

# Building Community and Changing Lives

## Highland honors new pastor

BY LAWRENCE JOHNSON

On Sunday, Nov. 7 at 10 a.m., Highland Christian Center will honor Senior Pastor and First Lady, Dr. Shon and Madeline Neyland for two plus years of service. The celebration will take place at 7600 N.E. Glisan St. and will feature guest speakers Bishop Ernest E. Carradine, Sr. of International Harvest Christian Fellowship, and Pastor April Murchinson of Emmanuel Church.

Due to the passing of the former pastor, the church was left rudderless for over a year, until a search committee, sifting through nearly 120 candidates, found a new shepherd: the highly decorated Air Force chaplain, Colonel Shon Neyland and his wife of 36 years, Madeline. In a giant leap of faith, Neyland accepted the job, retired from the military and moved his family from Honolulu to Portland, giving his first official sermon as the Senior Pastor in April 2019.

Highland began to flourish under Dr. Neyland's leadership. His energetic style, bible-based teachings and his winning smile

attracted new members and kept veterans aboard.

"What was most exciting to me were the souls coming to Christ," remarked Dr. Neyland about his first year, "And in those 10 months, we saw 175 people respond. ... Not only did those souls come to Christ, we baptized 70." Additionally, the church averaged 550 people weekly in attendance prior to COVID-19. Dr. Neyland's vision of "Building Community and Changing Lives" was born. The church was growing rapidly with over 400 visitors in the first 10 months.

After such a positive start, no one could have guessed that within a year, Dr. Neyland and the Highland family would have to shut down the church. In March 2020, in response to an overwhelming surge in COVID-19 cases, Gov. Kate Brown prohibited gatherings of 25 or more.

"I called an emergency planning meeting," remembers Dr. Neyland, "And said, 'How do we respond? Let's look at courses of action, and let's choose the best one that's going to move us forward, while protecting the people.'"

Holding on-line Sunday ser-



Highland Christian Center Senior Pastor Dr. Shon Neyland and his wife, First Lady Madeline Neyland.

vices, answering prayer requests, moving bible study groups to Zoom for all ages, running its food bank, continuing Sunday breakfasts for the houseless, Highland's ministry remained uninterrupted. Pastor Neyland called it the Unstoppable Church.

"It's been a tough time," said First Lady Madeline Neyland speaking of her husband, "But he knew the purpose. He knew the plan of God. He came up with this thing. This is the Unstoppable Church, with an unstoppable

pastor. ... We're here at Highland blooming where we're planted, no matter whether we get the water, the sunshine, we're doing what God called us to do."

And then George Floyd was murdered by a police officer in Minneapolis. Protests spread like wildfire across the world, and Dr. Neyland stood up, calling for unity. Sought after by news outlets, Dr. Neyland's voice was one of love and understanding in a divisive climate. Dr. Neyland spoke at rallies with a call for justice in

America. Dr. Neyland stated he wanted to remind us all that, "We need to take notice of the systemic discrimination and prejudices that we bring to the table every day in America, and that it was a time for real change."

Dr. Neyland's stance on social justice and change in America was not always received with open arms. He recalls that he received more than one letter from members saying, "Don't focus so much on social justice. Focus on the Word." But, according to Dr. Neyland, "The Word is social justice!"

As the pandemic surged on, Highland received national attention for being one of the first churches in the country to act as a walk-in vaccination site. Thanks to Highland's outstanding health and wellness team, you can still get your vaccinations at Highland twice a month. Highland was recognized for its efforts in combating the spread of COVID-19 with features in the New York Times, NPR News, and WebMD. Highland Christian Center and the Health and Wellness Team was also recently recognized nationally by the Balm in Gilead organization with the HC2030 Best Practice Award for its efforts in promoting community health.

Growing frustrated with preaching to an invisible on-line

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# Supporting Oregonians

## COPIING WITH PROBLEM GAMBLING

**The More Things Change...**  
The old adage applies: The more things change, the more they remain the same. And we've been through some changes this year. Health concerns, employment, the economy — even things as simple as getting the kids to school — all these things have been gradually changing. But the fact is one

fundamental thing has certainly remained the same: It's all still kind of hard.

Coping with the stress of change is never easy. Without a plan or a support system, it's easy to lapse into habits that might feel relaxing in the moment, but could have negative consequences in the long term. For some, gambling is a harmless way to disengage. But what might start as a fun diversion can, for some, become an obsession that's hard to control.

**Help is Available**  
Luckily, here in Oregon, help is available. Through the Oregon Problem Gambling Resource (OPGR), gamblers and those who love them can get support from trained addiction counselors, often right from home. Treatment is effective. People are ready and waiting to provide mechanisms to cope and to heal. And, best of all, it's free.

**Why Wait?**  
Most people who get started with OPGR report that they only wish they had done so sooner. The program helps see you through some of the challenges ahead and gives you the confidence, the support structure to feel better. All it takes is a phone call, a text or an online chat to put you on the path toward the calm and fulfillment you deserve.

For more information, visit  
**OPGR.ORG**  
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