

2024 ANNUAL REPORT & FINANCIALS



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Presented at Highlands United Church
AGM April 13, 2025



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DRAFT



Ministers of Faith and Community Engagement and Congregational Development Joint Report

In your hands you have a snapshot of a year in the life of Highlands. It bears witness to the life and work God has made happen in and through this amazing community in our 75th year. A year ago, the Leadership Board approved clarified roles for the two “generalist” ministers to help guide our responsibilities which overlap in so many ways creating the positions “Minister of Faith and Community Engagement” and “Minister of Congregational Development.” We share

many responsibilities like worship, pastoral care, staff supervision, and support for ministry groups. And we pursue responsibilities and initiatives independently. Here are some from 2024:

Minister of Faith and Community Engagement:

- This community explored “The Big Questions” like living in apocalyptic times (or not), mistranslations in the Bible and MAID.
- The church 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
- The church was in the paper for its life-sized Advent Calendar that reached out to the community

Minister of Congregational Development:

- Highlands’ 75th year worship and weekend events: Honouring the past, Building the Future.
- Straight talk in the Leadership Board and the Congregation about Building, Finance, 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.



Highland's United Church—Staff and Lay Leaders

Staff		Minister- Congregational Dev., Rev. Will Sparks Minister- Faith and Community Engagement, Julie Lees Minister- Seniors and Hospitality, Colleen Blair Minister- Children, Youth and Families, Allie Keir Administrator, Melissa Wilkin Administrative Assistant, Simindokht Bakhtiari Tech Team Coordinator, Talen Bentley Michaud Ed Hunt, Accounting Assistance Carol Smith, Facilities Coordinator
Music Ministry	Music Coordinator Choir Directors Choir Accompanists	Geordie Roberts Gillian Irwin, Spirit Singers Geordie Roberts, Genesis II Rosalind Hollett, God's Free Spirits Rosalind Hollett, Hand Bell Choir Heather Soderling, Re:Sound Chamber Geordie Roberts and Roz Hollett
Board of Trustees		Judy Anderson, Al Lill, Ken Hollett Peter Ackhurst and Will Sparks
Leadership Board		Frances Roberts, Chair Julie Lees, Craig Madill, Ev Leskiw, Doug MacKay Carol Nelson, Oleh Ilnyckyj, Ken Hollett, Chris Bochon, Lyndsay Irwin, Melanie Thomas and Will Sparks
Standing Committees	Finance Treasurer Members - Ministry and Personnel Worship	Rotating Chair Doug Mackay Cameron Forde, Bill Dyer, Kathleen Whyte and Judith Walker, Will Sparks - ex-officio Craig Madill- Chair, Diana Bomford, Betty Chapin, Ardis Nelson, Kathleen Whyte, Will Sparks, ex-officio, Julie Lees, ex-officio Gillian Irwin, Chair, Heather Soderling Colleen Blair, Eva Mathieson, Joy Dancey, Ken Irwin, Geordie Roberts, Janet Warren and Will Sparks
Pacific Mountain Region Representatives		Simone Carrodus, Ardis Nelson, and Allie Keir

76th Annual Meeting Agenda

April 13, 2025

WE GATHER in the gym immediately following the service

PICK up your bag lunch / beverage

Find your **TABLE #** on your lunch bag - greet your neighbours

Special Group Activity with your table mates & lunch Julie & Will

Gather Feedback on Renewal from groups

Thanks, and Prayer of GRACE

Opening - Call to Order Frances

Procedural Motions

- **Approval of Agenda**
- That the agenda for Highlands 76th Annual Meeting be approved
- **Voting by Adherents**
- That all persons deemed to be present at this meeting (via zoom) be given the right to vote on all matters arising at this meeting
- **Confirmation of Voting Methodology**
- That all calls for voting will be made via the moderator using the options available including Zoom
- **Approval of Minutes** from 75th Annual General Meeting
- That the minutes for Highlands 75th Annual General Meeting be approved

Honouring the Past - Memorials - we remember

Accepting Annual Reports

Motion to accept reports as written and presented in the booklet, except for the financial report.

Nominations: Leadership Board

- PMRC
- Trustees

Motion to approve the nominations presented by the Leadership Board

FINANCIAL REPORTS : 2024 Report

2025 Budget

Motion to approve the financial report for 2024

Motion to approve the 2025 operating budget

NEW BUSINESS - SUSTAINABILITY Update

THRIFT STORE Update

Courtesies and Acknowledgements

Adjournment

Motion That Highlands United Church 76th Annual Meeting be adjourned.

Minutes of 75^h Annual Meeting

Sunday, March 10th, 2024

75th Annual Congregational Meeting

“Holding on is believing that there’s only a past; letting go is knowing that there’s a future.” – Daphne Rose Kingma

Question to Ponder: What has Highlands meant to me and what do I want it to mean to me moving forward?

We Gather... to be the Church

Gathering Music – Geordie Roberts

Opening Singing: 🎵 MV#28 God of the Bible

Welcome – Julie Lees

Hybrid service today, combining the regular Sunday service with the AGM. All are welcome, in person and online.

Territorial Acknowledgement, Prayer Bowl – Ken Irwin

We may be celebrating using this space for 75 years, but there are those who have been looking after this area for much longer, and we honour them.

Christ Candle – Allie and the children

God’s Free Spirits Anthem: I Can Do All Things

Orientation to the service (present and online) – Will Sparks

For in person folks, voting will be done with hands; on Zoom, hands up in front of cameras or using Raise Hand icon in the chat, which will be relayed.

Prayer of Unburdening and Words of Assurance – Julie Lees

Opening Hymn: 🎵 MV#30 It’s a Song of Praise to the Maker

Theme Time – Allie Keir

Remembering 2023 in pictures – Will Sparks

Table Introductions

Welcome to those online and on Zoom as well as those in person!

Motion regarding Temporal Matters

Moved by Phyllis Bottomer Seconded by Simone Carrodus. Passed.

Motion Regarding the Agenda

Moved by Roz Hollett, Seconded by Reen Burley. Passed.

Motion Regarding Voting Methodology

Moved by Mike Soderling, Seconded by Simone Carrodus. Passed.

Motion Regarding Minutes of Congregational Meeting

Moved by Janet Warren, Seconded by Carole Nelson.

Page 10 (2023 AGM) shows Craig as Finance Chair and it should be David Boal. Will be corrected.

With amendments, Passed.

In Memoriam 2023 – Ardis Nelson

We remember those in our community of faith who died this past year

John Leonard Hammond, Lois Pearl Hammond, Ann Elizabeth Kenway, Gloria Frances Strong, Dallas, Audrey Langlois, Donald Jarvis, Margot Edith Thomson, Audrey Bernice Cecilia Sumpton, Ardith Shane, Bruce Tennant, Elizabeth Summerson, Fred Schernoff. Two internments: Peter Schaerer, Calvin Stead

New Members and Transfer of Membership –Sandra Soderling

We recognize those who have chosen to live their faith with this community of faith (**FILL THIS SECTION PROPERLY**)

Baptisms: Gillian Forde, Brooklyn Nadia Florence Siemens

Confirmations: Gillian Forde, Max Kier, Lachlan Kier, George Owens, Emma Byrom, Major Cordeau, Reen Burley, Patrick Ciccone, Ann Strickland, Roy Strickland, Melanie Thomas, Ross Lyle, Derek Baskerville

Weddings: Calvin Kenneth Lo and Ann Mackenzie Covert, Colin Madill and Billie Baird, Garth Albright and Leanne Lionello, Lian Niall O’Brian and Kyleigh Lynn Youngman, Benjamin Parker and Sabine Gervais, Jack Frances Thorpe and Siobhan Smith

Transfers of Membership: Pat and Barbara Munroe, Ian and Deb Kent, Frances Larter, Barbara James, Allan Cuzen, Allan Huston, Pat Stuart, Cathy Molinski

(the choir will come forward to the chancel)

Spirit Singers: One Step Away

Motion and Discussion Regarding the Annual Report –Sandra Soderling

Moved by Matt DeBoer, Seconded by Lisa Madill.

