



The **HIGHLANDER**

**December 2025/January
2026**



**The almost monthly newsletter of
Highlands Methodist Church, Leigh on
Sea**

These are services at Highlands for December 2025

10:30 am Sun 7 th	Morning Worship Café Church	Deborah Spinks
10:30 am Sun 14 th	Morning Worship Toy & Gift Service Parade	Rev Heather Simmons
4:00 pm Sun 21 st	Carol Service	Rev Heather Simmons
4:30 pm Wed 24 th ❄ Christmas Eve ❄	Christingle Service for all ages	Rev Heather Simmons
11:00 am Thu 25 th ❄ Christmas Day ❄	Christmas Morning Worship	Rev Heather Simmons
11:00 am Sun 28 th	Morning Worship United Service <u>here</u> Holy Communion	Rev Heather Simmons



Highlands (Leigh) Methodist Church www.highlandsmethodist.org.uk



The **Highlander** is published by Highlands Methodist Church, Sutherland Blvd, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, SS9 3PT. Highlands Methodist Church is a member church of the *Southend and Leigh Circuit*, 34/10, which is part of the Beds, Essex and Herts District.



**These are services at
The Fishermen's Chapel
for December 2025.**



9:30 am Sun 7 th	Morning Worship Communion	Rev Heather Simmons
7:30 pm Sun 14 th (Refreshments from 7:00)	Gospel Service	Rev Heather Simmons
5:30 pm Sun 21 st	Carol Service	
7:30 pm Sun 23 rd	Candlelit Remembrance Service	
10:00 am Thu 25 th ❄ Christmas Day ❄	Christmas Morning Worship	Rev Heather Simmons
11:00 am Sun 28 th	Morning Worship United Service at Highlands	Rev Heather Simmons

IT'S



CHRISTMAAAAAAAAAAS!



**These are services at
Highlands for January 2026.**

10:30 am Sun 4 th	Morning Worship Epiphany Sunday Café Church	Mike Fogg
10:30 am Sun 11 th	Morning Worship Covenant Service Communion	Rev Heather Simmons
4:00 pm Sun 18 th	All Age Worship & Praise	Matt Bunkall
10:30 am Sun 25 th	Morning Worship	Eileen Simmons



**These are services at
The Fishermen's Chapel for
January 2026.**



9:30 am Sun 4 th	Morning Worship Communion Covenant Service	Rev Heather Simmons
7:30 pm Sun 11 th (Refreshments from 7:00)	Gospel Service	Rev Heather Simmons
7:30 pm Sun 18 th	Taizé Service	Rev Heather Simmons
7:30 pm Thu 25 th	Mindfulness Service	Rev Heather Simmons





Highlands Methodist Church Hospitality in the Midst of our Community

All telephone numbers are '01702' unless stated

Minister	Rev Heather Simmons heather.simmons@methodist.org.uk	07879 232231
Secretary to Church Council	David Watson	555702
Minutes Secretary	Vanessa Mayes	473787
Church Stewards	Andrew Hyde	473111
	Donald Mayes	473787
	Lesley Hyde	473111
	Jean Edmonds	801517
All Age Community Builder	Matt Bunkall mattbunkall@gmail.com	07305 769086
Church Treasurer	Steve Watson	07543 905641
Children's Worker	Ros Bryant	478631
Pastoral Co-ordinator	Jean Edmonds	801517
Church Flowers	Jean Edmonds	801517
Lettings/Use of Premises	Sam Watson highlandslettings@gmail.com	07510 808519

From Your Minister

As Methodists we have an amazing gift of being a Connexional church (albeit with funny spelling!). We benefit from pooling our resources to have a bigger voice for God. One of these many benefits comes in the form of Advent and Christmas resources to support worship leaders and individuals. Each year the Methodist Church has a themed message, and this year's message is a beautiful one:



You are a gift. Made with love.



It made me think of all the gifts I buy for family and friends. I have actually put aside two full days in my diary to do my Christmas shopping this year. I am finally learning that it is not easy to "shoehorn in" shopping as a minister and jazz singer in this

wonderfully busy time of year.

When I was reading the resources for our Advent theme, I came across the advice below and I thought I would share it with you. I hope that it might inspire you to follow the rest of our Advent worship and reflection.

Here it is...

Think of preparing a gift.

Before you can give it, there's usually some work to do: removing packaging, peeling off the price label, maybe taking off a sale sticker.

