

# LIVE. GROW. THRIVE

## Highlands United Church Annual Report



# 2025

# Our Tapestry: Committees & Staff

Minister of Faith & Community Engagement

Minister of Congregational Development

Music Ministry & Choirs

Shelter to Home Team

Saturday Lunch Program

Bridging Gaps Committee

Thrift Store Volunteers

Youth Group Leaders

Camp Highlands Staff

Seniors Ministry Team

HUGG (Greener) Team

Affirming Ministry Group

Truth & Reconciliation Circle

Prayer Shawl (Knit & Knot) Group

ELL Program Tutors

Global Connections Committee

Book Circle Members

Leadership Council

Stewardship Team

Property Committee

Pastoral Care Team

Worship Committee

Christian Education Committee

Communications Team

Personnel Committee



## Financial Vitality & Future Planning.



### \$5 Million Sustainability Goal

Congregation approved feasibility study for long-term building and ministry needs.



### 14% Heritage Fund Return

Fund grew to \$375,203, yielding high return and providing \$60,000 grant for new Thrift Store.



### Successful Leadership Restructure

Created two new Minister roles: Faith & Community Engagement and Congregational Development.



## Worship, Music & Arts.

### 1,000 Attendees for Musical Revue

"10 Million Stare" production raised \$20,000 through nearly sold-out shows.



### 125+ Active Musicians

Music program thrives across four choirs, handbell choir, ukulele group, and chamber ensembles.



### 195 Average Weekly Attendance

Stable average Sunday worship attendance, including 24 participants joining via online livestream.



## Social Justice & Environmental Stewardship.



### 18% Greenhouse Gas Reduction

HUGG team oversaw LED and water heater upgrades, significantly cutting emissions.



### Visible Affirming Presence

Marched in Vancouver Pride Parade and hosted "Pienie Table Extrasaganze" for 28LGBTQIA+ inclusion.



### Truth and Reconciliation Advocacy

Circle held "Suuper Sundays" and led worship experiences on Indigenous wisdom and Celle to Action.

## Outreach & Social Enterprise.



### \$20,000+ Thrift Store Profit

Launched in 2025, exceeding revenue expectations for operating fund and promoting reuses.



### 162 Clients Served by Shelter to Home

Provided free furniture to North Shore residents and secured lease extension through 2027.



### 5,200+ Lunches Distributed Annually

Saturday Lunch program prepares over 100 lunches every week of the year for local community.



### 18 Community Gift Hampers

Bridging Gaps committee delivered hampers despite loss of a major donor.



## Next Generations & Seniors.



### Doubled Sunday School Capacity

Regular attendance of 25 children led to expansion into two separate classes.



### Youth Group Expansion

Solit into separate Junior and Senior gatherings to better serve 30-33 youth with age-specific faith exploration.



### 62 Campers at Camp Highlands

Three weeks of summer camp held, including new Victoria initiative and 18 full bursaries provided.



### 70+ Regular Senior Attendees

Seniors Ministry meets twice monthly, offering support and connection to a large cross-section of community.



## Caring, Education & Connections.



### 100+ Knitted Touques and Scarves

Prayer Shawl group provided items to local shelters and Downtown Eastside.



### Global & Language Links

ELL program supported students from five countries. Global Connections maintained Guatemala partnerships.



### 20 Years of the Book Circle

Celebrated two decades of connection and discussion using signature Celtic knot cloth.

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# MINISTERS OF FAITH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



What you have in your hands is a record of the life of Highlands United Church in 2025. It is filled with events, activities, acts of service, times of joy and sorrow, accomplishments, struggles and everything that happens in a year in the life of the Highlands community.

- **The Word:** that living, challenging, comforting message of our faith.
- **The Sacraments:** the outward and visible signs of God's grace in the community and the world
- **Pastoral Care:** the compassion that the church offers both formally and informally to its community, close to home and far reaching.



# MINISTERS OF FAITH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**A few vignettes illustrating the Word, Sacrament and Pastoral Care  
alive in 2025 at Highlands:**

## **WORD**

I remember our examination of the Book of Revelation – I remember how at the start many of us thought it was one of the bible’s most challenging and confusing books best left ignored; only to discover, upon exploration, the comfort and inspiration within its stories; and for some, perhaps many, a sense of renewed faith in this God who is at once so close and yet beyond our imagining. (Julie)

During the Thriving Faith Campaign, it was not good enough for the committee to put out a message about building a fund. It needed to be rooted in our faith, in what God wants the world to see and feel and hear through Highlands. Working with that small group to find the words of our faith that are alive and meaningful and propelling us forward felt like discerning God’s Word to us today. And it was a collective work. (Will)



# MINISTERS OF

## FAITH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### SACRAMENT

It feels like there were a lot of baptisms in 2025. How great is that?! And each one was unique and transforming for the whole community.



And for the first time in my ministry, I found myself getting weepy during the sacrament of baptism – something about the Highlands community, something about people’s journey stories, something about the Holy Spirit at work in us – it just sunk in for me ... more than ever before – this is the Holy among us. (Julie)  
It happens at Baptism, it happens at Communion, but it also happens in other moments that become an outward sign of God’s grace poured out on people and the community.

The Spirit Singers sang “At This Table” for a service in which we celebrated the sacrament of communion. The song felt sacramental as well. (Will)

### PASTORAL CARE

The Vancouver Pride Parade is such a celebratory event; and it is pastoral. Last August some Highlands folks joined with other United Churches around the UCC float. It was decorated with bright colours and banners. On one side it said, “Queerly Beloved.” What a pastoral phrase. A phrase that conveys: we belong, we are loved, we are seen, and we are known. To march beside that banner is to participate in deep pastoral care. (Julie)

In addition to all the visiting, meeting over coffee, or in the office, gathering to celebrate lives feel very pastoral to me. I am reminded of Pat Munro’s service and the way our hearts broke and poured out praise and thanks to God. (Will)

**Respectfully submitted by the lead ministers of  
Highlands United Church.**

# Rev. Julie Lees

## Minister of Faith and Community Engagement

**“Advent is that period of waiting where we prepare our hearts. We wait for Jesus to be born, which in a church context, means the birth of the light of the world ... and the notion that the world will be filled with the love of God.”**

- Explored “The Big Questions” like living in apocalyptic times (or not), mistranslations in the Bible, and MAID.
- Hosted Ray Aldred, Richard Topping, and Harry Maier from Vancouver School of Theology.
- Allison Rennie held a weekend workshop on the Enneagram.
- Highlands invited folks to learn about the church at the North Shore Newcomers Expo.
- Featured in the paper for its life-sized Advent Calendar that reached out to the community.



# Rev. Will Sparks

## Minister of Congregational Development

### HIGHLANDS' 76TH YEAR WORSHIP AND WEEKEND EVENTS

Honouring the Past, Building the Future.  
Straight talk in the Leadership Board and the congregation about building, finance, and a structural deficit. A Thrift Store team laying the groundwork for a 2025 build.



A Sustainability Team working with Rob Waller to create a fund development plan.  
Day-by-day, week-upon-week acts of deep care and loving kindness in every corner of the Highlands community. In the last few years, we have heard people wondering if Highlands is growing, shrinking, holding its own, and what the future holds.



This is not just a “bums in the seats and dollars in the plate” question. It is a question of renewal, community life, and spiritual relevance. We look forward to animated conversation in the coming Annual Congregational Meeting and the coming year that will help us decide what renewal means to us, and what actions we will take to build God’s future together.

# STAFF TEAM

**Rev. Will Sparks**

Minister of Congregational Development

**Rev. Julie Lees**

Minister of Faith and Community Engagement

**Rev. Colleen Blair**

Minister of Seniors & Hospitality

**Allie Kier**

Minister of Children, Youth, and Families

**Geordie Roberts**

Music Coordinator & Accompanist

**Gillian Irwin**

Spirit Singers

**Geordie Roberts**

Genesis II

**Rosalind Hollett**

God's Free Spirits

**Rosalind Hollett**

Hand Bell Choir

**Heather Soderling**

Re:Sound Chamber Choir

CHOIR DIRECTORS

**Melissa Wilkin**

Administrator

**Simindokht Bakht**

Administrative Assistant

**Talen Bentley Michaud**

Tech Team Coordinator

**Ed Hunt**

Accounting Assistance

**Carol Smith**

Facilities Coordinator

ADMINISTRATION

## STANDING COMMITTEES

### MINISTRY AND PERSONNEL

Craig Madill - chair (Jan-May)  
 Susan Hogman- chair (May-Dec)  
 Diana Bomford  
 Betty Chapin  
 Ardis Nelson  
 Kathleen Whyte  
 Dave Lovely  
 Will Sparks, ex officio  
 Julie Lees ex officio

### FINANCE

Rotating Chair  
 Doug Mackay (treasurer)  
 Cameron Forde  
 Bill Dyer  
 Kathleen Whyte  
 Judith Walker  
 Will Sparks(ex. officio)

### LEADERSHIP BOARD

Frances Roberts (chair)  
 Doug Mackay (treasurer)  
 Lyndsay Irwin (secretary)  
 Ev Leskiw  
 Susan Hogman  
 Oleh Ilnyckyj  
 Ken Hollett  
 Chris Bochon  
 Melanie Thomas  
 Rev. Will Sparks (ex. officio)  
 Rev. Julie Lees (ex. officio)

### PACIFIC MOUNTAIN REPRESENTATIVES

Simone Carrodus  
 Ardis Nelson  
 Allie Keir

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Judy Anderson  
 Al Lill  
 Ken Hollett  
 Peter Ackhurst  
 Rev. Will Sparks

### WORSHIP COMMITTEE

Gillian Irwin (chair)  
 Heather Soderling  
 Colleen Blair  
 Eva Mathiesen  
 Joy Dancey  
 Ken Irwin  
 Geordie Roberts  
 Janet Warren,  
 Julie Lees and Will Sparks

# STATISTICS

## Membership Statistics

Member Statistics	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total Members	452	445	443	419	409	425	487	479
Members removed by Transfer of Membership	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Members removed by Death	9	9	4	14	10	7	5	7
Members added by Confirmation	9	0	0	0	0	13	1	1
Members added by Transfer of Membership	1	2	2	0	0	10	0	0
Weddings	4	4	1	3	4	6	1	1
Baptisms	8	4	1	1	2	2	1	1
Memorials, Interment of Ashes, and Passing's	31	16	8	8	19	13	11	16

## Average Attendance

Average Sunday Morning Attendance	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2025
Yearly Average Jan-Dec	236	233		81	115	192*	195*

\*Includes an average of 34 online attendees.