Special recognition given to those who have been a part of the Local Connections group for many years, now that that has transitioned to Bridging Gaps.

Motions and Discussion Regarding Ministry and Personnel – Craig Madill

Moved by Craig Madill, Seconded by Diana Bomford.

The designation of Designated Lay Minister is being phased out, with new opportunities being created to attempt to fill that void. Colleen is working on being Ordained to properly qualify for this change in position. She will not be appointed to a new location; will stay here at Highlands.

None against; One abstention. Motion Passed.

New Business – Ardis Nelson

- Thrift Store Development - Carol Smith

Working on creating a sustainable and consistent revenue stream for Highlands. A Feasibility Study has been commissioned and was submitted to the Leadership Board. Appropriate motions and motions toward funding have been arranged to support this development. We are approved for a loan of up to \$75000; this loan would be reimbursed through proceeds from the Thrift Store. A gift has also been given of \$50000 from the Heritage Committee towards the funding of this project. Another gift from an individual has been given of \$20000 towards renovation costs.

The cost to convert part of the lower floor would be estimated to be \$155000. Much of this is centered around improvements towards accessibility to and from the lower hall area. We also have a grant application in place geared specifically towards accessibility; still waiting on a reply at this time. We do have another sale coming up later this month.

We Listen... for the Holy Wisdom

Scripture Reading – John 3: 1-20, read by Trena Clarke

Reflectionette – Rev. Will Sparks and Rev. Julie Lees

Hymn: ♪ VU#581 **When We Are Living (verses 1 and 2)**

Motion and Discussion Regarding 2024 Budget – Doug MacKay

Building and Equipment Fund is not in the report, but there is an update there. We had some unexpected expenses in that regard this year, which impacted the fund and leads is with approx \$170000.

A question is raised about the discrepancy between a deficit presented some time ago and what is in the report – the answer to that is that there was an appeal that was responded to with great success, so some of that carried over into the projections for this coming year.

Proposed budget deficit was \$66000; if we apply some of the Operating Budget surplus from last year to this year, we can cut that down to ~\$23000.

Moved by Doug Mackay, Seconded by Pat Monroe. Passed.

Motion and Discussion Regarding Nominations – Ardis Nelson

Nominations include Doug Mackay for Treasurer.

Moved by Carol Nelson, Seconded by Lindsay Bottomer.

Judith Walker on behalf of the Heritage Fund. Nominations: Maureen Flynn, Kevin Woodman, Kevin McKernan, Brian Gardiner.

Moved by Judith Walker. Seconded by Janet Warren. Passed.

Craig Madill on behalf of Ministry and Personnel. Nominating Susan Hogman.

Moved by Craig Madill, Seconded by Ken Irwin. Passed.

Al Lill for Highlands Board of Trustees. Nominating Ken Hollett.

Moved by Al Lill, Seconded by Eleanor Oakley

Resignations from the Board of Trustees: Peter Bell, Bill Denault,

Moved by Al Lill, Seconded by Eleanor Oakley. Passed.

Ardis Nelson nominates Ev Leskew, and Melanie Thomas to the Leadership Board.

Moved by Phyllis Bottomer, Seconded by Carol Nelson. Passed.

Thanksgivings and Appreciations – Sandra Soderling

Ken Irwin by Will and Sandra

Ed Hunt, (Treasurer) by Ardis

David Boal (Finance Chair) by Ardis

Wendy McNaughton (Intercultural Ministry) by Sandra

Staff and volunteers by Sandra

Thanks to Ardis by Julie

Thanks to Sandra by Will

Covenanting affirmation for Julie Lees

Community Prayers – Janet Warren

The Lord's Prayer (Strathdee version)

We Scatter... to be the Church

Announcements and Participating in the Life and Work of the Community – Will Sparks and Julie Lees

Closing Hymn: ♪ VU#399 God, Whose Love is Reigning O'er Us

Commissioning and Benediction – Will Sparks and Julie Lees

Blessing Song: ♪ MV#223 We Will Go with God

Administration and Leadership Reports

Leadership Board (LB)

Members: Chris Bochon, Ken Hollett, Oleh Ilnyckyj, Lyndsay Irwin, Ev Leskiw, Doug Mackay, Carol Nelson, Frances Roberts, Melanie Thomas, Julie Lees, Will Sparks.

Chair: Frances Roberts Secretary: Lyndsay Irwin

The LEADERSHIP BOARD (LB) 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 it's VISION STATEMENT in all we do and offer through the church.

This year we welcomed 2 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 (Oct. 6th & March 9th) 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 & Assoc. and our Sustainability team.

Planning the inception of a SUSTAINABILITY Fund Raising Campaign for the fall (yet to be named)

We hosted EXTENDED LEADERSHIP BOARD meetings May and Dec.

We are very close to the actual "breaking ground" for the construction of the THRIFT STORE after much patience, time and incredible planning of the Thrift Store committee.

Congratulations to Carol Smith & her team. We will also see new signage appearing in our PARKING LOTS this spring 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 75th Anniversary in April 2024.

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 Fund Raising Campaign. We are inspired by the interest and willingness to proceed and look to nurture skills we have within our community and 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

Ministry and Personnel (M&P)

For 2024, in person worship and LiveStream both experienced solid, regular attendance. In support of its various ministries and outreach initiatives, Highlands' staffing model is designed to support renewal and growth to ensure that the resources are in place to meet the needs and goals of the congregation and its multi-year ministry plan.

The ministry team – Will Sparks – Minister of Congregational Development, Julie Lees - Minister of Faith and Community Engagement, Colleen Blair – Minister for Seniors, Hospitality and Pastoral Care, Allie Keir – Minister for Children, Youth and Families, along with Geordie Roberts – Music Director and Director of Genesis Too choir, Gill Irwin – Director of the Spirit Singers choir, Roz Hollett – Director of God's Free Spirits and the Bell choirs, Heather Soderling - Director of Re:Sound Chamber Choir, has worked hard along with the worship committee to deliver engaging and moving worship each week both in person and on-line.

Melissa Wilkin is the Church Administrator, providing a professional and positive presence in the office; Tatina Lee left her role as the Office Assistant in the second half of the year and we were delighted to welcome Simin (Simindokht Bakhtiari), who started as the Office Assistant in October; Ed Hunt works on a contract basis as the bookkeeper.

Talen Bentley-Michaud leads the tech team on Sunday mornings to deliver a seamless experience for the on-line congregation.

There are so many who contribute to the running of Highlands and we are grateful to all of them for the many ways in which they do so.

Per the United Church of Canada guidelines and policies, Ministry, Admin, and Music staff received a 3.0% cost of living increase effective Jan 1, 2025, based on the calculation used by the National Church.

As the Human Resources overseers of our staff, M&P is aware that we ask our staff to do big jobs; we need to be mindful of all that we ask of them as well as the resources required to continue to offer the ministries and programming that Highlands wants.

Work of M&P in 2024 included :

- Working with Julie Lees and Will Sparks to update their job titles and descriptions to more accurately reflect their roles and provide additional clarity regarding their areas of responsibility at Highlands
- Working to support the staff, accommodating leaves of absence for a couple of staff members.
- Supporting the hire of temporary office staff to cover one leave
- Supporting the hiring / interview process for a new Office Assistant
- Ongoing review of staffing needs due to limited volunteerism in certain areas

Respectfully submitted by Craig Madill, Chair

Committee Members: Diana Bomford, Betty Chapin, Ardis Nelson, Kathleen Whyte, Susan Hogman; ex-officio members - Julie Lees & Will Sparks

Building Management Team

The Building Management Team (MT) exists to respond to the needs of our aging but well-loved building. In conjunction with the Finance team, we try to keep up with a litany of repairs that are needed every week, while responding to emergency repairs that keep everyone on their toes! Additionally, we have an annual maintenance routine, are continuing an internal painting program, and are constantly adapting our longer-term maintenance plan and capitol replacement program.

