



highlands church

Co-Pastor Search
Information Packet

Introduction

Highlands Church Denver is hiring for a Co-Pastor to serve in pastoral leadership alongside our Co-Pastor of Worship. This pastoral role will focus primarily on the spiritual formation and care of kids ages 0-19, their parents, and supporting our ministries of local and international justice, and neighborhood connection. Co-Pastors serve as Members of the four-person Executive Team.

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About Highlands Church Denver

In 2009, Highlands Church was founded upon the belief that when God created the world, and human beings in particular, God said, “This is good.” Our origin story is one of goodness. We believe this goodness applies to all of humanity, regardless of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, color, abled or differently-abled bodies. As Father Richard Rohr says, “We cannot create our union with God. It is objectively already given. There’s nothing we can do or not do to increase or decrease God’s love for us.”

We believe God’s welcome into love is extravagant and for all. Extending this welcome is the desired outcome for the mission to which we are called: to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. We believe that when we embody this mission, we will be an extension of God’s welcome in the world.

Our vision is that everybody would know and experience the ridiculous love of God. This vision gets lived out when we participate in the affirmation of the sacred dignity of all people through shared lived experiences, and active resistance to oppressive systems.

From the beginning, Highlands Church has been critically examining the theological heritage handed down through the white evangelical tradition and actively rooting out the erroneous foundations of racism, sexism, and homophobia. For the last fifteen years we have been reconstructing a more just and generous theology, anchored in the liberating life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These principles guide our everyday lives and can be found in our Ethos, Theological Beliefs, Commitments to Justice and Community Covenants.

Located in the Platt Park neighborhood of Denver, CO, but drawing from the wider Denver metro area, our community is about 50% people who identify as LGBTQ+, about 21% BIPOC-identifying, with a wide range of ages, including about 80 families with kids ages 18 and under.

The Role of Co-Pastor

As a Christian faith community, Highlands Church defines a pastor as a church leader who...

- experiences a sense of calling from God
- loves God-in-Christ-in-the-Holy Spirit
- loves the people of God, our neighbors, and God's world
- enjoys and thrives in both the Jewish and Christian scriptures
- desires to follow Jesus in their day-to-day life
- has established and lives by clear sexual, relational, and emotional boundaries
- longs for and participates fully in the growth of God's good Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven
- is a tender shepherd; practiced listener
- high emotional EQ/maturity
- very high self-awareness and willingness to grow
- strong, collaborative leader on behalf of and in communion with the church community
- stays connected (and builds relationships) with other pastors and faith leaders
- reads and studies the evolving nature of our faith particularly connected to issues of justice, culture, and faith

Co-Pastor skill sets, education and experience:

Most important for success in the role:

1. Leadership supervision of staff and key volunteers
2. Self-motivated and managed: ability to prioritize tasks, set and adhere to deadlines, and maintain clear focus on mission and vision
3. Pastoral Leadership: leading people in their relationship with God, and with people (because of their relationship with God); theological discernment
4. Pastoral Care: posture of availability and pursuing people; healthy personal and relational boundaries; leading people with prayer
5. Dedicated to growth and learning; curiosity and creativity
6. Strategic and Organizational planning and leadership discernment
7. Discipleship - leading people in the way of Christ
8. Preaching & Teaching (written and verbal communication)
9. Vision casting and leadership/implementation
10. Volunteer Development : recruit, train, and lead ministry volunteers
11. Experience with Budgeting process and Fundraising
12. Master of Divinity or equivalent experience and knowledge

Preferred:

Church and/or non-profit fundraising skills
Comfortable in front of an audience/ camera
Pastoral experience at a church of 200+
Experience managing a building
Current ties to Denver

Compensation & Application

Pay Range: \$65,000-\$75,000

Eligible for PTO, sick leave, holiday pay, staff intensive study days, Sabbatical, housing allowance designation, health care benefits, and retirement matching contribution

Note: The Co-Pastor is an exempt position. Responsibilities will be performed in approximately 50 hours per week and will include a mix of normal business hours, church services, staff meetings and events.

Additionally, all employees will complete a state and federal background check each calendar year.

The recruitment and selection process will consist of resume and application form analysis, phone screening, interviews, and any other steps seen as needed and aligned between candidates and the hiring committee.

If you (1) have the skill sets, knowledge and experience that are most important for this role, (2) have a passion for families and justice, (3) are interest in being part of a growing and loving community, and (4) if your beliefs are aligned to the ones of Highlands Church, then this can be the next step in your ministry journey. Please complete the application form on our website and a member of our Leadership Council will reach out to you.