As followers of Jesus we are called to be a gift to the world. Advent is a time to consider what in us needs removing. What attitudes, habits or distractions need peeling away? What doesn't belong in the gift?



Jesus says we must be ready for the coming of the Son of Man. As Advent begins, we reflect on what that means – not with fear, but with hope. We are being made ready, refined and wrapped in grace, to be given as gifts of peace to the world.

I wonder how many of you think of yourselves as a gift of peace to the world? And yet, with God's grace we have every opportunity to be just that. It reminds me of one of my favourite sentences in the bible:

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace” [Isaiah Ch 52 vs 7]



I was thinking, what attitudes, habits or distractions would I like to work on peeling away to be the gift of peace.

I can often race into a situation or conversation without thought – I am generally too excited. So I thought I might begin with taking a breath and having an ‘attitude of gratitude’: being grateful for each person, each situation and each day before speaking or acting.

It is going to take practice, so I have started a journal which I have by my bed to write about what I have been grateful for. However ideally, I would like it to become more spontaneous in my day, each time I meet someone or arrive somewhere safely etc. I will think how grateful I am or say so!

I am sure you will all find your own thing, but as you do so, remember that

you are a gift

and

you are made with love

and God will be your protector and provider throughout this season of Advent, Christmas and into our new year.

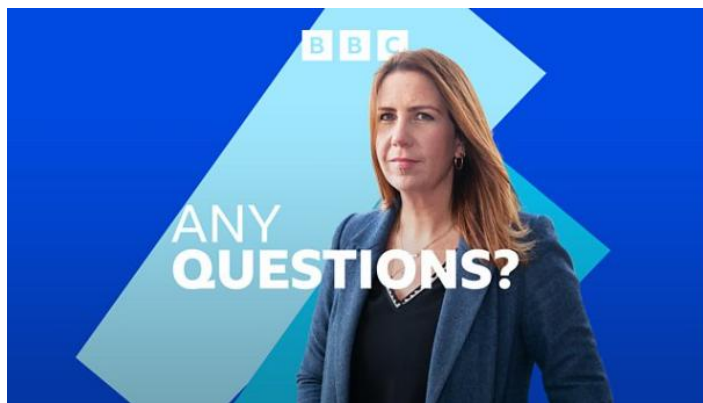
I do hope that you will join us at Highlands for the many wonderful events and services. Please come and say hello to me; I will be so grateful!

My prayer for all the members of Highlands, all who are friends of the church, and our local community is that you have a blessed time of joy, comfort, health and peace. I pray for you all as gifts of peace to our world in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

God bless,

Rev Heather (Rev Hev!) x

Save the Dates



Any Questions? (BBC Radio 4) is a live topical discussion in which a panel of personalities from the worlds of politics, media and elsewhere are posed questions by the audience.

AQ? comes from a different location each week,

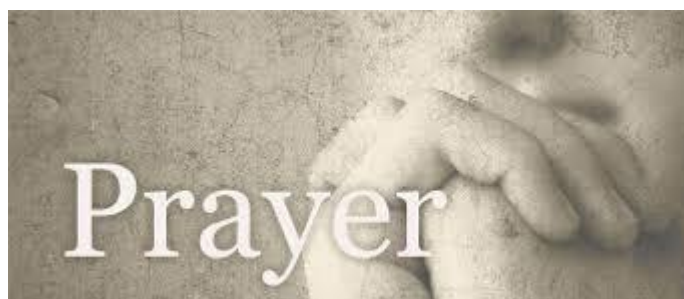
including, on Friday evening 6 February 2026, here Highlands Methodist Church. Admission is by ticket, absolutely free, and you'll be able to submit questions for discussion and see how a live radio show is presented. Tickets will be available shortly using a link on Facebook. (If you do not use FB, get advice from a steward).

You're invited to **Modern Christmas Songs of Worship** on Thursday 11 December 2025. Join us at Belfairs Methodist Church at 7:00 pm, led by the Circuit worship band and others from across the circuit. All are welcome, refreshments to follow.

At the **Christmas Coffee Morning** on Saturday, 6 December, 10:00 am to 12:30 pm, our Hobbies stall will offer beautiful hand-made Christmas cards and gifts, floral candle arrangements, vintage games and paper chains, a raffle, Christmas refreshments

Please do come and buy some lovely cards, all hand made. Also there will be bead bracelets, tree decorations, floral arrangements and more.

