

HISTORY

OF

HIGHLANDS UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CHEYENNE, WYOMING

Revised and Expanded

As of June 30, 2023

Compiled and edited by Victor J. Lisek

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William Westerfield
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Mr. Don Wirfel
Mrs. Robert Wold
Mrs. William K. Wolf
Mr. & Mrs. Harry W. Woods

PASTORS OF HIGHLANDS UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Emery Roy	September 26, 1965 -- April 30, 1970
William Stewart	April 22, 1971 -- July 2, 1972
Thomas Paden, Jr.	August 15, 1972 -- November 25, 1972
Richard McFarlin	May 6, 1973 -- Feb. 15, 1977
Fred Dawson	August 1, 1977 -- October 16, 1977
Janet Divas	October 17, 1977 -- May 12, 1978
David Owens	September 10, 1978 -- August 1, 1982
Robert Ware	August 1, 1982 -- April 30, 1983
Richard Brown	June 5, 1983 -- July 26, 1987
Seong Woong Kim	October 17, 1983 -- March 19, 1986
Forrest Carhartt	November 1, 1987 -- September 30, 1988
James Clark	February 19, 1989 -- January 31, 1993
In Hoiy Hu	February 19, 1989 -- April 30, 1990
James George	May 1, 1993 -- October 3, 1993
Patricia Lund	November 15, 1993 -- March 17, 1994
Jean Kiskaddon	September 2, 1994 -- May 30, 1995
Curtis Barnett	July 1, 1995 -- July 10, 1997
Linda Norris	August 24, 1997 -- November 15, 2003
Don Chanslor	July 4, 2004 -- December 20, 2007
Rodger McDaniel	July 1, 2008 --
Duane Ferchen	July 1, 2010 -- April, 2021
Bob Garrard	May 1, 2021

SIGNIFICANT DATES IN THE EARLY CHURCH HISTORY

1955 -1963 – Discussion regarding the establishment of a new Presbyterian Church

October 9, 1963 – Land purchased for Church site

January 27, 1964 – Initial meeting of steering committee

May, 1964 – Rev. Emery Roy contacted to be organizing pastor

October 25, 1964 – First worship service at East Side Community Center

June 6, 1965 – Officially organized as a congregation and chartered as Highlands
(Founding date)

September 26, 1965 – Installation of Rev. Roy as Pastor

January 8, 1967 – Ground breaking ceremony

April 30, 1967 – Cornerstone laying ceremony

July 23, 1967 – First worship service in new church

September 24, 1967 – Dedication ceremony of new church

The Beginning 1964 -1969

As early as 1955, the concept of establishing a new Presbyterian Church was a focus of discussion by the northeast Cheyenne community. During the period between 1955 and 1963, representatives of the Presbyterian Board of National Missions conducted feasibility studies for the formation of a new congregation. The Cheyenne Council of Churches also recognized the need. The residents of Buffalo Ridge, Indian Hills and Sun Valley subdivisions welcomed such a possibility and persisted in petitioning for the establishment of a new church during this time frame.

Eventually Session members of the First Presbyterian Church (downtown) as well as other interested individuals initiated a search for a suitable building site. In the fall of 1963, an irregular and vacant section of land measuring 5.65 acres located in the Buffalo Ridge subdivision came to be the preferential choice. George Cole, a real estate developer and builder, and his wife Mary Cole owned the property as well as the adjacent land surrounding it. Following deliberations and negotiations, the Coles sold that parcel of land to the Presbytery of Wyoming of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America for a sum of \$8,000.00. The deed was dated and filed on October 9, 1963. The loan was later paid in full on December 10, 1964.

The initial major organizational responsibilities in the founding of a new congregation were assumed by the First Presbyterian Church in downtown Cheyenne, recognized as the “mother” church. It was the Session of that “mother” church as approved by the state Presbytery and the congregation-at-large which appointed a steering committee to spearhead the formation, direction and oversight of this visionary church. Reverend Robert G. Walkley, associate pastor at First Presbyterian, was called to be the moderator of this committee. He, along with the Reverend Alton J. Goodenberger, chairman of the National Missions Committee, the steering committee members, Everett Spackman, Wallace Reed, Donald Murbach, Ralph Robinson and Robert Westerfield attended the inaugural formation meeting at the First Presbyterian Church on Thursday, January 27, 1964 at 7:30 p.m. (Committee members absent were Robert Lehman and Harry Woods). The group determined several aims: organizational appointments; building plans; survey of area residents; search for a temporary meeting place; and, arrangements for the hiring of a first pastor. The Board of National Missions agreed to pay the new pastor a \$6,000 salary and \$600 car allowance for one year. Mr. V. F. Hudspeth, a civil engineer and congregation member offered to draw up plans for the new building and parking lot.

In subsequent meetings in February and March, the committee approved the erection of a large sign on the construction site announcing the new church and arranged for annexation by the city. A building loan of \$50,000 from the National Missions was secured. Members of the steering committee and others canvassed the

surrounding neighborhood to solicit potential members and gauge area response to the proposed church.

On May 17, 1964, members of the steering committee travelled to Broken Bow, Nebraska to attend worship service and visit with Rev. Emery Roy, a recommended pastor for the new Cheyenne church. Impressed with their visit, the committee proceeded with arrangements for Rev. Roy to be the organizing pastor. He, with his wife and three daughters moved to Cheyenne in the summer of 1964 and preached a sermon at the First Presbyterian Church (downtown).

Rev. Roy met regularly with the steering committee during September and October to determine financial resources and probable expenditures. They also conducted neighborhood meetings, and discussed plans for Christian education programs, temporary worship facility/office and an appropriate name for the church. The location on a hill in the high plains and the relationship of the Presbyterian Church with Scotland suggested the obvious name, Highlands. Thus it was adopted. The first worship service of Highlands United Presbyterian Church (USA) was held at the Eastside Community Center in Buffalo Ridge on October 25, 1964. The Highlands Church evolved towards its own identity with the establishment of a newsletter, a nursery, a Christian education program, musical programs, social gatherings with "pot lucks" and mission projects. In January, 1965, the average weekly attendance was 80 and contributions totaled \$506 per week. This Church community involvement and gradual evolution continued throughout the spring as Highlands prepared to celebrate its official organization and founding date on June 6, 1965.

On that date, eighty eight men and women were inducted as charter members of the newly organized Highlands United Presbyterian Church (USA). The day-long celebration opened with worship service at 10:30 a.m. at the Eastside Community Center. Reception and baptism of charter members took place at 4 p.m. and a Service of Organization was held at 7 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church (downtown).

