

Highland Park

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Church family,

It has been four heart-wrenching weeks. The halls of HP Pres seem strangely empty without Bryan Dunagan's dynamic presence. He was our cherished friend, pastor, and leader, and our mourning for him takes many different forms. For me, grief has meant many restless nights and tears at unexpected moments. But through it all, one truth gives me hope: God is faithful.

God is faithful, as seen in the incredible outpouring of love in and around our congregation. I've witnessed many exchanges of compassion and concern across different groups. God is faithful in how he used Bryan's unique skills to guide our church toward a vision of helping people find and follow Jesus in our city and beyond. God is faithful in how he has shaped the women and men of this church for almost 100 years, blessing them as they joyfully worked to build his kingdom. Generation after generation, our mighty God is faithful, and so he continues to be in this time of profound loss. I urge you to hold fast to the Lord and lay your sorrow at his feet.

Just when we need it, Christmas beckons. Our hearts long to celebrate the good news that Jesus has come. While Christmas may feel different in Bryan's absence, our commitment to point people to Jesus during the Advent season will remain true. From discipleship resources in our Advent Guide, to service opportunities, to the thousands of guests we expect on Christmas Eve, we know that Advent is a time when the mission of our church, and God's faithfulness to us as Christians, is on full display.

So, what will Sunday services look like going forward? Although the mission of HP Pres extends far beyond the confines of Sunday morning worship, our weekly gathering is sacred and essential. We must keep it so. Over the next several months, you can expect thoughtful preaching from our pastoral team and some special guests who will help deepen our faith in Jesus. In December, we have guest pastors Jim Singleton, a former professor of Gordon Conwell Seminary, and Mark Labberton, the former president of Fuller Seminary. Both have preached in our sanctuary before and counted Bryan as a dear friend.

Our devoted Governing Elders — the 24 men and women you elected to provide spiritual guidance for our church — have worked tirelessly over the past four weeks and will spend more time together on our Annual Session Retreat in January. This retreat is a time to seek God's will for our church, and this year, we have a clear focus: engaging with our denomination, ECO, to explore the first steps needed in the search process for a Senior Pastor. Our Elders are prayerfully engaged in seeking the Lord, and we ask you to please be praying for them and the retreat as we seek wisdom and discernment from God together. We'll share more after the retreat, so stay tuned.

for the *flourishing* of
our *city* and *beyond*



As we enter this transitional process, we're creating a landing page where you can read answers to the most frequently asked questions about our first and next steps. You can also submit questions you'd like to have answered by our Session in the future. Head to hppres.org/questions to learn more and stay updated by checking there regularly.

Many of you have asked how we are helping the Dunagan family. To do this, we've created two funds – the Dunagan Family Fund and the Dunagan Memorial Fund. You can learn more and give to these funds now by going to hppres.org/bryan.

Finally, thank you for being a praying church. My guiding verses for this season and what I have been praying for you and our church is this clear exhortation in Romans 12: 11–12: “Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”

Stay strong in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jay Lee'.

Jay Lee
Executive Pastor