARC will provide a shuttle from Union Station, 1000 West Broadway, to the Exposition Center for free. Shuttles will run every 30 minutes beginning at 6:00 a.m.

If you have received an absentee ballot and have not sent it in, it must be postmarked on or before June 23. You can also put your ballot in drop-off boxes at the Jefferson County Election Center and the Kentucky Exposition Center.



## Baptist Joint Committee Luncheon June 26

All are invited to attend a special webinar exploring the intersection of race and religious liberty. On Friday, June 26, the BJC will broadcast live from the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., from noon until 1:00 p.m. The webinar is a free event, open to all who register at <https://give.bjconline.org/event/bjc-luncheon/e269711>.

Our event will feature a conversation with Robert P. Jones, the author of the forthcoming book *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity*. Jones will be interviewed by MSNBC’s Joy Reid during the event. Jones is the CEO and founder of PRRI and a leading scholar and commentator on religion, culture and politics. The 2020 virtual luncheon will also feature updates on our work, stories from members of the BJC community and information on the latest religious liberty developments.

## The Alliance of Baptists’ Joint Statement on Racism

With approval from Ministry Council, Highland Baptist signed on to a joint statement on racism sponsored by the Alliance of Baptists, Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, and the American Baptist Home Mission Societies. You can read the statement online at <https://tinyurl.com/yb8bqby5>.

## The Call of this Matter, Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis

One of my (Lauren) favorite pastors and preachers in our current context is Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis of Middle Collegiate Church in New York City. She will offer an anti-racism training via zoom this Wednesday and Thursday, June 17 and 18, 7:00 p.m.-8:30 p.m., for just \$20. To learn more about this event or to register, visit <https://tinyurl.com/y8jprhxw>. Learn more about Rev. Dr. Lewis and her ministry at <https://tinyurl.com/y9onrpd7>.

## Black Lives Matter Yard Signs

The Logo Warehouse is a local, black owned business, and we are purchasing 50 “Black Lives Matters” signs from them. Would you like one for your front yard? They will be \$10 each, 12”x18”, and come with metal stakes. To reserve one, please email Lauren Jones Mayfield at [laurenjm@hbclouisville.org](mailto:laurenjm@hbclouisville.org).

## Curbside Food Drive, HCM

On Sunday, July 19, Highlands Community Ministries will host a curbside food drive at their food pantry located at 1228 East Breckinridge Street the front entrance. Volunteers will unload directly from your vehicle the following items: nonperishable foods (tuna, mac-n-cheese, hearty soups, pasta and hearty sauces), personal hygiene items (toilet paper, bar soap, shampoo), and \$25 gift cards to Target.

## Around Highland...



... Congratulations to Buddy Lee who has been awarded the Kentucky School Social Worker of the Year by the Kentucky Association for School Social Work! They celebrate Buddy with these words: "As a School Social Worker, Buddy loved the students and families of JCPS. His role focused on attendance and working closely with school staff to effect change, yet Buddy found ways to connect with students. You could often find Buddy doing home visits with his friendly Golden Retriever, Bear, helping with chess club at one of his schools or providing resources to families. Prior to becoming a SSW, he was a Family Resource Coordinator for many years at King Elementary and loved serving in West Louisville. Buddy has a passion for the students and families of JCPS, and he has served them lovingly for over 27 years."

## Highland's Word To Our Community

... on NPR: *...where our building is closed but our church has always been open with weekday reflections, Friday worship and Sunday worship available on Facebook and YouTube.*  
... on our marquee:



**HIGHLAND BAPTIST CHURCH**

*A thinking, feeling, healing community of faith*

## Our Mission

God's Love compels us to cultivate a safe, welcoming community of faith where all are challenged to discover, grow, and serve, as together we boldly live out the worship that is our very lives.

## Our Vision

We dream of being an engaging, vibrant Christian church, where transformed people are joining the work of God, creating a world where justice and Love are abundant.

## Our Values

- We value a **deeply spiritual, Christ-centered faith** that opens us to life, equips us to serve, and calls us to action.
- We value a **courageous, progressive theology** whose relevance extends from the pew to the street, that engages both the mind and the heart, and that welcomes everyone from the skeptic to the devoted.
- We value **all people**, not in spite of, but precisely because of all that makes each one unique.
- We value **being doers of the word**, living out what Jesus taught: showing hospitality to strangers, confronting injustice, giving voice to those who have been silenced.
- We value a **healthy community**, where honest relationships provide all people safety, encouragement, acceptance, and healing, and challenge us to practice gentleness, forgiveness, and continued growth.
- We value **embracing challenge and change**: naming hard things, asking questions, and leaning into tensions and ambiguity.
- We value **growing together across the lifespan**, through multi-generational and intergenerational relationships and ministries.
- We value being rooted in our **distinct and radical heritage** that compels us to breathe new life into bedrock Baptist principles.
- We value **broad and deep worship** that invites us into the mystery of a loving God.
- We value **being good stewards** of all we have been given, discerning together how best to use our financial, physical, human, and spiritual gifts to follow Jesus and carry out our mission.

END OF NEWSLETTER