

April 22, 2020



Dear Friends,

Our 74<sup>th</sup> year of ministry is unlike any previous year! As we approach the summer months, the world is facing a global pandemic, and we are facing difficult decisions regarding the ministry of Highlands Presbyterian Camp and Retreat Center this summer.

**Residential Summer Camp is the foundation on which the ministry of Highlands is built, and it is the heart of our mission.** The Highlands Committee and staff have been carefully considering guidance from government and health officials, the American Camp Association, the Centers for Disease Control and Boulder County Public Health. Our first priority is always to provide a safe experience for our campers, guests and staff.

**In light of the available information, we have made a decision to suspend residential summer camp for this summer.** This is a heart-breaking decision made for the safety of our campers, volunteers and staff.

We have not yet made a decision about the feasibility of **Partnership Day Camp**. We await further guidance and conversation with our partner congregations.

**Faith formation, community building and fun are some of the things that make Summer Camp so special, and we believe that there is a way for us to continue to offer these to families and campers this summer.** Virtual Camp, Camp in Box, (or help us think of a great name), will offer small group Bible studies, singing, interactive live-streamed games, service projects, artsy crafts, and more! Campers and families will get to interact with each other and with Summer Program Staff including Dot Strickland, J.T. Schexnader and Brian Leisher. Plans are underway to offer six weeks of online programming, with weekly check-ins with your counselors following your week of virtual camp! **And, if we can do it safely . . . we hope to bring campers and their families to Highlands for a day or an overnight as a part of your experience!**

We plan to offer one age group per week, and there will even be a "You and Me!" week for younger campers and their special adult. You will each get to "Zoom in", even if you are not in the same place! We will also provide parents with support and online gatherings as they talk with their child about their experience at camp and explore questions of faith!

**We also do not know when Highlands will reopen to guest groups.** This will depend on the guidance we receive from government and health officials; and when we reopen, it may look very different. We may open to smaller groups before we can open to larger groups; we may need to change our style of meal service; and we may need to take new steps to insure the safety of our guests and staff. It is too early to know what will be required for us to reopen.

**Since March 25, we have furloughed most of our part-time hourly staff.** Those who live on site were invited to stay. Many have decided to use this time to stay with family. We cannot wait for the day when we get to invite them back!

*The mission of Highlands is to provide gracious hospitality & quality Christian programs  
in a majestic mountain setting & to nurture spiritual renewal & transformation in a safe & inclusive environment.*

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## There have been blessings in this time . . .

- It has been an opportunity for our wells and water sources to rest and replenish. And we have also made application to add water from Rock Creek into our water system.
- It has been an opportunity for us to remove all equipment from the kitchen and hall of the Retreat Center and strip and refinish these floors.
- It has been an opportunity for us to do major repairs on both the freezer in the kitchen and our wastewater plant pumps.

## As we consider our finances at this time, we begin with gratitude!

- **Significant gifts in 2018 and 2019 allowed us to fully fund our advance deposits for guest groups and campers.** As an act of partnership and goodwill we are returning deposits to all those who must cancel their stays at Highlands for 2020. To date, we have seen a loss of \$137,000+ in revenue from guest groups. Camper payments would have provided an additional \$95,000 in revenue. But we are grateful to have the cash reserves to return deposits and look forward to the day when all these people are able to come to Highlands.
- **We are grateful that we have already qualified for a Payroll Protection Act loan.** These funds will help us to continue to pay our full-time staff. All of our full-time staff continue to work both onsite and from home.



**We invite you to consider a gift to Highlands if you are able.** We know that “stay at home” orders do not affect everyone the same. For many this is a time of extraordinary financial strain. Let me assure you that we continue to hold you in prayer at our staff meetings each week. We meet via Zoom . . . and have continued our practice of weekly devotions and prayer. **We would ask for the gift of your prayers for the ministry of Highlands.**

**If you are able to make a financial gift to Highlands, please know that we would be deeply grateful for your support.** We are doing everything we can to control costs, but bills must still be paid for utilities and the ongoing costs of operations. Your gift will help us to weather these challenging days. Gifts can be made online at [www.highlandscamp.org](http://www.highlandscamp.org), as well as by check or electronic funds transfer.

**Thank you for love, support and prayers! The ministry of Highlands is built on the generous gifts of time, talent, wealth and imagination of many people. We will weather this storm, and in 2021 we will look forward to celebrating our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with you at Highlands! And oh the stories we will tell!!**

This passage from Ephesians has encouraged and sustained us at Highlands . . . *“And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”* Ephesians 3: 18-21

**Stay safe, wash your hands and know that you are loved by a God who is able to do far more than we ask or imagine!**

Grace and peace,

Handwritten signature of Gary Forbes

Gary Forbes  
Moderator, Highlands Committee

Handwritten signature of Maria Shupe

Maria Shupe  
Executive Director