

Highlands News

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | HIGHLANDS CHURCH | DECEMBER 2024 | VOLUME 28 | ISSUE 12

Christmas Cantata

The Highlands Chancel Choir will present their annual Christmas Cantata to the congregation and public on Saturday, December 14 at 5:30 pm and Sunday, December 15 at 10:00 am in the Sanctuary of Highlands Church. Under the direction of John Matthews, the Chancel Choir will sing "The Voices of Christmas" - by Joseph Martin. This wonderful Cantata will be accompanied by Pam Meyer, Jeannine Wagar and Linda Bachman. All are most welcome to attend either worship service. No reservations or tickets needed. Luncheon to follow on Sunday (see page 3).

Christmas Eve Service

Join us for a family Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion worship service on Tuesday, December 24 at 4:00 pm in the Sanctuary. Pick up a flyer at the Information Station to invite your family and friends for this special Highlands Church tradition. Our Nursery will be open.

Join us for
Christmas Worship

Pastor's Pen by Rev. Robert Cloninger

The question always comes about, "What is Advent?" And that's an excellent question. It feels like a million different things happen within the year of the church, and we might not pay attention to all of them. Advent is unique, and it needs to be paid attention to. To make it simple, Advent is a period of waiting and anticipation. Waiting on what? The coming of Christ. Just as our ancestors so long ago were waiting on Christ's first coming into the world to deliver them, so we wait on the second coming of Christ to deliver us from this world.

For a lot of us, that doesn't mean much, but we aren't the persecuted church. With millions of Christians all over the world dying or under the threat of death just for being Christian, this is a time we can specifically pray and try to put ourselves in the shoes of our brothers and sisters under intense persecution. We also

need time to steady our hearts and listen to God, another benefit of Advent. We can feel unity with our brothers and sisters worldwide and, at the same time, do some of the work we need to do on ourselves.

I've found recently in my own life and noticed from hearing from others that some of the most significant work we need to do is to be quiet and still and listen to God. God is, after all, found in the silence and stillness. Though our God moves in significant ways, He is found in that small voice that wants to speak out to us today. It can be hard to observe Advent because the Christmas season is so loud. It's filled with more people than usual, more parties than usual, more guests than usual, more lights, and especially more sound. I urge you all not to give too much to these distractions. The distractions result from a secular world trying to draw our attention away from Jesus. But I tell you this: at the end of Christmas, if it's been all parties, noise, shopping, and people, we will find ourselves on December 26 feeling empty. With a focus on Jesus, we'll always feel full, and when we have a chance to focus on Jesus and don't take it especially, then there's just not going to be much lasting joy to be found in it.

So what can we do? Well, the thing we should always do is put Christ first. But I'm not calling for a protest of all Christmas parties and fun; I'm saying put some things in place that will help you find quiet, stillness, and calm so that you can more readily listen for Jesus during this time and prepare your heart for his coming. This can certainly look different for everyone. Maybe take more walks alone or listen to the radio less so that there is quiet in the car to hear the voice of God. Whatever you do, if you choose to be disciplined, you can't go wrong.

I wish you a wonderful Christmas season and pray that you find Christ in a new way that fills your heart and lasts. He wants to be found. You have to open yourself to his presence.

Blessings,

Robert



Pastor Robert's office hours are:

MONDAY - THURSDAY

9AM—NOON ... AVAILABLE IN OFFICE

1PM—4PM ... AVAILABLE BY APPOINTMENT

Christmas Luncheon

Join us for a Christmas Luncheon in the Fellowship Hall on Sunday, December 15, following the Cantata (approx 11:15am). The lunch will be provided by The Fellowship Committee and will be \$15 per person. The menu will include ritz cracker pork chops with cranberry sauce, cheesy potatoes, lettuce salad, corn casserole, pound cake with strawberries & whipped cream, and a drink.

Tickets sales have begun and will be available for purchase on November 30/December 1 and again on December 7/8. Any proceeds from this event will be directed to the church's general fund.

Also, there are signup sheets in the Gathering area asking for 12 volunteers to be Food Runners, and 2 volunteers to be Ticket Takers. Contact Linda Uttley, Fellowship Committee Chairperson, for more information.