Even though Reverend Emery J. Roy served as organizing and founding pastor of Highlands, his official call by the newly established congregation did not take place until a unanimous vote on July 25, 1965 sanctioned his pastorship. His official installation took place on September 26, 1965. The ceremony was held during an evening worship service at the Eastside Community Center with a reception following.

During the following months, membership increased, a choir was formed, a Sunday school program was inaugurated, suppers and social events were enjoyed, new elders installed and above all else, the building fund expanded toward a \$25,000 goal. In June 1966, John Freed was chosen as designer and architect of the church structure. Later that year, the session accepted the bid of Mr. Robert L. Buenger to

construct the edifice for \$83,550. There was a ground breaking ceremony held on Sunday, January 8, 1967 and cornerstone laying ceremony on April 30, 1967.

The construction of the church edifice extended from January to July of 1967. The first worship service in the new church was on Sunday, July 23, 1967 at 10:30 a.m. Rev. Roy, pastor, noted the occasion as the “reality of a dream”, with “gratitude to God and appreciation for the many contributors”. The membership at that time surpassed 140. On Sunday, September 24, 1967 the church was dedicated during the worship service and an open house for the community was held that afternoon.

During the later months of 1967, the session requested Mr. Harold Kissell to investigate the feasibility of establishing a Mariners group at Highlands. Five months later, in May of 1968, Highlands Clipper Ship of Mariners was founded. This social organization was instrumental in acquiring a new piano and organ for the Church. The *Clan* (Highlands’ monthly newsletter) was launched as a vital communication vehicle, providing parochial and communal news and information.

Highlands flourished during the years following its formation. Worship services and Sunday school attendance were steady. Income was sufficient to meet expenses and the financial situation was secure. There was encouraging congregational involvement in social gatherings, mission projects, Christian education and responsible stewardship. To all appearances, Highlands had emerged as a successfully established church in Cheyenne. On December 31, 1968, the recorded membership totaled 171.

Enthusiasm and ambition which dominated the formative years of Highlands, encountered banality and communal lassitude in early 1969. Fervor and earnestness with the new and novel, as well as, personality conflicts, denial of pet projects, disappointment with expectations and services, all contributed to declining membership. Subsequently, “descending offerings” became a major concern of the pastor and the Session. Not only were loans and financial commitments a strain on the budget but so were purchases of initial church wares and needs.

In March 1969, the seriousness of the financial downtrend was realized. Somber options were contemplated. Graciously, the Presbytery National Board of Missions sent financial specialists to help resolve the dilemma and a manageable and effective plan of action was implemented. With dedication and commitment throughout the year, 1969 ended with an increased membership (182) and financial solvency.

Through the Years 1970 – 1999

During the three closing decades of the 20th century, Highlands enjoyed relative stability as a viable congregation and continued to sustain a favorable reputation with the State Presbytery and local community. That which constitutes a Presbyterian Church together with whatever makes up the particulars of new church soon coalesced into Highlands United Presbyterian Church of Cheyenne.

There were regular Sunday worship services, children and adult Sunday school, Choir participation, hand bell ringers, Sunday nursery and fellowship. There were pre-marital and spiritual counseling sessions, home and hospital visits by the pastors and communion brought to shut-ins. Church Session members met at least monthly and guided the process and progress of Highlands. Throughout the years, Bible study groups, vacation bible school, youth ministry, summer school and pre-school programs, may have varied in size and format, but, were, nevertheless, a constant staple of Christian education. Each year, the church celebrated baptisms and weddings and conducted ritual services for funerals. In addition to regular Sunday worship and Presbyterian mission contributions, members supported the Comea Shelter, Habitat for Humanity, Needs, Inc., and other organizations in need.

Not only did the members of Highlands worship together, they socialized and supported each other in the communal spirit. There was plenty of participation in preparing and enjoying social functions, including, Lenten suppers, summer picnics, autumn bazaars, Thanksgiving dinners and Christmas parties. Ladies breakfast and lunch bunch groups remained popular throughout these years. The Mariners continued social and benevolent activities throughout the 70's and 80's.

In the early months of 1970, Rev. Roy occasionally filled a vacant pulpit in Burns, Wyoming, which evolved into more constant support and eventual "yoking" with that church in November. Reverend Roy, who guided the infant church for five years, requested dissolution from Highlands in February. His last sermon was on April 30th. Following his departure, there was no "called" teaching elder or official pastor for nearly a year. The pulpit was filled by visiting and accommodating pastors, including those at First Presbyterian Church.

Ultimately, in January of 1971, Rev. William Steward was invited to fill the pulpit as an interim and subsequently installed as pastor in April. He was replaced by Rev. Thomas Paden, who assumed the pastorate on August 15, 1972. Later that year, Bud Freed and Frank Cole were instrumental in having the parking lots graveled. A joint counseling center with First Presbyterian was inaugurated before the end of that year and during the following summer 7 leaders travelled to South Carolina for a month of training. During the early 1970s "Happy Times" pre-school began operating in the basement of Highlands with at least 40 children participating, many of whom were from Highlands' families.

In May, 1973, Rev. Paden was replaced by Rev. Richard McFarlin, who assumed the pastorate of both Highlands and the church in Burns as a “yoke” church. That summer a burglary of significant items from the Church initiated more stringent security measures. Several years earlier, Highlands had been gifted a corner lot of property near the Baptist Church in Buffalo Ridge. Arguments against the accumulation of unnecessary property and possessions as a fundamental precept of the Presbyterian Church prevailed and the Session sold that property in July.

Rev. McFarlin initiated several new projects and programs for the youth at Highlands. A group of 28 young people and 8 adults travelled to San Francisco in 1974 for 10 days to observe the workings of a large inner city church. A few years later, 6 young adults and 4 counselors experienced a week-long visit at the Indian Presbyterian Church in Fort Defiance, Arizona.

The tenth anniversary was celebrated on Sunday June 8, 1975 with Rev. Dr. John Pattison of First Presbyterian Church as a special guest. At that time the active membership numbered 101 and the inactive number was 44. The year’s budget was \$18,103. Session committees were reorganized into three categories: church programs; community programs; and church support; and, were newly titled “commissions.”

In February of 1976, questions arose within the congregation concerning the pastor’s ability to resolve arising “tensions” and discord. The session voted to request Rev. McFarlin to “take a temporary leave of absence”. However, the request was later rescinded after clarifications and suitable adaptations were resolved between pastor and the Session. During this disturbing period, the “yoke” with the Burns church was dissolved and overall worship service attendance at Highlands dwindled.

