



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

HIGHLANDS UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Jacksonville, Florida

HIGHLANDS UNITED

**ANCHORED IN CHRIST
ANCHORED IN COMMUNITY**



Highlands is a multi-generational church glorifying God by connecting people with Christ through worship, study, service, and fellowship.

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FROM OUR PASTOR

THE REV. DR. OLIVE MAHABIR

Reflecting on Our Journey Together in 2025

Dear Beloved Congregation,

As we reflect on another year of ministry together, I am filled with gratitude for God's faithfulness and the steadfast commitment of our church family. Throughout 2025, we have witnessed God's hand guiding us through both challenges and moments of joy. Our worship services remained vibrant and spirit-filled, with increased participation in Sunday gatherings and special services.

The various ministries—children's, youth, mission, and small groups—continued to flourish, thanks to the dedication of our volunteers and leaders. We celebrated milestones such as baptisms, confirmations, and welcomed new members into our fellowship. Our mission efforts reached many in our local community, demonstrating Christ's love in practical ways.

Financially, we have been good stewards of the resources entrusted to us. While the year presented some economic uncertainties, your faithful giving allowed us to meet our obligations and support missions both locally and globally. Thank you for your generosity and trust.

Looking ahead, our vision remains to deepen our relationship with God and one another, while extending our reach to those in need. I invite you to continue praying, serving, and dreaming with me as we step into the coming year together. May God continue to bless and guide our congregation as we seek to be a light in our community.

In Christ's service,
Pastor Olive

Rev. Dr. Olive Mahabir

Dear Highlands,

What a blessing it has been to spend 365 days of 2025 with you!!

We have worshipped, prayed, learned, laughed, and served together over these last 525,600 minutes. We have continued treasured, honored traditions and we have started new faith formation experiences.

I have witnessed your faith, your resilience, your strength, your commitment and your love for God and your love and commitment for this church.

You have built a firm foundation here at Highlands and have created and sustained a dwelling place for God.

This year we witnessed God moving in these walls of Highlands, and with prayers and support, we took our ministry beyond these walls and out into the world.

Through prayers, donations, and hard work we brought back Vacation Bible School to Highlands. For 5 days in the summer, we had a room filled with Highlands Precious Gifts Preschool children, church children, and children from the community. We had adult volunteers from the church and also youth volunteers. We shared daily meals together and filled the halls with laughter, singing and joy. We were all reminded to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of HIS power.

We took a group of 4 youth and 2 adults to a mission trip in Lithia, Florida, where we worked at Beth-El a Farmworkers Mission. We learned about migrant farmworkers in Florida and were able to help distribute food in the weekly food distribution.

6 youth and 4 adults traveled to Montreat, North Carolina and participated in Montreat Youth Conference 2025 "Light My Path." We learned, we worshiped, we played and we grew as a youth group and as children of God. We shared our experience with the church during a "Montreat" Worship Service in September.

5 of our High School Youth spent the night in cardboard boxes to raise awareness for homelessness in Jacksonville. We raised over \$1000 for Family Promise!

This is only a small sample of the many things we accomplished together as a church in 2025, but 4 of the most impactful.

In our whole church Sunday School Class on the first Sunday in January, we picked "Star Words" for 2026. A star word is a word that is received randomly from a curated list. The star word serves as a spiritual practice that helps us to find guidance and follow Christ in the new year by searching for meaning in our given star word.

One of our group members' star word was "dream." As we went around the circle discussing what our words could mean for us, she said, "I am not sure about this word." Another friend piped in and said, "we are never too old to dream."

Together as we move forward into 2026, I pray that we all dream. Old, young, not so old and not so young, I pray we can all dream of how we can play a part in God's vision for Highland United Presbyterian church. Dream of what it looks like when all generations from all kinds of backgrounds come together to worship God, serve God, and support one another in our walk with Christ.

What part of this dream is God YOU do to continue to support one another and further God's mission of bringing love into the world?

I know that we can and we will dream, and we can and will open our hearts and our minds to let God continue to move through this place and through us in 2026.

Peace and Blessings,
Brooke Tucker
Director of Faith Formation

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The annual meeting of the congregation and corporation of Highlands United Presbyterian Church will be held on Sunday, January 25, 2026 in the sanctuary immediately following worship.

The annual meeting may consider such business as electing officers, hearing reports of the Session along with plans for the coming year, and transacting other business as appropriate, including a vote on proposed changes to the church bylaws.

Meeting Agenda

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Call to Order

Approve Minutes for Congregational Meetings:

- January 26, 2025
- November 16, 2025
- December 14, 2025

Old Business

- Questions welcome

New Business

- Receive Annual Reports
- Receive Treasurer's Report
 - Approve the Terms of Call for the Pastor
- Hear the Report of the Congregational Nominating Committee for:
 - 2026 Congregational Nominating Committee
- Approve the Corporation Officers for 2026:
 - President - Alan Robbins
 - Vice President - Mark Vanderberg
 - Treasurer - Mark Morrison
 - Secretary - Sharyn' Going

Closing Prayer



CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITY

MEETING MINUTES

JANUARY 26, 2025

The meeting of the congregation of Highlands United Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, Florida, was called to order at 10:55 a.m. The meeting was held in the sanctuary following the worship service. The Annual Report had been e-mailed to the members prior to this meeting, and copies were also handed out to anyone in the congregation who needed one. Rev. Dr. Olive Mahabir called the meeting to order at 10:55 a.m. She asked if a quorum was present, and Stated Clerk Sharyn' Going replied that there was a quorum. Dr. Mahabir then opened the meeting with a prayer.

