

LIFE TOGETHER

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

highlands church



BETTER TOGETHER

Since 2009, Highlands Church has been pursuing a more just and generous expression of Christianity for Denver and the world.

Our mutual love and shared passion for this mission is what has driven us for 14 years through multiple locations, leaders, and culture-defining events.

As we reflect on the last (fiscal) year, may this report remind you of the life we've shared together at Highlands. There is so much joy, beauty, and transformation happening inside our walls and beyond.

We are endlessly inspired by the continued strength and resilience of our community.

Without a doubt, we are better together.

Thank you for your partnership.

BRETT BUSSEN

COMMUNICATIONS & DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

OUR ETHOS

Married, divorced and single here,
it's one family that mingles here.

Conservative and liberal here,
we've all gotta give a little here.

Big and small here,
there's room for us all here.

Doubt and believe here,
we all can receive here.

LGBTQ and straight here,
there's no hate here.

Non-binary, woman and man here,
everyone can here.

Whatever your race here,
for all of us grace here.

In imitation of the ridiculous love
Almighty God has
for each of us
and all of us,
let us live and love without labels!

WORSHIP

Sunday morning continues to be our central weekly practice in worship and belonging for our community and first-time visitors. **Fresh coffee and delicious food** are lovingly offered in the BrickHouse Diner. Our **diverse and dynamic preaching team**, along with our talented volunteer musicians, lead our Sunday worship.

In addition to Christmas and Easter, we offered other special services, such as Blue Christmas and Maundy Thursday.

We continue to on-board **new musicians** and **explore new songs** that represent our deepest beliefs about the radically inclusive love of God.

A **Summer Songwriting Circle** gathered to create new songs for Highlands, and we're developing a Denver Worship and Justice Community Choir with other local affirming churches.

30+ WORSHIP TEAM MEMBERS

126 SONGS PLAYED LAST YEAR

500+ EASTER ATTENDEES



“

My heart is always so full after our worship and it's so great to be back in community with everyone”



BELONGING

Our Vision is that everybody would know and experience the ridiculous love of Jesus. This often begins on Sunday mornings, but it amplifies in other experiences of belonging.

In the spring and fall, we offered seven **BrickHouse Classes** on weeknights covering topics like the Enneagram, raising kids, grief, and storytelling, with over 160 participants.

This spring, we launched six new **Deepen Groups**, connecting over 60 new people in intentional, local small groups across the metro. Other **social groups** continue, such as Youth Group For Adults, Highlands BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), 55+ Potlucks, and Highlands Hiking.

Other events like our **Homecoming Party**, **Summer Cookouts**, and **Christmas Gala** offer opportunities to celebrate and share life together.

25 ACTIVE SMALL GROUPS

160+ CLASS PARTICIPANTS

84 POUNDS OF COFFEE SERVED

750 FRESH BAKED BISCUITS SERVED



“

Familiar faces from Sunday morning became friends. Life got less lonely. My Deepen Group was where real community happened.”



YOUTH

Our youth had a year full of education, adventures, and community! With weekly gatherings and activities on Sunday mornings, the Youth Ministry hosted **two different weekend retreats** during the school year, a summer **Week-O-Fun**, and volunteered with the Denver Rescue Mission.

A favorite event is the **Our Whole Lives (O.W.L.) Retreat**, which helps youth make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health. Grounded in a holistic view of sexuality, it goes beyond facts about anatomy and human development. It helps teens clarify their values and understand the spiritual, emotional, and social aspects of sexuality.

The youth are excited to keep exploring their **new curriculum studying the Bible**, building deeper relationships, and seeking **more interfaith and mission opportunities**.



“I like coming to Highlands and learning about God here because God loves us, no matter what!” - 11th Grade Student



30+

STUDENT EVENTS ATTENDED
OUTSIDE CHURCH (GAMES,
PLAYS, DINNERS, ETC.)

9

GROSS THINGS ATE BY
YOUTH COORDINATORS

10,000

REMINDER TEXTS SENT TO KIDS

KIDS

Kids Church provides a safe, fun, and educational space for infant through elementary school children during Sunday Worship while the school year is in session.

An incredible team of volunteers works together to provide weekly classes for kids, including monthly **Kids Worship**.