Yet, the reported active membership was 91 in January, 1977 and the budget was relatively robust. Consequentially, however, Rev. McFarlin decided to answer a “call” from Arizona and left Highlands on February 15th. An interim pastor, Rev. Dawson, assumed responsibilities from July until October. A spiritual retreat for the entire congregation intended to “heal the wounds” was held at the Hynds Lodge on October 9th. The Session hired Rev. Janet Divas who served as pastor from October 17 to the middle of May of 1978.

When Rev. Janet Divas, the interim pastor, left in May, Rev. Davis Owens was “called” to serve as Highlands’ pastor. He was installed on August 15, 1978. During his tenure a bell choir was renewed, a refugee Asian family was sponsored in 1979 and a Laotian family in 1980. In June, 1979, a group of young adults went to the John Hyson School for disadvantaged children in New Mexico as a work experience project. At the end of December, 1979, Highlands’ membership numbered 118 and a budget for 1980 of over \$51,000. Sunday school attendance was 58 and “Happy Time” pre-school registered over 50 children. Mariners’ membership flourished to over 50.

The young adult community at Highlands performed the musical "Godspell" on May 23 and 24, 1980. A slow pitch softball team was formed in the summer of 1981 and the team played in the city league. In the later months of 1981, Rev. Seong Kim was interviewed by the Session regarding the possibility of forming a Korean congregation at Highlands in order to use its facilities and accommodations. He and his family then moved to Cheyenne in April, 1982 and began weekly Korean services at that time.

In early 1982, conflicts between the pastor and select members of the congregation surfaced prompting a letter of resignation from Rev. Owens in May, 1982. The search committee then interviewed and engaged Rev. Bob Ware who assumed the pastorate on August 1, 1982 on a part-time interim basis. He immediately called a special meeting of the congregation and a brain-storming session was held on September 12 with 8 separate groups contributing ideas, suggestions, etc. for renewed direction and goals. Reorganization and other systemic changes were made in the following months. During the remainder of that year, the Korean congregation sponsored a city wide revival, a new Kawai piano was purchased, the *Clan* format was up-graded and coverage expanded, the parking lots resurfaced and Highlands sponsored a basketball team. Church membership had increased to 134 and the 1983 budget of \$59,000 was approved.

There was a special optimism in the beginning of that year, when the Highlands basketball team won the First Place Trophy in the city church league. This spurred enthusiasm and interest for the upcoming summer softball team. In the spring of 1983, the Session voted to "call" Rev. Dick Brown to the pulpit to replace Rev. Ware and he assumed the pastorate on June 5th. That autumn the original few families of the Korean congregation grew in membership and was incorporated into the general Highlands congregation. They did, however, maintain a separate board of Deacons and a separate time for their worship service. Rev. Seong Kim was installed as full time assistant pastor on October 17th, 1983.

The need for more useful and suitable space prompted a renovation and remodeling project and was spearheaded by Rev. Brown. Begun in early 1985, the renovation of the downstairs kitchen, the remodeling of the downstairs classrooms and partial work of the "upper room" above the narthex were completed in time for the 20th anniversary celebration on June 23, 1985. Rev. Emery Roy, founding pastor, preached the sermon for the anniversary worship service and a potluck dinner and slide presentation followed the service.

Highlands was experiencing relative soundness as it entered 1986. Income for the previous year reached an all-time high amount, surpassing \$107,000. Membership exceeded 140 and the recorded average attendance listed 18 Koreans and 86 non Koreans. The prayer chain was initiated and a special mission project to help support the Native American John Hyson School in New Mexico was introduced. In March, Rev. Seong Kim accepted a call to serve a church in North Carolina. In his place, In

Hoiy Hu, from Boulder, Colorado assumed part time pastoral responsibilities as an associate for the remaining 20 Koreans in May.

During the early months of 1987, divisiveness within the congregation regarding Rev. Brown's performance as pastor forced the Session to request his resignation. Personal problems were influential in his leaving Highlands in July. His departure caused a decrease in active membership, weekly church attendance as well as contributions. Happy Time pre-school contracted to function as an independent entity with its own administration and contractual agreements. The session engaged Rev. Forrest Carhartt to fill the pulpit for one year beginning November 1st.

The new, interim pastor helped restore cohesiveness and stability even though financial struggles continued. In May, 1988 the roof was replaced and on July 10th a special barbeque celebration recognized the final completion of the "Upper Room". As agreed, Rev. Carhartt left Highlands at the end of September. In January, 1989, Rev. Dr. James Clark was invited to preach and interview for the pastor's position. With an overwhelming majority vote, he was hired and along with Rev. Hoiy Hu as associate pastor, they were both installed on February 19, 1989. Facing a significant monthly operating deficit, Rev. Clark initiated a plan to increase contributions and to revise the budget. In March, the new pastor proposed 28 goals and objectives for church development which promoted a spirit of congregational enthusiasm. By December, 1989, Highlands financial and membership numbers were robust and thriving.

In April, 1990, Rev. Hu announced his decision to move to Alaska and resigned as associate pastor. A search for a new Korean pastor was begun. However, Rev. Hu did remain at Highlands to celebrate the Church's 25th Anniversary on Sunday June 10th. On that day, Rev. Clark conducted a commemorative worship service which included a special biblical role playing performance by the children. A social hour of fellowship followed. With the departure of Rev. Hu, the Korean congregation requested separation from Highlands to establish its own church. In August, 17 Korean members moved to their new church on Myers Ct. Of course, this action reduced Highland's membership and revenue. During 1991 and 1992 with Rev. Clark as pastor, the Church maintained a period of steadfastness. Highlands was debt free and membership exceeded 120. Average Sunday worship attendance was about 60. In October, 1992, Rev. Clark announced his retirement effective January 31, 1993.

Rev. James George was hired in May to serve as temporary pastor until the search committee secured a permanent pastor. Rev. Patricia Lund began her service as pastor on November 15, 1993.

Early in January of 1994, the session realized a significant deficit in the budget, a drop in church attendance and a growing problem between Rev. Lund and a representation of the congregation. The session voted 5 to 4 to terminate her contract.