## Christmas Services Attendance

Christmas Season	24 December Eve 4:00 pm	24 December Eve 7:00 pm	24 December Eve 10:00 pm	25 December Day 10:00 am	Total
2019	366	443	110		919
2020	50 on Zoom	585 online	389 online		1023
2021		452	259		711
2022	255	263	79		620
2023	289	264	110	149*	812
2025	386	311	72		769

\*2023 Christmas Eve fell on Sunday.



# SENIORS MINISTRY

## Rev. Colleen Blair

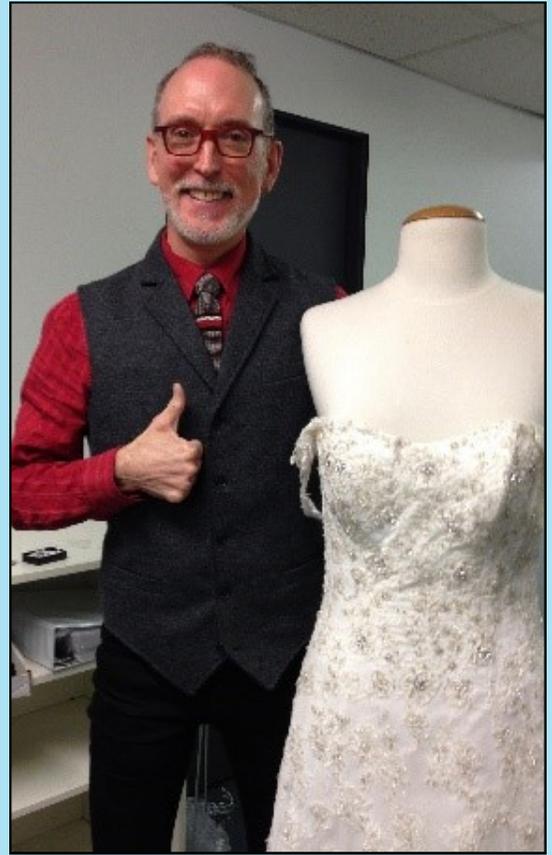
The Seniors ministry at Highlands, under the leadership of the Rev. Colleen Blair, is a growing and thriving ministry representing an incredible cross section of loving, caring community. We are continually blessed by a wonderful tapestry of wisdom, experience, humour and life that surrounds us each time we meet.





## Our Goals for the Seniors Ministry:

To enhance the quality of life for senior adults through meaningful relationships, engaging programs, learning opportunities, helpful resources, and support for emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing, including care during times of uncertainty, loss, or grief. We gather on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday (September to June) and we usually have between 50-70+ of our seniors present,



Rev. Colleen Blair supports seniors through times of transition and challenge, serving as a liaison with families and coordinating extra care when needed. She also leads the Seniors Ministry and its volunteers, offering talks, music, bus trips, and gatherings that enrich and support our lives.



# KIDS & YOUTH

MINISTER FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES: ALLIE KEIR

OUR MEMORIES  
2025

# Youth Group

## Children, Youth and Families Minister's Report

2025 was an exciting and joy-filled year for children's and youth ministry at Highlands. We were thrilled to welcome many new families into our community, and Sunday mornings were often buzzing with energy. Sunday School regularly saw attendance climb to 25 children, so much so that we happily opened a second class when needed to keep things engaging and interactive for everyone.

Our Sunday School curriculum was creative, hands-on, and full of heart. Most of it was thoughtfully developed in-house and brought faith to life through scripture, storytelling, themed videos, crafts, Godly Play, and even gym games, because sometimes you just need to move. We are so lucky to have our Sunday School teachers, Emma Byrom, Julie Byrom, Gillian Forde, Georgia Keir, and Avery Shmidt, to help lead our faith and fun.



They are about belonging, growing in confidence, and building faith-filled connections that last. Our Youth Group continues to thrive, with 20 to 25 amazing youth gathering monthly during the school year. Under the leadership of Jewel Epp, Ethan Sauer, Gillian Forde, and Chris Bochon, the group enjoyed movie nights, youth Olympics, art and baking evenings, skating, swimming, campfire sing-along, laser tag, and of course, our third annual PG-rated murder mystery event.



These gatherings are a place where youth can show up exactly as they are, build real friendships, and explore faith in ways that feel natural and authentic. And yes, we always manage to weave faith formation into the mix. As our group grows, so do the needs of our youth. Our younger members are eager for high-energy, hands-on activities, while our senior youth are ready for deeper discussion and meaningful faith exploration. So, in September 2025, we began to offer separate junior and senior gatherings to better support each age group. This seems to be working well and has continued into 2026

# Summer Camp

**Camp Highlands 2025 was another fantastic summer adventure.**

We hosted three week-long day camps, Magnified VBC, A Taste of the Arts, and KidVenture, with a total of 62 campers joining the fun. From leadership opportunities and intergenerational connections to community service projects and creative exploration, camp was packed with laughter, growth, and faith-filled moments. With generous contributions from our congregation, it was our privilege to provide full bursaries for 10 campers this year.



New in 2025, we took Camp Highlands on the road. We ran our Magnified VBC at Central Saanich United in Victoria, with the help of our beloved Sandi Parker, where she is a part of the ministry team. It was such a success that we have been invited back again this summer. Highlands is a place where faith is lived out with creativity, connection, laughter, service, and a whole lot of joy. I remain deeply committed to nurturing the spiritual and personal growth of our children, youth, and families. In particular, and going forward, I will focus my attention on creating programming with zero barriers for neurodivergent kiddos and their families. It is important to me that all children know how deeply they are loved and celebrated, and I will do my best to make sure that Highlands is a safe place for that to happen.

Submitted by Allie Keir.

# Sustainability Committee



**THRIVING FAITH**

Together for Tomorrow

At an extended Leadership Board meeting in late 2023, we first heard the words “structural deficit” in a report from the then finance committee chair, David Boal. He reported that our cash reserves would be depleted very quickly if we did not take action. Financial sustainability has been one of our Five Year Ministry goals, so hearing this created an urgency to focus closely on that part of the goal.

On the suggestion of some in attendance, we contacted Rob Waller of Waller and Associates to obtain advice on achieving financial sustainability. Waller and Associates had worked with Highlands United on our two God Space campaigns, and many felt confident that Rob had the experience and expertise we were looking for.

Here is, in brief, an outline of our engagement with Waller and Associates and the congregation in 2025:

- January 2025, first meeting with Rob Waller
- February 2025, proposal to Leadership Board for a feasibility study of creating a sustaining fund large enough to address our long-term building and ministry needs
- March 2025, after consultation with Finance, Building Management, and extended Leadership Board members, the Leadership Board decided to move forward with the proposed plan and a Sustainability Team was appointed
- Comprehensive assessment of stewardship trends, building costs, revenues and expenses, budget projections, and future building needs with the help of Finance and the Building Management Team

- October 2025, congregational meeting and approval of feasibility study to determine the capacity to raise up to \$5 million for a special fund to sustain building and ministry into the future.

At the time of writing, March 2025, the feasibility study has been successfully completed, its recommendation to hold a fund campaign was approved by a meeting of the congregation, March 9, and the preparation stage of the fund campaign has begun.

Respectfully submitted by Will Sparks, based on a summary written by Ardis Nelson



# Ministry & Personnel

Committee: Craig Madill stepped down as chair due to responsibilities on the Sustainability Campaign Committee. Susan Hogman became chair in June 2025. Dave Lovely has attended committee meetings and volunteered to assist with some tasks in preparation for being confirmed by the congregation.



## ACTIVITIES:

- Staff reviews were completed early 2025.
- Ongoing support provided for the staff given increasing workload.
- Reviewed our bullying and harassment policy, and ensured all staff, Leadership Board, and M&P are aware and signed an Attestation Agreement regarding this policy.
- Created a salary scale for lay staff, approved by Leadership Board.
- Began to update M&P Terms of Reference.
- M&P has worked with staff in the office to assist in coordinating volunteer and temporary coverage during a staff member's leave.

Members: Susan Hogman, Chair; Craig Madill, Ardis Nelson, Kathleen Whyte, Betty Chapin, Diana Bomford, Dave Lovely.

# Leadership Board

The Leadership Board is grateful and honoured to work in a position of trust and faith on behalf of a vibrant, amazing, and dedicated congregation at Highlands. We are stewards of a community which lives out its Vision Statement in all we do and offer through the church.