They also have **collaborated to design a fresh, developmentally appropriate curriculum** for our kids that aligns with our theology and highest values.

Support for parents of young kids is provided with **free childcare** for our littlest Highlanders on Sundays and other church events, and **Child Dedications** are offered twice a year for kids of all ages.

Other fun events for kids included our **Waterslide Party, Homecoming Carnival, Easter Egg Hunts, Trunk or Treat**, and **Youth Sunday**.



7,000

SQUARE FEET OF SPACE
DOWNSTAIRS FOR KIDS
AND TEENS

8

UNIQUELY DESIGNED
CLASSROOMS

1000+

EASTER EGGS FULL OF GOODIES

OUTREACH

Our Purpose as a community is to “create belonging by affirming the sacred dignity of all people, and inspiring them to do the next loving thing.”

Justice isn't a secondary ministry - it's the outward expression of our inward transformation and essential for all who follow Christ.

Our **Justice League** has been diligently researching issues which contribute to homelessness, paying particular attention to legislation that may help or hurt those experiencing homelessness.

Highlands has a special heart for unhoused LGBTQ and BIPOC youth in Colorado.

In March, the Justice League met with State Senator Rachel Zenzinger in support of legislation she was leading, which provides additional services to kids aging out of the foster care system - a particularly vulnerable population. We're happy to report this legislation passed!

DID YOU KNOW?

Thanks to our great location and abundant space, several local organizations use our building to gather throughout the year.

KHESED

low-cost community mental health counseling

B'NAI HAVURAH

a progressive, Jewish Reconstructionist Community

3PA

Platt Park People's Association (3PA) is to build a vibrant and welcoming community for the future for those who live, work, and play in Platt Park.

SMALL GROUPS

for grief and recovery meet frequently

ELUS VOCAL ENSEMBLE

FRONT RANGE ORGANIC GARDENERS

PLUS WEDDINGS, PARTIES, AND OTHER CELEBRATIONS

FINANCE

In Fiscal Year 22-23, Highlands Church Denver steadily recovered from the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and church relocation.

Although annual revenue fell 3.6 percent short of projections, prudent spending resulted in expenses coming in 3.1 percent under budget, resulting in year-end results roughly consistent with our FY 22-23 budget.

Our debt-to-equity ratio of 1.7 means the church is well positioned to meet its short- and long-term debt. Highlands anticipates a realistic increase of 6.3 percent in revenue in FY 23-24, which would allow us to add to reserves.