Contradictory reports were received by the Wyoming Presbytery and an investigation was initiated. It was then decided by that Presbytery to dissolve the existing Session at Highlands, "for the best interest of the Church". An administrative commission of the Presbytery was to oversee the functioning of the Church. Subsequently, elders resigned, employees and others in leadership positions left and general frustration prevailed. Church attendance declined, membership dwindled and collections diminished. With Rev. Lund gone as of February 17, 1994, Highlands struggled with no pastor or resident leadership. Eventually, the original Session members were reinstated and Rev. Jean Kiskaddon was brought on as half-time pastor for 9 months. With the overall downsizing of Highlands, there was a restructuring and realignment of priorities and needs. Total membership at the end of 1994 was 72 and attendance averaged 36.

Notwithstanding the troubled, previous year, the 30th anniversary celebration, held on June 4th, had an attendance of over 120 guests. Rev. Kiskaddon had left Highlands in May, so the worship service was conducted by church elders while Rev. Emery Roy, the founding pastor preached the sermon and Rev. Ware, a former pastor assisted with communion and prayers. Also in attendance were Reverends Jim Clark, James George, Jim Green, Peter Funch, representing the Presbytery and Curtis Barnett, the newly called interim pastor at Highlands. A social reception and luncheon was later held in the fellowship hall.

Rev. Barnett, began his pastorate duties on July 1st, 1995. By October of that year, the nursery was reopened, adult Sunday school classes resumed and a new pianist introduced. Active membership numbered 59 in 1996 with approximately 40 in attendance each week for worship service. In June, 1996 Rev. Barnett's interim status was renewed for another year. On August 24, 1997, Rev. Linda Norris was installed as pastor. She led a sound, active and responsive, even though smaller Highlands, into the new millennium.

The New Millennium 2000 - Present

Highlands transitioned into 2000 smoothly and comfortably in the manner of a traditional Presbyterian Church. Rev. Linda Norris, the pastor celebrated weddings and baptisms and led funeral services. She made home and hospital visits, provided spiritual counseling, delivered laudable homilies and discharged her pastoral duties favorably. Deacons and Session members exercised their responsibilities and actively gave good direction and leadership. Woven into the fabric of Highlands' life-spirit,

were weekly children and adult Sunday school classes and daily pre-school, Lenten soup suppers, a committed choir, *Clan* publications, Mariners monthly functions, Christmas and Easter services and many potluck dinners and social gatherings. Even though there was some ebb and flow of membership transfers and new admissions, a core contingent remained steady and constant though the early years of the new millennium. Average attendance at services each Sunday was in the mid 40's and donations were steady. Early in the year, Jim Maas assisted Pastor Linda as an intern prior to entering the seminary in the fall. A regular and continuing monthly ladies lunch group was initiated in the spring of 2000.

In the beginning of 2001, attendance at services continued to be around 45 and membership was listed at 88 individuals. Session held a retreat at Hynds Lodge in May and the women of the church also held one in August. During the October Session meeting the need to remodel and redecorate the sanctuary was discussed. The major projects considered included interior painting, new carpeting, replacement of light fixtures and the installation of wood paneling on the wall behind the pulpit. The estimated cost reached \$20,000. It was spring of 2002 before the work began and it was completed at the end of summer with a rededication celebration held on August 25th of that year. A miniature horse carriage with banners welcoming the crowd to Highlands had its inaugural entry into the Frontier Days parade in July. With an impetus donation of \$10,000, a concrete slab for parking was laid in front of the church before the winter of 2002.

At the 215th general assembly of the Presbyterian Church held in the Denver Convention Center in late May, 2003, Highlands held a welcome reception and tea for the world-wide delegates attending. A Highlands quilters group was formed that summer. On November 15, Linda Norris resigned as pastor because of health reasons. The retired Rev. Robert Walkley, as he had graciously done in the past, agreed to moderate the Session and fill the pulpit temporarily while the search for a new pastor took place.

With no called pastor for over six months, attendance and contributions declined. A loan of \$15,000 was obtained from the Presbytery in the spring of 2004 to offset the \$32,000 cost to repair the roof. Renovation to the pastor's office and study was also completed that spring. In June, the session hired Rev. Don Chanslor as pastor to begin on July 1, 2004.

Enthusiasm and urgency as well as attendance and collections, however, failed to rally in early 2005. By April there was a deficit budget and receivables were in arrears. The session discussed selling a portion of the "North 40", (property north of the Church) to liquidate overdue bills. No action was taken. On June 5, 2005, Highlands celebrated its 40th anniversary with a special worship service and pot luck dinner. Following the celebration, certain congregation members wrote letters and expressed concerns about their expectation and aspirations of the pastor and his

failure to effectively provide leadership and inspiration. Other members, however, held opposite opinions. Rev. Kinney from the State Presbytery was called to help bridge the division. Several individuals resigned from their positions in the Church. Attendance and contributions dwindled. Nevertheless, out of necessity, new siding was installed and windows replaced. By December, Highlands was \$2500 in arrears of payments due. Active membership was 50 and weekly attendance diminished.

The year 2006 began and continued with monthly deficits. Money was withdrawn from the contingency fund and the pastor's employment was decreased to three quarter time. In 2007, the membership role record showed 40 active and 13 inactive members. Rev. Chanslor submitted his letter of resignation in November and he left for Louisiana at the end of that year.

With no pastor during the early months of 2008, Rev. Walkley again agreed to moderate Session meetings and advise the Church elders. Deacons visited the sick and administered to others in need in whatever capacity allowable. Various ministers were solicited to fill the pulpit on most Sundays and on the others the congregation adapted a worship service. With attendance shrinking, a Presbytery Mission representative was invited to assist in the search for a pastor. In July, Rev. Rodger McDaniel, who had led Sunday worship numerous times in the past, agreed to a six month contract to lead services on three Sundays of each month. Attendance at that time numbered around 25 each Sunday.

In February of 2009, the Presbytery authorized Rev. McDaniel and the Session of Highlands contracted with him to serve part time as its pastor. That year the boy scouts planted shrubs and bushes on the south and west sides of the property. The choir was re-activated. Adult bible classes and a prayer chain were restarted. A revised attendees' directory was published and some repair work both in the building and outside was completed. In July, Rev. Duane Ferchen, a retired minister, consented to regularly lead the worship service on one Sunday each month. In August, a group from Highlands attended a Rockies game on Faith Sunday. This swell of activity continued enthusiastically into and during 2010.