Christmas Church Decorating

Please help us beautify the church for Christmas on Monday, December 2, at 9:00 am. The skills of both men and women are greatly needed. For any questions, call Linda Uttley at 479-531-3044.

The Season of Advent

Advent is always a wonderful season to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, and is usually a busy time of year at the church. The first day of Advent is the first Sunday in December; December 1. Our worship schedule will run per usual with the exceptions of the special services listed below.

Celebration Worship Cantata - Saturday December 14, at 5:30 pm, in Sanctuary

Traditional Worship Cantata - Sunday, December 15, at 10:00 am, in Sanctuary (luncheon to follow)

Christmas Eve Worship - Tuesday, December 24, at 4:00 pm, in Sanctuary

Mission Opportunity - Food Pantry



Thanksgiving has come and gone and now Christmas will be here very soon. Please continue to donate holiday food items such as stuffing mix, canned sweet potatoes, green beans, instant potatoes, cranberry sauce, and dessert mixes for the Bright Futures Food Pantry & Gravette School District. Place your donated items in the marked bins located in all entrances to the church for delivery to the Gravette School Food Pantry. Thank you for your continued support of this Food Pantry.

Children's Worship Center

Children are welcome to visit our Nursery (0-4 years) and Kids Worship (5-11 years) on Sunday mornings during the 10:00 Traditional worship service. For more information, contact Laurie Pearson at 479-256-4452 (Nursery), Fran Lovell at 571-255-0701 or Wanda Krug at 719-213-1115 (Kids Worship).

We'd love to grow this team and if you feel a nudge in this direction, please contact Wanda Krug at wlepillez@gmail.com. We can use helpers, as well as teachers.



Adult Sunday School

Join us for Bible Study in the Mark classroom at 8:30 am as we continue to look into "Things of the Future," the final section of 25 Basic Bible Studies by Francis Schaeffer. We'd love to see you this Sunday! Questions? Call Brad Krug at 719-210-6124.

WRAP UP
the year
Give Blood

FREE cozy blanket
for all donors!
While supplies last.

BLOOD DRIVE
DEC 11
10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

HIGHLANDS CHURCH OF BELLA VISTA

COMMUNITY BLOOD CENTER OF THE OZARKS

The banner features a festive winter theme with a background of green and red holly leaves and pine trees. On the left, there is a white sign with the text "WRAP UP the year Give Blood" and a yellow box with "FREE cozy blanket for all donors! While supplies last." and an image of a plaid blanket. On the right, the text "BLOOD DRIVE DEC 11 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM" is displayed in large, white, outlined letters. At the bottom left, it says "HIGHLANDS CHURCH OF BELLA VISTA" and at the bottom right, there is a small logo for "COMMUNITY BLOOD CENTER OF THE OZARKS".

Compassionate Disciples

Hello to all our church family. Yes, the Compassionate Disciples group is active and we want to continue to provide support to Pastor Robert for our congregation during their times of need. For those who do not know much about the group, we exist to provide compassionate care through emotional, spiritual, and/or physical needs. Along with Robert, we contact those who have been in the hospital or have been ill and follow up on them. We also follow those individuals who are homebound, for the most part, or who live in extended care facilities. We work with Pastor Robert and the Care Group Leaders, adding an extra bit of loving care.

We are a little scaled down as far as members go, which is one reason for this notice. We meet monthly to review the list of individuals we are following. We are looking for fellow members (men or women) who truly enjoy providing comfort to others. Remember, you get back so much more when you can provide a few minutes for a phone call or a visit to someone in need.

For additional information, or if interested in learning more, contact the leader: Linda Virgili (876-1404) or linda.virgili@yahoo.com.



HIGHLANDS METHODIST WOMEN

Christmas Tea - HMW Meeting

The HMW Christmas Tea will be on Monday, December 9, at 11:00 am in the Fellowship Hall. An RSVP was required for the caterer. If you have any questions, contact Wilhelmina Munson at 719-661-9956.

This should be a fun treat for all of you hard working women of the church! Wear your hat, boa, gloves, 'ugly' or 'beautiful' Christmas sweater or shirt, or whatever, and we'll have a FUN and festive time! See you then!

HMW Change for Change

Hello Church! Change for Change is now designated to various children's missions throughout Northwest Arkansas. Thank you for your continued support.