Dr. Mahabir asked the members if they had any additions to the agenda. None were given, and a motion to accept the agenda was given by Elder Candy Cole and seconded by Elder Mike Sutherland. The agenda was approved by the congregation.

Dr. Mahabir then gave her Pastor's Report. She told the members that she was going to be serving also at the Presbytery level, and she has already begun this service. She will also be serving as a Commissioner for the Presbytery at the meeting of the Synod of the South Atlantic, which is a three-day event that takes place at St. Simonds Island. Our Presbytery is one of sixteen Presbyteries that make up the Synod. She asked if anyone had any questions, and none were offered. She next asked if there were any questions for Brooke Tucker, Highlands' Director of Faith Formation, and none were given. Dr. Mahabir complimented Brooke on her work with all the Highlands members.

Next, Dr. Mahabir asked for approval of the minutes for the Congregational Meetings that had been held on January 28, 2024, and December 15, 2024. She asked if there were any additions or corrections to these minutes. None were given, and Elder Art Richard made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Elder Jenna Whitney. The minutes were approved by the congregation.

Dr. Mahabir stated that the committee reports would be reviewed, and each chairperson would come forward to answer any questions. The committee reports were given in the following order:

Worship (Chairperson Mike Sutherland) – There were no questions for Elder Sutherland. He did thank his committee members for their help in preparing the sanctuary for worship and preparing the elements for Communion. The Worship Committee minutes were accepted as information.

Christian Nurture – (Chairperson Audrey Regnier) – There were no questions for Elder Regnier, and her report was accepted as information.

MEETING MINUTES

JANUARY 26, 2025 - CONTINUED

Preschool Advisory – (Chairperson Jenna Whitney) – There were no questions for Elder Whitney. She told the congregation that she and Brooke Tucker will be working with the Preschool families with the hope that they will become more involved with church activities. She stated that information regarding church events, such as the Chili Cook-Off, are being sent to the Preschool parents. She also encouraged the Highlands members to welcome the Preschool parents when they are in worship. She mentioned that Brooke has taken over the chapel service for the Preschool children held on Wednesdays.

Dr. Mahabir thanked Elder Whitney for all her participation with the Preschool activities, mentioning that she teaches music to six Preschool classes twice a week. She also did the Wednesday chapel service until Brooke Tucker was hired as Director of Faith Formation. She added that it will be a continuing effort to have a closer relationship with the Preschool. Elder Whitney's report was also accepted as information.

Member Care – (Chairperson Sandy Pruitt) – Elder Pruitt stated that her group sends out birthday and anniversary cards as well as get well and sympathy cards to the members. She invited the members to visit other church members who are shut-ins, or cook a meal that can be given to a family. There were no questions for Elder Pruitt. Dr. Mahabir added she and committee members visit the shut-ins and those in care facilities, and give Communion to them. She encouraged any members who are interested in helping Member Care to join this group, as it is very small, and the committee members do most of their work behind the scene. This report was also accepted as information.

Mission – (Chairperson Donna Wilson) – Elder Wilson was not able to be in worship today, and Dr. Mahabir asked if anyone had any questions regarding the Mission Committee. None were given, and this report was accepted as information.

Fellowship – (Chairperson Candy Cole) – Elder Cole asked the members of this committee to stand and be recognized. She also asked the church members to sign up for the upcoming Chili Cook-Off that is being held on February 1. Dr. Mahabir complimented Elder Cole for all her hard work the past three years, which included the time of Covid. She added that Elder Cole and her group are working to bring back some of the dinners that have been part of Highlands' activities in the past. This report was also accepted as information.

Resources and Management – (Chairperson Chad Sambito) – Elder Sambito could not be present, but Dr. Mahabir said other committee members could answer questions regarding the committee. No questions were asked, and this report was accepted as information.

MEETING MINUTES

JANUARY 26, 2025 - CONTINUED

Buildings and Grounds – (Chairperson Tom Sweeney) – Elder Sweeney thanked Doug McCullough, Scott Heckler, and Reed Whitney for their assistance in projects around the church campus. He added that there is a lot to be done on campus, and he encouraged anyone who is interested in helping to join the committee. He gave an update on the new electronic sign. It has not yet been installed, due to some discrepancies between the city and the Zoning office. As soon as this is resolved, the sign can be installed. He added that the new sign is much better than the current one, and he is hoping that the new sign will draw people to our church. There were no questions, and this report was accepted as information.

Dr. Mahabir called Alan Robbins forward to moderate the meeting of the Corporation. Elder Robbins gave the names of the officers of the Corporation, stating that they have held these positions for several years. They are as follows: President: Alan Robbins, Vice-President: Mark Vanderberg, Treasurer: Mark Morrison, and Secretary: Sharyn' Going. He then invited Treasurer Mark Morrison to come forward and discuss the budget.

Elder Morrison first discussed the 2024 budget. Revenue from all sources was \$382,000.00, and actual expenses were \$386,000.00, so there was a small loss for 2024. The loss was \$14,000.00 better than predicted. He added that the revenue in 2024 was supported by the congregation in an amazing way, in that contributions were 99% of what was budgeted. He also stated that Highlands had investment income of \$14,000.00, which was \$9,000.00 better than estimated.