This year we welcomed two new members: Ken Hollett and Ev Leskiw.

We all participated in a regional retreat with other members of boards and councils from around BC in November. We have implemented a portfolio approach for board members, linking us with specific groups integral to the life and work of HUC. We had two Special Congregational Meetings, October 6 and March 9, regarding future visioning and sustainability for HUC. A thorough Sustainability Assessment Report was published which included data collected from interviews and an online survey under the leadership of Rob Waller & Associates and our Sustainability Team.



Planning the inception of a Sustainability fundraising campaign for the fall, yet to be named. We hosted extended Leadership Board meetings in May and December.

Regarding the Thrift Store, we are very close to the actual “breaking ground” for the construction of the thrift store after much patience, time, and incredible planning by the Thrift Store committee. Congratulations to Carol Smith and her team.

We will also see new signage appearing in our parking lots this spring.

# Leadership Board

We continue to practice the inclusion of spiritual discernment in our monthly meetings as we make decisions for this community.

We organized and hosted a wonderful celebratory weekend for Highlands' 76th anniversary in April 2025.



The Leadership Board are to be commended and thanked for their commitment and time given to serve the Highlands community. I appreciate their willingness and boldness to examine and research different ways of sustaining and building for our future. The challenges we face are the work and organization involved in our Sustainability fundraising campaign. We are inspired by the interest and willingness to proceed and look to nurture skills we have within our community.

We aim to find an effective way of managing our time resources to this end. We hope you will be inspired to offer your gifts of time and talent to this cause. Minutes from Leadership Board meetings are available through the office.



Respectfully submitted,  
Frances Roberts  
Chair of Leadership Board

# Worship and Music

## Worship



We were blessed to have a full leadership team throughout 2025, consisting of Will Sparks, Julie Lees, Allie Keir, Colleen Blair, and Geordie Roberts. They led us with wisdom, compassion, creativity, and excitement. However, that team alone could not have provided the worship experiences that our congregation now wants and expects without the support of many other faithful people.

The **Worship Ministry Team** is responsible for preparing worship services that provide opportunities to be inspired, to feel included, to be challenged and to celebrate God's presence in our lives.



# Music

Music ministry at Highlands continues to provide community and a creative outlet for over 125 members of our congregation. In addition to four choirs, the congregation also appreciates the contributions to worship of the handbell ringers, occasional guest musicians for special events like the Family Christmas Concert, and the Summer Choir.



Along with these long-established efforts, we can now include the recent addition of musical groups in other ministry areas such as a beginner ukelele group, a regular sing-along gathering and a line dancing group.



The leadership of Gill Irwin, Roz Hollett, Heather Soderling, Geordie Roberts, Ren Zheng must be acknowledged as key to the success of our music program. We also need to acknowledge the role of the tech team in successfully sending our music out to the online congregation and beyond. We are very fortunate to have a large and diverse choral library that allows us to enhance worship with music in many contemporary styles and from a diversity of cultures. The “freshening” of the library is always a work in progress and is an expense that is worth being reminded about every year.

Although the organ is used less often in 21st century hymns and songs, it is crucial to our worship experience particularly at Christmas and Easter. Just to keep the instrument tuned once per year is a considerable expense and the upkeep of an instrument that was old when we acquired it 65 years ago will need to be kept on the agenda of both the music and property committees in the coming years. We were fortunate to find and retain the services of a skilled organ technician in September 2025 and a proper tuning of the instrument proved very welcome indeed.



# Music



The most important consideration as we consider the health of the music program over the next five to ten years is to not ignore the fact that the choir is, in large part, “aging in place”.

With that in mind, anything the congregation can do to encourage their gullible or easily coerced friends, neighbours and relatives under the age of 50 “give it a try” with the choirs at Highlands would be greatly appreciated and will pay dividends both to the church and the new recruits, guaranteed. In the long-term, a succession plan for leadership will be necessary and the groundwork to guarantee the future health of music ministry at Highlands is starting to appear on the agenda of the committees affected. If you know of any young clones of any of our music leaders, start dropping hints.

Respectfully submitted  
Geordie Roberts

## Re:Sound Chamber Choir



This year saw Re:Sound begin its 10th season! We sang in church approximately once a month from September to June, including Good Friday and Christmas Eve. We also sang at special events including the High Tea, Advent Festival, and Highlands Family Christmas. Our membership remained steady this year, and we were lucky to share worship with Summerland United in May. We would like to thank Kathleen Whyte for donating two new pieces of repertoire to the choir.

Respectfully submitted,  
Heather Soderling

# God's Free Spirits



God's Free Spirits is a wonderful group for singers aged 3 to Grade 3. This lively group has expanded and developed this year and can now perform some simple two-part music, as well as perform solo parts from time to time.

We rehearse every Thursday evening from 6 until 7 p.m. and work with Allie Keir on a Bible study, a craft, and lots of singing. The choir sings in Church approximately once a month and participates at the 4 p.m. Christmas Eve service and the Highlands Family Christmas. Their infectious enthusiasm is wonderful to work with. I'd like to thank Emily and Jewel for their help from time to time. We would welcome new members at any time to join us.

## Bell Choir

For over fifty years now at Highlands, the Bells have provided special music during Sunday services and at special events. This year, I would like to acknowledge the foundational impact of our first director, Charlotte Nelson, who passed away recently. Charlotte wrote all the music for the group by hand while she was leader, and her legacy here is felt deeply.



I personally owe her a huge debt of gratitude, as someone who exemplified how to work successfully in this medium. This year, the group has performed at the Advent Sundays and will be contributing to the celebration of Easter. We are able to have a flexible schedule to allow for people to ring when they are able, and have a devoted group of ringers who have risen to new challenges and ringing techniques with great aplomb. My thanks go to the strong memories and training that Charlotte gave me, and to the enthusiasm and skills of the current ringers.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rosalind Hollett

# Advent Festival 2025

Our annual Advent Festival has grown in popularity and size since it's birth about 18 years ago. Usually held on the weekend before Advent, the event runs from Friday evening through Saturday afternoon.

The Advent Festival invites in hundreds from the wider community, sharing who we are, what we believe in and what we do. In this way it works towards fulfilling our 5 Year Ministry Plan.

**There are many moving parts to this church-wide event including:**



**Nativity Exhibit (in the Lower Hall) coordinated by Chris Robertson;** 2025 is her last year in this role. 200+ nativity scenes on display donated scenes were documented by Carol Rushworth and held in secure storage until the event the exhibit was assembled, displayed and hosted by volunteers under the leadership of Chris Robertson. Thanks goes to Geordie Roberts who entertained the exhibit visitors during the weekend special thanks goes to Chris Robertson who has coordinated the Nativity Display since its inception.

## **Kids Only Market (in the Gym)**

- coordinated by Gill Irwin and Joy Dancey
- items are collected during the year and displayed so children aged 4-14 are able to buy and wrap gifts for friends and family
- adult and youth volunteers work one-on-one with younger children



## **Christmas Cafe (in the Gym)**

coordinated by Marie Rice

Provides a relaxing social area to enjoy Friday dinner or Saturday lunch or just to rest while children are shopping or decorating cookies.

### **Bake Sale (in the Gym)**

coordinated by Tracey Morettin with baking by the SpiritSingers.

### **Craft Sale (in the Gym)**

coordinated by Tracey Morettin

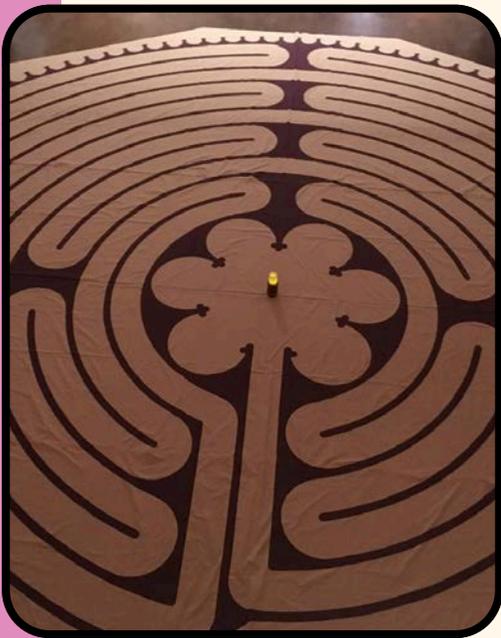
### **Cookie Decorating (in the Gym)**

coordinated by Allie Keir and run by the youth staff  
thanks to Ann Echols and Daphne Squire for baking the cookies



### **Labyrinth and Spiritual Practices Space (in the Sanctuary)**

- coordinated by Sharon Yetman and Ross White
- held in the sanctuary
- people of all ages are invited to walk the labyrinth laid on the sanctuary floor and learn about this meditative practice
- thanks to Sharon Yetman, Ross White and the Healing Hands team for sharing their gifts with us.



### **Children's Quiet Space (in the Welcome Space)**

coordinated by Wendy McNaughton

a quiet space for children to explore children-size nativity scenes, puzzles and books and to play dress-up in the "manger."

There are dozens of folks not mentioned in this report, but we are so very grateful to all the volunteers who help to make this event a huge success!

