Where transformed people are joining the work of God.

Staying Connected Through Worship

Merriam-Webster does not mention a building, structure or church for the definition of worship. I breathed a sigh of relief because in our current need to distance ourselves for everyone’s health and safety, we are facing new rhythms of worshipping through Facebook Live Feeds and a new YouTube channel. Thank you for your words of support after viewing last Sunday’s first-ever Facebook Live Feed. We heard how connected you felt to Highland’s beautiful stone-lined sanctuary and more importantly, how you felt the presence of our faith community. From the staff’s viewpoint, it went exceptionally well given it was a first experience for all of us. Walter created the perfect space within our sanctuary for recording so everyone could see the beautiful windows and imagine sitting in your pew with the faith community.

What’s planned for future Sundays? We will continue to provide Facebook Live feed at 10:00 a.m. on Sundays at https://www.facebook.com/hbclouisville.org. For those of you without access to Facebook, we’ve now added the functionality of a YouTube Channel from which we can do live streaming. Simply go to https://www.youtube.com and search for “Highland Baptist Church of Louisville” and you’ll see our Channel identified with our logo displayed prominently. We’re new to the YouTube experience, so please let us know what works or doesn’t work for you there. Please read carefully through your Saturday email that began prior to the first Sunday in Lent. This week’s email will also contain a pdf of Sunday’s bulletin so youcan participate in prayers, singing of hymns, read the scriptures from your Bible, and view the view the planned service. The Sunday bulletin can also be found on the church’s website by Friday afternoon. Jim England is the proclaimer for this Sunday, March 22. He will be joined by one other minister and a few singers. We are continuing the collaboration during the Lenten season between a Sunday proclaimer and a member of Highland’s Worship Ministry Group. This week’s collaborator, David Tribble, will bring prayers from the Messengers Bible Study Class. We promise to practice safe distances from each other, feeling your presence with us.

Yes, we are working on how to experience Holy Week with services for Maundy Thursday, Tenebrae, and Easter. If confess I asked if Easter could be postponed and I’m wondering if it might be wonderful to sing Christ, the Lord Is Risen Today the first Sunday we are able to be back in our sanctuary! What about Friday Church? Friday Church will also have a Facebook live feed at 7:00 p.m. Look for Fred Bogert and Jim England this Friday night at https://www.facebook.com/hbclouisville.org.

While we intensly miss your presence and your voices singing the hymns of faith in worship, we are all greatly encouraged by the many ways you are finding to remain knit together while we are apart. We encourage you to reach out with phone calls, text messages, FaceTime, and Zoom calls. We look forward to the day when it is safe for us to be together again. ~ Kathy Collier

For the Living of These Days—A Word from Carol Harston

“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.”

When the church worked to create the mission, vision, and core values for “Vision 2020,” how could we have known that 2020 would include a global pandemic, social distancing, and suspending in-person church gatherings? We are living through strange days with high risks and unknown outcomes, but we still cherish the mission, vision, and core values that the church adopted in 2017.

We value a healthy community where all people might be safe and well. For this season, living out this value requires us to reimagine the church as we follow the guidelines from the CDC and the recommendations from our governor. Our staff gathered on Monday, reimagining our congregation’s life in light of the CDC’s recommendation that groups of 50+ people do not gather in person for eight weeks.

To be a healthy community, Highland Baptist will not gather in person for worship or study for eight weeks. We hope to resume worship on Sunday, May 10. We are committed to keep up with the news and adjust our plans, as needed. In the meantime, we are working to creatively consider how we will work to continue the church’s work during this time. (continued to page 4)

Online Giving

We continue to be grateful for the in-person community that we have cultivated week in and week out for so long so that in times like these, the good work of the church can continue. And it does continue! In this moment, where finances are not our primary concern, but they do remain in the back of all of our minds, we ask you to practice generosity by giving faithfully.

There are two ways to do that right now:

1. The easiest way to give is by going to our website https://hbclouisville.org/give. In the sidebar, choose “Donate” and then “Highland’s General Operating Fund.” You can give a recurring gift this way, as well as a one-time gift.
2. The most cost-conscious way is to set up an automatic bill payment with your bank. This will send your gift to the church automatically in these stressful days, and best of all, no fees—which allows us to be a better steward of your gifts when all seems uncertain.