This past summer, we contracted to have the gym, lower hallway from kitchen to Lower Hall, and Fireside room painted. We will continue this process this summer with areas prioritized based on need and usage by Highlands and renters. The Lower Hall will be dealt with once the Thrift Store construction is complete.

We also had large trees removed south of our parking lot and replaced those with smaller young trees near Edgemont. Repairs to our rock walls on both sides of the south lot will be a priority for this year.

We completed a conversion of our lighting to LED and our aging hot water tank to electric tank, as noted in the HUGG report. Thank you, Dave Wilson, for being the point man on this project.

The list of surprise repairs is too long to detail, but we are continuing to fix problems as they arise. Other projects are being brought to our attention as our congregation sees a need or a desire. Many of these projects cannot be funded at this time, but we are hoping that may change in the near future as our Sustainability Project moves ahead.

Many thanks to Doug Margerm who continues to work as a liaison with the finance department and keeps us in line, financially. His guidance and expertise are invaluable!

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Warren and Doug Irwin (co-chairs)

For BMT members: Bochon, Doug Margerm, Will Sparks, Melissa Wilkin, Dave Wilson

Pacific Mountain Region

The Pacific Mountain Region (PMR) Council is the governing body of the United Church in B.C.; through it we relate to the wider United Church. Ministerial staff and 3 lay delegates from Highlands are members of the Council. Allie Keir, Ardis Nelson, and Simone Carrodus are our lay delegates. Also, Treena Duncan is the CEO ("Executive Minister") of the Region.

The AGM of the Region was held at St. Andrew's Wesley in June. All our delegates attended the meeting. The Sunday service was most exciting, as Colleen was ordained. Many from the congregation attended that as well.



Throughout the year most of the meetings of various councils and working groups are by zoom.

Some Highlands members have specific tasks within the Region: Simone continues on two regional committees: the Communities of Faith /Pastoral Relations Council and the Approvals Working Group. Will supports the CEO.

Submitted by Simone Carrodus

Sustainability Committee

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 Godspace 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 2024:

- January 2024- First meeting with Rob Waller
- February 2024- Proposal to Leadership Board (LB) for a Feasibility Study of creating a sustaining fund large enough to address our long-term building and ministry needs.
- March 2024- after consultation with Finance, Building Management and Extended Leadership board member, LB decided to move forward with the Proposed Plan and 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 Building Management Team
- October 2024- 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 recommendations to hold a fund campaign were approved by a meeting of the Congregation (March 9th) and the preparation stage of the fund campaign has begun.

Respectfully Submitted by Will Sparks based on a summary written by Ardis Nelson

Membership Statistics

Member Statistics	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total Members	451	451	452	445	443	419	409	425	
Members removed by Transfer of Membership		2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Members removed by Death	8	4	9	9	4	14	10	7	5
Members added by Confirmation	4	0	9	0	0	0	0	13	1
Members added by Transfer of Membership	12	6	1	2	2	0	0	10	0
Weddings	3	2	4	4	1	3	4	6	1
Baptisms	6	6	8	4	1	1	2	2	1
Memorials, Interment of Ashes, and Passing's	21	14	31	16	8	8	19	13	16

Average Attendance

Average Sunday Morning Attendance	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Yearly Average Jan-Dec	255	244	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
2018	362	464	115		941
2019	366	443	110		919
2020	50 on Zoom	585 online	389 online		1023
2021		452	259		711
2022	255	263	79	23	620
2023	289	264	110	149*	812
2024	386	311	72		769

*2017 and 2023 Christmas Eve fell on Sunday.

Memorials and Passing's (11)

Richard James Bennetts passed December 11, 2023 – Memorial Jan 2, 2024

Rouhieh Azizi passed January 6, 2024 – Memorial Jan 16, 2024

Frances Josephine Wright passed December 5, 2023 – Memorial Jan 20, 2024*

Margot Catherine Drain passed January 4, 2024 – Memorial Jan 30, 2024

Len Horvath passed February 26, 2024 – Memorial Mar 14, 2024

Hubert "Hu" Gabrielse passed Mar 11, 2024*

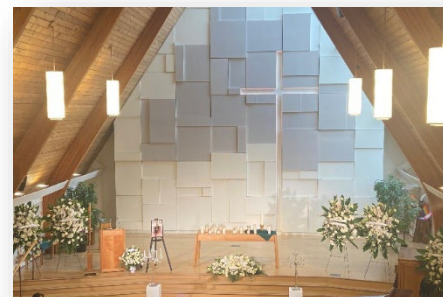
John Fleming passed March 14, 2024 – Memorial April 13, 2024

Eleanor Oakley passed April 9, 2024 – Memorial May 4, 2024*

Ed Suderman passed April 19, 2024 – Memorial May 17, 2024

David John Owens passed June 29, 2024 – Memorial Sep 8, 2024

JoAn Carol Lynch Maurer passed August 9, 2024 – Memorial Oct 25, 2024*

**Baptisms (1)**

Olivia Wilshire

Weddings (1)

Carl Douglas Steffens and Emma Kathleen Forster August 2024

Interments Only (4)

Nicola Anne Ferriday passed September 2022- Interment Apr 18, 2024

David Alexander Bai passed June 20, 2024 – Interment Jul 9, 2024*

Anthony Robert Cella passed Nov 6, 2024 – Interment Nov 14, 2024

Ping Lan Betty Wong passed July 19, 2024 – Interment in W Vancouver

New Members by Confirmation (1)

Pat Stuart

New Members by Transfer of Membership (0)

Worship and Music

Worship



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.

We were blessed to have a full leadership team throughout 2024, 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.

For this support we thank:

- those who "hosted" the online services and engaged in the chat box: Eva Mathiesen, Robin Rivers, Jacqueline Scott and Kathleen Shenfield.
- the choirs and their directors: SpiritSingers (Gillian Irwin), Re:Sound Chamber Choir (Heather Soderling), Genesis Too (Geordie Roberts), and God's Free Spirits (Rosalind Hollett).
- those who "set the stage" for our worship: Colleen Blair, Joy Dancey, Linda Davidson and Tanis van Drimmelen
- Melissa Wilkin and Simin Bakhtiari who prepared the orders of service and the PowerPoint presentations
- the "tech crew" under the leadership of Talen Bentley-Michaud
- our "communion team": Diana Bomford, Betty Chapin, Mechel MacDonald, Lisa Madill and Oleh Ilnyckyj.

A highlight of 2024 was our celebration of Highlands' 75th anniversary. Worship was an integral part of the celebration entitled "Honouring the Past, Building the Future". Through our worship services we explored our recurring themes of commitment, change, dreaming and growth. That time helped to prepare us to move forward with faith once more.

Respectfully submitted,

Gillian Irwin on behalf of the Worship Ministry Team

Joy Dancey, Heather Soderling, Janet Warren and staff: Colleen Blair, Ken Irwin, Allie Keir, Julie Lees, Geordie Roberts, Will Sparks.

Music

Music ministry at Highlands continues to provide community and a creative outlet for over 100 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.



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.

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.

Respectfully submitted

Geordie Robert



God's Free Spirits

This year saw God's Free Spirits continue their music ministry by singing in church approximately once every six weeks from September to early June. This past December, we were happy to participate once again in the Highlands Family Christmas event, and also to sing at the 4:00 Christmas Pageant too, all in our chosen costumes. I was thrilled to work with up to eight young singers and to see new faces join, and old(er) faces move on to Genesis Too. We practice on Thursday nights and share time with Allie Keir and her children's program, encompassing a Bible story and a craft to round it all out. Thank you as well to Emma Byrom for periodically assisting us. We continue to be "Kids Under Construction"!