Submitted by Gillian Irwin, acting coordinator 2025



**HIGHLANDS UNITED PRODUCTIONS PRESENTED 10 MILLION STARS, A MUSICAL REVUE.**

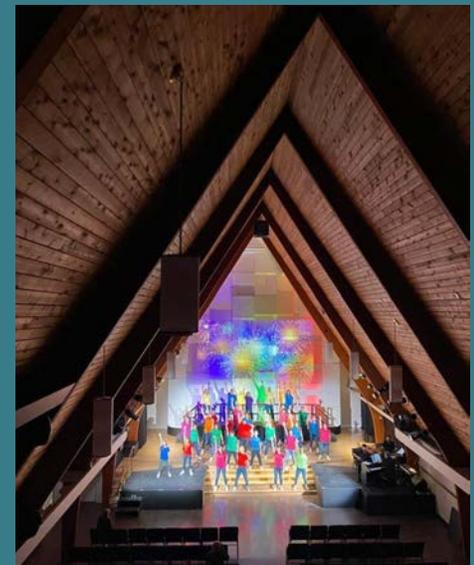
With selections from a wide variety of Broadway musicals past and present. We had a cast of over forty entertainers on stage, about half were from our congregation, a well-rehearsed band, and over 70 volunteers involved in the preparation and presentation of this event.

Our cast members ranged in age from ten years old to “in their eighties,” and all were delightful. Seeing the interaction between younger and older, total strangers before rehearsals began in some cases, super-talented youngsters learning from highly experienced seniors, moms and dads on stage with their daughters and sons, all of this made the entire project a blessing. This was the closest and most friendly cast we have experienced.

So many people played a large part in the success of the production that we would not know where to begin in listing them all. We owe a huge thank you to every one of the volunteers who took care of the wide variety of departments needed to have a successful show. However, we all need to continue to celebrate the brilliance of Geordie Roberts. He is fabulous to work with and his contributions, over and above his “job” at Highlands, are immeasurable.

The four shows were almost completely sold out, with nearly 1,000 members of our community enjoying this production. All profits from the show went back to Highlands, just over \$20,000.

**Respectfully submitted by Doug and Gill Irwin, co-directors**



# Building Management

With the completion and success of the Sustainability Fund Campaign, the Building Management Team, BMT, is encouraged to move forward with plans outside the confines of the emergency repairs that occur weekly. In conjunction with the Finance Committee, we look forward to plans that will address the longer-term maintenance plan and capital replacement program.

However, we are also pleased to report the completion of work that had been planned for the summer of 2025, including:



- Repairs to the south parking lot pavement
- Line painting
- "No parking" signage
- Pre-school wall and floor repaired
- Painting as per annual schedule
- South parking lot rock wall repaired
- Courtyard wood repaired or replaced, and painted
- Back outside wall of gym 80% painted



With the completion of the Thrift Store, issues around storage and security have taken a place in our list of pending items, but will be fully addressed when we have Anne's report in hand. We expect there to be more than a few items that will of necessity take priority.

We anticipate having a role in the accessing and accommodating of new tenants for what has been the Waldorf space.

The BMT is grateful to Doug Margerm for his continued guidance with our group and the Finance Committee. His expertise is truly invaluable. We are thankful for the building expertise on our team as well, and for the time team members give to our aging, well-loved building.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Warren and Doug Irwin, co-chairs

BMT members: Chris Bochon, Doug Margerm, Will Sparks, Dave Wilson



# Pacific Mountain Region

The Pacific Mountain Region, PMR, Council is the governing body of the United Church in BC. Through it we relate to the wider United Church.

Ministerial staff and two lay delegates from Highlands are members of the Council. Allie Keir and Ardis Nelson are our lay delegates. Highlands can have three lay delegates.

Treena Duncan is the CEO, “Executive Minister,” of the Region.

The 2025 AGM of the Region was held in Nanaimo, May 29 through June 2.

The theme of the AGM was Cracked Open and invited us into the story in Mark 14:3 where the woman breaks open her alabaster jar to anoint Jesus.

Delegates through the three days explored this theme in the context of what we in the United Church need to break open so that new life for our faith communities will emerge.

We heard and discussed presentations from speakers about declining congregations and participation in church, millennial and Gen Z experiences of church and spirituality, and how we might respond to those challenges. As well, we heard hopeful reports of the national church’s initiatives to ensure continuing life, and how we can move from self-centrism and privilege to love and radical accompaniment.

As always, attending this annual meeting is a wonderful opportunity to hear what other faith communities are struggling with and celebrating. Highlands UC seems to be quite well known as a thriving congregation, based on comments from other attendees.

The Sunday service was a moving wrap-up to the AGM, including the ordination of our friend Sandi Parker.

All our delegates attended this AGM, either in person or remotely.

This was Simone Carrodus’ last AGM as a Highlands delegate to the PM Region. Simone has been a faithful presbyter and regional representative for many years and has served on a number of committees, most recently on the Communities of Faith/Pastoral Relations and the Approvals Working Group. She has also been an excellent mentor to new reps. Thank you, Simone, for the time and wisdom you have contributed to Presbytery and PM Region for so many years.

There is a spot available for a new representative, and we would welcome anyone interested in representing Highlands at the Regional AGM or participating on a regional committee to connect with one of us.

Ardis Nelson, on behalf of Highlands PMR reps



# Welcoming Ministry

It will come as no surprise to many that the welcome space is the heart of Sunday morning hospitality at Highlands. It is, for members and visitors alike, the place of invitation, first impressions, connection, and on many occasions it is a place to engage in the shared activity of ministry. With coffee, conversation, and warm greetings, it is a place of belonging and offers that deep sense of coming home.



I am very grateful to the welcome hosts and greeters for the work they do to facilitate this ministry. Working together as a team of about 12 people each week, the greeters and welcome hosts help to facilitate the Sunday morning experience and embody the welcome that the whole congregation extends.



They prepare for your arrival, welcome people as they come through the doors, and pay special attention to those who are new and visiting. The hospitality ministry would not be complete, though, without the team of hosts that welcome and support the online community, which is a vital and vibrant part of the Highlands worshipping community.

The hosts monitor the chat box and bring a warm and generous personalized welcome to those joining worship online.

Particular thanks to Jon Carrodus for coordinating the welcome hosts and reaching out to newcomers, and to Simone Carrodus for her weekly attention to the information/action table.

Respectfully submitted,  
Colleen Blair, Minister for Seniors and Hospitality

# Social Justice Affirming Ministry



Participated in several worship services, including Highland's Affirm anniversary and PIE Day Sunday (the Sunday before March 14), celebrating our Public, Intentional, and Explicit commitment.

Celebrated Pride with a special Pride service and participation in Pride at the Pier. We also collaborated with the Lower Mainland Pride Cluster. Several congregation members helped build and decorate the Lower Mainland Pride Cluster float and marched in the Vancouver Pride Parade.



Hosted an Affirm Craft Day, creating necklaces, bracelets, greeting cards, and artwork to raise funds for our Affirming ministry and annual fees for Affirm United.

Ran a craft and information table at the Advent Festival, selling items from the Affirm Craft day. We also contributed to the life-size Advent calendar.

Held a "Picnic Table Extravaganza" on September 27, decorating the outdoor table, sharing 2SLGBTQIA+ books, and engaging the public about Highlands and the Affirming program.

Continued work on a new Affirm antependium (first version debuted on PIE Day Sunday).

Each Sunday, committee members and allies wear the green scarf at the back of the church, offering a visible sign of welcome and a friendly presence for questions about Highlands as a safe and inclusive space.



Respectfully submitted,  
Reen Burley

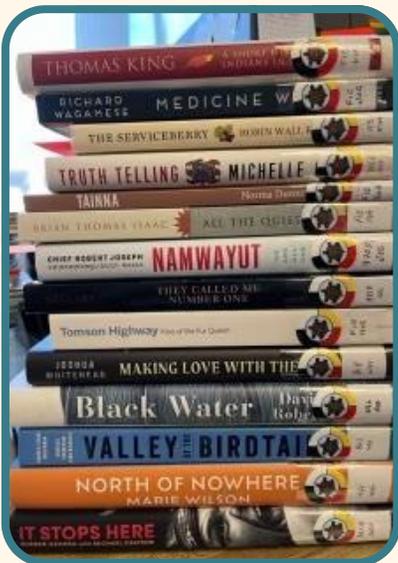
# Truth and Reconciliation



**Members:** Tanis Van Drimmelen, Linda Greven, Wendy McNaughton, Margaret Harrington, Ross White. Staff Resource: Will Sparks. Wendie Reinhardt (term completed with gratitude)

**Goals Statement:** educate, expand knowledge, and raise awareness in the congregation regarding Indigenous issues. (for example- the 94 Calls to Action, UNDRIP, correct vocabulary and terminology, cultural sensitivity and safety, history, art, and decolonization)

- learn to listen to and appreciate Indigenous voices and worldviews.
- invite the congregation into worship experiences reflecting Indigenous wisdom.
- promote action and public witness on Human Rights issues.
- take steps towards reconciliation.



Through the year our team has been involved in (to name a few):

- Sponsored Souper Sunday, i.e. Doctrine of Discovery
- Offered leadership in territorial acknowledgements.
- Worship Planning: National Indigenous Peoples Day, National TRC Day, Orange Shirt & Red Dress Days
- Participation in Tseil Waututh sponsored Water Ceremony
- Engage each other and the congregation in sharing books, knowledge, information, local events and self-reflections.