Thank you always for your faithful gifts, especially in these days!
Please pray for the following during the Coronavirus pandemic

- The sick, chronically ill, and vulnerable populations
- Medical professionals serving during this time
- Civil servants who are caring for the common good
- Those whose jobs and income are affected
- Students whose semesters have changed
- Families developing new routines
- Those who live alone as they are even more isolated these days

As we move through these strange days, we are actively seeking ways to stay connected and that includes our children and their families! Suddenly thrown into new rhythms and routines, each day is exhausting and we need each other more than ever even when we are physically apart. So, here’s our plan for connection for this week while practicing good social distancing.

We’ll be moving all of our interaction to Zoom calls, Facebook Live, and a couple of other creative methods. I’ll send out a more specific email to each of you with directions on how to connect to these opportunities. If you haven’t signed up for our Highland Kids Newsletter, go to https://hbclouisville.org/newsletters-sign-up/.

As we go, so we’ll adjust as we need to. The goal is to make our rhythm sustainable for the long haul and give children something to look forward to as they connect with their church friends.

Next week, we will likely continue with our 11:30 a.m. Zoom connections with a variety of activities like games (yes, games!), Bible study class zoom calls, storytime, etc. so do everything you can to add this 30-45 minutes or so of connection time in for your family while you prepare lunch (and take a parent mid-day breath)! We are figuring out as we go, so we’ll adjust as we need to. The goal is to make our rhythm sustainable for the long haul and give children something to look forward to as they connect with their church friends.

If you have not yet joined our Children and Family Ministry of Highland Facebook Group, this is a great way for staying connected as well. I am posting prayers, thoughts, and other content to support us daily in this journey, and our Families with Children Ministry Group along with other parents are posting strategies that are working for their families. There is also a Google doc of resources posted—educational (thanks Jackie Marrs!), how to talk with your kids about coronavirus, and maturing faith at home resources. I am also posting any community needs that we learn about that you could choose to respond to there as well. You can post too! Know that each of you are in my thoughts in these days. It is no small task to juggle working from home, manage children’s schoolwork from home, set boundaries for little ones nearly every minute and care for your own heart and mind and spirit. Take courage. Stop. Breathe. One day at a time. Sending all the virtual hugs and encouragement this day to you and your family. ~ Renee

Faith Formation Streaming Each Weekday

“We value a deeply spiritual, Christ-centered faith that opens us to life, equips us to serve, and calls us to action.”

In days of anxiety and isolation, we must find new space and rhythms to discover God’s presence, grow in our faith, and wrestle with our fears. Our ministry staff has committed to bringing a word of encouragement that calls forth our faith. Our schedule is as follows: Lauren on Monday, Jim on Tuesday, Carol on Wednesday, Renee on Thursday, and Perry on Friday. You can find us at 10:00 a.m. every weekday on our Highland Facebook page (Highland Baptist Church of Louisville) and our YouTube channel (Highland Baptist Church of Louisville, Kentucky). To keep up our sacred time on Wednesday nights, we will offer an Hour of Prayer on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. with music and time for contemplation.

The beauty of our live streaming platforms is that you have two choices: Join us live so that you can comment and connect with one another OR watch it later, depending on your availability. Live streaming is a new endeavor for our staff, so know that we will seek to grow week by week in our knowledge of how our technology works and what is most helpful for the church. Your encouragement and support have been so comforting for us as we reimagine ministry for this season!

We appreciate your patience and your prayers while we ourselves navigate these difficult days. We trust God to lead us through this time and eagerly anticipate the day when we can share information about the person we believe God is leading to be our next pastor.

Your Pastor Search Committee, ~ Bob Cunningham, Alexia Fuller, Kathy Belcher, Noah Cooksey, Earl Shelp, Tyler Swim, and Carolyn King.

Pastor Search Update

Our committee remains very excited about the candidate we have chosen to recommend as our next pastor.

We are even more grateful that last week while it was still possible, the candidate was able to come to Louisville and meet with the church staff. We are pleased to report that the staff all felt very positive about the person we have selected. They voice a great deal of excitement about the prospects of working alongside the person and the gifts the person would bring to Highland Baptist Church.