The expenses for 2024 were \$387,000.00, which were \$8,000.00 less than budgeted. This was due to hiring the Director of Faith Formation much later in the year than had been planned. There were some severance costs associated with the reorganization of personnel at the end of the year. Elder Morrison added that 2024 was almost a break-even year and will go down as a success regarding the budget.

At the end of 2024 funds from the Preschool, cash in banks, certificates of deposit, money market funds, and marketable securities totaled \$562,000.00. Of these funds, \$123,000.00 is earmarked in trust for various missions and programs of the church. Highlands has unrestricted assets of \$439,000.00, and the church has no debt.

Elder Morrison now discussed the 2025 budget. He told the members that the budget projects a \$48,000.00 loss for the year. He added that this amount of loss is not sustainable over the long term. The Session has approved this deficit as an investment in Highlands' future with what it believes are the right resources in place at the right time to grow our membership. Most of the increase in the budget comes from rising personnel costs and increases in our property and liability contracts. He added that there are no increases in staff salaries for 2025.

MEETING MINUTES

JANUARY 26, 2025 - CONTINUED

In 2025 our revenue is projected to increase by \$4,000.00. However, contributions from the congregation decreased by \$46,000.00, as members either passed away or moved in 2024. This loss of revenue was somewhat offset by a contribution from the Preschool of \$26,000.00, and the Preschool remains a crucial asset to the success of this church. Also included in the budget is a \$25,000.00 faith budget. This will require additional support from the congregation and the growth of the church to attain our 2025 goals.

Elder Morrison added that the church is financially sound and capable of making investments contemplated in the 2025 budget as approved by the Session. It can do so for a number of years in the future. Ultimately though, the church must execute strategies and actions that reach out to the Arlington community to extend Christ's good news to more people and grow the congregation. He added that this is the challenge before the congregation in 2025 but with support from the members, the constant love of God the father, Jesus his son, and the Holy Spirit leading us in all these endeavors, our church will continue to shine for generations.

Elder Morrison asked the members if there were any questions. Vic Stewart did ask a question regarding Dr. Mahabir's salary for 2025, and this was answered by Elder Morrison. Elder Kendall Starkweather thanked Elder Morrison for all his years as serving as Highlands' Treasurer. Elder Morrison commented that he would serve as Highlands' Treasurer for one more year.

Elder Robbins said the next item of business for the Corporation was to approve Dr. Mahabir's Terms of Call. He asked Dr. Mahabir to please exit the sanctuary for a few minutes. Elder Morrison reported on the Terms of Call with the congregation. He said there were no changes in Dr. Mahabir's Terms of Call except those that are required by the Board of Pensions. Her Terms of Call include a salary and housing of \$70,000.00 and benefits which come to a total of \$114,900.00. Elder Morrison asked the members to approve Dr. Mahabir's Terms of Call by saying "aye." There were no dissenting votes. He added that Dr. Mahabir is doing a tremendous job at Highlands. She was welcomed back into the sanctuary with a standing ovation from the members.

Elder Robbins said that the business of the Corporation was concluded, and he turned the meeting back over to Dr. Mahabir. Dr. Mahabir said the meeting would now continue with other items included in the Annual Report. She invited the Chairman of the Nominating Committee, Elder David Bauerlein, to come forward with his report. Elder Bauerlein stated that the Nominating Committee was comprised of Kendall Starkweather, Mary Beth Yutzy, and himself. He reminded the group that last month they approved the members of the Elder Class for 2027. Today the members will be asked to approve the new members of the Nominating Committee. He first asked if there were any nominations from the floor for the Nominating Committee positions. None were given, and he informed the members that the proposed slate of members on the new Nominating Committee are Don Hall (representing the Session), Art Richard, and Mary Beth Yutzy.

MEETING MINUTES

JANUARY 26, 2025 - CONTINUED

Dr. Mahabir asked for a motion to accept the slate of nominees. This was given by Reed Whitney and seconded by Mark Morrison. She asked if there was any discussion. She asked the congregation to approve the slate by saying "Aye." No one opposed, and the motion carried. Elder Bauerlein added that a lot of great work is done at the committee level, and members do not have to be nominated to serve on a committee. He encouraged the members of the congregation who don't already serve on a committee to consider doing so. Dr. Mahabir thanked Elder Bauerlein for his time and commitment to the Nominating Committee for the last several years.

Dr. Mahabir stated that the items on the agenda have been completed. She also said she wanted to thank everyone at Highlands who has helped her in the past year. She thanked all the members for everything that they do. She added that the church cannot do anything without the commitment and dedication of its members. She reminded the group that it is important for everyone to keep their eyes on the church's goals and objectives. She added that each of us may sometimes have to set aside our feelings and always try to work together. She said she looks forward to sharing another year of ministry with the Highlands' congregation, and she urged everyone to pray for one another.

She asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was given by Becky Briddell and seconded by Rufus Taylor. This was approved by the congregation, and Dr. Mahabir said the meeting was adjourned at 11:35 a.m. She closed the meeting with a prayer.

MEETING MINUTES

NOVEMBER 16, 2025

The congregation of Highlands United Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, Florida, met on Sunday, November 16, in the sanctuary following worship. Rev. Dr. Olive Mahabir called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. Stated Clerk Sharyn' Going reported that a quorum was present. Dr. Mahabir then opened the meeting with a prayer.