Bell Choir

The Highlands Bell Choir continues to ring the Schulmerick bells donated to the church over 50 years ago by the Barker family. We rang this past year at Christmas and Easter, and we work on a flexible time schedule, allowing people to come for the rehearsals that fit their schedules. Over the past several years, we have developed a strong group of very able ringers who have more than risen to the occasion and so we have been able to choose more interesting and challenging music and ringing techniques. My deep thanks go out to all those who have volunteered to participate, and we are always able to incorporate brave new ringers too!

Respectfully submitted,
Rosalind Hollett

Seniors Ministry

The ministry with and for seniors was full and rich and saw a myriad of joys and sorrows as the tapestry of our lives together was woven and unravelled.... over and over throughout the cycle of our days and the seasons of our lives.

Here is a snapshot of some of the activities enjoyed by the seniors in 2024:

- **Guatemala Discovery Trip**
Exploring another culture and way of life helps us discover who we are in the world. Last summer, Will Sparks took a Highlands United group to Guatemala encountering beauty, history, struggle, art, culture and hope found among the remarkable people of the Guatemala Highlands.
- **Introduction to Chair Yoga & Meditation**
- **Not Alone – Tom Van Wallegem**
Once again, we were delighted to hear military historian and author, Tom Van Wallegem in the lead up to Remembrance Day. In the most horrific circumstances, nurses and midwives used their skills to care for, and comfort, those serving on the battlefields in World War 1 and 2 and those returning to, or left behind, on the home front. This interactive presentation explores the roles of nurses and midwives,

highlighting their bravery, and addresses some of the lasting impacts from such significant events in history.

- **Waisted Efforts, with Ivan Sayers**

Ivan Sayers who gave us a brief history of women's fashion in the 20th century including slides and garments on dummies. Ivan Sayers is a fashion historian who specializes in the study of women's, men's, and children's fashions from 1700 to the present. Ivan worked for many years at the Museum of Vancouver and is currently at the Society for the Museum of Original Costume.

- **Living Successfully with Hearing Loss** Managing hearing loss can be challenging. We know, however, that staying connected with others is vital. Lisa Dillon Edgett, Ph.D., RAUD, Aud(C), will offer Tips, Tools and Strategies for Communicating Effectively. Lisa teaches a course through Vancouver Community College for both adults with hearing loss and their communication partners. This talk will highlight some of the knowledge and lessons that can increase understanding and reduce the barriers to communicating effectively.

- **Christmas Concert**

Janet Warren and members of the Higher Ground Choir created a delightful morning of music! In keeping with a wonderful and much-loved tradition, the choir offered the gift of song and lead us in singing together!

The seniors also enjoyed a wonderful Christmas fill bus trip to Downtown Vancouver, where they had a delightful lunch and a tour of the Christmas lights around town.

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 wouldn't be complete though, without the team of hosts that welcome and support the online community which is a vital and vibrant part of the Highland's 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

Children, Youth and Families

Children, Youth and Families Minister's Report

Highlands experienced significant growth in its children's and youth programs in 2024, with many new families starting to attend regularly. On Sundays, attendance in Sunday School often reached up to 25 children, leading to the introduction of two dedicated classes when required. The curriculum used has been diverse, most of which was created by Allie, and incorporated scripture, stories, thematic videos, crafts, Godly Play, and gym activities. Sunday School was supported by teachers Emma Byrom, Gillian Forde, Georgia Keir, Avery Shmidt, and Julie Byrom starting in Sept 2024. Laila Kassim-Parkinson provided nursery care during services up to August. From September to December the nursery was staffed as needed.



Thursday evenings at Highlands as always are vibrant with rehearsals for the God's Free Spirits and Genesis Too choirs, offering children and youth opportunities to engage in music and community. These sessions are cherished moments for building relationships and nurturing faith among participants.

In alignment with feedback from families seeking quality over quantity in events, Highlands organized several well-attended activities, including Shrove Tuesday/Mardi Gras, Spring Fling Dance & Youth Fundraiser, Pancakes & PJ's, and Advent Festival. These events foster community and spiritual growth without overwhelming family schedules.



The Youth Group, led by Grace Owens, Chris Bochon, Jewel Epp, and Ethan Sauer, comprised of 20-25 dedicated youth who met monthly during the school year. They participated in various engaging activities, such as movie nights, game nights, art and baking nights, out trips such as skating, swimming and bowling, as well as our 2nd annual Murder Mystery Event (PG of course!!) These gatherings provide a supportive environment for our youth to just show up as their authentic self and be in community with each other. (And we sneak a little Jesus in there - because after all, we ARE a CHURCH youth group!) In June, Grace retired from her roll as Youth Leader, and we welcomed Gillian Forde to the team. We have a large number of younger youth that are more interested in active participation, and our with the senior youth desiring more discussion/faith exploration. Going forward, my hope is to offer separate junior and senior youth events to cater to the different needs and desires of the age groups.



Camp Highlands 2024 was success, offering 3 week-long day camps: Cosmic Quest VBC, A Taste of the Arts, and KidVenture, with a total of 58 campers. The camps featured leadership programs, intergenerational learning, and community service activities, while enriching participants' experiences of faith exploration and relationship building. Our challenge AND pleasure this year was meeting the needs of 10 campers that needed 100% bursary

support. That coupled with rising costs of running camps (ie wages, food, out trips, chartered buses, and camp materials), we did not quite manage to break even. We have taken this into consideration for 2025 and have raised our camp prices. We are also looking into creative ways to help fund bursaries that will no doubt be needed again in 2025.



Camp registration for 2025 is now live! Please see the website for details and tell ALL of your friends, neighbours and family (grandchildren).

I remain committed to nurturing the spiritual and personal growth of children, youth and families by fostering a supportive community that emphasizes faith, creativity, connection and service.

Submitted by Allie Keir.



Adult Education and Faith Formation



Study and Reflection, Adult Education Groups

Report pending.

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:

- 2004, Sept. – Phyllis Ferguson
- 2005, Feb. – Ruth Wilson
- 2007, Oct. – Bonny Ball
- 2018, June – Diana Bomford
- 2019, Jan. – Margaret Harrington
 - April – Sunny Park
 - Oct. – Heather Boal
 - Oct. – Oleh Ilnyckyj
- 2020, June – Judith Walker
- 2021, May – Ariel Creighton
 - May – Nancy Forde
 - Sept. – Fiona Lhotka
- 2023, April – Cathy Vassiliadis
 - Oct. – Robin Rivers
- 2024, Sept. – 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.

Library

All are welcome at Highland's 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



Social Action and Community

Affirming Ministry

Report pending

Truth and Reconciliation Circle

The goals of the Truth and Reconciliation Circle at Highlands are to:

- educate, expand knowledge, and raise awareness in the congregation regarding Indigenous issues
- 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.

2024 was a year for learning, listening, and venturing into small actions. This included:

- helping to organize and participating in the Tsleil-Waututh Water Ceremony
- honouring the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people (Red Dress Day)
- continuing to work to foster relationships with the Tsleil-Waututh and Squamish nations.
- honouring the National Indigenous Peoples Day
- producing and selling our Highlands Orange Shirt with commissioned art by Gordon Dick, and honouring the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (Orange Shirt Day)

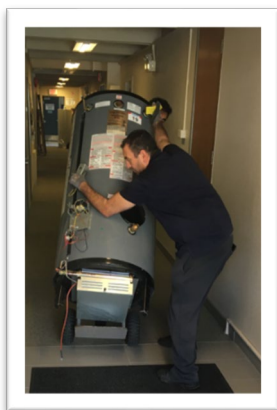


- offering book study on “Our Home and Treaty Land” by Ray Aldred and Matthew Anderson
- hosting Ray Aldred in worship and soup conversation afterwards.
- continuing to acknowledge the land in meaningful ways in worship.

The TRC recognizes that reconciliation and justice are long games. They involve transformation which, when it is genuine, is neither easy nor quick. We are committed to this long game and would love anyone to join the journey.

Respectfully Submitted by Will Sparks on behalf of TRC,
Ross White, Linda Greven, Tanis Van Drimmelen, Wendy McNaughton, Wendie Reinhardt, Sue Wilson, Margaret Harrington, Pat Munroe.

