

# Highland Baptist Church Congregational Profile

## *Who We Are*

**Highland Baptist Church is a Thinking, Feeling, Healing Community of Faith.** While our church has used this phrase as a tagline in our literature and publicity for many years, these words are much more than a marketing phrase. “Thinking, feeling and healing” captures much of who we are and how we see ourselves. The following offers some context around what these words mean to us.

### Thinking

We ask uncomfortable questions of our faith. We value sincere seeking of truth, respecting each member’s right to respond to ultimate questions in their own way. This general orientation leads to thoughtful, often lively discussions in Sunday Bible Study groups, and during the educational programs we offer on a wide variety of topics.

When we make decisions, we are “process-oriented,” especially when our congregation faces momentous, potentially divisive decisions. That is, we insist on processes—plentiful congregational gatherings for discussion and voting, for example—that allow everyone who wants to be heard, the chance to be heard.

### Feeling

As followers of Jesus, Highland Baptist Church cares for communities through acts of social justice, which are central to who we are. Our missions work locally, regionally, and internationally to build empathetic connections with other organizations and people. We believe in being doers of the word and not hearers only by providing a nurturing and caring community of faith. We’re surrounded by a cloud of witnesses and saints in progress who encourage us to persevere and run the race of life’s journey together. We believe that church is a place for people across the full spectrum of life’s span. We have listening ears and caring hearts for all of our members and make space for the noise of infants, the passion of the young, the questioning of the adult, and the wisdom of the experienced. We are a church devoted to and lifted by our hymnody and music ministry that expresses our beautiful traditions and the fervor of our souls. We invite people to express God’s call on their lives and share their gifts. With empathy we bear witness to the pain and struggles of others. We believe in the power of divine love over our lives, which inspires our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion as a crucial component of what we do and who we are.

### Healing

Highland Baptist Church is a healing community; we believe doing the work of love through service is healing, both for those we serve and for our church community. Healing is embodied by our commitment to fostering safe spaces such as Alcoholic Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Divorce Recovery and multiple other groups where people find community.

This healing work is also carried out by a variety of ministry groups who partner with many local organizations including Habitat for Humanity, LaCasita, and Kentucky Refugee Ministries. We also partner with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, in particular with the Affirming Network.

For many church members, Highland Baptist Church is a theological refuge, a restorative place to heal from traumatizing theology many faced in previous faith communities. As part of our sacred call, Highland Baptist engages in many individual and systemic pursuits of healing. One such effort is our interest in racial justice. Highland formed a reparations task force to explore our church history and make plans for a more just future. We have followed recommendations from this task force, like changing the skin tone of the Jesus figure in our stained glass window and founding a reparations fund that receives one percent of our annual budget. We also engage in healing with our LGBTQ+ siblings through marches in the annual pride parade and sponsorship of

Louisville's "Drag Revival." We believe that these efforts, combined with strong personal relationships in our everyday church activities, bring us closer to "On Earth as it is in Heaven."

## **What We Believe**

### **Our Mission**

God's Love compels us to cultivate a safe, welcoming community of faith where all are challenged to discover, grow, and serve, as together we boldly live out the worship that is our very lives.

### **Our Vision**

We dream of being an engaging, vibrant Christian church, where transformed people are joining the work of God, creating a world where justice and Love are abundant.

### **Our Values**

#### **Spirituality (What We Believe)**

We value a **courageous, progressive theology rooted in Baptist principles** whose relevance extends from the pew to the street, that engages both the mind and the heart, and that welcomes everyone from the skeptic to the devoted.

We value a **deeply spiritual, Christ-centered faith** that opens us to life, equips us to serve, and calls us to action. We express that faith through **broad and deep worship**.

#### **Community (Who We Are)**

We **value all people**, not in spite of, but precisely because of all that makes each one unique. We are committed to **growing together across the lifespan**, through multi-generational and intergenerational relationships and ministries.

We value a **healthy community**, where honest relationships provide all people safety, encouragement, acceptance, and healing. We embrace **challenge and change**: naming hard things, asking questions, and leaning into tensions and ambiguity.

#### **Faith in Action (How We Make a Difference)**

We value being **doers of the word**, living out what Jesus taught: showing hospitality to strangers, confronting injustice, and amplifying voices that have traditionally been silenced.

We value **being good stewards** of all we have been given, discerning together how best to use our financial, physical, human, and spiritual gifts to follow Jesus and carry out our mission.

### **Our Future:**

Highland is a place where some who struggle to articulate faith find a community; where social justice is not seen as optional; where we continually remind ourselves that we cannot be hearers only, but must be "doers of the Word" a biblical phrase carved in stone above our main sanctuary door and which serves as a weekly reminder of our calling as followers of Jesus.

Highland Baptist is in a season of thoughtfully and prayerfully considering our future. Over the past few months, several members of the congregation have met as a Strategic Planning Team to identify values and needs in our church. This work was made possible with help from the Center for Congregational Health and reputation analysis from church member Casey Boggs and his firm ReputationUS.

During a recent congregational meeting, the church identified five areas of interest for continued action and attention. They are: Leadership & Organizational Structure; Faith Formation, Community & Fun; Financial Sustainability; Communications; Faith in Action.. These areas represent our collective care for continuing Highland's good stewardship, prophetic witness in our city, and interactive community. We have great hope that the next several years at Highland Baptist will be defined by growth, change, and strengthening these five areas of church life.

Much more of our history can be found in *The Cloud of Witness, 110 Years of Faith, Highland Baptist Church*, by Peter Smith.