This Circle is actively recruiting members interested in furthering their goals and working collaboratively to achieve them. Please contact any member.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Ross White

# Small Group Connections

SMALL GROUPS CONNECTIONS: THE MANDATE FOR THE SMALL GROUPS' MINISTRY IS TO OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONGREGANTS TO CONNECT SOCIALLY WITH AN INTENTION TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER IN DEEPER AND MORE MEANINGFUL WAYS. MOST INITIATIVES WERE CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS YEARS

- Christmas Card Greetings
  - Construction of 150 cards by a small team of 8 and led by Pamela Hollington.
  - Cards included advent Information and mailed Nov-Dec 2025.
- Huddles: (Small Group Conversation Connections)
  - Huddles continue in a variety of ways and connections. This past year we have had 9 active
  - Huddles of 3-4 with a collective total of 33 members.
- High Tea- June 7: objectives of Connecting in Small Groups met very successfully
  - We had 130 guests and made approximately \$1800 profit which was split between Children and Youth and the Thrift Store Payment system. We had
- Summer Social Connections
  - Coffee clusters- 1 registered with 7 in attendance
  - Appy parties- 3 parties reported with a collective total of 46 guests
  - Breakfast party- 7 guests
- Garden Gang- 13 people continue with Garden maintenance
- Hanging Basket Sale led by Carol Smith brought in some funds





## Highlands United Growing Greener

Our goal is to encourage and support the people of Highlands and the wider community in protecting our environment. We can pick up litter, we can recycle, we can use less energy. Probably more of our own energy, though.

The HUGG group meets monthly by Zoom to support each other to keep these things moving. Though Zooming has been increasingly hard. Jon puts an item in the Friday Highlights message every week.

We held only one congregational litter pickup after church around the village this year; most Sundays are taken up with other things. The recycling in the church building seems hard to keep organized; we need to work on that more. Caroline manages the cigarette butt cans in front of the building.

Since we switched to LED lighting and installed an electric hot water heater in place of the gas one, Highlands' greenhouse gas emissions have reduced by about 18% and our electricity use by about 22%, according to the Faithful Footprints team which provided the grant for this work.

**HUGG core members: Jon Carrodus, Simone Carrodus, chair, Ev Leskiw, Caroline Mahoney, Jean McTavish, Will Sparks, and Pam Tattersfield. Jean and Pam are from other congregations.**



## Global Connections

- Maintains Highlands' partnership with Artesana Collective in Guatemala by WhatsApp calls with Andréa Barrios
- Offers suggestions for "Gifts that Give Twice" during Advent, including selling Multifaith Calendars
- **Members:** Jon and Simone Carrodus and Sharon Yetman(chair)

# BRIDGING GAPS

(Formally Local Connections)



2025 was another active and meaningful year for the Bridging Gaps Committee. We had the opportunity to tour the WISH drop-in centre and learn more about the important services they provide. Through designated budget funds, we were also able to offer financial support to First United, WISH, Shelter to Home, and Saturday Lunch.

We supported Sage House by providing toiletries and other needed items, and in May we held a well-attended sewing day where members of the congregation made tote bags for the women there. We also met with the director of the North Shore Women's Centre to learn more about their work and the support they offer.



This year also marked Santa Hank's retirement, and we want to thank him sincerely for his many years of generous support for our hamper program. Camp Fircom asked if we could make more curtains for their cabins, but because the request came late in the year, we suggested taking that on in 2026.

With the help of the congregation, we collected and delivered toiletries, makeup, and other personal items for WISH, as well as socks, underwear, ponchos, and other needed items for First United.

Despite Santa Hank's retirement, and the loss of his annual \$1,000 donation, the generous support of the Spirit Singers and the congregation made it possible for us to prepare and deliver 18 hampers.



Members: Susan Hogman, Chair; Deb Kent; Cathy Vassiliadis; Joy Dancey; Janie Ackhurst; Julie Lees, ministry liaison

# Shelter to Home

## Mission

Shelter to Home is an outreach ministry of Highlands United Church and a member of Furniture Banks Canada. We collect gently used furniture and household goods and provide them to people across the North Shore who are experiencing furniture poverty. Our donation line is operated by Lu'ma Native Housing Society and supported by Shelter to Home volunteers.



**162 CLIENTS  
SERVED**



## 2025 Highlights

- Received community grants from the District of North Vancouver and the North Shore Community Foundation, totaling \$12,100
- Received Festival of Trees support from the Donohoe Real Estate Group
- Raised additional funds through Bridging Gaps, Thrift Sale pop-ups, the Welcome Back BBQ, and the Advent Appeal
- Processed approximately 350 loads of donated furniture and household goods
- Secured a lease extension to June 2027
- Continued to serve clients through the work of 20 dedicated volunteers

**350 DONATION  
LOADS  
RECEIVED**



## Financial Snapshot

- Expenses were approximately \$27,000, mostly for rent.
- Donations totaled \$17,472, with the remaining shortfall covered from funds on hand.



**20 VOLUNTEERS**



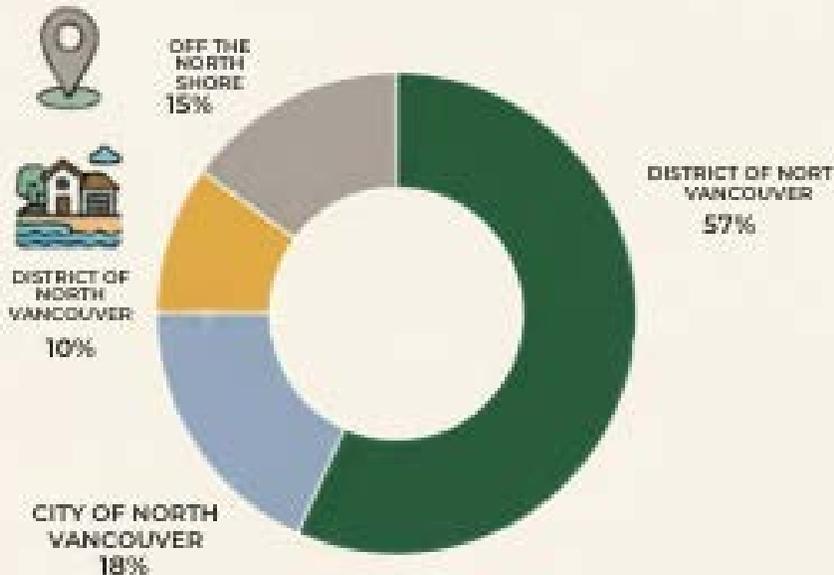
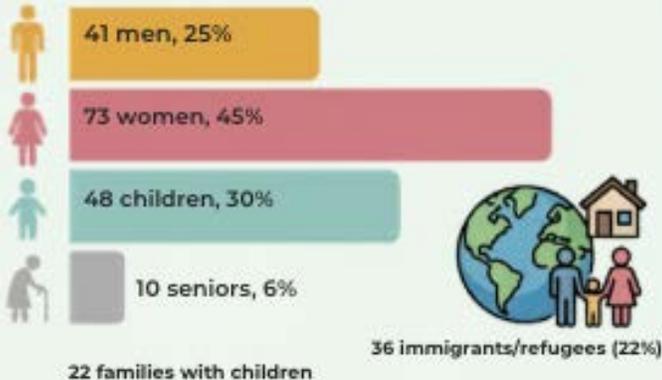
# SHELTER TO HOME CLIENT PROFILE 2024

## Housing Outcomes

### Client Profile, 2024

162 total clients served

Lato Regular, 18pt



## Referring Agencies

Hollyburn Seniors' and Family Services was the largest referral source, with 35 clients (27%), followed by Sage House and North Shore Crisis Centre with 21 clients (13.5%), Vancouver Coastal Health with 17 clients (11%), Impact with 16 clients (10%), and North Shore Emergency Services with 13 clients (8%). Other referral sources included Harvest Project, Lookout North Shore Homeless Shelter, North Shore Women's Centre, North Shore Community Resources, West Coast Family Services, Highlands United Church, North Shore Neighbourhood House, and community referrals.



## Current Challenges

- Space that is affordable, but too small for current needs
- Two-floor layout that creates accessibility challenges
- Ongoing financial sustainability

## Community Partners

- Shelter to Home works alongside North Shore churches, community organizations, Lu'ma Society, Squamish First Nation, Tsawasen First Nation, Seymour Lions Housing, Directions Youth, and others.

# Saturday Lunch

Saturday Lunch is a feeding ministry that prepares and distributes over 100 lunches every Saturday of the year. Each week 5 sandwich makers gather in the big kitchen at Highlands to make 224+ sandwiches. A team of two or three then assemble and pack the lunch bags with a drink box, fruit, cookies and 2 sandwiches. At the end of 2024 we started a monthly cookie making event to involve other volunteers. In the spring of 2024, many of our volunteers took the Food Safe Level 1 course as part of our ongoing commitment to this ministry. Saturday Lunch is grateful for the tremendous financial support from members of the North Shore Tai Chi Spirit.



We also received some funding from the District of North Vancouver. As well, the program receives support in the way of food donations from the Food Bank. We were fortunate to receive a donation from Bridging Gaps in 2024 which enabled us to purchase 8 styrofoam coolers to help with transporting the lunches to North Shore Neighbourhood House. The folks who come to receive a lunch say things like, "It's not just lunch...they give hope."