Highland’s United Growing Greener (HUGG) Group



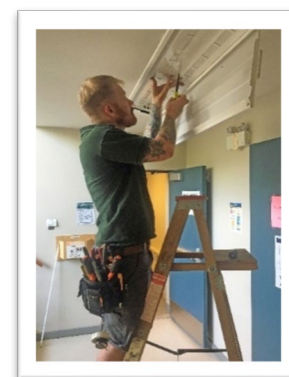
Our goal is to encourage and support the people of Highlands and the wider community in protecting our environment and saving the oceans. We can pick up litter, we can plant bee-friendly gardens, we can take care of recycling around the church. And Caroline has set up cigarette butt buckets around the front of the church building, which are being well used. Jon puts a weekly news item in the Friday Highlights message. It was especially rewarding celebrating Earth Day and our 75th anniversary by engaging quite a few people in a litter pickup all around Edgemont.

This year we received a grant from the United Church’s Faithful Footprints to reduce Highlands' carbon footprint and save energy. We replaced our fossil gas burning hot water heater with an electric one, and we’ve changed all lights in the building to LED, thanks to the work of Dave Wilson! This saved us, in the last 4 months of 2024, 3440 kWh of electricity, with hydro bill savings of over \$550.

This carbon footprint reduction is small, in comparison to our use of fossil fuel in the boilers which heat our building. When they reach the end of their life, we will be required by provincial regulation to move into heat-pump technology.

The HUGG core group includes: Jon Carrodus, Simone Carrodus (chair), Ev Leskiw, Doug Mackay, Caroline Mahoney, Jean McTavish, Will Sparks, and Pam Tattersfield. (Jean and Pam are from other congregations.)

We meet by zoom the last Wednesday afternoon of each month, mostly to support one another in the work. We’d be happy to have others join us!



Submitted by Simone Carrodus

Advent Festival



Our annual Advent Festival has grown in popularity and size since it's birth about 17 years ago. Usually held on the weekend before Advent, the event runs from Friday evening through Saturday afternoon. There are many moving parts to this church-wide event including:

1. **A Nativity Exhibit** with 200+ nativity scenes on display in the Lower Hall. Donated scenes are documented and held in secure storage until the event. Our volunteers show up faithfully each year to assemble the exhibit and to host the event. Many people come to see the exhibit and this year, we heard many lovely comments about the beautiful exhibit and our visitors were so appreciative of the time and care put into the display. Thank you to Geordie Roberts who entertained the exhibit visitors with his soft music over the weekend and to Carol Rushworth who worked diligently to register each set. Contact Chris Robertson if you'd like to help with the Nativity Exhibit this year.
2. **Kids Only Market:** Coordinated by Gill Irwin and members of the Spirit Singers, the group gathers gently loved giftable items and create a "store" where children from 4 to 14 can purchase gifts for family and friends. Located in the Gym, the store is supported by caring adults who assist the children with gift selection, wrapping and cards. The Kids Only store is truly a gift for children, parents, and the community. If you would like to be part of the fun, please contact Gill Irwin.
3. **In the Gym:** The Gym space also includes a bake sale table, kid's cookie decorating and artisan craft tables. This is a bustling place to shop or sit in the lovely Café to enjoy lunch or coffee and a donut.
4. **Labyrinth and Spiritual Practices Space:** On Thursday evening before the event, all the chairs are removed from the Sanctuary to make way for our Labyrinth floor and Spiritual Practices. The space is lit with candles, soft music plays and folks are invited to walk the labyrinth in contemplation. Many children and youth walked the labyrinth this year and

were keenly interested in learning about this calming practice. Thanks to Sharon Yetman and the Healing Hands team for sharing their gifts with us.

5. **Christmas Café:** The event is never quite the same without the aroma of homemade chili on Friday night and the fragrance of Harmony donuts on Saturday morning. Thanks to Marie Rice and team for never failing to keep us fed and happy!
6. **Children’s Quiet Space:** The Fireside Room is transformed into a quiet space for small children to explore children-size nativity scenes, puzzles, books and to play dress-up in the “manger.” Thanks to Wendy McNaughton and friends for this lovely teaching space for little ones (and parents.)
7. **Thrift and Gift Sale:** In the Welcome Space, we held a thrift sale with Christmas decorations, new giftable items, seasonal tableware, and party frocks. The sale was well attended by the community. Contact Carol Smith if you are interested in our thrift sales or the festival.

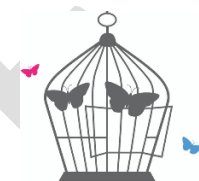
There are dozens of folks not mentioned in this report, but we are so very grateful to all the volunteers who help to make this event a huge success!

Respectfully submitted by Will Sparks

Global Connections

The Global Connections committee:

- 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
- Sets up the Action Table in the Welcome Space each Sunday
- New members always welcome



Andrea Barrios

Members Jon & Simone Carrodus and Sharon Yetman (chair) meet as needed in person and by phone.

Bridging Gaps – Formally known as Local Connections

2024 was a very busy year for the Bridging Gaps Committee.

- **Committee:** We welcomed 2 new members to our Committee, Joy Dancey and Janie Ackhurst
- **Financial Support:** With the funds designed through the budget, financial support was given to; First United, WISH, Shelter to Home, and Saturday Lunch.
- **Sage House:** Makeup For Mother’s Day, provided 18 Makeup packages with cases sewn by many hands.
- **Camp Fircom:** great group of sewers made 24 curtains for the camp.
- **Community:** Attended the North Shore Homelessness Task Force Connect Day along with Shelter to Home and Healing Touch.



- **Hampers:** Compiled and delivered 21 hampers.

Members: Susan Hogman(Chair), Deb Kent, Cathy Vassiliadis, Joy Dancey, Janie Ackhurst, Julie Lees.

Thrift Sales 2024

Highlands United Church receives donations of household goods throughout the year. These donations are sorted, and stored for upcoming Thrift Sales or researched and placed online for sale. All proceeds go to support the work of the church and to help fund the church's many community and outreach programs. The sale of donated items also supports our passion for preserving our environment by recycling material through the community and keeping unwanted items out of the landfill!

Donations:

- teams of 4 or 5 meet each Saturday from 10:00 – 12:00 to accept and pre-sort items that are donated to us by members of the Church and the wider community. This is well supported by our volunteers and we would encourage more members of the congregation to donate and participate. Anyone interested in being part of our Saturday Drop-Off team is welcome to sign up through the link in the Friday e-mail.

Sorting:

- about 35 volunteers gather each Tuesday morning to sort and store the donations for our sales. Other organizations such as Big Brothers, WISH, My Sister's Closet, Salvation Army etc. receive items which we are unable to sell at our Thrift Sales.
- higher value items and collectibles are researched and listed for sale online – many thanks to the folk who help with this part of the process.
- our small team of gentlemen move tables and boxes and bags, and even shelving units and other display items so willingly. They are also frequently called upon to help out with other tasks around the church. Thank you, guys!
- An important part of our ministry is the Tuesday morning Coffee Time where we connect with each other. Thank you to Sheila Stanway and helpers for keeping us filled with coffee, tea and cookies!

To all who have donated items or helped out with the Thrift Sales, receiving or sorting – thank you!

Thrift Store Update

The Thrift Store Steering Committee was very active in 2024 in securing additional funding (loans, grants and gifts) to cover the higher than anticipated construction cost to renovate the store space. We are happy that the funding is in place and we are moving forward with gratitude and excitement for the future!

At the time of writing this report, the team is happy to announce that the Building Permit has been approved by the District of North Vancouver and that we have chosen a contractor with construction starting April 1, 2025. Watch for more updates in the Friday Highlights and the date for our grand opening celebration. We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the United Church of Canada, Highlands Leadership Board, staff, lay leaders, friends and the congregation for your dedication and support of this project.