35th Annual Cookie Walk

It has long been a Highlands Church tradition to have an annual Cookie Walk and it always happens on the first Saturday in December. This year's event is Saturday, December 7 from 8:30 - 11:00 am.

We encourage our entire congregation to take part in providing cookies, sweets, and goodies for this long-standing tradition in our community. While we request 20 dozen cookies, we realize that is a big ask and may not be possible for some people. Any amount you are able to make, even if it's not the full 20 dozen, or perhaps over the 20 dozen, will be greatly appreciated.

There are signup sheets in the Gathering Area for volunteers. Let's all pitch in and make this 35th annual Cookie Walk one to remember.

You can begin to bring donations for the Sweet Shoppe Monday—Thursday, December 2—5, 9am to 1pm, so we can package them. Drop off of cookies will be Thursday—Friday, December 5—6, from 9am to 1pm.

On the day of the event, all workers please remember to park in the back lot and come wearing your Christmas themed attire. All jobs will be posted on the kitchen door Wednesday, December 4 with times to arrive on December 7.

The Cookie Walk helps support many missions and ministries in the Northwest Arkansas Area. See you and your cookies soon! Questions, contact Wilhelmina Munson at 719-661-9956, Pat Lehman 479-876-1985, or Darleen Olson at 479-936-1814.



HIGHLANDS METHODIST MEN

HMM December Meeting

The Highlands Methodist Men (HMM) will conduct a short business meeting to elect their 2025 officers on Thursday, December 5, at 8:00 am in the Fellowship Hall. This is a very important meeting and we encourage all men of Highlands Church to attend. Following the meeting, men who are willing and able will stick around to help the ladies set up and prepare our facility for the Cookie Walk.

Finance Office News

WE MATCHED THE CHALLENGE PLUS ++!

It is exciting to announce that we have successfully matched the Challenge gift of \$5,000 and more! As of Tuesday, November 26, we have received \$19,095 matching funds, making a total of \$24,095 of additional giving towards our Operating Budget for 2024. Your generosity is very appreciated. Your giving makes it possible for Highlands Church to finish the year meeting expenses and obligations for the year.

FIFTH SUNDAY LOAN REDUCTION

We have a long standing tradition of focusing on our Mortgage Debt during months with five Sundays. This extra gift goes towards paying down the debt principal on our church. The regular mortgage payment is made monthly through the operating budget. Any donation indicated for loan reduction goes toward additional principal payments. These payments reduce the life of the loan and save us many dollars in interest. We average paying an additional \$10,000 to \$15,000 each year. Join us in this effort on the weekend of December 28/29. Many small gifts make a HUGE difference.

**Join Us For Communion
During both services
Nov 30 & Dec 1**

December Outreach Events

Cookie Walk: Our 35th Annual Cookie Walk will be Saturday, December 7, from 8:30 am until 11:00 am (or until the last cookie is gone)! The proceeds from the Cookie Walk and Coffee Shoppe are split between the Highlands Church Mission Ministries and Highlands Methodist Women. (more details on page 5)

Angel Tree: Thank you to everyone who participated in the Angel Tree! We had 20 Angels given to us and 20 children will be blessed with gifts. Remember- all gifts will need to be returned to the church (unwrapped) no later than Sunday, December 8 at noon. We need a few volunteers to help deliver gifts to Gravette School; vehicles with good cargo space are needed. Gifts will be delivered December 9 between 3:30-6:30 pm. If interested in helping deliver, please call/text our Angel Tree Coordinator, Sue Benson at 620-960-9185.

Be a Santa to a Senior: We have been given an opportunity to help spread holiday cheer to Senior Citizens in need within our community. We are partnering with Home Instead of NWA and will be collecting gifts for those seniors. Tags will be on our Angel Tree the weekend of Nov 30/Dec 1. This will work just like the Angels for Bright Futures. Take a tag, write the tag number on the sign out sheet, buy the three gifts on the tag. If you want to go in with a friend to help purchase the gifts, feel free to do so. Please plan to bring your unwrapped gifts to the church between December 10-15, but no later than December 15, at noon.