The year 2011 might be considered pivotal regarding the focus, direction and disposition at Highlands. A more contemporary approach to the interpretation of scripture, more active social justice involvement, and, some adaptation to the worship service were all gradually introduced. A majority of the congregation embraced this revival as initiated by the pastor, Rodger. Some from the congregation, however, were more comfortable with conventional and traditional practices and chose to disjoin from Highlands. Even though numbers temporarily diminished, enthusiasm and interest grew. New Mission projects included involvement with Wyoming Family Home Ownership, Family Promise, Recover Wyoming, weekly food collections for Needs and Comea and the beginning of a community garden. The *Clan* was restructured and reintroduced. In spring of 2011, Rev. McDaniel inaugurated a scripture discussion group at a local tavern that was open to the community, called

“Bibles and Beer” that attracted nearly two dozen participants. On July 7, 2011, a Star Wars movie and costume event brought 200 family members from around the city to Highlands where a truck load of non-perishable foods were collected for Needs, Inc. In September, Mohammed Salih, a Muslim Imam, was a guest participant at a Sunday worship service. At the end of 2011, membership had grown to 35 active and 28 inactive individuals and the average attendance regularly neared 40. Income for the 2011 year was \$69,000 according to the annual report.

The opening of 2012 saw active participation in social projects including the collection of food for Needs, Inc. and Comea Shelter, providing volunteers to host the Family Promise program, Lenten soup suppers, a continuation of Bibles and Beer discussion group, and a new endeavor to visit those in nursing homes. On May 12, the 50th anniversary committee held a first meeting. Its purpose was to prepare for a semi-centennial celebration within a few years and to create a vision for the future of Highlands. A community vegetable garden project was launched in May with the intention of donating the grown produce to the needy. In summer, the nursery room was refurbished and made available to toddlers on Sunday mornings. A church website was introduced in October. Highland’s Session agreed to support the newly created Recover Wyoming, a city-wide program designed to assist addicts in maintaining sobriety. The first annual blessing of the animals took place on the second Sunday of November. The annual report for 2012 claimed regular weekly attendance of 40 and an expenditure of \$76,000.

Early in the year 2013, pastor Rodger and the anniversary committee proposed the idea of selling land north of the church and to use that money to renovate and remodel the existing church building. The congregation embraced the idea and a survey and appraisal were ordered in March. A longtime member suggested the city authorities be approached to possibly purchase the land for use as a neighborhood park. On September 8, the congregation voted to sell a major portion of the land to the city for \$400,000. Meeting with the architects took place in November and it was agreed to reverse the sanctuary entrance so that a rose window, altar table and pulpit were positioned at the east end to receive the rising sunlight during worship services. The narthex, restrooms as well as the outside surfaces and siding were to be renovated and, in some cases, reconstructed. The contractor’s estimated cost of the project was \$386,000. The sale of the land to the city was finalized in December. Of that \$400,000, the architect’s costs was \$22,000 and 10% was donated to the Presbytery.

In discussion over the sale of the property, it was discovered that the church corporation was dissolved in 2009. Through legal processes, a new corporation became official in April of 2013. Also, in spring of that year, a new editor launched a revised and expanded format of the *Clan*. A garden was planted that summer, the church held a picnic and a group attended a Rockies game in Denver on Faith Sunday.

During November of 2013, Highlands held congregational discernment meetings regarding an option to be designated as a “More Light” Presbyterian Church. With a majority of the membership in agreement, the Session, on November 25, unanimously requested such a designation from the Presbytery. As such it committed itself to be an open and affirming congregation to the gay and lesbian community. A portion of the membership found it objectionable and in time separated from Highlands.

It was in early 2014 when Mountain West Architects prepared a design and plan to begin major construction work in spring. In February, as sanctioned by the Book of Order, communion celebration became a component of the worship service on every Sunday rather than once a month. The Session, with congregation support, terminated the contract with Happy Times pre-school effective June 1, so that the lower level could be better and more freely used for Church and community functions and events.

On March 24, 2014, the Reverend Doctor James F. Clark, former pastor of Highlands passed away at age 86. He had also served as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Cheyenne. He and his wife, Mary, were participating members of Highlands following his retirement and contributed to Highlands in the similar way he lived his own life as a musician, scholar and clergyman.

The Church secretary position was eliminated in April with duties distributed among designated Church members. In addition to the on-going nursery available for toddlers during Sunday services, a program for young children was begun and affectionately called “Children’s Church”. Attendance was minimal but spirited.

In June, the Session requested a supplemental loan of \$144,000 from the Presbytery for the upcoming additional renovation, anticipated new furnishings and other expenses. The Session then proceeded to initiate a special capital building fund campaign. During the summer while construction was in process, worship services were held at a nearby mortuary chapel. Weekly attendance continued to average approximately 35. As construction progressed on the main structure upstairs, a cleaning, repairing and painting project took place on the lower level by Church volunteers. In complementing the major renovation project, new appliances, tables and chairs, pew cushions, a pulpit and other items were purchased. An electric keyboard was donated by a Church member. At the beginning of autumn the total project in the sanctuary and lower level was completed and a dedication ceremony was held on September 21, 2014. The following week Highlands had a “blessing of the animals” Sunday service and later, during the annual Thanksgiving Dinner the refurbished fellowship hall in the lower level was dedicated to the memory of Rev. Dr. James Clark, a former pastor and ardent supporter of Highlands.

Robust might be the word describing the year 2015. There were 32 active and 4 inactive members listed on the roster. However, there was an increasing steady number of visiting attendees who returned each week for worship services. Highlands

had assumed a posture of “all are welcome” and on some weeks there were well over 40 who participated in worship and communion. Income exceeded expenses nearly every month. A satisfying capital campaign made it possible to make extra payments to the loan principle. Highlands was an energetic and dynamic community. The congregation supported eight mission projects, provided assistance to indigents through its Lenten fund, accommodated bible and book study groups, facilitated a prayer chain ministry, sponsored a women’s faith sharing group, collected items and goods for special needs’ projects, participated in community social action events, and, celebrated uplifting worship service each week as lead by Revs. McDaniel and Ferchen. A spearheading leader at Highlands and in the community, Pastor McDaniel conducted weddings, baptisms, counseling sessions and funerals regularly, along with weekly Bibles and Beer discussions, newspaper contributions and participation in the clergy interfaith group.

On Sunday, August 16, 2015, Rev. Bob Garrard (former pastor of First Presbyterian Church) and his wife Holly presented a program about their recent trip to the Middle East and the situation of the Presbyterian Church there. It prompted an endeavor to learn about, establish communication with, and provide support for the Presbyterian Church in Lebanon and Syria. This shared relationship between Highlands and the Churches in that area became an ongoing mission. A new venture at Highlands occurred on Halloween 2015, when a neighborhood “trunk and treat” was held in the parking lot of Highlands. Adults and children dressed in maladroit and entertaining costumes distributed thousands of pieces of candy to a surprising large number of children. At the December meeting of the Session, a vote passed changing the names of committees from: support to grounds; community to missions; and programs to fellowship.