Respectfully submitted,  
Wendy McNaughton



# Baptism and Weddings

## **Baptisms (12)**

Zoya Ghafelehbashi

Shanli Molaei

Parisa Seifoory

Behnam Samadipour

Asal Samadipour

Aryan Samadipour

Bella Rose-Heraty

Brayden Rose-Heraty

Hossein Tason Etesam

Maryam Mahmoudian Aliabadi

Mehrana Leah

Parimah Laeh



## **Weddings (1)**

Trevor William Oakley and Kayla May Orrell July 2025





# Memorials and Passings

## Deaths and Memorials

- Gloria Magnussen passed on 29 November 2024. Memorial held 11 January 2025.
- Amienh Ferdowsi Missaghi passed on 28 January 2025. Memorial held 6 February 2025.
- David Walter Blair passed on 31 January 2025. Memorial held 15 February 2025.
- Patrick Munroe passed on 28 April 2025. Memorial held 27 July 2025.
- Norman Fromyha passed on 23 May 2025. Memorial held 3 August 2025.
- Alec Wallace passed on 28 May 2025. Memorial held 23 August 2025.
- Vera Belle Berton passed on 14 May 2025. Memorial held 20 September 2025.
- Jean Gabrielse passed on 3 September 2025. Memorial 28 September 2025.

## Interments Only (4)

- Nicola Anne Ferriday passed in September 2022. Interment held 18 April 2025.
- David Alexander Bain\* passed on 20 June 2025. Interment held 9 July 2025.
- Anthony Robert Cella passed on 6 November 2025. Interment held 14 November 2025.
- Ping Lan Betty Wong passed on 19 July 2025. Interment held in West Vancouver.

New Members by Transfer of Membership

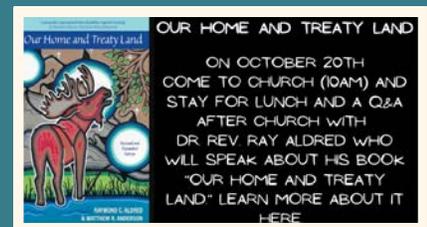
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\* Indicates a Highlands member.

# Adult Education and Faith Formation Study and Reflection, Adult Education Groups

There are so many ways one learns, through study, engagement, osmosis, singing, action, the list goes on. From the ministers' joint report to the Prayer Shawl report, we can read between all the lines of this Annual Report to understand the vast array of rich learning opportunities. This entire report is a testimony to adult education and faith formation. What might not be mentioned elsewhere are things like:

- **Lectio Divina:** a group meeting every Tuesday morning via Zoom to meditate on scripture
- **Lenten Art Response:** five different creative activities that deepened the Lenten experience
- **Book Study:** Ray Aldred's latest book, *Our Home and Treaty Land*
- **Tuesday Bible Study:** 1 Corinthians
- **Mini Mountaintop Retreat:** Mt. Seymour, Lynn Valley, and Highlands offered a one-day spiritual retreat in February
- **Church Info Fair:** a time after church to learn all about the groups that are part of Highlands
- **Affirm Celebration:** a time to celebrate and acknowledge the learning done and decisions made



# LIBRARY

All are welcome at Highlands Church Library. The library supports the ministry of outreach by providing resources that encourage spiritual exploration. The library offers materials for leaders of children, youth, and adult groups as well as individuals.



The library offers a varied selection of books and DVDs. Betty creates displays at the entrance to the library which support worship, festivals, and church seasons. We continue to acquire new books including many by Indigenous and LGBTQS+ authors. We are always interested in hearing about titles that you would like to see at the library.

Submitted by Betty  
Chapin and Robin Rivers



## The 15th Capilano Highlanders Scout Group

The 15th Capilano Highlanders Scout Group is growing strong, and it provides learning and leadership opportunities for youth aged 5 through 26. In 2025, there were 64 youth and 21 Scouters. That included 19 Beavers, 29 Cubs, 13 Scouts, 1 Venturer, 3 Rovers, 21 Leaders, with 9 serving Group Committee members. The sections met weekly, often outdoors. Each section enjoyed camping experiences and challenging programs.

Leaders and the Group Committee at the 15th were volunteer parents and community Scouters. The committee members were Amber Akerberg, Group Commissioner, outgoing; Stephen Tresidder, Group Commissioner, incoming; Adam Lloyd, Treasurer; Ross Borsoi, Group Admin; Afa Habibi, Group Registrar; Guy Kirby, Church Liaison; Toph Marshall, Secretary; and George Clarke and Dawn Martin-Smith. Fundraiser roles remain vacant.

Submitted by Amber Akerberg  
Group Commissioner, 15th Capilano Scout Group  
Pacific Coast Council, Scouts Canada

# Book Circle



The Book Circle was founded in September 2004 by Linda Baxter and Phyllis Ferguson Bottomer. The primary goal was to provide a small group activity in which congregational members could deepen their connection to each other while sharing their reactions to a wide variety of books, both fiction and non-fiction.

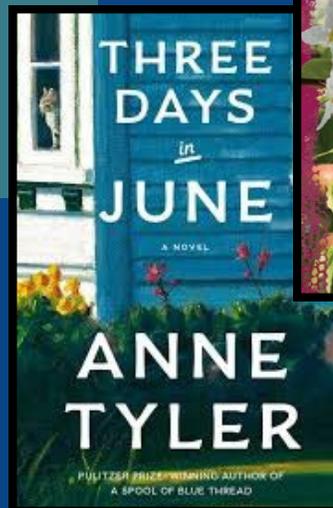
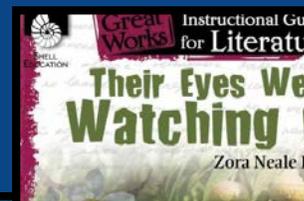
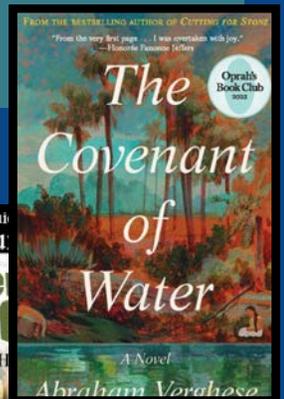
Since then, over 30 people have taken part for different lengths of time in the wide-ranging discussions. In the first decade, besides Linda and Phyllis, the frequent attenders included Roxine Berg, Linda Davidson, Jean Gabrielse, Eleanor O'Neill, Marg Manning, Margot Thomson, and Grace Valde.

According to my attendance records, current participants joined in the following months:

- September 2004 — Phyllis Ferguson
- February 2005 — Ruth Wilson
- October 2007 — Bonny Ball
- June 2018 — Diana Bomford
- January 2019 — Margaret Harrington
- April 2019 — Sunny Park
- October 2019 — Heather Boal
- October 2019 — Oleh Ilnyckyj
- June 2020 — Judith Walker
- May 2021 — Ariel Creighton
- May 2021 — Nancy Forde
- September 2021 — Fiona Lhotka
- April 2023 — Cathy Vassiliadis
- October 2023 — Robin Rivers
- September 2025 — Shae Rutherford

Thank you to all for over twenty years of gathering around the round Celtic knot cloth from Holy Island to share our opinions, but also our personal connections to experiences portrayed in the books. And laughter too. Looking forward to another twenty.

Respectfully submitted by  
Phyllis Ferguson Bottomer



# Thrift Store

2025 was a milestone year for Highlands United Church with the construction, launch, and successful operation of Highlands Thrift Store, a social enterprise designed to support the financial sustainability of the church while advancing our commitments to outreach, community connection, and environmental stewardship.



From the outset, the store has been warmly received. Customers frequently comment on the thoughtful merchandising, welcoming atmosphere, and quality of donated goods. Many have already become repeat visitors, strengthening our connection with the broader community while supporting the ministries and outreach programs of Highlands. The Thrift Store also advances Highlands' commitment to environmental responsibility.

By encouraging reuse and keeping thousands of items in circulation, the store actively reduces landfill waste while modelling practical, community-based sustainability. This work aligns closely with the church's broader environmental goals and demonstrates how faithful action can care for both people and planet. Financially, the store is already showing encouraging momentum. Early sales in the fall and at Christmas exceeded expectations and have contributed meaningful revenue toward the church's operating fund, helping to strengthen Highlands' long-term financial foundation. A draft 2026 budget projects continued growth alongside responsible expense management.



## Volunteer Engagement

Our volunteers' generosity of time and spirit reflects the very best of Highlands, and we extend our deepest gratitude to every person who has helped to bring this new Thrift Store ministry to life. New volunteers are always welcome.

Donations Receiving: Weekly Saturday teams manage incoming donations from both the congregation and the broader community

Sorting Teams: Approximately 35 volunteers participate in regular Tuesday morning sorting, ensuring a steady flow of quality merchandise to the sales floor. Our social coffee time is cherished by our members, providing an opportunity for social connections and sharing. Special thanks to our set-up and moving crew and coffee and tea makers

Store Operations: Weekly volunteers serve as cashiers, floor assistants, merchandisers, researchers, online store support, and pricing support

Facilities and Warehouse Support: Volunteers assist with fixtures installation, storage organization, and ongoing operational needs



### • Operational Priorities for 2026

- Engage a Store Manager to provide consistent operational leadership and oversight for volunteer activities
- Continue refining volunteer systems, procedures, recruitment, and training
- Strengthen efficient inventory flow to maintain fully stocked and appealing retail spaces
- Continue refining our Marketing Plan to further grow our customer base and increase community awareness
- Create communication media, print, social, signage, to inform, invite, and educate
- Ensure that the [www.hucthrift.ca](http://www.hucthrift.ca) website and online store is always current and stocked with diverse inventory
- Create opportunities to celebrate the work of Highlands United Church and all our dedicated volunteers
- We remain committed to ensuring that the Thrift Store is not only financially sustainable, but also a place of connection, dignity, and welcome for all.