Clerk Sharyn' Going then stated the purpose of the meeting, which is as follows: The purpose of the meeting is to approve the recommendation of the Session to amend Article 5a in the church's bylaws, which states "There shall be at least twelve (12) Ruling Elders, divided into three classes of four (4) elders."

Dr. Mahabir then stated the proposed amendment, which reads: "There shall be at least nine (9) Ruling Elders, divided into three classes of three (3) Ruling Elders." The Session is recommending the decrease of Ruling Elders on the Session from twelve Ruling Elders to nine Ruling Elders. The church updated its membership list in the spring of 2025, and the Session has discerned that the proposed amendment reflects the current membership/Ruling Elder ratio.

Dr. Mahabir stated that this is the recommendation from the Session, and she requested a motion from the congregation regarding the proposed amendment. This motion was given by Tyler Cole. Dr. Mahabir then asked if there was any discussion. Pat Martin McNorton asked for more clarification of the amendment. Dr. Mahabir responded that the number of Ruling Elders is left to the discretion of every congregation. She added that there is usually a ratio of 18 Elders to one Ruling Elder in a congregation. She also said that every congregation has its own ratio. She also added that having 12 to 13 Ruling Elders is recommended for a church that has 250 members. Considering Highlands' current membership, it was felt that the church doesn't need 12 Ruling Elders.

Jen McCullough asked a question regarding a minimum number of Ruling Elders needed, and Dr. Mahabir responded that the number of Ruling Elders can be changed at any time if the membership numbers for the congregation changes.

Dr. Mahabir asked if there were any other comments or questions. Hearing none, she asked the members of the congregation to vote. There was one "No" vote, and the rest of the members voted in favor of the amendment.

Dr. Mahabir stated that the agenda for the Congregational Meeting has been completed, and she asked for a motion for adjournment. This was given by Candy Cole and seconded by Art Richard.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:08 a.m. with a prayer by Dr. Mahabir.

MEETING MINUTES

DECEMBER 14, 2025

The members of Highlands United Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, Florida, met for a Congregational Meeting on Sunday, December 14, in the sanctuary. The purpose of the meeting was to hear a report from the Nominating Committee with its recommendations for the Elder class of 2028.

The meeting was called to order at 10:59 a.m. by Rev. Dr. Olive Mahabir. Stated Clerk Sharyn' Going confirmed that a quorum was present. Dr. Mahabir then asked Don Hall, chairman of the Nominating Committee, to inform the members of the committee's recommendations. Elder Hall stated that the other two members of the committee were Art Richard and Mary Beth Yutzy. He then listed the nominees, who are Doug McCullough, Alan Robbins, and Bill Hart.

Dr. Mahabir asked if there were any nominations from the congregation. Hearing none, she asked for a motion to close nominations. This was given by Reed Whitney and seconded by Mike Sutherland. Next, she requested a motion to accept the nominees. Jenna Whitney made the motion, which was seconded by Tom Sweeney. The vote to accept the nominees was unanimous.

Dr. Mahabir stated that the new group of Elders will undergo training and examination. Their ordination and installation will be scheduled following that process.

This concluded the business of the meeting. Dr. Mahabir requested a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was given by Rufus Taylor and seconded by Shari Huffman. The meeting was adjourned at 11:03 a.m. with a prayer by Dr. Mahabir.

CLERK OF SESSION STATISTICAL REPORT

New Members

12

Transfer Certificate: 2
Affirmation of Faith: 4
Confirmation: 6

Membership Losses

21

Transfer Certificate: 4
Deaths: 4
Moved to Inactive List***: 13

Active Members

120

December 31, 2024: 129
2023 Net Change: -9
December 31, 2025: 120

Average Worship Attendance

89

In Person - 80 (+7)
Online - 9 (-4)

Baptisms

2

Infant/Children: 1
Youth or Adult: 1

Marriages

1

Members: 1
Non-Members: 0

Age Distribution of Members, Regular Attendees, Non-Member Spouses and Children/Grandchildren

25 & Under	28	18.0%
26 - 40	6	3.9%
41 - 55	19	12.1%
56 - 70	33	23.0%
Over 70	67	43.0%

***In 2024, the Session implemented a more formal and consistent membership review process. Each December, the membership lists will be reviewed. Members that have not chosen to participate in the church's worship and fellowship during the previous 2 years will be moved to the Inactive list. They will be informed of this move and encouraged to participate. If there is no participation during the next 2 years, members will be removed from the Membership Rolls. If a member resumes participation during that 2 year window, the member will be added back to the Active Member list. Only the Active Member List will be reported to the PC(USA) in our Statistical Reports.



COMMITTEE REPORTS

Leadership and Teamwork

Mike Sutherland led the Worship and Music Committee throughout 2025. The committee faced challenges as membership fluctuated, resulting in varying workloads for volunteers. Despite this, the team faithfully rose to every challenge and continued to serve effectively.

Membership Changes and Contributions

The committee welcomed a new volunteer, Mary Beth Yutzy, who expressed a desire to learn and support how the Worship Committee serves the congregation of Highlands United Presbyterian Church.

Eva Skipper updated and rewrote the instructions for moderating the Sanctuary Live Stream Camera. Midway through 2025, Eva and her husband relocated to North Carolina along with Eva's mother, Abbie. Recognizing the need for additional support, Art Richard and Vic Stewart stepped up to provide valuable input and assistance. Art Richard, along with Alan Robbins, also helped with setting up Communion.