Marjorie



We pray for our friends who are ill, housebound, or bereaved and for those in residential care: particularly *Peggy Gosling* in Westcliff Lodge, *Irene Downing* and *Doreen Morby* in Brambles. *Glenda Green* in Legra and *Marion Chapman* in Chalkwell Grange. Our thoughts and prayers are with them and their families.

We **pray especially for** a number of church members afflicted by long-term illnesses and short-term accidents or recovering from surgery. Also for those of us whose families are far away.



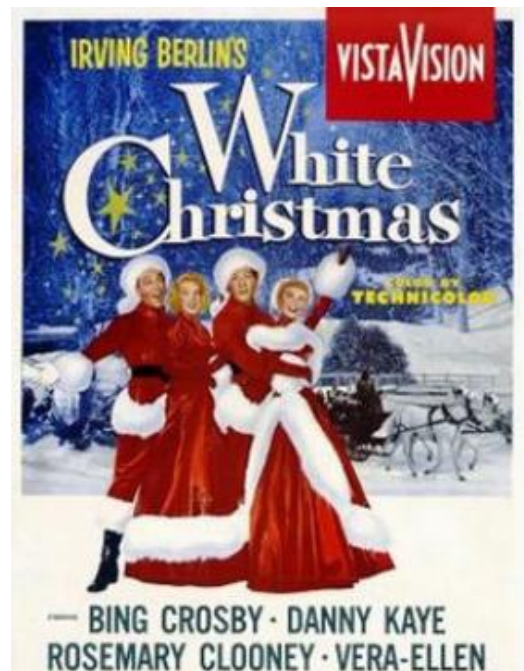
Table Tennis, Board Games and Puzzles.

There will be no table tennis in December. January dates are Thursdays 8 and 22, 10:00 am to 12:00 noon. Donations are £3 p.p. and refreshments are provided. Come and join the fun, since all are welcome. Jean Edmonds.01702 801517

Classic Cinema

At the new time of 11:30 am (showing at 12:00) 5 December you can see this month's movie, *White Christmas* (Michael Curtiz 1954).

With a cast including Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye, this musical tells the story of two performers who meet while recovering from WW2 injuries and set up a song-and-dance act together. There will be a break for discussion during the film.



Hobbies (December)

We will meet on the 4 December from 10.00 am to 12:00 noon in Room 1, cost £3 which includes refreshments.

Our activity will be making Christmas Floral arrangements, with Jean, for the Christmas Coffee Morning on 6 December.

11 December will be our Christmas Get-Together from 10.00 am to 12:00 noon before we finish for the Christmas holiday. Activity: making a Father Christmas fridge magnet.



Hobbies (January)

We will resume Hobbies on the 15 January 2026 from 10.00 am to 12:00 noon as normal. Activity to be arranged nearer the time.

Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Marjorie

Highlands Toddlers

In the run-up to Christmas our sessions will include making greetings cards and a Christmas frieze for the Jubilee Room.

Our last Toddlers session this term will be on 15 December. As our current children are so young, we intend to have our usual format that day, plus one or two traditional extras, including the favourite pass-the-parcel, and maybe even a visit from Santa.

Highlands Toddlers donated £150 to BBC Children in Need. Our thanks to those in our Lunch Club for their contribution to this total.

Ros (478631) and Margaret (557512)

Church Flowers

December 14 donated by Frank and Jean Edmonds in memory of family and friends.

21 donated by Jenny Courtenay in memory of her parents.

January 11 donated by Jill Grove in memory of her parents.
25 donated by Jean and Frank Edmonds in memory of her mother.



From the Editor

*New ev'ry morning is the love
our waking and uprising prove*
[John Keble c. 1830]

You'll recognise these lines. Originally a poem of Keble (1792-1866), they were set to music, usually to 'Melcombe'. You can find it at *Singing the Faith* 137.

The message here is simple enough. We wake every morning to a new day – a day that is unique. No two days are the same. Even in prison we will have thoughts and dreams that are new.

We approach a new year, 2026, that is unique. Many of us will make 'resolutions' for the new year because we know that everything will change, and we may need to embrace that. Happily, another great hymn (StF 51 Great Is Thy Faithfulness) reminds us that not everything will change. Hymnist Thomas Chisholm (1866–1960) addresses God thus

*Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be*

So, we can confidently resolve to follow a God whom we know to be constant. Everything else will be exciting and different. We should resolve therefore to welcome the new, explore all the opportunities in front of us, set aside anything that is false or corrupt, and cleave to what is new but true. Happy New Year? Sorted!