**Respectfully submitted,  
Carol Smith, Catherine Alkenbrack, and Chris Robertson  
Members of Highlands Thrift Store Steering Team**

# Prayer Shawl

We Gather, We Welcome, We Relax, We Laugh, We have good Conversation, We have fun!

We have been gathering together and enjoying a time of relaxing, laughter, conversation and friendship for many years. Our door is always open and we love to 'draw the circle wide' and welcome anyone who would like to join us. (The kettle is always on and tea is at the ready!)

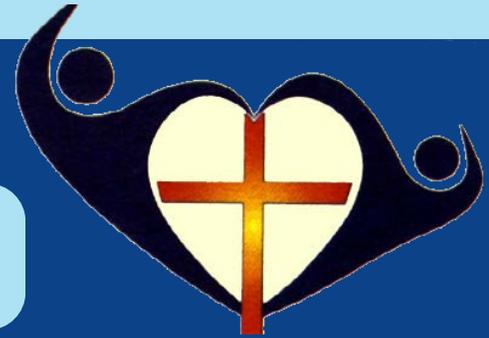
We knit and crochet, prayer shawls, touques and scarves and on occasion have engaged in bead work, under the guidance of Carol Rushworth. If you are a stitcher, you would be most welcome as well! Bring your project and enjoy the company!



The prayer shawls are offered as comfort in times of loss or illness as well as in celebration of baptisms and special occasions and our ministry staff often take them to give those they visit. This past year we have provided more than 100 touques and scarves which were shared between the DTES, our own N.S. Lookout Shelter, the Saturday Lunch participants, Wish and more.

Respectfully submitted by  
Joy Dancey  
On Behalf of the Knit and Knot Group

# Healing Hands



Healing Hands Ministry team are trained by Healing Pathway Society and this year have:



- Offered healing sessions to congregation and community members twice a month
- Participated in Practitioner days 3 times
- Offered soaking prayer during monthly communion services
- Offered soaking prayer at Shrove Tuesday and Maundy Thursday events
- One member mentored in Healing House at Naramata for 6 weeks
- Offered soaking prayer at Advent Festival and Quiet Christmas services
- One member mentored in Healing House at Naramata for 6 weeks
- Offered support to Healing groups in Squamish and Lynn Valley

For an appointment contact Lorraine Elliott

We are grateful for support from Julie Lees and Will Sparks

Sharon Yetman, Wendie Reinhardt, Lorraine Elliott, Jacquie Forbes-Roberts, Beth McLaren, Deb Mickelson, Pam Tattersfield, Judi Rhodes, Walter Huber, Anne Crosthwait, Milada Myska, Elizabeth Ross

# Mens Breakfast



Our weekly breakfast meeting is a long-standing tradition, stretching back nearly 40 years.

“Conversation with meaning” is our motto and we practice it every Wednesday.

We gather at either Highlands or the Eighties Restaurant at Lonsdale and 14th, alternating between the two from week to week.

We continue to help at the Shrove Tuesday Pancake dinner in our Lower Hall just to demonstrate that we can cook and serve just as well as we can talk and eat.

So, “Bless this food to our use and us to your understanding. In Jesus’ name we pray.”

We embrace this quote from Bill Hogman. He often used it as we all sat with our full plates in front of us, eager to dig into our breakfast feast. A short blessing was offered by the first person to receive a plate. No one could match Bill’s pithy quote, and anyone who used more than two sentences was considered verbose. We continue this practice.



We invite you to join us for breakfast and friendly conversation, Wednesdays, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., at the Eighties or Highlands/Zoom. Feel free to arrive late or leave early if you do not have time for the full hour.

We also have an annual retreat weekend at Northern Lights Lodge in Likely on the shores of Quesnel Lake, the deepest fjord lake in the world.

Respectfully submitted,  
Stephen Beaton



# ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

In 2025 the ELL Program offered a series of four class groups, with a Beginners class and an Intercultural Conversation Group on Tuesday mornings, and our Speakers Group Thursday mornings and Walk & Talk on Thursday afternoons. Each group averaged about 8 to 10 participants from various countries: South Korea, China, Iran, Chile, and Mexico, some of whom were new to Canada and some who had been here for several years but were looking to gain confidence in using English.



We were pleased to have 6 competent volunteer leaders, guiding these groups at the various levels of speaking, conversation, reading, writing, and listening skill development. Although this is not an accredited ELL Program, we do feel we offer a worthwhile experience for the participants and are always happy to welcome both new students and new native English-speaking volunteers to become involved.



Respectfully submitted by Judy O'Neill on behalf of Wendy McNaughton, Cathy Vassiliadis, Sunny Park, Janie Ackhurst, Susan Jecks, and Diana Bomford, with occasional assistance from Deb Anderson.

Caring

# Heritage Fund

The Highlands Heritage Fund (HHF) was formed to provide a permanent endowment fund for Highlands United Church to which individuals can contribute. The operation of the fund according to the Terms of Reference ensures that income from the money contributed will be available to support projects that are specifically of an enduring and long-term nature for Highlands Church. Only income from the Heritage Fund can be spent, so the fund continues to generate money for the future. The fund is managed by a committee of 5-7 members appointed by the congregation with responsibilities to manage the portfolio as set out in the HHF Terms of Reference. Committee members sit for staggered terms of 3 years and approval of this Annual Report will include the appointment for a further 3-year period for committee members who have reached the end of their current 3-year term and have agreed to serve for a further term.

The committee membership for 2025 was Scott Hughes who served as chair, Maureen Flynn, Brian Gardiner, Judith Walker and Kevin Woodman. We are deeply saddened by the death of Scott Hughes in January 2026. We are grateful to Brian Gardiner for his service to the committee. Maureen, Judith and Kevin will continue to shepherd the Heritage Fund, along with Nancy Piercy and Kathleen Whyte as new members after congregational approval.

The money in the HHF is fully invested to maximize returns within acceptable risk parameters. The fund is managed by external investment managers Connor, Clark & Lunn Private Capital. The portfolio began the year at \$360,087 and ended the year at \$378,203. During the year, a withdrawal of \$28,500 was made from the invested funds to support the construction costs of the Highlands Thrift Store. An additional \$21,500, which was earmarked for the Heritage Fund but not yet invested, was added to that amount to make a total of \$50,000, which the committee had approved for the Thrift Store, a project that will have an enduring and long-term impact upon the church.

In 2025, the fund enjoyed a one-year performance return prior to withdrawals of 14%, and the HHF Committee is pleased with the management and performance of the fund on behalf of the congregation. The capital and interest pool continues to grow for the long-term benefit of Highlands United Church.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the  
Highlands Heritage Fund Committee,  
Judith Walker

## **A HIGHLAND'S AFFIRMATION**

**“As followers of Jesus,  
we want to be a community that gathers and takes risks:  
to receive and engage a diversity of people...”**

**This means people of different ages,  
genders, or sexual orientations.**

**This means people of different abilities,  
ethnic backgrounds, or economic circumstances.**

**This means that all people will have access to:  
a safe, respectful, and welcoming community  
the gifts and experiences of one another  
celebrations of life passages like baptism, confirmation,  
marriage, blessings, healing, and care at the time of death and  
dying  
the opportunity to share in our whole vision**

## **VISION STATEMENT**

**As followers of Jesus, we want to  
be a community that gathers and takes risks:  
to receive and engage a diversity of people  
to celebrate life-giving worship**

**to love and be loved**

**to know and be known**

**to serve and be served**

**to learn, pray, and grow together**

**Trusting in God, we want to be people who scatter:**

**to live out faith in action**

**to seek peace, justice, and healing**

**to share time, ministries, and money**

**Led by the Spirit, we are continually transformed on this journey.**



## **PART 1 - 2025 YEAR IN REVIEW**

2025 was a significant year for Highlands finances as two future-building initiatives came to fruition. Construction began on the new Thrift Store, enabling the store to open in the fall, and the Sustainability campaign was launched to provide for the future of Highlands. As part of the Sustainability project, a depreciation report was commissioned to help determine the future cost of maintaining Highlands building and equipment.

The Fund structure was also updated to reflect these new initiatives, and to consolidate four former Building and Equipment related funds into a single Building, Property and Equipment fund.

### General Operating

At 2025 ACM the approved budget contained an annual deficit of \$65k, and over the first three quarters of the fiscal year the operating deficit remained at or above the budgeted level.

Helping our budget situation were considerable fundraising efforts by the Flea Market/Thrift Store volunteers through pop-up and other sales, where \$30k was raised for the General Operating fund. The biannual musical in March also raised another \$10k for the General Operating fund.

By October, the deficit started to come down due to a slow down in discretionary and building related expenses, fundraising efforts, higher than expected lease and room rental revenues, and generous congregational offerings through the combined Stewardship and Sustainability campaigns.

By the end of the year the deficit was eliminated and Highlands ended the year nearly on budget, with a small residual deficit of less than \$13k. Note that the final number may change based on final accounting adjustments and the external review.

Looking back on the year, overall General Fund offerings were up 4% percent over 2024 and exceeded the budgeted estimate. Fully one quarter of the total offerings for the year came in during November and December. This was in a year where the congregation was asked to consider both immediate Stewardship contributions and giving directed to building the Sustainability fund.

Building revenues were up over 8% over 2024, and exceeded the budget level by almost 10%. There were strong fundraising efforts through the musical, pop-up and other sales, the grand opening of the Thrift Store, and other fundraising.

On the spending side, total expenses came in within \$1.5k of the budget.



A line by line comparison of the 2025 Budget to Final Actuals is shown in Table 1. Note that these numbers could change based on final accounting adjustments and the external review.

