

Highlands News

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | HIGHLANDS CHURCH | JANUARY 2026 | VOLUME 30 | ISSUE 1

A New Year with Renewed Purpose

As we begin a new year together, we take time to reflect on who we are, what we are called to be, and how God is leading us forward. These updated Values, Vision, and Mission statements express the heart of Highlands Church and guide us as we grow together in faith, fellowship, and service in the year ahead.

THE MISSION OF HIGHLANDS CHURCH

VALUES STATEMENT (WHO ARE WE?)

A CARING COMMUNITY OF FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP

VISION STATEMENT (WHAT DO WE SEEK TO BE OR BECOME?)

THE VISION OF HIGHLANDS CHURCH IS TO BE A GROWING CHURCH FAMILY ENTHUSIASTICALLY BRACING THEIR INDIVIDUAL SPIRITUAL GIFTS, AND VOWS OF PRAYERS, PRESENCE, GIVING, SERVICE, AND WITNESS TO CREATE DEVOTED DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST.

MISSION STATEMENT (HOW DO WE ACCOMPLISH OUR VISION?)

LOVE GOD! LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR! MAKE DISCIPLES!

Under-Shepherd Udderings

Howdy Highlands Church Family,

Happy New Year! 2025 is in the rearview mirror. Thank the Lord and praise Him for all His blessings. 2026 requires us to drive on the road (Jesus, take the wheel) and trust God to guide us in all our journeys. To that end, our Church Council approved a new set of statements that will keep us focused on our calling to be His disciples and do what Jesus commanded. These three statements are not so much new statements of purpose as they are re-fashioned and clarified. I will be preaching a sermon series in January on the Mission of Highlands (and every) Church. At the end of our worship service, I plan to introduce a new weekly affirmation of our Mission Statement: **Love God. Love Your Neighbor. Make Disciples.** Those seven words provide the BIG PICTURE and driving purpose for our life in Christ. I pray, and I ask you to pray each day, that the Lord will bless the ministries and mission of Highlands Church in 2026.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Rick



Spiritual Disciplines

A million-dollar study by an American church revealed what common sense and the Bible revealed to us for over 2,000 years. The greatest spiritual formation, the greatest stride in sanctification, the greatest way to keep daily tuned into the Holy Spirit, is to set aside time each day for prayer and Bible reading (study). If you prefer a devotional in a printed booklet, our church offers a classic daily devotional, entitled *Our Daily Bread*. (Copies are at the Info Station). So we may share in a spiritual discipline together as the body of Christ, you are encouraged to receive the Wake-up Call devotion (it's also presented as a Podcast and on Spotify) each morning in your email. Sign up here: <https://seedbed.com/wakeupcall/>. Our Lay Leader, Bill Williams, has helped many of you to sign up. Our goal is to have our entire church share in this daily devotional together.

Traditional Service Discipleship Class: "Imagine the God of Heaven"

Pastor Rick is offering a five-week Discipleship Class for our Traditional congregation beginning Sunday, January 11, at 11:15 AM, immediately following worship, in the Peter Classroom. This study uses Rev. John Burke's best-selling book *Imagine the God of Heaven* to explore heaven and near-death experiences (NDEs). Each week includes a video and group discussion, along with reading from the book and study guide.

A sign-up sheet is available at the Information Station to RSVP. When you sign up, please indicate whether you would like the church office to order the book and study guide (\$25 total). Payment will be collected at the first class. Couples are welcome to share the book set.

Finance News

As the end of the year is upon us, we can look back with gratitude for the blessings God has bestowed upon us in 2025. Highlands Church is a very generous congregation, and we are able to meet all our financial obligations for operations and administration in 2025.

The mortgage balance at the end of November was \$84,642. On the Fifth Sunday loan reduction giving November 30, we received \$4,845 which made the balance \$79,797 before the December payment. As of December 18, the mortgage balance is \$77,237.36. It is hoped that end of year gifts will reduce the balance even more. Watch for announcements about reducing the debt. We can burn this mortgage in 2026. Sooooo exciting!

Looking toward 2026, the finance committee has proposed an operating budget of \$483,148, which will restore funding for all anticipated programs. During our Stewardship weekends we received 85 estimates of giving for this budget totaling \$370,988. And, since then we have estimates for additional 32 giving units totaling another \$80,000. This gives us about 93.6% of the necessary member giving for the operating budget. So, we are going into 2026 with anticipation of another very successful year.