Andrew



December 2025 Calendar

All events are at Highlands unless otherwise stated)

Mon	1 st	9:30 Toddlers
Tue	2 nd	Prayers in church 9:15 Tuesday Chatter 10:00
Wed	3 rd	Advent Lectio Divina 7:30
Thu	4 th	Hobbies 10:00
Fri	5 th	Classic Film Club 11:30 (<i>White Christmas</i>)
Sat	6 th	Special Christmas Coffee Morning 10:00
Sun	7 th	Café Church 10:30
Mon	8 th	Toddlers 9:30 House Group 7:30 (in the Snug)
Tue	9 th	Prayers in church 9:15 Tuesday Chatter 10:00 Lunch Club 12:00
Wed	10 th	Advent Lectio Divina 7:30
Thu	11 th	Hobbies 10:00 (last before Christmas)
Fri	12 th	
Sat	13 th	Coffee Morning 10:00
Sun	14 th	Morning Worship – Toy & Gift Service 10:30
Mon	15 th	9:30 Toddlers (last before Christmas)
Tue	16 th	Prayers in church 9:15 Tuesday Chatter 10:00 Bible study/house group 1:00
Wed	17 th	Advent Lectio Divina 7:30
Thu	18 th	Coffee Morning 10:00 (incl Showstoppers' Grotto)
Fri	19 th	
Sat	20 th	Coffee Morning 10:00
Sun	21 st	Carol Service 4:00
Mon	22 nd	
Tue	23 rd	Prayers in church 9:15 Tuesday Chatter 10:00
Wed	24 th	Christmas Eve Christingle 4:30
Thu	25 th	Christmas Day Morning Worship 11:00
Fri	26 th	
Sat	27 th	

Sun	28 th	Morning Worship 11:00 United Service @ Highlands
Mon	29 th	
Tue	30 th	
Wed	31 st	New Year's Eve

January 2026 Calendar

All events are at Highlands unless otherwise stated)

Thu	1 st	New Year's Day (Hogmanay)
Fri	2 nd	
Sat	3 rd	
Sun	4 th	Café Church
Mon	5 th	
Tue	6 th	Prayers in church 9:15 Tuesday Chatter 10:00
Wed	7 th	Lectio Divina 7:30
Thu	8 th	Table Tennis, Board games and Puzzles. 10:00
Fri	9 th	Film Club 11:30
Sat	10 th	Coffee Morning 10:00
Sun	11 th	Morning Worship 10:30 Communion/Covenant First of our centenary celebrations
Mon	12 th	Toddlers 9:30 House Group 7:30 (in the Snug)
Tue	13 th	Prayers in church 9:15 Tuesday Chatter 10:00 Lunch Club 12:00
Wed	14 th	Lectio Divina 7:30
Thu	15 th	Hobbies 10:00
Fri	16 th	
Sat	17 th	Coffee Morning 10:00
Sun	18 th	All Age Worship 4:00
Mon	19 th	
Tue	20 th	Prayers in church 9:15

		Tuesday Chatter 10:00 Bible study/house group 1:00
Wed	21 st	Lectio 7:30
Thu	22 nd	Table Tennis, Board games and Puzzles.
Fri	23 rd	
Sat	24 th	Coffee Morning 10:00
Sun	25 th	Morning Worship 10:30
Mon	26 th	
Tue	27 th	Prayers in church 9:15 Tuesday Chatter 10:00
Wed	28 th	Lectio Divina 7:30
Thu	29 th	
Fri	30 th	
Sat	31 st	Coffee Morning 10:00

Another Highlands Service

Does your pooch need a bit more discipline? Reece Harris, who is passionate about delivering fun and practical training in a relaxed environment The class is currently Wednesday evenings at 7.30pm with spaces available. Contact is through

<https://www.essentialcaninelifeskills.co.uk/find-a-trainer/southend-west/>

Or telephone 07981 015007.



Dining In

Aubergine & Fennel Gratin with Goat's Cheese & Walnuts

If like us you get an 'Oddbox' or a 'Veg Box' or a 'Zero Waste' box, you'll be familiar with the problem of seemingly random wonky vegetables roaming round the kitchen in search of a recipe. Chances are you won't know what to do with them. You may even get suggestions from the family of what you can do with them.