Applications will be reviewed starting in February 2024.

submit your application at hchurchdenver.com/careers

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!

™Mark Tidd, Highlands Church Denver. May be used with permission.



Our Community Covenant

We believe **how** we do what we do is as important as **what** we do. Our Community Covenant guides us in our relationships with each other, and is the way we develop relational health.

Grow in Self-Awareness

- » Be present
- » Speak your truth with love
- » Be aware of your social location
- » Lean into discomfort to promote growth
- » Name your part in conflict

Cultivate Trust

- » Believe the best in each other
- » Meet people where they are
- » Give grace abundantly
- » Address conflict soon - don't let grievances build up

Respect Each Other

- » Follow through with commitments and acknowledge limitations
- » Share in decision-making; collaborate
- » Recognize everyone processes at their own pace
- » Own your impact on others

- » Honor healthy boundaries
- » Honor each other in disagreement (unless the disagreement is rooted in one's oppression)

Hold Space for All

- » Listen with curiosity to understand
- » Everyone's perspective is needed
- » Be proactive to ensure diversity of voices are present
- » Stay attuned to how much space you are taking up

Seek God Together

- » Through gratitude and curiosity
- » In caring for others
- » In worship and contemplation
- » By listening for guidance/wisdom
- » In prayer for communities near and far

We strengthen the health of our church through shared leadership and dependence on God our Creator, Jesus Christ our Redeemer, the Holy Spirit our Sustainer, and on each other.

Ephesians 4:11-16, Ephesians 4:25-5:2, Romans 12:9-12,
Romans 13:8-10, Luke 5:15-16, Philippians 2:1-11



Our Theological Beliefs*

*All teachings of Highlands Church are anchored in this theology. While sharing these beliefs is not a requirement for anyone in the community to belong, serve, or lead at Highlands Church, all Co-Pastors must be in alignment with these (evolving) core beliefs, and all preachers and teachers at Highlands must teach within this grounding theological framework.



Rublev's icon of the Holy Trinity

God

Our theology is grounded in the relational nature of God. God as “three-in-one and one-in-three” is the God whom we follow and imitate: personally, as an organization, and in our communal life together. God the Loving Parent of all of us; God the Son, Jesus the Christ; God the Holy Spirit, our Comforter and Liberator. We believe the three persons of the Holy Trinity were present together during creation and on the cross and in all things. We’re inspired by Rublev’s Icon as a depiction of mutual deference, rather than a hierarchy of power, within the Trinitarian God, where the flow of love always moves outward to humanity and into all of creation. We trust the Trinity to hold us in the flow of love throughout life, death, and for all eternity. In acknowledging that God is beyond a single gender, we often refer to God without gender, or we use all pronouns, including they/them.

Taking our cues from our Jewish siblings’ name for God, *YHWH (I am who I am)*, we believe that every person is born “with God’s name on their lips,” and that God is as close to us as the air we breathe. The breathing of all life praises God’s name. Jesus’ name for God, Abba tells us God is our Birther, the One Breath Breathing, the Source of All.

The Spirit of God is our sustainer. We are inspired by the stories of the Holy Spirit leading enslaved Africans in the United States to recognize the real message of liberation and belovedness in the Gospel of Jesus. In the book of Acts, we see evidence that the Spirit speaks to us in words and experiences we can understand. And in the Letters of Paul, we directly experience the Holy Spirit as we bear the fruit of the Spirit and express our personal unique spiritual gifts in the body of Christ.

In Jesus, we see that, for a time, God humbled God's self so much as to become a two-celled zygote in the womb of Mary (Philippians 2:5-11). And Jesus, the second person of the Trinity lived in functional subordination to God, our Father (Parent/Mother). Jesus is called God incarnate (in the flesh) because God didn't just sympathize with humanity from a distance as a spiritual being, but identifies with us fully as a human being. Jesus lived the emotional, physical, and spiritual experiences of humankind. We experience God’s comfort and support for us in our times of pain

and anguish, trials and tribulations, disappointments and even betrayals, in part through God's solidarity with us in Jesus.

In the gospel accounts of Jesus, we see Jesus healing many people. Jesus pointed to his ability to heal as the key evidence that his claim to be from God was true, because God Is Salvation; God is our healer. God is always working to bring us into wholeness, which leads to the coming of the Kingdom of God. We understand salvation to be the restoration, healing, and wholeness of humanity.