Bell Ringing: Another annual tradition at Highlands Church is Bell Ringing for the Salvation Army at Allen's Food Market in Bella Vista. Our scheduled times are in one-hour shifts from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm, December 11, 12, & 13 and again the following week on December 18, 19, 20 & 21. Thank you to everyone who has already signed up! For more information, contact our coordinator, Donna VanderSchaaf at 479-715-6059.

December 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1– Communion – Advent Begins	2– Christmas Decorating	3	4– Fellowship Committee Mtg	5– HMM Business Meeting	6	7– Cookie Walk
8– Angel Tree gifts due	9– HMW Christmas Tea & Meeting	10– Compassionate Disciples Meeting	11– Blood Drive – Stitchers Mtg	12	13	14– Christmas Cantata
15– Christmas Cantata & Luncheon – Santa for a Senior gifts due	16	17– Council Meeting – Kitchen Cleaning	18	19– Library Meeting	20	21
22	23	24– Office Closed – Christmas Eve Service @4pm	25– Office Closed – Christmas Day	26– Office Closed	27	28– Scrapbooking & Card Making
29	30	31– New Year's Eve	Mark your January Calendar! Combined Worship—Sunday, January 5, 10:00 am, in Sanctuary			



Stitchers Wanted: Everyone is welcome to join the Stitchers while they get together to stitch, crochet or knit, and enjoy some fellowship. Patterns (crochet or knit) are available for the Prayer Shawls and/or the Prayer Squares for any participant that would like to contribute to those ministries.

The Stitchers meet twice per month (September-May) on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays. However, they will only meet once next month; December 11 at 1:00 pm in the John Classroom. They are seeking more participants so the group can continue to meet and fellowship together. If you are interested, please contact the group coordinator, Sandra Foster, at 580-471-12892 or sjfos1@gmail.com.

Library News: We have a shelf in the Narthex area, just outside the Library, that contains several 'FREE' paperback books for you to take home for your reading pleasure. You will enjoy popular authors like Baldacci, Coulter, Cussler and Connelly, just to name a few. Every few months, we will put out more free books so keep watch! Any books that don't find a home will be donated to Care & Share in Gravette.

Also, don't forget to browse through our many other books, DVD and CD selections in the main Library and Annex. Fall and winter is the perfect time to curl up with a good book or a fun movie. When you are done, please return them promptly so that others may enjoy them as well.

NOTE: You don't need to fill out a 'checkout' card for the paperbacks located in the Library Annex. When you are done reading them, just return them to the shelf from where you found them so others may enjoy... they are alphabetically filed by Author.

Thank you,
Library Committee



EVERYONE WELCOME!

SATURDAY CELEBRATION - 5:30 PM

SUNDAY TRADITIONAL - 10:00 AM



HIGHLANDS CHURCH

A Global Methodist Congregation

Office News

Amey & Lori: office@hgmcbv.com
Newsletter: newsletter@hgmcbv.com

OFFICE HOURS: Monday - Friday, 8:30am - 4:00pm

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE: The Deadline for the January Highlands Newsletter is 12:00 (noon), on December 15 (early). Send all newsletter submissions, comments and/or questions to this email address: newsletter@hgmcbv.com

HOLIDAY: The church office will be closed on December 24, 25, & 26 for the Christmas holiday.

NOTES OF CONDOLENCES:

Family of Vernon Sidler for his passing on 11/11/24.
Family of Alice Lock for her passing on 11/12/24.

Church Staff

REV. ROBERT CLONINGER, *Senior Pastor*
LORI HEALD, *Office Administrator*
AMEY BURKETT, *Administrative Assistant*
DRU MATTHEWS, *Bookkeeper /Treasurer*
JOHN MATTHEWS, *Director of Music Ministries*
PAM MEYER, *Celebration Worship Leader*
JEANNINE WAGAR, *Organist*
JOYCE SHELDON, *Chimes & Bells Director*
LAURIE PEARSON, *Nursery Staff*
MONICA CLARK, *Custodian*

Operating Budget Report - October 31, 2024

	YTD Budget	October Actual	YTD Actual
Income	418,644	53,355	382,818
Expenses	418,644	40,710	393,340
Net	0	12,645	(10,523)

Thank you for your continued support.

3 ways to give

to Highlands Church



Online



In-Person



By Mail

for details visit... hgmcbv.com/give



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[Instagram.com/hgmcbv](https://instagram.com/hgmcbv)

