

Our History: 1982 - 2023

In the late 1970's, the Presbytery of South Louisiana set a goal of beginning a new church each year during the 1980's. Dr. James Monroe was called as General Presbyter and served with the New Church Development Committee to achieve this goal. After the appropriate demographic and site studies were completed, the Highland Road area was given priority. A search for suitable property was begun, and ultimately the Presbytery purchased the property on which Highland Presbyterian Church is now located. A task force was formed to begin the organization of a new church.

In the spring of 1982, pursuant to the recommendations of this task force and with the concurrence of the Presbytery and the New Church Development Committee, a call was issued to the Rev. Robert Lee Nichols, Jr. to serve as Evangelist and Organizing Pastor. Dinners were held in various homes providing an opportunity for those interested in the new church to meet and share their ideas. Finally, on the Day of Pentecost, May 30, 1982, the first worship service was held in the living room of the house on the Highland Road property. In the spring of 1983, the first remodeling of the house was completed and the three-car carport became a (six-car) Sanctuary.

On the Day of Pentecost, May 22, 1983, Highland Presbyterian Church of Baton Rouge was commissioned by the Presbytery of South Louisiana. Rev. Lee Nichols was installed as Pastor and the first class of twelve Elders and twelve Deacons was installed. There were 103 Charter Members of the congregation; of which eleven remain: Betty Bagent, Jack Bagent, Sherry Hutchinson, Connie Leonard, Mike Leonard, Jim Martin, Mary Martin, Julia Stewart, T. Bonner Stewart, Todd Stewart and Rickie Taylor. After worship that day, another tradition was established, a birthday celebration highlighted by a jambalaya dinner.

In 1984 a Planning Council was established to proceed with a master development plan, including plans for the first new building on the site. A building campaign began, an architect and contractor were hired and the Fellowship Hall, now better known as the Sanctuary Building, was begun. The building was dedicated on November 15, 1987. While this building was being constructed, still another remodeling of the "house" was undertaken. Men and women of the congregation contributed their time and labor to the completion of the remodeling as well as landscaping the church grounds.

Pastor Lee Nichols received a call to start a new church in Ballwin, Missouri in July of 1989 and the search for Highland's next Pastor began. Interim Pastor, Rev. Malcolm Anderton was chosen to serve the congregation of Highland. After a yearlong search, Rev. Daniel L. Durway was called and installed in September of 1990. Both he and his wife, Flo, served the church faithfully until his retirement in 1999 leaving a legacy of programs such as "A Week of Evenings" and the Durway Speakers Fund. Rev. Bo Lewis accepted the position of Interim Pastor and assisted the church while the next full-time Pastor was sought. Another search of the Pastor Nominating Committee led to the call of Rev. James A. Rollins and his installation in June 2000.

In 2006 Highland had an opportunity to expand their facilities. After the sale of unused property and paying off an existing mortgage, the finances were in place to look to implementing long-range plans. A committee of the Session worked with architect Bob Lunsford to develop a plan for renovation of the narthex area and expansion of the education wing by approximately 1,400 square feet. Contractor Frank Brost was chosen and ground was broken on August 5, 2007. The new space was dedicated on the Day of Pentecost, May 11, 2008, Highland's 25th Birthday.

Another period of change began in September of 2013 when Rev. Jim Rollins stepped down as Pastor. In October 2014, Rev. Linda L. Kelly was chosen to serve as Interim during the search for Highland's next Pastor. She served faithfully through the end of December 2015, sharing her gift of compassion. A call was issued, accepted, and on February 8, 2016, Rev. Janie McElwee-Smith was installed as Highland's fourth Pastor.

Rev. McElwee Smith brought a passion for youth to Highland and formed a new Youth group – all girls. This group was active in many facets of the life of Highland from serving in Worship, participating in service projects, and even attending programs at Montreat. A Baccalaureate Service was held April 28, 2019, to recognize their many accomplishments.

In the final quarter of 2018, it became clear that Highland Presbyterian Church could no longer afford a full-time Pastor. With this in mind and so advised, Rev. McElwee-Smith secured a position as full-time pastor at the First Presbyterian Church of Hollidaysburg, PA. Her last Sunday at Highland was May 5, 2019. It was with bittersweet feelings that Highland gathered together following worship to host a farewell reception for Rev. Janie and her family.

Rev. Jeff Day began by serving as Pulpit Supply in late 2019 and found a mission and ministry at Highland. In November the Session of Highland entered into a covenant with Rev. Day to serve Highland as Part-time Stated Supply. He continues in the position to this day.

Along with the rest of the world, Highland's life changed dramatically in the spring of 2020 with the impact of Covid-19. "Live streaming" and "virtual worship" became the new normal. By the end of May, guidelines were in place to allow for the gradual reopening of churches. Highland enrolled in the "Open Safely" program, established guidelines for the mitigation of Covid-19 (including social distanced seating in the Sanctuary, discouraging direct contact with people and objects, and requiring the wearing of facial coverings), and resumed in-person worship on the Day of Pentecost, May 31, 2020.

Gradually things at Highland have returned to "Pre-Covid" status. We enjoy our social times all the more and value what is most important, the role of Jesus Christ in our lives through good times and bad. As we celebrate this 40th Anniversary we especially give thanks to God for the journey we have traveled, always under His loving care.

Charter Members

Leonard Adams	Lockhard Farris	Susan Owsley
Rachel Adams	Mandy Farris	Doug Owsley
Jane Alwood	Mary Farris	Lisa Paul
John Alwood	Shannon Farris	Woody Paul
Linda Alwood	Edna Faw	Jennifer Paxton
John Babb	Stephen Faw	James Pratt
Joyce Babb	Wade Faw	Dale Redman
*Betty Bagent	Cherlyn Gwin	Kathleen Redman
Brian Bagent	David Gwin	Betsy Repetz
*Jack Bagent	Linda Hook	Jane Robertson
Cynthia Bates	Steve Hook	Bill Rust
Ruby Bates	*Sherry Hutchinson	Nancy Rust
Winsley Bates	Becky Keogh	John Scheide
Myrna Blankenship	Sandra Kungle	Sallie Scheide
Greg Blimling	*Connie Leonard	Judith Singleton
Brook Boynton	*Mike Leonard	Hilda Skidmore
Tom Brown	*Bill Lewis	Johnnie Snow
Ann Brown	*Billy Lewis	Nancy Snow
James Burroughs	Alan Martin	David Stage
Linda Burroughs	Jimmie Martin	Lois Stage
Charles Carr	Jonathan Martin	Jane Stewart
Doris Carr	*Mary Martin	*Julia Stewart
Sherri Bagent Casey	Margaret McKerney	T. Bonner Stewart
Rita Cochran	Cheryl McWilliams	*Todd Stewart
Michelle Bagent Coleman	Daniel McWilliams	Christine Stroud
Jim Courtney	Nena McWilliams	Ed Stroud
John Courtney	Scott McWilliams	Glenn Sumner
Kathie Courtney	Carla Miller	Judi Sumner
Shannon Courtney	Patrick Miller	*Rickie Taylor
Norma Crump	Oneida Monroe	Rita Taylor
Cecil Eubanks	Michelle Gwin Mott	Diana White
Judy Eubanks	Joan Neikirk	Luke Williamson
Katy Evanco	Lisa Nichols	
Bob Everitt	Lynn Nichols	
Mildred Everitt		

*currently active in Highland Presbyterian Church



Highland Presbyterian Church

40th Anniversary

May 28, 2023