On January 17, 2016, a commemorative service honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was held at Highlands with Judge Ronn Jeffrey participating. A county-wide Medicaid Expansion Rally with Governor Mead, other state legislators and faith leaders in attendance, was held at Highlands in February. That spring, Highlands initiated a state-wide chapter of RESULTS, an organization advocating for health, education and economic opportunities worldwide. Highlands became the host site for its monthly meetings. During the summer of 2016 the city of Cheyenne constructed a children’s playground area on the northeast corner of city land bought from Highlands a year earlier. It was named Highlands Park. That fall, Highlands hosted the annual State Presbytery meeting and, in October, hosted a candidates’ forum on social justice. Weekly Church participation averaged 36 and income continued to exceed expenses.

The congregation of Highlands United Presbyterian Church remained very active as 2017 began. That year, during the Trump administration, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency intensified the enforcement policies of arresting and deporting immigrants. In response, Highlands focused its Lenten suppers on those

issues. Invited to participate in open discussions with church members and citizens were the sheriff, the chief of police and other state and local officials. Immigrant families also provided insight regarding their histories, present statuses and fears. Reinforced with knowledge of the law and the needs of local immigrants, Highlands voted to become a sanctuary church on April 30, 2017. Highlands embraced the slogan and campaign, “Highlands Chooses Love”. In August, the local Unitarian Church and Highlands entered into a “sanctuary covenant” i.e. an agreement to co-host undocumented immigrants. At that time one such worker was living at the Unitarian Church. Members of Highlands joined in hosting by providing meals and visits. Although

A month earlier, the Session directed a voluntary committee to audit Highlands’ policies and practices and submit a detailed questionnaire to the Presbytery requesting to be recognized as an “Earth Care” congregation – one which is environmentally compliant with the criteria. One month later, the Presbytery conferred that official recognition on Highlands as the first and only church in the state to have qualified. Also, that month, Rev. McDaniel and the Session inaugurated a special fund drive in anticipation of future needs, called “Highlands Has A Future”. In recognition of the “brightly” anticipated future of Highlands, those attending church services that Sunday, March 5, 2017 wore sunglasses.

The many social projects, community involvements and church activities at Highlands continued at a steady pace during these years, distinguishing this small church as significant and dynamic in the community. Bibles and Beer, book club, Lenten suppers, summer picnics, vegetable garden, baseball game outings, trunk & treat, interfaith council participation, as well as, involvement in Family Promise, Wyoming Family Home Ownership, home-bound and sick visitations, prayer chain, Day of Giving, Unaccompanied Student Initiative, and, Habitat for Humanity were some of Highlands social endeavors. In addition to regular Sunday morning services and fellowship hour, there were special Easter and Christmas worship celebrations, featured choir singing, blessing of animals, and occasional guest preachers. Food for Comea shelter and Needs, Inc. were collected throughout the year. Monthly Session meetings determined the orderly functioning of the church and the *Clan* indubitably served as its life-blood.

Less than three years after acquiring the \$144,000 loan from the Presbytery, Highlands liquidated that loan in July of 2017. Highlands’ debt-free financial posture was good.

Highlands held a 50th Anniversary celebration (50 years after the dedication of the church building in 1967) on September 24, 2017. The event was highlighted with a Sunday morning worship service that included a State Presbytery message, select music and choir performances, an apropos sermon and special readings. A formal catered lunch and program following the service was held in the church’s lower level, Jim Clark Fellowship Hall. An updated church history booklet was newly published

and distributed to those present. Guests who attended included several former pastors, past church members and invited community notables.

The anniversary year of 2017 closed with a recorded membership of 36 and weekly average of 40 attendees. The total annual income of \$100,000 significantly surpassed the budget.

Although Highlands had participated with the Unitarian Church in hosting undocumented immigrants for six previous months, it was in early 2018, when Highlands decided to establish itself independently as a sanctuary church. In order to host such guests it was necessary to prepare living accommodations. Preparations began in March and were completed in September. However, no guests were in immediate need of sanctuary protection. On March 30, Highlands was a joint sponsor of a prayer vigil and community march in downtown Cheyenne in support of immigration reform. More than 40 church members participated.

It was an inaugural venture for Highlands to participate in the police department “neighborhood night out” city-wide event held on July 10, 2018. Residents from the Buffalo Ridge area were invited to meet and intermingle with police representatives and church members. Music, games conversation and plenty of food were enjoyed by a crowd of 200. An annual picnic and outdoor worship service was held at Clear Creek park on August 12th.

The reverend Ameer Issaak, pastor of the Tyre Evangelical church in Lebanon, visited and preached at Highlands on October 14th. He apprised the congregation of the status and situation of the small church and school in Tyre. His visit was sponsored by the Wyoming Presbytery as an on-going partnership with that church which began in 1996.

During the annual congregational meeting held on January 27, 2019, the committee reports reflected a notably assiduous and communal past year at Highlands. There were ten special mission projects plus eight continual humanitarian ones. Support of the ministry of the churches in Syria and Lebanon was a focus of the congregation. Throughout the year fellowship events and activities averaged at least one each month and the church building and grounds were well maintained. Average attendance at services tallied 42 and the budget for 2019 was over \$80,000.

Programs during the Lenten suppers in 2019 focused on the education of and interrelationship with the Native American community at the Wind River Reservation. Rev. McDaniel was recognized by the Highlands congregation on January 27 for his ten years of service to the church ... the longest pastorate in its history. At the invitation of the PCUSA, Highlands responded and by fulfilling six activities/requirements was designated a Hunger Action Congregation on World Food Day, October 6th. Its purpose and its mission was to alleviate hunger and to address

prejudices, practices and policies that undergird a system that perpetuates hunger. Also, in October, the session voted to accept the challenge of becoming a Matthew 25 Church, meaning its emphasis was on addressing poverty, racism and congregational vitality.

The vitality and spirit of Highland's congregation had a smooth transition into 2020. Worship attendance and participation, income and donations, enthusiasm, commitment and industriousness continued with a steady upsurge. Plans were being formulated for a Native American discernment session and trip to experience a pow-wow at the Wind River Reservation. Lenten suppers were scheduled and programs about climate change were promised. A 50th anniversary Earth Day service was to be held on the 19th of April. These plans, however, were either changed or halted as the Corona virus of 2019 (Covid-19) reached the United States. The first case was reported in Oregon on January 19 and had spread to Cheyenne by March 11, 2020.