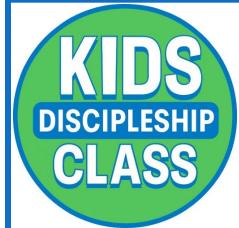
Highlands Youth Discipleship

“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15: 5

Our Youth Group is looking forward to our first outing of the new year as we travel together to see DAVID at the Sight & Sound Theatre on Saturday, January 3. We’re excited to spend the day enjoying lunch, sharing fellowship, and taking in this powerful presentation as we begin the new year together. We hope to learn a lot about the life of David and how his story can help us go deeper in our discipleship journey.

Games & Grub will not meet on Sunday, January 14, due to the youth group trip.

If you have questions or need further details, please contact Wanda Krug.



Children's Center

“START THE CHILDREN OFF THE WAY THEY SHOULD GO AND EVEN WHEN THEY ARE OLD THEY WILL NOT TURN FROM IT.” PROVERBS 22:6



Kids Discipleship Class (ages 5–10) meets in the Children’s Center on Sundays from 10:30–11:00 AM following the Children’s Sermon; there is no class on the first Sunday of each month.

Nursery (ages 0–4) is open in the Children’s Center on Sundays during the 10:00 AM Traditional Worship Service and from 9:00–10:00 AM for parents attending a discipleship class.

In the new year, Kids Discipleship we will be continuing our study of “Jesus’ Birth and Childhood”.

January Lessons:

- January 11 - The Shepherds
- January 18 - Wise Men
- January 25 - Simeon and Anna

Outreach Ministry Report & Opportunities

Thank you church family for volunteering your time at Care and Share Thrift Store, Samaritan's Feet Shoe Event in Gravette, Samaritan Community Center in Rogers packing snack packs for food insecure students in the Gravette School District, Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Ministry and ringing the bell for the Salvation Army Red Kettle Campaign. You have made a positive impact on families in our area. In 2025 the Outreach Ministry Committee donated a total of **\$19,950.84** to the following organizations:

- Snack Packs for Gravette Schools \$10,000.00 (FYI snack packs cost \$3 ea)
- Bright Futures Gravette \$ 4,950.84
- Samaritan's Feet – Gravette Students \$ 5,000.00 (200 shoes @\$25 pair)

In 2026 please continue to donate to Power of One. Simply fold any size bill lengthwise and place in the offering plate. Those bills are directed to Outreach.

Thank you for your continued support of the Gravette School District Food Pantry. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.

2026 Outreach Opportunities Save the Upcoming Dates

Snack Packs – We will pack snack packs on February 4 and April 1, from 10:00 AM–11:30 AM, for food-insecure students in the Gravette School District. Packing will take place at the Samaritan Community Center, 2910 South 8th Street in Rogers. Volunteers are encouraged to come help and learn more about the services Samaritan Community Center provides.

Care & Share Thrift Store – Located at 103 Huntington St. SE in Gravette. Our next volunteer week is January 13–17, which is expected to be a very busy time. The store will reopen on January 6 after being closed for two weeks for the Christmas break, and volunteer help will be greatly appreciated and needed.

Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Ministry – In 2025, we experienced a wonderful opportunity to share the Gospel of Christ around the world, and we will continue this ministry annually. As you see clothing items on sale, consider picking up something for boys or girls ages 2–14 and placing them in the Shoebox Ministry tub located in the hallway near the nursery. We will collect clothing items, hygiene items, school supplies, small toys, and more throughout the year. Our goal for next year is to fill 150 shoeboxes for distribution through Samaritan's Purse.

Blessings, Sara Sherman, Outreach Ministry Committee Chair

Mission Work in Mexico

Each year I, Brother Jim, take teams to Rio Bravo, Mexico in mission. Many things are done, but most important is the difference being made in the lives of children. Our teams share Bibles, offer hands-on Vacation Bible Schools, and dedicate reading libraries in Spanish for 1st through 4th grade readers in elementary schools. This year I hope to provide books for 3 elementaries.

Please believe me when I say that illiteracy is a huge driver of poverty and desperation in Latin American countries. In Mexico, of those children who do go to primary school, only 55% will complete a secondary education. It robs people of the ability to rise above the most menial of existences. Through the love of Christ at work in us that can change!