In Jesus, we also see that grace extends far beyond humanity's capacity to understand. He challenged any religious priority of his day that minimized the wide embrace of God for all peoples. Jesus overturned conventional thinking, exposed our bloodthirst, and invited us to walk the path marked by compassion and inclusion, with an eye to serve "the least of these."

In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God demonstrated what God has been saying all along throughout the Hebrew scriptures: God is Absolute Love. And God's love is more expansive than we can comprehend, and extends to everyone always. And because this is who we believe God to be, this is who we are: a community committed to Love, which affirms the sacred dignity of all people. Our Ethos and open Communion Table attest to this every time we gather.

God Speaks

We believe God speaks to us through creation, scripture, experience, and tradition, and sometimes even in silence. We believe God speaks to every single person, in any and every way each person can receive God's words of love.

Creation is the original revelation of love. The whole created world was fashioned by the grace of God who longs to be known and to participate with us. What God has created tells us so much! That is why our faith encourages us to be present to the beauty of creation, and to scientifically explore and learn about the universe. As we learn more about everything we can see, and that which we can't, we are learning more about the wisdom, brilliance and magnificence of God.

We anchor our teaching in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures— the Bible. We believe the scriptures are inspired by God and are a model for our spiritual journey. The Bible acts as a window to God, and a mirror to ourselves. In general, we don't read the Bible as if every word is exactly as God wants or that every passage has a simple and clear meaning that can be uniformly understood by everyone in the same way! We take the Bible so seriously that we cannot take it literally, unless the texts ask the reader to take it literally. For example, we believe in the literal, bodily resurrection of Christ because the New Testament writers wrote about the resurrection as a literal event. We read the Psalms as poetic because that is the form in which we have received them.

With careful attention to the context of any passage and our best understanding of the language, circumstances, historic times, and the original audience for whom a text was written, we try to discern, with the help of the Holy Spirit, how an ancient text can speak wisdom to us today and reveal how God has been active in people's lives in the past. Our core hermeneutic flows from Jesus Christ, whose life, death, resurrection, and eventual return guides our theology. We believe that we continually receive more love and more revelation through Christ.

We acknowledge that there is no “objective” interpretation of scripture, and that much damage has come from this false hermeneutic. Our preaching team, no matter each individual's social location, intentionally seeks out perspectives different from their own so that reading and teaching from the Bible is for the sake of the flourishing of all people. We also acknowledge that many people have been so harmed by hateful interpretations from the Bible that they need to stop engaging with the Bible in order to stay in relationship with God. We honor this decision, and teach from the Bible while carefully holding great sensitivity for these beloveds.

The scriptures themselves let us know that God speaks to us through means other than the written words of the Bible.

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)

So while God speaks to us through the scriptures and the created world, we also hear from God by reflecting on our experiences and those of others. We hear from God in silence, and by thinking deeply about things. While our use of reason is imperfect, it is often an important guide to truth. So too, are our traditions, the things we've received from previous generations and have put into practice. They aren't perfect either, and sometimes need to be revisited and revised to help us stay on track with a God who is not static but is always leading us into more love, truth, and abundant life. Our litmus test to whether what we believe we hear from God *is truly* from God is if what we hear inspires us to greater love.

But when the Spirit of truth comes, the Spirit will guide you into all the truth.
(John 16:13)

The Beginning of the Story

The first two chapters of Genesis contain our origin stories, and our core identity as human beings. Genesis is the beginning, but not the ending, to how we define and understand humanity. While they are not a scientific documentation of the beginning of our world, we take the first chapters of Genesis to be important and informative in our journeys of knowing God and ourselves. This is the starting point for how we see God and how God sees us. Beginning with the 'first day,'

When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, let there be light, and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. (Genesis 1:1-3)

Throughout Genesis chapter 1, God repeats seven times: "it was good." Just three days into the creation story, God already declared goodness. We hear it again on the fourth, fifth, and sixth days: each time, only goodness. And when God creates humanity in God's image and likeness, God blesses humankind, and then God reflects that indeed, "humans are very good." Over the course of our story, human beings and every plant, animal, drop of water, cloud in the sky - *everything* is labeled good. (Genesis 1:4 - 2:4) The culmination of God's creation is humanity, infused with the

Divine spark. Humanity, therefore, is the product of a direct and special creative act of God.

“The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” (Job 33:4)

We believe in the original goodness of all people. Original goodness is where God begins the flow of love for humanity. Through this love, we were each created in God’s image; God's loving imprint is on every person. People of every race, ethnicity, ability, gender identity, and sexual orientation reflect God’s love for all. God never abandons humanity; God always moves to reclaim and nurture new life. Over the long arc of history, we can see God’s grace moving through the joy, beauty, glory, suffering, and brokenness of humanity.