Worship Planning and Activities

For most of 2025, the committee met monthly to collaborate with Pastor Olive on worship themes, colors, and decorations. Under the guidance of Director of Music Gregory Spiess, the committee supported music and worship planning throughout the year.

Special services included Holy Communion, Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and two Christmas Eve Services. The committee also prepared the sanctuary for Advent by dedicating a Saturday to decorating.

Notable Statistics (2025)

- Holy Communion was celebrated 17 times.
- Average in-person worship attendance: 80
- Lowest in-person attendance: 49
- Highest in-person attendance: 143 (Easter Service)

Committee Members

The Worship and Music Committee consisted of: Mike Sutherland (Chair), Gregory Spiess, Alan Robbins, Eva Skipper, Art Richard, Vic Stewart, and Mary Beth Yutzy.

Conclusion

The Worship Committee consistently accomplished its projects and responsibilities, and it has been a joy for the members to serve together.

Sincerely,
Mike Sutherland

COMMITTEE REPORT

CHRISTIAN NURTURE

Here at Highlands, we form our faith so our faith can form us.

In that vein, 2025 was a busy, fulfilling and fun year for the Christian Nurture Committee as we benefitted from the first full year of leadership by Director of Faith Formation Brooke Tucker coupled with countless hours served by church members and their financial support for an array of programs.

Some of our big milestones were our first Vacation Bible School, first confirmation class and first full-fledged trip to Montreat Youth Conference since the COVID-19 pandemic turned everything upside down.

The dedication of Highlands to youth, which has long been a hallmark of our church, got recognition by the Presbytery of St. Augustine when it awarded a grant for retaining youth that we will draw from in the months and years ahead.

Mission support

During a busy summer, high school youth traveled to Cedarkirk Camp and Conference Center for a week-long "Challenge to Change" mission trip. The youth and leaders worked together at Beth-El Farmworkers Resource Center during the day and participated in camp activities at night.

Closer to home, the entire congregation made Valentine's Day cards for veterans that we delivered with soup packages to 5 Star Vets for veterans staying there.

In support of Highlands' decades-long ties to Arlington Community Services (Highlands was a founding member of ACS) youth collected hundreds of pounds of canned goods donated by members during Trick or Treat for Canned Goods followed by our annual partnership with Highlands Precious Gifts Preschool for Thanksgiving Baskets containing turkey and all the trimmings. We capped a busy two month for ACS by bringing a virtual sled full of White Gifts donated by the congregation for ACS to distribute.

Lucy's Lemonade Stand once again raised money to support childhood cancer research as youth served up lemonade at a stand in the courtyard after church.

Our youth deepened our partnership with Family Promise by participating in Cardboard City where they slept overnight in shelters made of cardboard boxes while raising more than \$1,000 to help Family Promise.

Churchwide Faith Formation Programs

We marked the way to Christmas with a weeks-long Advent study during a churchwide Sunday school class so we could prepare for the full meaning of Christ's birth. The entire congregation also read daily lessons in an Advent devotional printed out for everyone.

COMMITTEE REPORT

CHRISTIAN NURTURE

We had an Epiphany celebration during the Sunday school hour and organized the Palm Sunday Preschool Sing and Easter Egg Hunt. On World Communion Sunday, church members made colorful prayer flags we hung in the courtyard.

For Christian education, we continued our adult Sunday school classes year-round and youth Sunday school during the school year. We added a second Sunday school class for adults with the Follow Me Café Discussion joining the Present Word class. Pastor Olive led a class on forgiveness during Lent. On a fun note, we had a Bible Family Feud Sunday School Showdown

We continued Highlands monthly Living in Faith Together (LIFT) gatherings during the school year for all ages for fellowship over dinner, reflection on Bible passages and fun activities. We added worship arts on LIFT Wednesdays before LIFT.

The fall kickoff event for the mission/committee fair served up lunch and a giant waterslide in front of the church.

Youth in Action

We celebrated a confirmation class of six new members after they went through weeks of study capped by a retreat at Camp Montgomery when they wrote their own confirmation vows.

We brought back Vacation Bible School with a five-day program that filled the Lee Family Life Center and classrooms at Harris Hall, giving us a chance to show families and children in pre-school and the surrounding neighborhood how Highlands values children from an early age.

We continued JOY Sundays when youth take leadership during worship service. They also gathered monthly at church for a Sunday supper, fellowship and study. Youth and chaperones made three big trips outside of Jacksonville in 2025 by traveling to Camp Montgomery for the middle school/high school fall retreat, to North Carolina for Montreat, and to the Tampa area for the Cedarkirk mission.

Hopes and Dreams

Looking ahead to 2026, we will build on the momentum we gained in 2025 while showcasing all the enriching ways people can get involved in the many programs and missions that nurture and growth our faith.

Respectfully submitted,
David Bauerlein

COMMITTEE REPORT

PRESCHOOL ADVISORY

The Preschool Advisory Committee includes Dr. Olive Mahabir (Pastor), Anna Serrano (Preschool Director) Bill Hart (Treasurer) Jenna Whitney (Session Member/Moderator/Preschool Employee), Brooke Tucker (Director of Faith Formation), Jen McCullough and Nancy McCullough (Church Members).