We had tentatively set plans for a call weekend on April 17-19, but with the rapidly changing world we find ourselves in, that will not be possible. Since it will likely be May 10 before we gather in person to worship together, we’ve talked with the candidate and believe it is best to let them focus on caring for their current congregation during this crisis without having their people suddenly being faced with the added anxiety over hearing their pastor is about to leave. As a result, we are choosing to keep the candidate’s name and church confidential at this point. We trust you understand this out of respect for the person to freely care for their faith community during this on-going crisis.

We appreciate your patience and your prayers while we ourselves navigate these difficult days. We trust God to lead us through this time and eagerly anticipate the day when we can share information about the person we believe God is leading to be our next pastor.
A Prayer from the Good-Time Gospel Hour Bible Study Class

(Taken from the Second Sunday of Lent worship service)

We pray today for all the people around the world who have died due to the coronavirus and their families who are mourning.

In life and in death, may we sense the Holy come close.

For everyone who is sick and battling the coronavirus or other illnesses today.

In sickness and in health, may we sense the Holy come close.

For all those who feel anxious and scared because of all the unknowns with this pandemic.

In anxious and calm times, may we sense the Holy come close.

For all the medical professionals, public health officials, and caregivers who are responding to the sick and dying.

By caring for one another, may we sense the Holy come close.

For our elected leaders who we trust with setting up systems that will keep us safe and healthy.

In our championing of the common good, may we sense the Holy come close.

For the leaders of our church who are navigating both the pandemic and the pastor call process.

By holding our leaders in prayer, may we sense the Holy come close.

For each of us as we seek to follow public health advice and also find spiritual connection with each other and God.

In keeping our social distance, may we sense the Holy come close.

For all of us who feel overwhelmed by all the things going on in our country and in our world.

In our wisdom and discernment to discern when and where to engage, may we sense the Holy come close.

For the hardness times that come in our personal lives amidst the chaos of pandemic.

In still recognizing grace and peace, may we sense the Holy come close.

For every up and down in life, for the times we mourn and the times we celebrate, for every valley and every peak.

In all things and every season, may we sense the Holy come close.
For the Living of These Days—A Word from Carol Harston  
(continued from page 1)
As a staff, we are considering how to recreate our week-to-week worship schedule, faith formation, community building, and pastoral care. We are also discerning how we celebrate Holy Week and Easter, move forward with our HVAC plans, utilize our Fellowship Fund for those suffering financially, and conduct our church business. We appreciate your patience as this work is new and complicated by social distancing. As we go, we will seek to keep you informed through our weekly newsletters and online streaming platforms.

Family of faith, how might God’s wisdom and courage form us in the living of these days? There is no doubt that these days contain a level of anxiety and uncertainty that many have either never experienced or not experienced for decades. In your own home, what might it look like to live out our values? How might you live with gentleness, forgiveness, and continued growth? Let us cling to what we have always believed: the church is not a building. The church is its people living out the worship that is their very lives. What a unique opportunity we now face to live into this truth!

When the time comes to gather in person, your ministry staff cannot wait to hear all about how God has transformed you, helping to heal the world through your very life. We will hold hands again and sing, cherishing every hug and living out this faith together. Until that moment comes, peace be with each of you, as it is with us.

Ways to Support Others Locally

- Make a donation to La Casita at http://www.lacasitacenter.org. Currently, they are not taking food donations but are accepting monetary gifts for purchasing food.
- Contribute to the Emergency Relief Fund for Families in Crisis due to COVID-19, distributed by the Association of Community Ministries at https://www.facebook.com/donate/213763209957777/36637985063073.
- Donate to or volunteer at Dare to Care. Dare to Care is providing extra services due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Visit https://daretocare.org or call 502-966-3821.
- Call Mayor Fischer at 502-574-2003 and ask him to use his leverage to release those people who are in jail awaiting trial because they could not afford bail. Because the jail is overcrowded and inmates cannot practice social distancing, the pandemic can spread rapidly in the jail.
- Be in touch with neighbors and friends at church who are most vulnerable to the virus to see if you can make a grocery or drug store run for them.

END OF NEWSLETTER