Jesus promised humanity the Holy Spirit, who sighs with our sighing, groans with our groaning, and gives us companionship with God and with one another. Human beings are signs of the presence of God’s love. There is divine consolation in our human mutual care.

To thrive in this world, we believe human beings need a sense of deep belonging and belovedness with and from one another and God.

Before we were born, when our life was only known to God, we were already, all of us, lovable. Our origins began with God’s blessing us and naming us as good. Each of us inherited original goodness. Our belovedness is forever manifest in the heart of God. We are not God’s problem to be solved. We are the objects of God’s unfailing love and affection. As we understand ourselves to be made in the good and loving image and likeness of God, and belonging to God, we can joyfully live in the trajectory of love.

Because of our belief in original goodness, we are inspired to move into our mission of *“doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God”* (Micah 6:8). In the Message paraphrase of the Bible, Eugene Peterson wrote that we can live with God *“in the unforced rhythms of grace.”* (Matthew 11:28)

This is our way of walking in the world as we follow Christ. As we each live more deeply into our own identity as the Beloved Child of God, we are called to affirm the

sacred dignity of all the other Beloved Children of God around us. We are called to pay special attention, as God does, to those who are historically and systemically marginalized and excluded, through our love and our actions for justice.

Nothing in the universe, not even suffering or a sense of separation or brokenness, can change our love-origin. Our beginnings with God were blessed. This blessing of goodness is our core nature and continues to grow as our world evolves. Our original starting point is love and goodness. God never regretted making us, not for one second. God is not wringing God's hands in heaven, wishing things had turned out better. God always catches humanity in the loving arms of Christ, who died to catch us and reassure us of love. Original goodness is our inherent nature.

The Ending of the Story

The whole created world was fashioned by the grace of the God who longs to be known and to participate with us. This longing of God sets the stage for the development and growth (evolution) of creation and the future, a fully redeemed and resurrected creation. And yet, so much in our world is not as it was supposed to be. At times, we live in broken relationships with God and with each other. We sometimes separate ourselves from our truest nature. We sometimes wrongfully, willfully take advantage of creation and our Creator. Sometimes, we hurt each other, ignore God, and damage ourselves. The brokenness of these relationships also impacts our relationship to the earth. At times, we seek retribution and separation over love. We understand this as sin: any act not done in love; any harm done by action or omission. And yet, sin is not our core nature. Our origin, our nature is goodness, not sinfulness. When we step away from love, we are utterly dependent on God to bring us back inside love. The ongoing redemptive work of God *always* brings us back to love.

Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, for in Christ all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through Christ and for Christ. Christ, [God's very self] is before all things, and in Christ all things hold together. Christ is the head of the body, the church; Christ is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that Christ might come to have

first place in everything. For in Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Christ God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of the cross. (Colossians 1:15-20)

The cross of Christ reveals how fully loved we are, how faithful God is to all of creation, and how God never gives up. Even in death, God is faithful to us. The crucifixion of Jesus is central to our understanding of how much we are loved by God. We do not believe that the death of Christ on the cross completed a transaction between God and humankind, but that it is instead a revelation of God's love to humankind. When Jesus was crucified, he did not do so to change God's mind about people, but to change people's minds about God. This is a stunning revelation of who God is and how unrelenting God's unconditional love for us is.

Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human, for as all died in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:20-22)

We have faith that a good future for all created things is in process. We have hope in the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit who loves us into a deeper life. All things are being made new by God-in-Christ-in-the-Holy-Spirit.

And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." (Revelation 21:5)

Therefore we were buried with [Christ] by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)

We believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ. We believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ. We trust that God resurrected the real presence of the Risen Christ, alive after Jesus died. And we trust that the resurrected Christ will return again to restore, reconcile, and make all things new. Christ's return will bring about the final breaking of the chains of injustice and also bring final redemption to all the world. God's dwelling place will be among humans, in the realm of the new heavens and the new

earth. Christ will wipe away every tear. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for evil and death will be completely erased. Nations will no longer take up swords against other nations, nor will humanity train for war anymore.

We trust that God resurrected the real presence of the Risen Christ, alive after dying. Death could not overcome Jesus. People in the first century of the Common Era quite literally experienced the present in-time and in-space, touchable body of Christ. So we believe the resurrection was a real, historical event. We believe a similar resurrection will happen for us, too.

