



HICKORY UNITED EPC | AUGUST 2025

THE HICKORY MESSENGER



Pastor's Pen

BY PASTOR TOM JONES

All 3 of the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) quote Isaiah 40: 3 which says, "A voice of one calling: 'In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'" Of course we know that this is a reference to John the Baptist as he was preparing the nation of Israel for the coming Messiah. The phrase, "prepare the way for the Lord" signified a need for spiritual transformation and a clearing of obstacles in people's hearts and lives to receive Jesus and His message.

Recently, a member of our church called me and shared with me a thought that he had. He said that maybe the reason that God had not yet sent us a permanent pastor is because we are not yet ready. He went on to say that we need to put more emphasis on us being ready to receive the blessing that God is going to send our way. This conversation led me to think more deeply about how God works in our lives.

We all know that many times the answer to our prayers is God telling us to wait and be patient. Being patient is not something I am good at doing. I am also not good about "clearing obstacles" in my own heart. Yet, if I am asking God to do something in my life, I absolutely must be open to the appropriate changes. We continue to pray for the Lord to send us a permanent pastor. Are we also praying that God will remove the obstacles in our hearts?

Love and Blessings, Pastor Tom

WORSHIP:

Sundays | 10:00 am

SUNDAY SCHOOL:

Sundays | 8:45 am

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THE VISION

Leading one another into growing relationships with Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit all for the glory of God.

THE MISSION

Reaching upward to God,
Growing inward with God, Serving outward for God.

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

NOTES OF Thanks

Thank you so much for your support. You are so generous and so kind. God is doing amazing things on the northside of Pittsburgh. God bless each and everyone!

~SOUSAN BENINATE

We are at a loss for how to express our gratitude for all your prayers and financial support. What would we do without you? Thanks for checks #2422 in the amount of \$2,500.00 and #2423 in the amount of \$1,700.00 on 6-16-25. Thank you so much. The sponsored children and families are blessed with the food that they need so much. This week the 9th graders are taking the Board of Education exams as well as the sewing class. God is good all the time. God bless.

~ERMITHE & PIERRE

Missions & Giving at HICKORY UNITED

BY BRUCE SHARPNACK
Stewardship & Benevolence Committee

Should I Give to Missionaries Directly or Through the Church? YES - Consider both, but don't leave out your local church. Remember - churches like Hickory United send missionaries and do direct mission work. Supporting your church not only supports missionaries but develops a lifelong, enduring, pastoral ministry to individuals and families which strengthens our culture of giving. Read more about this topic at: www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/give-to-missionaries-church/

Special thanks for worshipping God with gifts and offerings this year. We are currently meeting all of our ministry expenses.

"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:6-7, NIV).



Hospitality Team Info Meeting/Training

August 1 | 6:00 pm | Sanctuary
Sign-up to attend at Welcome Center



Monthly Food & Fellowship

August 10 | 11:15 am | Covenant Ctr.
Bring a main, side or dessert! Entree encouraged.

DEACON'S CORNER

Helping Hands Program

Donations of peanut butter, jelly, boxed cereals and pastas, canned fruits, vegetables, chicken and tuna and ready to go boxed meals are requested. Drop-off to the metal rack in the main entrance foyer. Collection is the first Sunday of the month. Thank you for giving generously!

Meals on Wheels

We need a few drivers to help deliver meals and be a blessing to those in need. If you are interested in volunteering for meal deliveries, please contact Sandy Martinek at 724-986-1463.

Fall Blood Drive

Save the date to donate and save lives on Saturday, September 6 from 7:30 - 1:00 pm in Covenant Center Gym. Appointments are encouraged. Book online at vitalant.org with group code: UG0010081.



Next Communion: August 3

10:00 am | Sanctuary
Gluten Free wafers available

Baptism News



Congratulations to Theresa Zatta and her daughter Eleanor Zatta on their joint baptism on July 6, 2025. Praise the Lord!

NATIONAL BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY

Life is Better Together

“Back to Church Sunday is a powerful, nationwide movement that started 16 years ago with a simple but urgent purpose: to call the Church back to its mission and to extend an open invitation to those who’ve never attended or have been away. It’s one Sunday—always the third Sunday in September—set aside for churches to rally together, welcome their communities, and remind people that hope is found in Jesus and in a church family that cares.

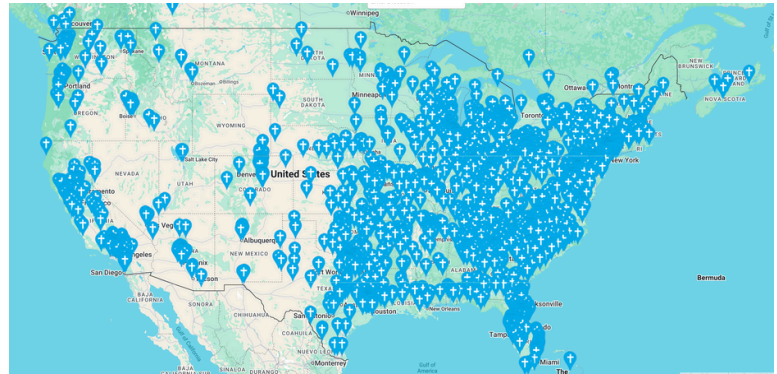
This isn’t just another Sunday. It’s an opportunity to reintroduce your church to your community, inspire your congregation to invite friends and neighbors, and create a warm, Bible-based environment where visitors feel genuinely welcomed and seen.