The vision and commitment of Highlands Precious Gifts Preschool to be the best premier church-based preschool provider continued in 2025. HPGP provides a developmentally based, literacy-focused educational environment for 12 months thru 5 year old children regardless of family or religious background. Our staff encourages positive social and emotional development in an educational setting that incorporates Christian values. Using an approach that focuses on the whole child, HPGP wishes to enrich all students intellectually and physically. By creating a fun and exciting early educational experience, we hope to foster in our students a sense of healthy curiosity and a life-long desire to learn.

Highlights of 2025

Our teachers and staff members continued to be well prepared as always when parents stop by for tours and registration, with word of mouth being the best advertising as a constant source of promoting HPGP. We are very pleased to say that under the outstanding directorship of Anna Serrano, Highlands Precious Gifts Preschool was awarded the Best of Business Rate for 2025- in part by Google All-Time Reviews.

The preschool also received highest marks and passed all state Dept. of Children & Families and Early Learning Coalition inspections. This goes the same for Cintas Fire Protection and City of Jacksonville Fire Marshal inspections. We are thankful for the diligence of all staff members and HUPC continued support.

A brand new playground structure was installed in the fall of 2025. Playing on this brightly colored style has been a high point of the students' day and helps continue physical development in the young children.

One of our goals was met when Brooke Tucker came on board as Director of Faith Formation. With gusto, she leads our preschoolers in Chapel lessons each week. The children love walking over to the big church every Wednesday. Brooke has also been a huge help in bridging communications between the church and preschool.

Another goal was met when ProCare Online computer software was put into place. This is put to use everyday for financial record keeping, daily attendance, direct lines of communication between teaching staff and families and cutting down on all paper mailings and saved payroll manhours.

While the search for the perfect fit of a Preschool Office Assistant continues, staff members who wish to expand on their role at HPGP are filling the gaps. Teamwork at its finest is what makes this program #1 in our area.

COMMITTEE REPORT

PRESCHOOL ADVISORY

Continuing education for all staff is vital and state mandated. All staff members are up to date with training. In the early summer, staff trained side by side for Child & Infant CPR and First-Aid accreditation.

All 8 classrooms had full enrollment with waitlists for certain age groups. Summer Camp gave peace of mind for parents needing summer care, within a safe environment. Vacation Bible School was enjoyed by the 3's & 4's. Many preschool alumni came back for that special week.

Our Preschool Treasurer, Bill Hart, reports that the preschool program continues to be financially stable. Increased tuition fees helped reach annual budgets goals and ensured top financial support to HUPC for 2025.

Our top priority for the coming year is to remain the #1 church-based preschool in the area. This committee is positive that we will do so due to the direct leadership of Anna Serrano whose love and commitment to the children are first and foremost.

Respectfully submitted,
Jenna Whitney

COMMITTEE REPORT

MEMBER CARE

Responsibilities of the Member Care Committee include:

- maintaining and distributing the Prayer List
- coordinating the Shepherd Program
- supporting Supper/Lunch Clubs
- coordinating provision of in-home meals for families during times of need
- sending birthday, anniversary, get- well, and sympathy cards
- assisting with transportation
- managing prayer blanket ministry
- updating church membership directory
- providing ongoing visitation and contact with members
- providing These Days devotional booklets for members who are shut-in or in facilities
- managing Medical Equipment Closet.

Accomplishments in 2025 include:

- Hiring Kurt English Photography to provide digital photos of the church membership. The sixty-four family portraits have been added to the Breeze directory.
- Monthly visits to local nursing homes (often including communion)
- Meal Ministry serves members during times of need
- Continue the distribution of These Days devotional booklets to members who are shut-in or in facilities
- Members received greeting cards (birthdays, anniversaries, get-well and sympathy)
-

It is with great solemnity that we commemorate the lives of seven members of our church family who have attained eternal peace. Annie Lietzow, Pat Saunders, Alice Livingston, Nita Birge, Louise Cook, Abbie Skipper, and Laddie Birge. It was a true privilege to visit these lovely people over the last several years.

Goals for 2026 include:

- Create a hard copy directory using the photos from Kurt English Photography
- Conduct quarterly Shepherd meetings
- Determine if birthday and anniversary will be sent by mail or electronic cards
- Assess the equipment in the medical closet
- Maintain all monthly responsibilities

Committee members include Sandy Pruitt (Moderator), Clara Whittaker, Kevin McNorton, Ginny Morrison, Nan Thomas, and Candy Cole.

Respectfully submitted,
Sandy Pruitt, moderator

We have the following organizations under the Mission banner as follows:

Arlington Community Services- While we collect canned goods weekly, we had some special collection dates- Halloween Trick or Treaters going to members' homes to collect cans, Souper " Super" bowls collection, and the making of Thanksgiving baskets. For the Thanksgiving Baskets, we collected between the congregation and preschool 770 pounds of Thanksgiving meal items. ACS is also collecting gently used Bibles and t-shirts.

Family Promise- HUPC did three calendar weeks of providing meals and groceries, for which Family Promise is very grateful. This year, the Youth Group of HUPC, participated in the Cardboard City Event held at Lakewood Presbyterian Church. The Youth spent the night in tents made of cardboard to bring awareness of the homeless situation here in Jacksonville. I am happy to report that the Youth raised \$1,399 in donations. Thank you, Brooke Tucker, for going with our Youth to this event. The collection bin has mainly been empty and we need to bring the bin into church so that we are made aware of Family Promise's needs. Thank you to Donna Wilson for your help with Family Promise.