Submitted by Chris Robertson and Carol Smith

Shelter to home

Shelter to Home, a member of Furniture Banks of Canada, is an outreach program of our church. Our mission is to provide furniture and household items, at no cost, to people on the North Shore who are experiencing furniture poverty, and to provide a place for those with excess gently used furniture and household goods to donate them for reuse. We have a free community telephone line for donations, provided by Lu'ma Native Housing Society, monitored by Shelter to Home volunteers.



Highlights of 2024 include:

- Our 16th year of operations!
- Receipt of program grants from the City and District of North Vancouver Community Grants programs, totaling \$8000
- Receipt of a \$25,000 grant from North Shore Community Foundation through the provincial Community Prosperity Fund; a three-year grant
- Funds provided by Bridging Gaps, Thrift Sale popups, Welcome Back BBQ, Advent Appeal
- Approximately 350 loads of furniture and household good donations from our community
- Notice from our landlord that they would be ending our lease for our work and storage space on Churchill Crescent, and then the welcome news that we could stay indefinitely
- The huge number of hours our 19 volunteers contribute to client services, donor services, small donation assessment and organization, communications, and administration.
- For the moment, a healthy fund account is thanks to grants and generous financial support from individuals
- The support of our community agencies and local governments

Challenges continue to be:

- our space; too small for our needs, but affordable
- our space: two floors are an access challenge for some volunteers and clients

Shelter to Home Client Statistics for 2024

Client Statistics:	Number of Clients	% of total clientele
198 clients were served in 2024	58 Men	29.3%
	92 women	46.5%
	48 children	24.2%
	25 Families with Children	
	26 Seniors	13%
	67 refugees/immigrants	34%

Referring Agencies

Hollyburn Seniors' and Family Services	60 clients	30%
Community **	25	12%
Sage House and North Shore Crisis Center	22	11%
Canadian Mental Health, North Shore	21	11%
Lookout North Shore Homeless Shelter	9	5%
Harvest Project	10	5%
Vancouver Coastal Health (HOPE, Foundry etc)	10	5%
North Shore Women's Centre	8	4%
Lu'ma (an Aboriginal service society)	7	4%
North Shore Community Resources	8	4%
North Shore Neighbourhood House	6	3%
North Shore Emergency Services	4	2%
Impact	3	2%
Shelter to Home Web Site	3	2%

** Community includes North Shore Churches, including Highlands, community organizations, including Covenant House, North and West Van Soroptimist Society, Direction Youth, and word of mouth



Financial information

S2H Statement receipts disbursements, 2024 proposed budget 2025	Budget 2025	Actual 2024	Budget 2024
RECEIPTS			
Other Grants:	0	0	0
North Shore Community Found	8400	8400	0
CNV		5000	7000
DNV		3502.35	3502.35
WV		1250	1250
Fundraisers	0	1418	0
Bridging Gaps, HUC	5000	7081.64	
Donations: charitable	20,000	6495.93	20000
Donations: moving		7645.79	
Total	33,400	40,793.71	
DISBURSEMENTS			
Rent	24,200	23,898.95	23370
Administration	0	0	0
Pick ups/moving	7000	3960.93	7000
Storage Mgr contract fees	3000	0	3000
Phone	600	534.14	600
Web	3000	111.55	3000
Consulting fees	0	0	0
Supplies	1500	512.31	1500
Other misc, promotion	1000	793.37	1000
Total	39370	29,811.25	39470

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."



Refugee Committee

For 45 years Highlands Refugee Committee volunteers have led our congregation in global outreach through sponsorship and settlement of refugees to Canada. On May 8, 2024, we welcomed the Ehsan Amini Family (father, mother, son-age 3, daughter-age 2) from Afghanistan (via New Delhi) sponsored under IRCC-Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada's Blended Visa Office Ready-BVOR program.

Our team of twelve obtained, cleaned, furnished and fully equipped a Lynn Valley 2-bedroom basement suite with assistance from HUC's Shelter-to-Home & Thrift Store. Upon arrival, we initiated the family's 12-month financial support and settlement activities – orientation to community, completing IRCC arrival documentation, obtaining bank accounts, SIN#s, MSP, transit passes, cellphones, BCID cards, Permanent Resident Cards, Child Benefits, language testing and training, doctors and dentists, library cards, settlement agency workers, children's pre-school activities, transporting to appointments and regular reviewing of income/expense budgets.

During June/July team members were fully engaged in an extremely challenging search to find longer-term affordable accommodation. In August we supported the family's move to a two-bedroom basement suite in Burnaby. We started the process for professional assessments and additional supports in the children's ongoing language, learning and social development.

With Ehsan well into Level 4 English by December, it was time to turn our efforts to assisting in employment search and potential journeyman electrician skills testing. The family was very thankful for delivery of Highlands' gift hamper and appear to be settling well into their new community.

Respectfully submitted,

Highland's Refugee Committee: Marilyn MacDonald (Chair), Peter Ackhurst, Catherine Alkenbrack, Lindsay Bottomer, Reen Burley, Simone Carrodus, Alixe Hale, Wendy McNaughton, Will Sparks, Buff Squire, Bill Walsh, Jeannie White

Ex Officio: Jean Gabrielse

The 15th Capilano Highlanders Scout Group

Highland's United Church Annual Report

The 15th Capilano Highlanders Scout Group continued to rebuild the group last year, as it provided learning and leadership opportunities for youth aged 5 through 26.

In 2024, there were 59 youth and 17 Scouters. That included 27 Beavers, 30 Cubs, 12 Scouts, 1 Venturer, 1 Rover, 17 Leaders and 5 Group Committee members.

The sections met weekly, often outdoors. Each section enjoyed camping experiences and challenging programs.

In July of 2024, some of our Scouts participated in the Pacific Jamboree held at Camp Barnard in Sooke on Vancouver Island. They spend a little over a week camping out with over 3,100 Scouts, Scouters and Offers of Service. They spent their time Badge Trading, Swimming, Hiking, Mountain Biking, Axe Throwing, Geocaching and walking 3k to their Sub-Camp multiple times every day.

Leaders and the Group Committee at the 15th were volunteer parents and community Scouters. The committee members were Amber Akerberg (Group Commissioner), Aaron Oman (Treasurer), and Ross Borsoi (Group Admin), Guy Kirby (Church Liaison), and George Clarke, Becky Knight and Dawn Martin-Smith.

Secretary and Fundraiser roles remain vacant.

Submitted by Amber Akerberg

Group Commissioner, 15th Capilano Scout Group
Pacific Coast Council, Scouts Canada

Men's 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 invite you to join us for breakfast and friendly conversation, Wednesdays, 8:00am-9:00am at the Eighties or Highlands/Zoom.

English Language Learners (ELL)

Report pending.

Caring Ministry

Caring Ministry Report

Pastoral care happened this past year in the form of telephone calls and cards, along with hospital, hospice and home visits provided by Tanis Van Drimmelen and Ministry Staff. The prayer team brought their prayers and attention to the names sent in by email and those written on the prayer list. And in addition to these, there was a group of volunteers that had regular telephone visits with those who were particularly isolated checking in with one another and offering a listening ear and welcome contact with Highlands. For much of the year, Ann Echols delivered homemade soup, bringing comfort, care, and nourishment to those in need of a culinary hug. What precious gifts of love and connection!



Circles of Accompaniment were in place as needed to offer love, support, and encouragement in difficult circumstances. They are for anyone in the Highland's community going through a transition, a challenging time or coming to the end of life. They are an intentional, systematic, and timely way of accompanying people on their journey. If you or someone you know in the congregation might benefit from a circle of accompaniment, please be in touch with Will, Julie, Colleen or the circle of accompaniment coordinators, Cheryl Irwin, and Ann Echols.

The Visiting Ministry program that has been in place for so many years under the able leadership of Ross Lyle. This program is in a renewal process and if you are interested in finding out more, please be in touch with Colleen Blair!