We freely admit that resurrection is an event we do not and cannot yet fully understand. But it is a clear sign of God's Kingdom in the now and the not-yet—the final declaration that God is Healer.

The coming of the Kingdom of God is both active at this present moment and will find fulfillment in a future reality, where our unity with God will be complete. Our bodies will be more than memories, more than fertilizer for the good earth: we will see God as God sees us. The ultimate purpose of creation calls us forth into the infinity of God so that we are all finally and fully united in Christ and in relationship to one another.

Summary and Acknowledgements

Highlands Church is a Christo-centric, universalist church with a generous, grounded theology. We interpret the Bible, our experience, and creation to mean that salvation in Jesus covers absolutely everyone (even those we wish it wouldn't). We believe that being a Christian begins with a hunger for God, and then leads to a desire to live as a follower of Jesus, empowered by the gifts and comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Presented by Jenny Morgan and Rachael McClair, Co-Pastors, and Mark Tidd, Retired Founding Co-Pastor, in January 2024.

Our Commitments to Justice

LGBTQ Inclusion

Most churches in America make an exception to the full embrace of God by excluding LGBTQ-identifying individuals. From our evangelical roots, the full inclusion of LGBTQ people was a radical departure. We set out to embody a “new normal” of what a church family should look like – LGBTQ and Straight individuals and families worshipping and learning together in shared community.

This work requires theological education (the dismantling of erroneous interpretations and applications of six scripture references in the Bible). It requires intentional representation through centering the stories of LGBTQ people, and listening to LGBTQ theologians and artists. Finally, it requires shared power through leadership at all levels within the Highlands leadership structure.

Racial Justice

As Highlands Church leans heavily into the work of racial justice, we continue to work towards a “new normal” within our community, identifying and dismantling white supremacy culture as it exists within our systems and structures. A “new normal” requires us to provide education on the establishment and perpetuation of racism. It requires us to center the stories of Black, Indigenous People of Color, and to listen to the perspectives of BIPOC theologians and artists. It requires us to share power through leadership at all levels with an integrity which does not favor white privilege.

Highlands Church absolutely and unequivocally denounces racialized violence countless black and brown men and women have suffered over the history of our country. The loss of life is cause for deep lament, and we as a faith community stand in solidarity with those who have lost loved ones, with those who are seeking justice, and with those who are advocating for drastic and overdue change. This is consistent with the God revealed in our holy text, who in both the Jewish and New Testament scriptures disrupted established institutions for the sake of justice. (cont.)

Our starting point in the story of God is that all humans were created in love and for love. There is no hierarchy of value for a human life. But when dehumanization occurs, especially in the form of violence, we must turn again to Christ, who taught us that what we do to the most vulnerable, we have also done unto him. And we must ask for guidance from the Spirit as we critically examine ourselves, our institutions, our beliefs, and our practices which retain and perpetuate expressions of violence against non-white bodies.

For more than ten years, Highlands Church has sought to answer the call to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God. We will continue to take care of those who are harmed by unjust systems. We will insist on fairness for all people. We will remain loyal to those who have no voice. We will oppose authority when those in charge abuse their power. We will hold sacred the bodies of black and brown people. We will work for justice until there is true liberty for all.

This is an essential part of our work as followers of the One who came and suffered in solidarity with the oppressed and marginalized, and who gave as the most important of all the commands: to love God, love our neighbors, and love ourselves.

We are an equal-opportunity and intentionally inclusive community.

Leadership Council

The Leadership Council (LC) is a volunteer, community-elected board responsible for the leadership and oversight of Highlands Church. Hires and manages the Executive Team.

Kate Berger

Bill Bonds

Bob Bongiovanni

Michael Buckley

Sara Leeper

Julie McShane

Miguel Oliveira

Kathryn Spadanuta-Castello

Lori Westermann

Chelsea Williams

Scott Wolf

Executive Team

Report directly to the Leadership Council.

Rachael McClair

Co-Pastor
Worship and Belonging

Jenny Morgan

Co-Pastor
Families and Outreach

Mia Clements

Director
Operations

Brett Bussen

Director
Communications & Development

Staff

Report directly to an Executive Team member.

Jamie Wolf

Music Director

Amber Parrish

Youth Coordinator

Hugh Long

Facilities Manager

Karen Goldman

Hospitality Coordinator

Jolene Funkhouser

Kids Coordinator

Erin Reyes

Belonging Coordinator

Robbie Goldman

Pastoral Care Associate

EFFECTIVE DECEMBER 2023