Micah's Backpack- Micah's food is now being delivered by SYSCO. This relieves Team Micah's from monthly pickup of pallets of food from several stores. Many thanks to Cindy Sweeney who worked very hard to make this happen. We are now packing 307 meals and with the St. Paul packing site a total of 327 meals. Bonnie is looking to expand packing sites and is in the process of recruiting other churches.

I want to thank all the volunteers who give of their time to help with our Mission projects. However we are always looking for more people to help. Can you find an hour or so to help us out?

Respectfully submitted,
Gail Peluso

COMMITTEE REPORT

FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship Committee members in 2025: Becky Bridell, Sharyn' Going, Sue Heckler, Connie Ritter, Nancy Taylor, Jackie Worden, and moderator Lori Smith.

Highlights of 2025:

The Fellowship Committee continues the tradition of hosting a fellowship hour following worship each Sunday. We provide refreshments and drinks in the Family Life Center every Sunday except for Mother's Day and Father's Day. We also provide a luncheon following a memorial service for a church member if the family requests one. We provided two luncheons in 2025. Families often donate to help cover the expense of the luncheon, but a donation is not required.

In February, we had our annual Chili Cookoff on a Saturday night. It was a fun evening with a pot of chili for every 2.5 people! We also served a barbecue lunch to the Five Star Veterans Center. There was a potluck dinner featuring recipes from our church cookbook on March 1st. Also in March, the Five Star Veterans Center asked if we could host another luncheon – this time we provided lasagna and some beautifully decorated cookies. In April, we had a soup & salad potluck before the Maundy Thursday service, and on Easter Sunday we prepared and served breakfast after the sunrise service. After the 10:00 Easter worship service we served our traditional root beer floats. In June, we had our Pentecost celebration with lots of creative red food.

In July, we hosted an Appreciation Luncheon for Anneliese Robbins to thank her for her many years of service to our congregation and to celebrate her retirement. In August, we hosted a Fall Kickoff in conjunction with Christian Nurture and tried a new thing by having a luncheon immediately following the worship service; more than 80 people stayed to eat together and have fun on the water slides. In October, we had a low country boil. In November, to celebrate Dedication Sunday together, we had a well-attended barbecue luncheon in the Family Life Center after worship. In December, we had another soup and salad potluck luncheon following worship this was a well-attended event that culminated in a homemade cookie exchange.

Generous donations from the congregation support our regular expenses as well as some more expensive purchases. After an extensive clean out of the kitchen, we decided to purchase new frying pans. We are also shopping for a new coffee system.

Lessons learned this year: meals immediately following worship (rather than on a Saturday night) are much better attended by all ages, particularly young families.

Respectfully submitted,
Lori Smith, moderator

COMMITTEE REPORT

RESOURCES & MANAGEMENT

Members: Charles Grabill, Charles Goodyear, Mark Morrison, Chad Sambito, Tom Sweeney, Christina Trombley, Mark Vanderberg

The Resources & Management committee works to care for and manage all that God has given us - our time, talents, and financial resources. Our goal is to provide recommendations to the session about the use of these many resources to drive the vision of our church and serve our community and members.

2025 saw several initiatives and milestones for HUPC:

- Stewardship is an important time of year where we identify the time, talents, and financial gifts that the members pledge to support our church. “Thriving in Christ” was our Stewardship theme for 2025. We continue to use a digital Pledge card & digital Time & Talents Sheet. This allowed for easier response by members who may not be able to attend in person but still want to support the efforts of our ministry. We are proud to report an Increase in the number of digital responses.
- The bookkeeping for the church transitioned from a desktop version of Quickbooks to Quickbooks Online. This transition has allowed for a more efficient and accessible process for maintaining the church's financial records. Thank you to Bill Hart for the countless hours that be put into making this happen.
- We are grateful to be ending 2025 with a full staff. The addition of Laura Sambito as our Church Administrator and Gregory Spiess as our Director of Music has brought stability and energy in the office. We continue to express our deepest appreciation for the years of service that Anneliese Robbins gave to Highlands.

We are looking forward to an exciting 2026 and the opportunity to serve HUPC!

Respectfully submitted,
Chad Sambito

COMMITTEE REPORT

BUILDING & GROUNDS

Last year was another busy year for building and grounds :

- The major project the past year was the completion of the replacement of the church's sign. It required over 16 months to complete all the required actions and permits. The new sign is state of the art that will last the church for many years to come as it will provide the church with an increased visibility in the community.
- The replacement of Harris Hall's A/C unit.
- bidding and the award of a new janitorial contract.
- Adding 5 additional handicapped parking spaces.
- Continuing the conversion of existing lighting with more energy efficient LED lighting.

Respectfully submitted,
Tom Sweeney





FINANCIAL REPORTS

FINANCIAL REPORTS

TREASURER'S REPORT

Highlands United Presbyterian Church 2025 Financial Results and Summary Budget 2026 Treasurer's Report

	2025 Budget	2025 Final	2026 Budget
Total for Income	290,200	340,320	283,200
Total for Expenses	433,760	388,743	400,000
Net Operating Income (Loss)	(143,560)	(48,423)	(116,800)
Total for Other Income	96,000	171,401	108,000
Total for Other Expenses	-	117,418	12,000
Net Other Income	96,000	53,983	96,000
Net Income (Loss)	(47,560)	5,559	(20,800)

Notes on Financials:

2025

Operating Income of \$340K was more than budget by \$50K largely due to two special gifts. One from a member for \$30K and another from a member's estate for \$20K. Otherwise, member giving was on budget.