To all who participated in the care of the Highland's community over this past year, we are truly grateful. And lastly, please remember that staff and volunteers rely on congregation members to let us know when they are struggling, or when you know someone who is. Thank you for helping to make this a caring community!

Blessings,
Colleen Blair

Circles of Accompaniment

Highlands Pastoral Care Team has identified a need within our congregation to support individuals who might be going through a transition or a challenging time and may need specific support. Within our community of caring and loving members, Circles of Accompaniment are being formed to travel with these individuals. The person requesting support (or family) will suggest the members of their circle as well as identify their specific needs, time frames, and

location of support. The objective of the team is to provide deliberate, systematic and timely support as described by the requesting person

Within the 2024 year 3 Circles were formed and actively involved over 20 caring congregational members.

If anyone believes a Circle would be beneficial either for themselves or anyone in the congregation, please speak to one of the Ministerial Team.

Respectfully Submitted by Ann Echols and Cheryl Irwin,
Leads of Circles of Accompaniment.

Healing Hands

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

- Offered healing sessions to congregation and community members once a month
- Participated in Practitioner days monthly
- Offered soaking prayer during monthly communion services
- Offered soaking prayer at Advent Festival
- Offered soaking prayer at Quiet Christmas service held at St. Catherines Anglican church
- One member mentored in Healing House at Naramata for 6 weeks and another attended for 1 week as a practitioner
- Offered support to Healing groups in Squamish and Lynn Valley
- Held an Introduction to Christian Healing at Highlands Church
- 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

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Who - The Knit and Knot group – for anyone who enjoys working with their hands in company with others.

What - Knit – Crochet – Stitch – or any other project you are engaged in and would be enhanced by having company!

Where - We meet each Monday at 1:00 in the Choir room.

The door is always open, and we would love to welcome anyone who would enjoy an hour, or two spent knitting /crocheting/stitching accompanied by good conversation and much laughter.

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



Congregational Life

Small Groups Connection Ministry

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. Some initiatives were continued from previous years. Others began in 2024

- Christmas Greetings Cards :
 - constructed of cards by a small team led by Pamela Hollington.
 - cards included advent information. Delivered by hand due to a mail strike.
- Huddles: (Small Group Conversation Connections)
 - Huddles continue in a variety of ways and connections. Presently there are 7 huddles involving 28 members.
- High Tea- March 10th- purpose to celebrate 75th Anniversary of Highlands
 - 203 guests , 54 Volunteers, profit of \$2858. Connections in small groups actualized and appreciated.
 - 54 volunteers- most with 2-4 hour commitment seemingly pleased and willing to participate. Again, connections in small groups actualized and appreciated by those taking part.
- Coffee Cluster- after church in lower hall, June
 - +60 folk gathered (15 card tables) for coffee in lower hall after church
- Garden Gang- 13 people continue with Garden maintenance
 - Collaborative Waldorf/ Highlands Native Plant Project completed.
 - Seven dead plants and shrubs were replaced and three trees planted.
- Summer Social Gatherings
 - Tea parties - 2 hosts collectively invited 26 guests.
 - Beach party
 - Appy Hour Gatherings- 6 hosts

Birthday Celebrations

Each month, folks gather together in the Fireside Room to celebrate with others who share the same birthday month. The birthday party is much more than just cake. The food, which includes both regular and gluten-free cakes, fruit, and tea or coffee is a simple shared meal. It is a lovely way to celebrate individuals and to get to know others in a friendly small group setting. A truly intergenerational gathering.

The party team: Wendy McNaughton, Phyllis & Lindsay Bottomer, Janine Lovely, Ann Echols, Bonny Ball, Mark & Trena Clarke, and Johanne Cordeau



Financials

Heritage Fund

The Highland's Heritage Fund (HHF) was formed to provide a permanent endowment fund for Highland's United Church to which individuals can contribute. The operation of the fund according to the Terms of Reference ensures that the income from the money contributed will be available to support projects of an enduring and long-term nature for Highland's 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 capable 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.

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 and Lunn Private Capital. The HHF Committee is pleased with the management and performance of the fund on behalf of the congregation. The capital pool continues to grow for the long-term benefit of Highland's United Church.

I would like to thank Peter Bell for his long term service to the Heritage Committee. He has now retired and the work gets moved forward with the other six participants.

We encourage members of the Highland's Congregation to consider a living gift, inserting a donation clause in your will specifying the Highland's Heritage Fund, or making a bequest directed to Highland's Heritage Fund, to continue to grow the fund and to ensure its long-term success and availability for future generations.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the committee,
Scott Hughes, Chair

Finance Committee Report

PART 1 - 2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

GENERAL OPERATING FUND

The General Operating Fund covers the day-to-day operations, building maintenance and minor repairs, and core programs and ministry of Highlands United Church. The 2024 Budget for this fund was approved at the March 2024 Annual General Meeting. This budget projected a deficit (income less expenses) of \$66.2 thousand to be covered in part by a carry forward of the special appeal funds received from the congregation in 2023.

The budget deficit persisted during 2024, but due to generous offerings by the congregation, especially in the last two months of the year, strong building rental revenues, and several successful pop-up sales, the deficit was reduced to \$19.4 thousand by the end of the year.

A detailed line by line comparison of the 2024 Budget to 2024 Actuals is provided in the *2024 Statement of Income and Expenses and Proposed 2025 Budget* document in the next section of this report. Note that all 2024 numbers are preliminary pending final accounting adjustments and the external review.

SEGREGATED FUNDS

In addition to the General Operating fund, Highlands United Church maintains a number of segregated funds supporting specific building, ministry and outreach activities and programs. These segregated funds can only be used for the purposes for which they were established.

Building and Equipment Fund

The Building and Equipment (B&E) segregated fund covers the cost of major repairs to the building and property, scheduled lifecycle replacement of major components of the building, and replacement of equipment. The B&E fund is supported by an annual transfer from the General Operating fund, donations directly to the B&E Fund, as well as funding for specific projects. Building and Equipment expenses can vary over time, so every year funds are accumulated in the B&E Fund so that there is a balance available to cover planned lifecycle building costs when they occur.

In view of higher repair costs in 2023, the 2024 Operating Budget increased the annual transfer to the B&E Fund by \$10 thousand, however the fund continues to be under significant pressure as necessary building repairs over and above the long term plan had to be made in 2024.

These included an exterior wall on the south side of the building, removal of a tree in the parking lot, and boiler and heating system repairs for a total cost of \$39 thousand. With support from a Faithful Footprints grant, Highlands was able to complete the upgrade of all lighting to high efficiency LEDs and replace the water heater. The net cost after the grant was

\$25 thousand. Also, a new copier and two computers were acquired for the Church Office at a cost of \$15.8 thousand. Both the lighting and copier should result in future operating cost efficiencies.

Below is a summary of the B&E fund activity for 2024 (all amounts in \$):

	Opening Jan 1/24	Transfer from Operating Fund	Income - Donations & Bank Interest	Expenses*	Ending Dec 31/24*
B&E	145,690	40,000	10,699	79,852*	116,537*
Note: Amounts are preliminary pending final accounting adjustments and the external review.					
* Expenses are before capitalization and amortization.					

Note that the ending balance in the B&E fund is below what will be necessary to cover long-term building repairs and replacements. Work has been undertaken to strengthen the management framework for building and equipment related costs within both the General Operating and B&E funds, and to update and identify future B&E fund needs. It will be important to address this through the sustainability initiative.

Ministry and Outreach Funds

Ministry and Outreach funds cover specific programs, ministries and outreach beyond that covered by the General Operating budget. Below is a list of the main program funds with the preliminary financial information for 2024 (all amounts in \$). Please also refer to the program sections in the Annual Report for more information.