Since it began, over 4 million believers across more than 40,000 churches have taken part—and the movement keeps growing. In today’s world, where so many are looking for peace, purpose, and a place to belong, your church can be the difference.” Outreach, Inc. Back to Church Sunday, <https://backtochurch.com/about>. July 23, 2025.

September 2024 was the first year Hickory United EPC joined the collective of nationwide churches observing Back to Church Sunday. It was the highest attended service that month and an inspiring number of congregants rose to the invitation challenge. In short, it was fruitful - all glory to God!

This year, we are leaning into Back to Church Sunday even more! Save the date for September 21, 2025 at 10:00 am for a special Back to Church Sunday service followed by a reception at 11:15 am in Covenant Center. We encourage our Hickory United church community to take charge as ambassadors of Christ and use invitation cards as conversation starters to invite at least one person (co-worker, friend, family member, neighbor, stranger, whomever) to attend for church service on September 21. Cards can be found in the Welcome Area.

This year’s theme is “life is better together.” God wants a relationship with us, but also urges us to seek community with each another. Some verses for reflection are Matthew 18:20, Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 and Hebrews 10:24-25. Let’s do this together Hickory United!



(Above) Each pin represents a church that has registered as a participating location for 2025. This is just the US! Churches in South America, Africa and Europe and Australia are also registered. See the map at backtochurch.com.

96%
Would
Participate
Again!

88%
Say Back to Church
Sunday helps their
church be more
Outwardly
Focused.

19%
Average
increase in
attendance
on Back to Church Sunday

(Below) A sample photo of the invitation cards available in the Welcome Area. Take one (or more) and use them to invite someone to church on Sept. 21!



KIDS & YOUTH

HICKORY UNITED Kids

The journey of faith is about so much more than managing behavior; it is an invitation from God to walk with Him in wonder.

In August, our Pre-K-5th graders will learn about this invitation into faith that begins with wonder at who God is. God invites every person into His big story, for it is only there that His sons and daughters discover who they are. From a young age, the question "Who am I?" is wired into each of us, and God alone can provide the answer.

In this series, kids will discover that God knows them, Jesus loves them, and the Holy Spirit leads them. They will discover that they cannot find the answer to the age-old question by looking within but by looking into the eyes of the God who sees them. Who am I? I am known, I am loved, I am led. Because of Jesus, I am a child of God.

HARVEST STUDENT MINISTRY

Join us Sunday mornings as we continue to read through the Gospel of Mark! In August, we will see Jesus' ministry to the Gentiles take shape, and we will see him begin to teach and preach more explicitly on his own identity as the Son of God.

Each week, we will discuss how we ought to respond to Jesus' teachings—how his teachings instruct us to love God and love others as he did.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SUNDAY SCHOOL 8:45 AM



Kids: Summer KidVenture

Tuesday, August 5 | 5:30-7:00 pm

Meets at Mt. Pleasant Twp Park in Hickory

Summer KidVenture is almost at an end! Kpoin us at the park for outdoor fun and bring a friend! Stay tuned for info about when weekly KidVenture resumes in the fall!



We can hardly believe that summer programming is near its end, but we are already gearing up for some incredible and exciting events for the Fall!

Stay tuned for all the amazing announcements coming soon this September and beyond.



Harvest Summer Hangout

Sunday, August 3 | 6-8 pm

Sherry Strnisa's Residence

Poolside fun, bonfires, hot dogs and s'mores. Summer Hangouts replace weekly Harvest Youth Group meetings.



School Year Kick-Off

Sunday, Sept 7 | 8:45 am | Hickory United



(Above) A special moment captured during Worship shows kids and youth students coming together in service by collecting and presenting the offering. God delights in all who serve Him!

AUGUST CALENDAR

ALL EVENTS, DATES & TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

SPECIAL DATES THIS MONTH

- 8/1 Hospitality Team Training Mtg | 6 pm (S)
8/3 Communion | 10 am (S)
Harvest Summer Hangout | 6:30-8 pm (Sherry Strnisa's)
8/5 KidVenture Summer | 5:30-7 pm (Mt Pleasant Twp Park)
8/10 Food & Fellowship | 11:15 am (CC)

- 9/7 Sunday School Kick-Off | 8:45 am
Annual Fellowship Picnic | 12:30 pm (Cross Creek Park)
9/12 Harvest Student Kick-off | 5-7 pm (CC/L)
9/19 Parent's Night Out (K-5) | 5-9 pm (CC)
9/21 Back to Church Sunday | 10:00 am (S)

NEXT MONTH

- 9/1 Labor Day - Office Closed
9/6 Fall Blood Drive | 7:30 am - 1:00 pm (CC)
9/7 Communion | 10 am (S)

(CC) Covenant Center (CR) Choir Room (FH) Fellowship Hall (LB) Library (P) Parlor (YL) Youth Loft (S) Sanctuary

CHECK ONLINE CALENDAR FOR FULL LIST OF RECURRING WEEKLY/MONTHLY MEETINGS: hickorychurch.com/calendar

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PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR

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communications@hickoryunitedepc.org

SUBMIT A PRAYER REQUEST:
hickorychurch.com/prayer



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TEXT 'HICKORYUNITED' TO 84576 & JOIN THE MAILING LIST!