Operating Expense of \$389K was less than budget by \$45K mostly due to reduced personnel costs in office administration. We adopted Quickbooks Online during the year and automated many transactions which greatly improved our bookkeeping/accounting processes. Most other areas of spending were well controlled during the year.

Net Income was a positive \$6k which was \$53K better than projected in the budget.

Major capital projects were \$30K Harris Hall AC, \$30K New Sign, and \$15K Playground

2026

Operating income projected to be slightly lower than 2025 supported by 67 Pledged and Giving members. Growing this number is important to sustain the Church's sound financial health.

Operating Expenses are expected to rise by \$12K over 2025 spending, largely due to a 3% base pay increase for our staff. The church staff is well positioned to deliver sound results for the congregation in all areas of administration and ministry.

Cash Reserves currently sits at \$484K of which \$72k is restricted for Youth/Crafters leaving \$412K unrestricted and available for operations.

Thank you for your continuous support of our church and its operations. As our stewardship campaign resounded this year "Thriving in Christ", together we can share in the love and grow in our numbers.

NOMINATING REPORT

SLATE OF OFFICERS

The Nominating Committee is charged with prayerfully building a slate of members to fill elected offices, including Highlands' Ruling Elders, Treasurer, Corporation Officers and Secretary.

The 2025 Nominating Committee was comprised of Don Hall, Mary Beth Yutzy, and Art Richard, with Rev. Dr. Olive Mahabir as ex-officio member.

This year, the Nominating Committee received nominations from members at large and considered a number of members who have demonstrated commitment to the congregation, its mission and its values, and who have the capacity to make faithful, effective decisions on behalf of the church.

For the Class of 2028, the following members were approved by the Congregation on December 14th: Bill Hart, Doug McCullough, and Alan Robbins.

Per the changes made to the Highlands Bylaws and Book of Order, the Session shall be comprised of at least 9 ruling elders, divided into three classes of at least 3 elders each. One class shall be elected each year at the Annual Meeting for a term of 3 years. Ruling elders shall not serve more than six consecutive years, and a ruling elder who has served six consecutive years shall be ineligible for election to the same board for at least one year.

The Nominating Committee will present its nominees for the 2026 Nominating Committee at the Congregational Meeting on January 25. The nominees are Don Hall, Art Richard, and Mary Beth Yutzy.

Per the Highlands Bylaws, the Nominating Committee shall be comprised of one ruling elder currently serving on Session who shall act as the Chairperson of the Committee, and two members at large. The pastor shall be a member ex-officio, without a vote.

Nominations to supplement this slate may be made from the floor of the Annual Meeting.

Respectfully,
Don Hall, Chair



CONNECT

2025 Session

Class of 2025

Sandy Pruitt
Mike Sutherland
Clara Whitaker
Jenna Whitney

Class of 2026

David Bauerlein
Don Hall
Lori Smith
Tom Sweeney

Class of 2027

Gail Peluso
Chad Sambito
Vic Stewart
Christina Trombley

Moderator: Rev. Dr. Olive Mahabir
Clerk of Session: Sharyn' Going

Church Staff

Rev. Dr. Olive Mahabir

Head Pastor
pastor@hupcjax.org

Gregory Spiess

Director of Music
music@hupcjax.org

Brooke Tucker

Director of Faith Formation
FaithFormation@hupcjax.org

Laura Sambito

Church Administrator
Church Admin@hupcjax.org

Eileen Blackmon, Nursery Attendant

Highlands Precious Gifts Preschool

Anna Serrano

Preschool Director
msanna.hpgp@gmail.com



HIGHLANDS UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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www.HUPCjax.org

Follow us:
@HUPCjax



Serve

If you would like to be more engaged and active with the church, we invite you to consider serving on one of our committees.

- Church Growth
- Worship
- Mission
- Fellowship
- Christian Nurture
- Preschool Advisory
- Resources and Management
- Member Care
- Building and Grounds

To learn where your skills may be best put to use or where openings may exist, please contact Rev. Dr. Olive Mahabir at (904) 641-9622 or email pastor@hupcjax.org.

Volunteer

Do you want to connect with others at Highlands? Show your commitment to putting your faith into action? Highlands is always seeking volunteers to fill a wide variety of roles and there is a place for you to get involved no matter your availability or skillset.

Current opportunities to volunteer include:

- Worship Liturgist (leading liturgy, reading scripture passages, leading prayer, sharing announcements)
- Worship AV Crew (help run our live-stream during worship. Don't worry, there is training!)
- Worship Usher (greet & pass out bulletins prior to worship, record attendance, assist in worship as needed)
- Handy Helpers (lend a hand assisting in maintenance projects around the church)
- Volunteer Coordinator (help get people plugged into committees and/or volunteer roles that can use their skillsets)

To learn about new volunteer opportunities, check the weekly Highlander Newsletter.

Support

When you make financial contributions to Highlands, you are supporting our ministries which seek to support and transform the community around us. In this time, there are several ways in which you can contribute, including:

- Online donations via credit card or bank transfer
- Mail donations to the church office
- Church Drives (such as for Micah's Backpack or ACS)