The pandemic disrupted normal social activities and forced the closure of group gatherings, including church services and functions, in order to prevent the spread of the air-borne disease. Mask wearing and social distancing (6 ft. apart) became a mandatory way of life. Highlands joined with multiple organizations and churches cancelling services and activities in early March. On March 13, Rev. McDaniel reported that the Session had decided to "immediately and indefinitely" suspend worship until deemed safe to continue. He also published a response to the "health crisis" document. The first teleconference worship service was held on Sunday, March 15 at 10 a.m. with 33 participants experiencing a church service from their homes. The following Sunday, March 22, the first ZOOM (group video teleconference) worship service was held. Thus began a Highlands ZOOM church that was the vehicle for Sunday services, eventually averaging over 80 participants from throughout Wyoming and other states. This technology also accommodated session meetings, book club participation and other intercommunication Church programs for over a year during the Covid-19 pandemic.

On May 3, pastor Rodger e-mailed to all church members a list of ten organizations and charities to whom Highlands provides support and monthly contributions. Highlighted from that group was the Hunger Action Committee which had received grants and subsequently passed on donations exceeding several thousand dollars. Repairs to the hail-damaged roof began that spring and a new handicap chair lift was installed in May. Summer rains and a faulty sprinkler problem caused major flooding of the lower level and a multiple approach at remediation and restoration was implemented. On October 4th, a special worship service was created and delivered by the Earth Care committee. The passing of Rev. Dr. Robert Walkley on November 1, 2020 was noted by the Highlands community. Rev. Walkley was instrumental in the early formation of Highlands and through the years was not only unwavering in his support but many times substituted in the role of surrogate pastor.

The Covid-19 pandemic persisted throughout 2020 and extended well into 2021. It was wide-spread, rapid and intrusive. By mid-April, the number of recorded cases in the United States was near 750,000 and deaths totaled approximately 40,000. The Dow Jones Industrial average slipped from 30,000 to 21,000. Following the July 4th celebrations and August vacations, the U.S. infection rate approached 4 million and deaths increased to 100,000 plus. The year ended with an exponential increase to over 19 million cases and 335,000 deaths. Laramie County listed seven thousand cases and 58 deaths. Thankfully, only a very limited number of Highland congregants or family members tested positive for the virus and there were no known hospitalizations or deaths.

Throughout this nine month period, Highlands made safe adaptations and careful choices. Ladies coffee group returned to meeting twice each month. The Bibles and Beers group resumed via ZOOM as did the weekly book discussion club. The *Clan* was published each month. Rev. McDaniel accommodated weekly in-person visits with church members every Thursday during a two hour period. The availability of world-wide networking via ZOOM brought unexpected participation for Sunday services. Quite regularly ZOOM attendance reached 90 or more with viewers from around Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, Washington State, Arizona, Hawaii, Amsterdam and Germany. Contributions increased exponentially also. Thankfully, several anti-viral vaccines became available for distribution in early December and on the 14th the first inoculation took place on the East Coast.

The year of the pandemic ended with conservative hopefulness. Some unexpected positives occurred at Highlands. Membership rose to 44 and Sunday average attendance throughout the year surpassed 80. Income exceeded the budgeted expectation by \$80,000 (nearly doubled). The difficult year of 2020, with sequestered and restrictive lifestyles, transitioned to a new year with renewed hope and confident resolution.

The year 2021 began with an incessant surge of Covid-19 infections, hospitalizations and deaths. Nevertheless, Highlands remained an active community functioning primarily through ZOOM internet for Sunday services as well as book studies, Bibles & Beer discussions, committee and session meetings and other relevant church matters. On January 24, Rene Myers, engagement advisor for Presbyterian "Matthew 25" churches, gave an inspiring live message via ZOOM. In February, members of Highlands participated in an all-out effort to convince the State Legislature to expand Medicaid in Wyoming. However, the effort proved futile.

Anti-viral vaccines for Covid-19 became available early in the year. By March over 30 million cases and 500 thousand deaths were reported in the U.S. with more than 8,000 cases and 100 deaths in Laramie County. The continuing rise in numbers eventually began to diminish with the liberal distribution and administration of vaccines.

With the encouraging signs of waning Covid infections and reduced restrictions by government health guidelines, the Session decided to resume in-person attendance at services and church activities with mask coverings and social distancing beginning on Easter Sunday, April 4, 2021. ZOOM participation remained an option. The baptism of Rhyland and Penelope McDaniel occurred that day.

With the “opening” of the church in April, Highlands resumed active participation in its missionary work. These included: Family Promise, Recover Wyoming, Wyoming Home Ownership, Meals on Wheels, Unaccompanied Student Initiative, More Light Congregation, Hunger Action Committee, Earth Care Committee, Lenten Fund Collection and weekly donations to Needs, Inc. and Comea Shelter. The Fellowship Ministry also resumed these activities: bi-weekly morning coffee discussion group, prayer team, Bibles & Beer discussions, and book-study groups.

As a “Matthew 25” church, and Highlands commitment to address systemic racism and poverty, it was decided by the Session and congregation to create a permanent endowment fund to meet the special needs of Native American students at Central Wyoming College. A sum of \$29,000 was presented to the CWC Foundation in Riverton on May 7, 2021.

During the summer months, the average worship attendance (in person and ZOOM) was in the mid 80’s and monthly donations remained near \$20,000.00. The annual picnic took place on August 23, on Church grounds.

On Sunday September 5, Frederick Douglas Dixon, Director of Black Studies Center at U.W., delivered a message entitled “The Other America, Revisited”. On September 19, Rev. Monica Hall, Interim Presbyter General of Wyoming, spoke during worship service and presented an overview of the present and future status of the Presbyterian Church in Wyoming. On October 3, congregants brought their pets (critters) to Sunday morning service for the annual Blessing of the Animals. The First Lady of Wyoming, Jennie Gordon, spoke on Sunday, October 17 outlining the efforts and accomplishments of the Wyoming Hunger Initiative. The Annual Thanksgiving Dinner was held on November 20. Frank Cole, who in 1967 sold the land on which Highlands now stands, passed away on November 29, 2021.