In our case the delinquent veggies were aubergine & fennel, which sounds a bit like a dubious law firm. But I found a recipe that not only accommodated the uninvited veg, but also turned out an appetising dish.



Ingredients

(for 4 – easily halved)

600 ml crème fraîche

2 tsp sea salt

Ground black pepper

25g fresh flat leaf parsley, fine chopped

1 tsp grated nutmeg

2 medium aubergines, thin-sliced into rounds

500g fennel, thin-sliced

125g soft goat's cheese

50g white breadcrumbs

50g rough-chopped walnuts

1 tbsp olive oil

Method

1. Preheat oven to 180°C fan/200°C/Gas 6
2. Mix the crème fraîche, sea salt, pepper, parsley and nutmeg.
3. Lay half the aubergines on the bottom of a tin, then half the fennel, half the mixed crème fraîche and half the goat's cheese.
4. Repeat the above layers...
5. ...then scatter breadcrumbs and walnuts over the top
6. Drizzle with the olive oil then put the tin in the oven for 45 minutes. The top should be crisp golden brown and the gratin bubbling. Leave for 10 mins then serve with crusty bread.

LOOKING FOR MEN WHO ENJOY SINGING!

Highlands Methodist Church
would like to create a male singing group
to support its local community events.

(Looking for between 3 and 7 members.)

If you enjoy singing and feel your voice is good,
perhaps you would like to join the group?

Please contact: Matt Bunkall on 07305 767986

Call or message your name and contact details.
We would like to arrange a couple of songs for our
"Christmas Carol Service"
so if you would like to join the group?

Please get in touch.

Highland's Members and Friends of the Highlands,
who value singing uplifting songs, are who we most
hope to find.

"We just Sing with Joy & Hope!"



"We just Sing with Joy & Hope!"

Cards

Option 1

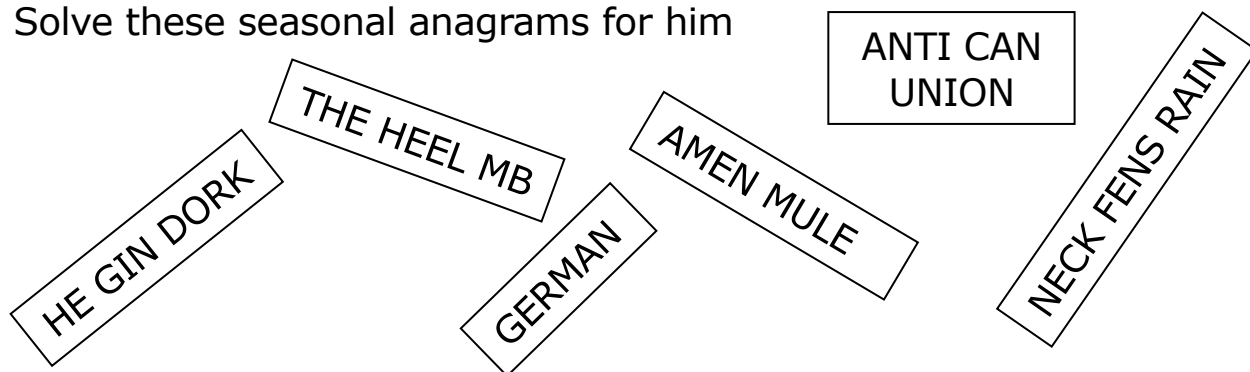
Christmas is coming and so is hardship for many, both in the world and in our local community. So why not, as in previous years, "post" just one Christmas card to everyone at Highlands and donate to charity in lieu of many cards (also saving a few trees). Suggested charity HARP for the needy and homeless in Southend, but the choice of charity is yours. A donation box for HARP will be available. Details for displaying the cards will be shared in due course.

Option 2

A member of our local uniformed organisations is offering a private local delivery service at a discount from commercial rates. Check the back door noticeboard for details.