### Ministry and Outreach

Ministry and Outreach funds cover specific programs, ministries and outreach beyond that covered by the General Operating budget. These funds can only be used for the purposes intended. Below is a list of the main funds with the preliminary financial information for 2025 (all amounts in \$). These numbers may change based on final accounting adjustments and the external review.

Please also refer to the program sections in the Annual Report for more information on activities during the year.

Note that in 2025 the Thrift Store was moved to a new Fund.

MINISTRY & OUTREACH FUNDS				In \$
Fund	Beginning Balance*	Income	Expenses	Ending Balance
<b>Ministry Funds:</b>				
Memorials & Celebrations	61,061	0	(8,200)	52,861
Other Memorial Funds	4,575	600	0	5,175
Ministry Initiative	42,340	10,287	(2,946)	49,680
Shelter to Home	44,464	25,030	(28,810)	40,684
Senior's Ministry	22,222	9,210	(7,424)	24,009
Saturday Lunch	12,121	15,620	(11,753)	15,988
Music	14,585	100	0	14,685
Minister's Discretionary	5,011	250	(42)	5,219
Youth	6,117	955	(2,765)	4,308
Summer Programs	60	67,387	(63,224)	4,223
Refugee Program	8,394	704	(8,432)	666
Musical Productions	0	22,578	(22,211)	367
Other Ministry Programs	18,078	9,689	(14,931)	12,837
<b>Total Fund 10 Ministry</b>	<b>239,027</b>	<b>162,410</b>	<b>(170,737)</b>	<b>230,701</b>
<b>Outreach Funds</b>	<b>3,103</b>	<b>1,575</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4,678</b>

\* Beginning Balance excludes the Thrift Store, which moved to a separate Fund in 2025. All numbers subject to final accounting adjustments and the external review.



## **PART II - 2026 OUTLOOK**

### Fund 01 - General Operating Fund

This year marks a significant milestone in Highlands financial sustainability. After several years of projecting large budget deficits in the General Operating fund, the proposed 2026 Budget plan is almost balanced, with a residual shortfall of less than \$20k.

This is enabled by a new source of funding from the Thrift Store, where we are proposing a transfer of both the net revenues from the fall opening of the store, and then an ongoing transfer of a portion of monthly sales to the General Fund.

We have also refined the costing for some expense lines and projected modest increases to offerings and room rentals.

Included in the budget is the UCC Cost of Living adjustment of 2.6% and continuation of the 2025 level of funding for Education and Faith Formation, interior painting and the transfer to the Building & Equipment fund.

Overall the 2026 budget projects a 7.5% increase in revenues over the 2025 budget (and 1.5% higher than the 2025 actuals), and a 2.3% increase in expenses over the 2025 budget (and a 2% increase over 2025 actuals).

Final 2025 Actuals may change due to accounting adjustments and the external review.

### Fund 05 - Building, Property & Equipment

For 2026 we are projecting a forecast for Building & Equipment work from the new Fund 05 Building Property & Equipment fund of \$90k, which is based on \$50k transferred from the operating budget and a drawdown on the Building and Equipment reserve of \$40k.

### Summary

Inherent in the forecast is uncertainty, particularly with respect to unexpected building and equipment repairs that might occur over the year. Finance Committee and Leadership Board will continue to monitor, manage and report on the financial life of Highlands over the year.



**2025 INCOME & EXPENSE STATEMENT / 2026 PROPOSED BUDGET - General Operating Fund**

Account Description	2025		2026	
	Budget 2025 ACM	Actual*	Proposed Budget	
<b>INCOME &amp; FUND TRANSFERS IN</b>				
GENERAL	Contributions	465,000	484,081	475,000
OFFERINGS	Special Gifts	5,000	1,600	5,000
	Open/Sundry	10,000	7,020	10,000
	Other Agencies	20,000	18,955	20,000
		<b>500,000</b>	<b>511,656</b>	<b>510,000</b>
BUILDING REVENUE	Multi-Year Lease Revenue	261,400	273,112	272,137
	Other Room Rentals	85,000	106,252	90,000
		<b>346,400</b>	<b>379,364</b>	<b>362,137</b>
FLEA MARKET/ THRIFT STORE	Flea Market/Pop Up Sales	30,000	30,100	
	<i>Tsf from Thrift Store Fund balance</i>			40,000
	<i>Tsf from Thrift Store Sales</i>			45,000
		<b>30,000</b>	<b>30,100</b>	<b>85,000</b>
FUNDRAISERS	<i>Transfer from Fund 10 - Musical</i>	10,000	10,150	0
	Other fundraisers	1,000	2,805	1,000
		<b>11,000</b>	<b>12,955</b>	<b>1,000</b>
OTHER REVENUE	Weddings & Memorials (Net)	6,000	4,572	6,000
	ESL	1,500	2,540	1,500
	Grant Revenue		2,100	
	Bequests		1,000	
	Bank & Investment Income	4,000	8,111	1,000
		<b>11,500</b>	<b>18,323</b>	<b>8,500</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME &amp; FUND TRANSFERS IN</b>		<b>898,900</b>	<b>952,398</b>	<b>966,637</b>



EXPENSES & FUND TRANSFERS OUT

MINISTERIAL	Payroll & Related Expenses	351,000	350,501	363,100
	Other Operating	6,800	4,365	6,800
		<u>357,800</u>	<u>354,866</u>	<u>369,900</u>
WORSHIP & MUSIC	Payroll & Related Expenses	55,000	54,090	55,400
	Production Services	250		250
	Music & Choirs	2,000	2,280	2,000
	Worship Expenses	2,500	1,795	2,500
	Payroll & Related - Live Stream	19,000	16,477	14,000
	Livestream Expenses			
		<u>78,750</u>	<u>74,642</u>	<u>74,150</u>
CONGREGATIONAL LIFE & HOSP	Payroll & Related Expenses	2,300	1,749	1,700
	Cong Life General Expenses	2,750	2,174	2,750
	Congregational Life Events	0	1,307	0
	Caring & Senior Ministry	500	1,350	500
		<u>5,550</u>	<u>6,580</u>	<u>4,950</u>
EDUCATION AND FAITH FORMATION	Payroll & Related Expenses	31,000	30,069	30,500
	Educ & Faith General Expenses	3,500	2,722	3,500
	Adult Education	250	139	250
	Library	1,000	917	1,000
		<u>35,750</u>	<u>33,847</u>	<u>35,250</u>
Account Description		<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual*</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
		2025 ACM		Budget
OUTREACH (From Operating)	Mission & Service from Operating	25,000	25,000	25,000
	Bridging Gaps from Operating	17,500	17,500	17,500
	Community Connections	725	1,517	725
		<u>43,225</u>	<u>44,017</u>	<u>43,225</u>
COMMON SERVICES & ADMIN	Payroll & Related Expenses	85,700	83,913	88,200
	Office Supplies, Printing & Postage	10,000	10,321	10,000
	Banking & Transaction Fees	6,000	9,259	8,000
	Stewardship	500		500
	Leadership Board	500	300	500
	Advertising & Communications	750	691	750
	Technical Services	1,500	0	1,500
	Technology	250	1,143	250
	Accounting & Facilities	35,000	29,943	35,000
UCC Assessment	42,438	42,438	40,550	
		<u>182,638</u>	<u>178,008</u>	<u>185,250</u>



BUILDING AND PROPERTY (Incl Shared Costs)	Janitorial Services	95,000	101,186	95,000
	Utilities	50,500	51,951	52,500
	Repairs and Maintenance	40,000	50,206	50,000
	<i>Transfer to B&amp;E</i>	50,000	50,000	50,000
	Insurance	24,666	20,116	25,000
		<b>260,166</b>	<b>273,459</b>	<b>272,500</b>
TOTAL EXPENSES & FUND TRANSFERS OUT		<b>963,879</b>	<b>965,419</b>	<b>985,225</b>
INCOME LESS EXPENSES (Incl Fund Transfers)		<b>(64,979)</b>	<b>(13,021)</b>	<b>(18,588)</b>

<sup>^</sup> 2025 Actuals are subject to final accounting adjustments and the external review.

Respectfully submitted,

Finance Committee: Doug Mackay (Treasurer), Cameron Forde, Kathleen Whyte, Judith Walker, Will Sparks (Ex Officio)

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Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Highlands Heritage Fund Committee,  
Judith Walker

## **Sustainability Report**

In 2025, Highlands embarked on a bold path to ensure the long term, financial stability of the church - The Thriving Faith Campaign. The campaign arose from the recognition that Highlands needed to change its approach to funding the operating budget and building fund for long term viability. The Thriving Faith Committee was formed to develop the case for support, roll out the information, and lead the approach to building the Sustainability Fund.

Information was shared with the congregation, and a team of visitors was established to ensure that all of the congregation would learn about the needs of Highlands and how it could support by building the Sustainability Fund.

Between home visits, three vision events, three financial seminars, and final mailed out packages, over 160 households participated in the campaign.

By the end of the campaign in mid-December, contributions and pledges over 3 years totalling **\$1,946,000** were received. The Sustainability Fund Committee was established to oversee the fund and to select a professional Fund Manager to manage the investment income and ongoing growth of the fund. As of this report **\$1,046,958** has been received and invested.

With great gratitude for the generosity and responsiveness of the Highlands United Community.

Respectfully submitted by Craig Madill on behalf of The Thriving Faith Campaign Committee:

Ardis Nelson, Carol Nelson, Craig Madill, Ken Irwin, Will Sparks, and Rob Waller