Each school receives approximately 500 new books to use in helping the children become literate and to ignite their learning potential. Schools in Mexico are not supported by taxes, and most parents cannot afford to send children to school because of the cost. Therefore, reading materials are almost unknown in households, and only textbooks are found in most schools.

Besides the new reading books, we distribute new Spanish language New Testaments at no cost to all the children who would like to have one. The joy of these gifts is apparent on the children's faces, and their desire to come to school is enhanced. It is my belief that the impact on these children's lives is immeasurable. The cost for the children's books and Bibles for each elementary school is approximately 1,800 dollars. I want to challenge this church to provide books for one elementary school. This is something we accomplish together!

With a grateful heart, Bro. Jim Benfer



**Make a difference in
these children's lives**

Library News—Open House Invite!

All are welcome to visit our **Church Library Open House**

When: Sunday, February 1, 2026

Time: 11:15 AM–12:15 PM (after Sunday worship)

Where: Visit our three library locations

- Luke Room – Reference materials
- Library Annex – Children's books, paperbacks, non-fiction books, DVDs, and CDs
- Main Library Office – Christian fiction and non-Christian fiction books

Refreshments will be served in the Library Annex.

Library Committee



Start the New Year in Discipleship

The new year is a great time to grow deeper in faith, and Highlands offers two Adult Discipleship classes to help you do just that. The Mark Discipleship Class is a caring group of learners and will resume meeting on December 28, continuing their study in *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ: A Handbook for Christian Maturity* by Bill Bright. This class is well established and continues to grow together in faith and fellowship.

Coming in January, a new opportunity begins with the Matthew Discipleship Class, launching on Sunday, January 4, 2026. This new class will meet Sundays from 9:00–9:45 AM in the Matthew Classroom and will be coordinated and taught by Allen Lovell for the first few months. The opening sessions, titled *Bible 101*, will explore the Bible's history, organization, and how to study Scripture effectively, followed by a study of the Gospel of Mark. Sign-ups for the Matthew Discipleship Class are available at the Information Station.

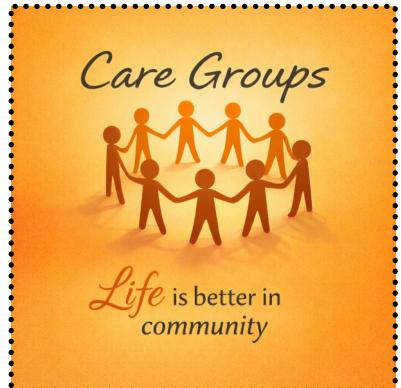
Care Groups: Caring for One Another at Highlands

Care Groups are one of the primary ways we care for one another at Highlands Church. These small groups stay connected through phone calls, cards, visits, prayer, and occasional gatherings when possible. They offer encouragement, support, and fellowship, helping us stay rooted in community and grow together as a church family. Participation in a Care Group is an opportunity for connection, reminding us that no one walks alone.

Following a pause during our recent transition, the Care Group ministry has been thoughtfully restructured and is being renewed with a focus on meaningful participation and shared care. Care Group Leaders and Co-Leaders are in place, and in the coming weeks, they will begin reaching out to each person in their group. Leader gatherings will be held on the fourth Thursday of each month at 4:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall to provide, support, encouragement, and guidance.

Pastor Rick is very supportive of the Care Group ministry and is personally invested in it. He and his wife, Karen, are leading a Care Group themselves and are sharing in the same commitment to connection, care, and fellowship that Care Groups are meant to provide. We're looking forward to a strong and meaningful 2026 as we continue to grow together as a church family.

Care Groups are open to all who consider Highlands Church their home and membership is not required. If you are not contacted but would like to participate, or if you have questions, the church office or the Care Group Coordinators (Bud and Katy Henkel and Doug and Lynn Stone) would be happy to help.



January Highlanders Meeting

The Highlander's Men's group will be meeting again on Tuesday, January 6 at 8:45 am for fellowship, breakfast, a devotional and a special presentation to help us in our spiritual walk through the year ahead, all followed by a short business meeting.