Puzzle of the Month¹

Santa's letters are mixed up.
Solve these seasonal anagrams for him



Humour Corner

Server: *How would you like your pizza, your majesty?*
Good King Wenceslas: *Same as usual. Deep-pan, crisp and even, please.*

¹ Solution page 22

HIGHLANDS SPECIAL
CHRISTMAS COFFEE MORNING

SATURDAY 6th DECEMBER 2025
10.00am to 12.30 pm

Christmas Gifts
Christmas Cards
Candle Arrangements
Children's Activity Table
Christmas Tree Decorations
Appearance by Father Christmas
Delicious Christmas Refreshments
Raffle and Vintage Games

 ALL ARE WELCOME

In Aid of Church Funds

10.00am to 12.30 pm



Christmas Gifts

Christmas Cards

Candle Arrangements

Children's Activity Table

Christmas Tree Decorations

Appearance by Father Christmas

Delicious Christmas Refreshments

Raffle and Vintage Games



ALL ARE WELCOME



In Aid of Church Funds

Poem of the Month



Just Doing My Job by Clare Bevan

Clare Bevan is a teacher and contemporary children's writer.

I think that this poem may well have been inspired by a school nativity play – one that we have all enjoyed at some time. Not all nativity plays include the story of Herod. I can't think why not...

Just Doing My Job

I'm one of Herod's Henchmen.
We don't have much to say,
We just charge through the audience
In a Henchman sort of way.

We all wear woolly helmets
To hide our hair and ears,
And Wellingtons sprayed silver
To match our tinfoil spears.

Our swords are made of cardboard
So blood will not be spilled
If we trip and stab a parent
When the hall's completely filled.

We don't look very scary,
We're mostly small and shy,
And some of us wear glasses,
But we give the thing a try.



We whisper Henchman noises
While Herod hunts for strangers,
And then we all charge out again
Like nervous Power Rangers.

Yet when the play is over
And Miss is out of breath
We'll charge like Henchmen through the hall
And scare our mums to death.

Puzzle of the Month Solution

THE HEEL MB is **BETHLEHEM**.
HE GIN DORK becomes **KING HEROD**
NECK FENS RAIN must be **FRANKINCENSE**
GERMAN is of course a **MANGER**
AMEN MULE turns out to be **EMMANUEL** and well done if you
turned ANTI CAN UNION into **ANNUNCIATION**.

Humour Corner

(A Salutory Tale)

Have you heard the story of four people named Everybody,
Somebody, Anybody and Nobody.

There was a job to be done, and Everybody was sure that
Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did
it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job.
Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, but Nobody realised
that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed
Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

(Thanks to Julia for supplying this)

METHODISTS DON'T JUST CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS!

Sunday 11 January
Highlands Church

Our 100th birthday
celebrations start
here:



- 10:30 Historical Covenant Service with Holy Communion – as in 1926
- 11:30 Coffee
- 12:00 Simple lunch – 1920s style
- 1:00 Invited guest speakers
- 2:00 Appearance of Sunday School Queen

What is Covenant?

An annual service to celebrate God's unconditional love for his people

Why 100 years?

Highlands Methodist Church has been serving the local community from this site since 1926, when George V was on the throne, a loaf of bread was about 4p, and the world record transfer fee for a footballer was £6,500.

SERVING the COMMUNITY 7 Days a Week

Children and Young People

Group	Time	Contact
Scouts	Thu 7:30 to 9:00 pm	Jack Reeve 07847 355859
Cubs	Thu 5:45 to 7:15 pm	Jordan Rutherford 07804 065933
Rainbows	Wed 4:00 to 5:00 pm	Julie Griffiths 07834 321724
Brownies	Wed 5:30 to 7:00 pm	Teresa Thompson 07809 219729
Guides	Fri 7:00 to 9:00 pm	Jacqui Hendle 07961 545037
Rangers	Thu ² 7:00 to 9:00 pm	Jacqui Hendle 07961 545037
Toddlers	Mon 9:30 am to 11:30	Ros: 478631 Margaret: 557512

Fellowship Groups

Group	Time	Contact
Prayer	Tue 9:00 to 10:00 am	Andrew Hyde 473111
Chatter	Tue 10:00 am to 12:00 noon	Rosalie 478631

Services to the Community

Group	Time	Contact
Lunch Club	2 nd Tuesday 12:00	07951 963730 Registration essential

Social and Recreational

Group	Time	Contact
Hobbies	1 st /3 rd Thu 10:00 am to noon	Jean 801517

Any material for the February edition of *The Highlander* needs to be emailed to andrewghyde@aol.com (or put a hard copy in the pigeonholes) by 25 January 2026.

² Every fortnight