BOB BONGIOVANNI

TREASURER, LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

\$653K

APPROVED BUDGET FOR FY 23/24
JULY 2023 - JULY 2024

28%
FACILITIES
& OPERATIONS

7%
PROGRAMS &
EVENTS



65%

STAFF

INCLUDES 12 EMPLOYEES,
TAXES, AND BENEFITS

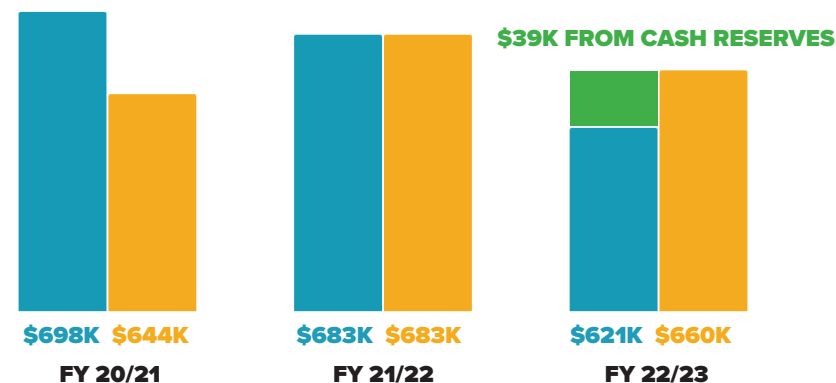
REVIEWING OUR FINANCIAL HEALTH

BUDGET VS SPEND



**OUR SPENDING WAS UNDER BUDGET
THE LAST THREE FISCAL YEARS**

INCOME VS SPEND



**LAST YEAR WAS THE FIRST TIME WE
TOOK FROM OUR CASH RESERVES TO COVER EXPENSES**

\$685,112 IN CASH RESERVES

AS OF JULY 1, 2023

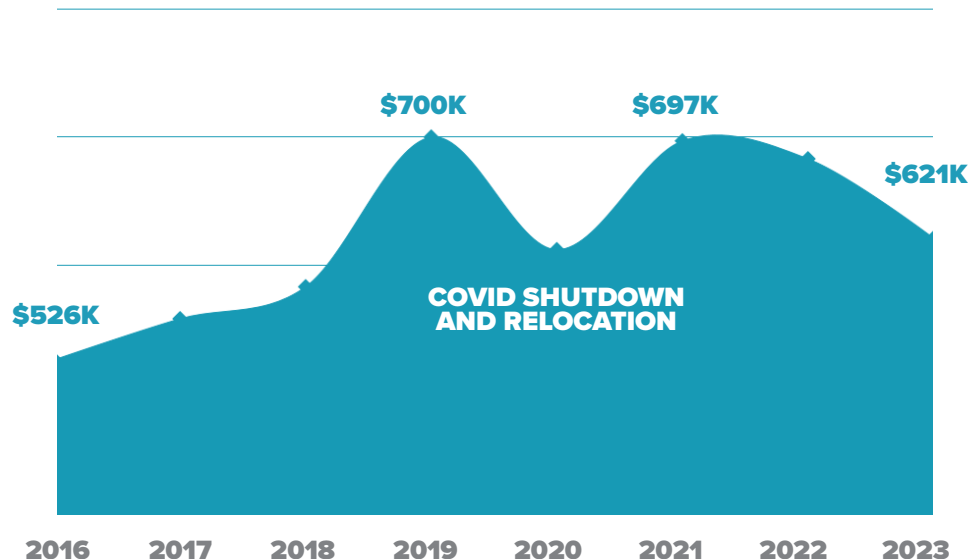
GIVING

Our ministry is only possible with continuous support of our community and friends. Despite the unique challenges of the pandemic and relocation of our church, the generosity of our community remains strong.

While our budget remains conservative and our cash reserves are healthy, a modest increase in giving this upcoming fiscal year would ensure we can put money back into savings, while increasing funding directly to ministries.

The continued growth of our Sustaining Partner program and the success of our Annual Christmas Gala make it all possible. Thank you!

INCOME FROM GIVING (FY 15/16-FY 22/23)



SUSTAINING PARTNERS

A **Sustaining Partner** is anyone who gives a recurring financial gift to Highlands Church. It's our version of an annual pledge drive.

Our Sustaining Partners are the backbone of our ministry, partnering with us to sustain the life and financial health of Highlands for years to come.

Thanks to consistent, recurring gifts, we're better able to plan the future. Join over 300 other Sustaining Partners in our shared mission today!

OUR 2023/2024 GOAL

INCREASE 6% OR \$3,000/MO

This increase would ensure our income exceeds our budgeted expenses for the upcoming year and allow us to put money back into savings.

Start or update your Sustaining Partner gift today:
HCHURCHDENVER.COM/GIVE



Our Mission

**DO JUSTICE, LOVE KINDNESS,
WALK HUMBLY WITH GOD**

Our Vision

**EVERYBODY KNOWS
AND EXPERIENCES THE
RIDICULOUS LOVE OF GOD**

Our Purpose

**CREATE BELONGING BY
AFFIRMING THE SACRED
DIGNITY OF ALL PEOPLE
AND INSPIRING THEM TO
DO THE NEXT LOVING THING**

OUR STORY CONTINUES

Highlands' commitment to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God will flesh out as we pursue a more just and generous version of Christianity. This looks like actively seeking racial and LGBTQ justice, and affirming the God-given dignity of all people.

The Mission, Vision, and Purpose of Highlands Church is ours to manifest together.

Our growth happens through generosity of time in volunteering and financial resources.

Personal impact happens when we offer communion to one who's been denied it.

We transform when we challenge our previous beliefs, as we begin to understand the ways anti-antisemitism and racism have shaped theological thought for centuries.

Our church comes to life through the relationships we nurture, the acts of service we offer, and lives of justice we live, inside and outside our doors.

We humbly ask you to be "all in" with us this year as we follow closely on the heels of Jesus.

RACHAEL MCCLAIR
CO-PASTOR