All men of Highlands Church are automatically members of the Highlanders and all are invited to attend what is always an informal meeting, centered primarily on fellowship, while enjoying a meal together. There will be a sign-up sheet on the information station in the Gathering Area so we can get a count for breakfast. Please sign-up and plan on joining us as we start a new year together.



**HIGHLANDS METHODIST
WOMEN**

January HMW Meeting

The Highlands Methodist Women would like to invite the women of Highlands Global Methodist Church to a New Year's Tea. The tea will be prepared by the women from The Jane Store and will be held on Monday, January 12, at 11:00 AM in the Fellowship Hall. The cost is \$15 per person for regular attendees of Highlands Church and \$30 per person for all others. This should be a fun treat for all the hardworking women of the church! Seating is limited, so please sign up early in the Gathering Area, as all reservations and payments must be made by Sunday, January 4, at noon. Wear your hat, boa, fancy clothes, gloves, or whatever you like, and join us for a fun and festive celebration.

HMW Book Club—Begins January 19

Please join the Women of Highlands on Monday, January 19, 2026, at 10 AM in the Mathew Room. ALL women and friends are invited as we discuss *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus* by Lee Strobel. Is there credible proof that Jesus of Nazareth really is the Son of God? In *The Case for Christ*, Strobel—former legal editor of the *Chicago Tribune* and New York Times bestselling author—retraces his own spiritual journey from atheism to faith and builds a compelling case for Christ's divinity. After reading the book, we'll listen to one of his talks on YouTube if time permits. We'll have coffee and cake while we enjoy good conversation! No sign-up is necessary. For more information, call Sue LaHood at 479-855-0937.

Highlands Columbarium and Memorial Garden



Located on church grounds, the Highlands Columbarium and Memorial Garden is available to current and former members of Highlands Church and their immediate families. You are welcome to visit this peaceful space on the south side of the Ministries Activity Center. Brochures are available on the Information Wall just outside the church office. For more information, please contact Doug Fowler, Columbarium Chairman, or the church office.

January 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1– Office Closed	2– Office Closed	3– No Celebration Service – Youth Trip to Branson
4– Combined Worship at 10AM – 1st Sunday Cookies	5	6– Highlanders Meeting – Undecorate for Christmas – Compassionate Disciples Meeting	7	8– Trustees Meeting	9	10
11– Traditional Discipleship Class Begins	12– HMW Mtg; New Year's Tea – Care & Share Trailer on site	13– Care & Share Volunteers Begins	14– Stitchers	15– Safety & Security Meeting	16	17
18	19– Office Closed – HMW Book Club	20– Kitchen Cleanup – Church Council Meeting	21	22– Care Group Leaders Meeting	23	24
25	26	27	28– Stitchers	29	30	31

Thank you for your support!

Thank you to everyone who helped make this year's 36th Annual Highlands Church Cookie Walk such a success! Because of the generosity, creativity, and hard work of so many in our church family, the event raised over \$7,500.

From those who baked and crafted, to those who helped with setup, hospitality, and cleanup, every contribution played a meaningful role. Many worked behind the scenes to prepare, organize, and welcome our community, and their efforts did not go unnoticed. We are deeply grateful for the time, talent, and energy that were so freely given. Thank you for making this beloved tradition such a joyful and impactful event once again.

Darleen Olson and Pat Lehman, Co-Chairs, Cookie Walk





HIGHLANDS CHURCH

A Global Methodist Congregation

**5:30pm Saturday Celebration Worship
10:00am Sunday Traditional Worship**

First Sunday Combined Worship @10am
(No Saturday Service)

Office News

CHURCH OFFICE, Amey Burkett: office@hgmcby.com

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

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE: The deadline to submit content for the February Highlands Newsletter is 12:00 PM (noon) on January 20. Please send all submissions, comments, or questions to the church office at: office@hgmcby.com

CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED: The church office will be closed January 1 & 2 for the New Year's holiday and again January 19 for Martin Luther King Jr Day.

Operating Budget Report - November 30, 2025

	YTD Budget	Nov Actual	YTD Actual
Income	401,503	41,244	414,008
Expenses	401,503	38,296	393,510
Net		0	20,498

Thank you for your continued support.

3 ways to give

to Highlands Church



Online



In-Person



By Mail

for details visit... hgmcby.com/give

THE POWER OF
ONE

Drop a folded dollar into the offering plate
to support our Outreach Ministry



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