Also, in November, an unprecedented offer was extended to Highlands by the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Fort Collins, Co. A gift of \$40,000.00 was given to Highlands to be invested in a restricted account with half of the interest to be distributed to non-local missions. The remaining half is to grow until an additional 40 thousand is accumulated. This gift was presented to representatives of Highlands on November 23, 2021. The new Rabbi of Mt. Sinai Temple in Cheyenne, Moshe Halfon lectured on Hanukah and the commonalities between Christians and Jews during the December 5th Sunday service.

In early December a new variant of the Covid virus, “omicron” was detected in twenty States, including Wyoming. Though not as severe as the “delta” variant, it, nevertheless prolonged cautious concerns for the elderly and health-compromised. Highlands made adjustments in worship services and congregational activities.

At the close of the year 2021, Highland’s financial, social, communal and spiritual posture was strong and promising. Membership numbered 51 and weekly worship attendance, including zoom, frequently surpassed 90. Year-end donations totaled \$160,000 and overall assets surpassed \$400,000. The “Clan” had a new editor, and the congregation at Highlands eagerly embraced the challenges of the coming year. Nine new members were added to the Church roster and 2 individuals had died during the year.

The annual congregational meeting of Highlands was held on Sunday, January 23, 2022 in person and via zoom. Elections for the 2022 session members, corporate officers and committee heads were held. All annual reports were approved by the congregation.

Congregational participation in social community endeavors active in the previous years, continued into 2022. On January 9th, Sister Lailey Hashem of the Afghan Islamic Center in Northglenn, Colorado, via zoom, gave a teaching message during worship service about the needs and predicament of Afghan refugees in the Denver area. Eight days later a volunteer group from Highlands delivered a truckload of requested donations to that Center. Later in January, Paula Egan Wright assumed a shared bi-weekly accompaniment schedule with Janet Bliss.

Members of the Wind River Reservation visited and shared their story of cultural and traditional practices and ceremonies during services on February 14th. During Lent, soup suppers and study sessions were held as usual. On March 15, the Earth Care committee received its recertification ... the only church in the State Presbytery.

Worshippers at Highlands enjoyed a celebratory breakfast together prior to Easter services on April 17th. On Earth Care Sunday, April 24, a special service was presented by that Committee. In early June, as a joint venture with the Native Americans at Wind River Reservation, Highlands Hunger Action Committee participated in a “grow your own” project: planting and cultivating nutritious foods and medicinal plants. This project included a delivery of over 1000 pounds of soil and erecting several geodomes (small garden houses) with plant boxes.

As the only *more light* Presbyterian Church in Wyoming, Highlands and the LGBTQ community celebrated PRIDE month on June 5th with a theme-focused service. Sarah Burlingame was guest speaker.

Several families of Afghan refugees from Northglenn, Co. participated in the August 14th Service and shared their experiences in adjusting to the American way of life. The annual Church picnic was held on August 21st on the outside lawn.

Rev. Rebecca Barmes, Presbyterian Hunger Action Representative spoke to the congregation on September 11th, Hunger Action Sunday Observance. That year's anxious yet enjoyable blessing of the animals was on October 16.

Professor Emeritus at Iliff School of Theology, Tink Tinker, a citizen of the Osage Nation gave a lecture on Native American spiritual beliefs and practices during worship service on September 18th. As a *Matthew 25* Church, Highlands invited the congregation and choir of Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church and Pastor Hilton McLendon to conduct worship at Highlands. The joint service took place at 4 pm on November 13th. The annual Thanksgiving Dinner took place on November 19th in the Clark Fellowship Hall.

At the closure of 2022, there was a high level of satisfaction with the gospel-led mission work accomplished. Two book clubs continued throughout the year, Bibles and Beer discussion met weekly, coffee group twice monthly and hunger action team meetings monthly (via zoom). Financial, moral and hands-on support was given to Family Promise, Recover Wyoming, Needs, Inc., Save the Children, Climb Wyoming, Indigenous students at CYC, Meals on Wheels, My Front Door and Comea House. The Lenten Fund assisted over 112 needy persons from the community. Mission disbursements in 2022 exceeded \$50,000.

Throughout the year, Highlands was actively involved with Wyoming Presbytery and Syrian-Lebanon partnership, socially and financially. The CLAN was published monthly, buildings and grounds were well maintained, worship service attendance in church and via zoom averaged 70 per week and the Church's financial situation was robust. During 2022 there was a gain of 8 members and a loss of 4 totaling 55 active members on the roster. The Social Action committee reported that 5000 pounds of food were donated and delivered to Needs, Inc. in 2022.

The month of January 2023 was especially active at Highlands. A 4 p.m. joint worship service at Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church replaced the regular service at Highlands. Both congregations prayed, sang, listened to God's word and "amen-ed" together. A joyful fellowship gathering followed the service. A busload of Highland's membership traveled to Laramie on Saturday, January 14th to participate in U.W.'s Black Student Center dialogue on Martin Luther King's writings. The following day representatives from the Wind River Reservation were guests of Highlands and shared information on the Riverton Peace mission.

During the annual congregation meeting on January 22, 2023, elections were held, reports and the projected budget of nearly \$140,000 was approved.

Pastor McDaniel held a book signing for his newly published book, “Standing Against the Wyoming Wind” in the Fellowship Hall on January 15th. An outcome of the discernment process which transpired in late 2022, was the determination to set aside \$500 per month into a holding fund as a reparation to Indigenous Peoples for land taken from them. The fund, to be used for specific future needs determined by the Native Peoples, was inaugurated in January.

On Sunday, February 19, Rev. Elizabeth Mount of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Cheyenne exchanged pulpits with Rev. McDaniel. Lenten study series began March 1st with soup suppers in the Fellowship Hall and on zoom March 2nd. The Lenten Fund (monies collected to help those calling the Church for assistance) tallied over \$10,000.

LED lights were installed throughout the Church in early April. Easter breakfast was enjoyed in the Fellowship Hall prior to the Resurrection Service. On April 23rd, the Earth Care team organized the Earth Day celebration service and brought Bob Budd, author of “Otter’s Dance”, to lecture the Congregation. Janet Bliss, piano accompanist for over 20 years at Highland, was honored with a special recognition of her retirement on May 21.

On PRIDE Sunday, June 11th, The LGBTQTA+ community at Highlands observed PRIDE month by presenting a theme oriented worship service with Avery Arden of the National *More Light* Presbyterian Board as guest teaching elder. New trees and bushes were planted on the south lawn in mid-June.

On June 18th, Rev. Rodger McDaniel, who served as Highland’s pastor for over 15 years, announced his retirement, effective September 30, 2023. Search for a replacement began soon after.