Fund/Program	Opening Jan 1/24	Income	Expenses	Transfers In (Out)	Ending Dec 31/24
Ministry Funds					
Memorials & Celebrations	94,171	11,110	16,784	(28,000)	60,496
Ministry Initiatives	42,080	7,202	6,942		42,340
Memorial Funds	6,075	500	2,000		4,575
Ministers Discretionary	4,295	1,357	641		5,011
Music	16,204	852	2,470		14,585
Refugee Program	29,615	80	21,301		8,394
Saturday Lunch	11,977	13,005	13,362	500	12,121
Senior's Ministry	22,317	13,358	5,813	(7,640)	22,222
Shelter to Home	15,692	51,334	29,540	6,978	44,464
Summer Programs	4,827	40,900	50,726	5,000	0

Fund/Program	Opening Jan 1/24	Income	Expenses	Transfers In (Out)	Ending Dec 31/24
Thrift Store Project	4,879	20,628	19,170	45,174	51,512
Youth	4,509	8,622	5,013	(2,000)	6,118
Other Funds*	24,012	6,664	7,469	(4,789)	18,418
Total	280,653	175,612	181,232	15,224	290,256
<u>Outreach</u>					
Outreach - First United, Bridging Gaps, Special Outreach	3,103	3,514	3,514	0	3,103

Note: Amounts are preliminary pending final accounting adjustments and the external review

* Other funds include Affirm, Christmas Hampers, Flowers, Grants, Faithfest, Healing Touch, Lay Education, Memorial Garden, Quilters, Socks for First United and TRC.

Heritage Fund

(see Heritage section of the Annual Report)

Sustainability Initiatives

Funds totaling \$163 thousand were received in 2024 to support highlands future sustainability initiatives.

Submitted by the Finance Committee:

Doug Mackay (Treasurer), Bill Dyer, Cameron Forde, Judith Walker, Kathleen Whyte, Will Sparks (ex officio)

PART II — 2025 GENERAL OPERATING BUDGET (Fund 01)

The 2025 financial situation continues to be challenging as Highlands United Church balances programming with increased costs, particularly for repairs and maintenance to our building and property. Similar to 2024, 2025 will be a transitional year as we move forward with the Thrift Store project and our sustainability initiatives.

With the strong congregational givings and building revenues last year, we have budgeted for modest increases in offerings and building rental revenues for 2025. We also are planning again for \$30 thousand in revenues from Pop-Up sales and/or the Thrift Store. For 2025 we are also anticipating \$10 thousand in revenue from the bi-annual musical production.

For expenses, the budget includes provision for the United Church of Canada (UCC) cost of living increase of 3% for salaries and increases in the UCC assessment and our insurance costs. We have also committed a further \$10 thousand increase to the Building & Equipment fund for

2025, and an additional \$5 thousand each for interior painting and Sunday school programs. There are also minor adjustments to some of the other budget lines.

With these adjustments the budgeted deficit (expected income less expenses) for 2025 is \$65 thousand, which is 7% of expected revenues, and similar to the \$66.2 thousand budgeted in 2024. This deficit will be offset by the remaining carry forward from 2023, general fund reserves and potential new revenues from the sustainability initiative.

One thing to highlight is the potential for unanticipated building maintenance and repairs that may come up during the year, which may result in increased pressure on both the General Operating and Building and Equipment funds.

With continued focus on revenue opportunities and control of expenses we expect the General Operating fund deficit can be managed over the course of the year.

The Finance Committee will provide regular reporting to the congregation on our financial situation as we progress through 2025.

The 2024 Statement of Income and Expenses and Proposed 2025 Budget is shown below:

Statement of Receipts and Disbursements 2023 and Proposed Budget for 2024

2024 INCOME & EXPENSE STATEMENT AND 2025 PROPOSED BUDGET - GENERAL FUND			
Account Description	2024		2025
	Budget		Proposed Budget
	2024 AGM	Actual *	

Income

OFFERINGS	Contributions	445,000	463,558	465,000
	Special Gifts	10,000	4,500	5,000
	Open/Sundry	10,000	4,848	10,000
	Other Agencies	15,000	19,199	20,000
	Subtotal Offerings	480,000	492,104	500,000
BUILDING REVENUE	Multi-Year Leases	244,600	251,071	261,400
	Other Room Rentals	75,000	91,763	85,000
	Subtotal Rentals	319,600	342,835	346,400
FLEA MARKET/ THRIFT STORE	Pop Up Sales/Thrift Store	30,000	42,534	30,000
	Transfer to Thrift Store project		(12,534)	
	Subtotal Flea Market/Thrift Store	30,000	30,000	30,000
- FUNDRAISERS	Transfer from Musical			10,000
	Other fundraisers	1,000	3,532	1,000

2024 INCOME & EXPENSE STATEMENT AND 2025 PROPOSED BUDGET - GENERAL FUND				
Account Description		2024		2025
		Budget		Proposed Budget
		2024 AGM	Actual *	
	Subtotal fundraisers	1,000	3,532	11,000
OTHER REVENUE	Weddings & Memorials (Net)	4,000	5,747	6,000
	ESL	1,500	1,459	1,500
	Bank & Investment Income	5,000	9,008	4,000
	Other Transfers from Funds	10,000	4,789	0
	Subtotal Other	20,500	21,003	11,500
	TOTAL INCOME	851,100	889,474	898,900
Expenses				
MINISTERIAL	Salary & Payroll Expenses	340,500	339,089	351,000
	Other Expenses	4,500	4,913	6,800
		345,000	344,002	357,800
WORSHIP & MUSIC	Salary & Payroll Exp - W&M	53,000	55,352	55,000
	Production Services	2,000	0	250
	Music & Choirs	2,000	1,948	2,000
	Worship Expenses	2,500	1,620	2,500
	Salary & Payroll Exp - Livestream	18,500	19,359	19,000
	Other Expenses - Livestream	500		0
	Subtotal Worship/Music	78,500	78,279	78,750
CONGREGATIONAL LIFE	Salary & Payroll Expenses	2,300	1,596	2,300
	Cong Life General Expenses	2,500	1,877	2,250
	Cong Life Events	250	0	250
	Caring & Senior Ministry	500	1,545	750
	Subtotal Congregational	5,550	5,018	5,550
EDUCATION & FAITH FORMATION	Salary & Payroll Expenses	25,500	24,048	31,000
	General Expenses Ed & Faith	3,500	1,986	3,500
	Adult Ed & Faith			250
	Library	1,000	568	1,000
	Summer Program (Fund 01 only)			
	Subtotal Ed and Faith	30,000	26,601	35,750
OUTREACH	Mission & Service	25,000	25,000	25,000
	Bridging Gaps	17,500	17,500	17,500
	Community Connections	500	724	725
	Subtotal Outreach	43,000	43,224	43,225

2024 INCOME & EXPENSE STATEMENT AND 2025 PROPOSED BUDGET - GENERAL FUND				
Account Description	2024		2025	
	Budget		Proposed	
	2024 AGM	Actual *	Budget	
ADMINISTRATION	Salary & Payroll Expenses	83,200	82,838	85,700
	Accounting & Facilities	34,100	31,761	35,000
	Office Supplies, Printing & Postage	10,700	9,171	10,000
	Banking & Transaction Fees	8,000	6,857	6,000
	Stewardship	250	1,866	500
	Leadership Board	500	530	500
	Advertising & Communications	750	1,124	750
	Technical Services	1,000	2,217	1,500
	Technology	250	89	250
	HUGG		(25)	
	UCC Nat'l Levy	36,540	36,539	42,438
	Subtotal Administration	175,290	172,969	182,638
BUILDING & PROPERTY	Janitorial Services	95,000	91,891	95,000
	Utilities	50,440	49,640	50,500
	Insurance	19,586	18,645	24,666
	Repairs and Maintenance	35,000	38,580	40,000
	Transfer to Building Reserve fund	40,000	40,000	50,000
	Subtotal Bldg & Property	240,026	238,757	260,166
	TOTAL EXPENSES	917,366	908,850	963,879
	INCOME LESS EXPENSES	(66,266)	(19,375)	(64,979)

Note: * 2024 Actuals are preliminary pending final accounting adjustments and the external review.

A Highland's Affirmation

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.