



HICKORY UNITED EPC | DECEMBER 2025

THE HICKORY MESSENGER



Pastor's Pen

BY PASTOR CLAYTON LAPOSTA

It's hard to believe that by the time you receive this "Pastor's Pen" I will have had the pleasure of being your pastor for 1 month! The saying is true, "time flies when you're having fun." Since this letter will be received between holidays, I thought I would mention both this month.

First is Thanksgiving. By now I hope you all had a WONDERFUL Thanksgiving surrounded by people you love and who love you. I was reminded by our foreign exchange student, Pachu (this was his first Thanksgiving) that this holiday is one of the rare few that are uniquely American and Christian in tradition. While not only Americans and Christians can feel a sense of thankfulness, for us who belong to God we know the source where all of our thankfulness can be attributed. It's not a blind thankfulness where we thank good luck or good karma, but we can attribute everything thanks worthy to our God who creates and holds all things together. Knowing that, even in the face of difficult things we can be thankful. For all things we should be thankful because we trust that God is using all things to accomplish good.

So I encourage you, even if you are reading this letter after Thanksgiving, to give thanks to God for all the things we receive. It's also a really great time to remind someone that you're thankful for them. Maybe even someone you go to church with, because I know someone here is thankful for you! I sure am thankful for all of you.

Finally, it's hard to believe but Christmas is right around the corner. This Advent season our church has so many wonderful things scheduled where you and your family can come, worship, and celebrate the long awaited arrival of the Savior of the world. I encourage you to utilize these events. Use them as a time to draw nearer to God than ever before. Make this holiday season not just one where the gifts and family get togethers are great, but make it a point to know and treasure Jesus better than ever before. And hey, maybe encourage a friend to join us and do so too? God bless you, your family, and this church this holiday season.

With love,
Clayton LaPosta

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.

WORSHIP:

Sundays | 10:00 am

SUNDAY SCHOOL:

Sundays | 8:45 am

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MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

Deacon's CORNER



Angel Tree

Please remember to sign-out your Angel at the round table in the Welcome Area and note the return date and wrapping instructions of your Angel. Angels along with gifts should be returned underneath the Welcome Area Christmas Tree.

Christmas Poinsettia Orders

If you would like to place a poinsettia(s) in the church for Christmas in memory of a loved one, order form envelopes are available at the Sanctuary entrance podium on Sunday mornings and the Welcome Center desk. Poinsettias are \$10.00 and pick-up is following the Christmas Eve services. Return payment and form to the offering plate or Main Office no later than Sunday, December 14. Please make your checks payable to Hickory United EPC.

NOTES OF Thanks

Your generous donation is much appreciated. We will put it towards purchasing meat each month to add to our non-perishables.

~BRIANNE EILER

Thank you so much for your very generous canned food donations for the upcoming inclement weather season. This was such an ingenious and thoughtful gift. We were as thrilled to be able to deliver them to the Seniors as they were to receive them. Thank you again for thinking of us and Happy Thanksgiving!

~YOUR FRIENDS AT MCDONALD COMMUNITY MEALS ON WHEELS

"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40).

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus. We thank the Lord for giving a heart for our fellow Haitians. Once you were aware of the great need of the Pierre family you decided to support them. Thank you for check #22519 in the amount of \$100.00 issued on 10-28-2025. We appreciate your help to this family. May God bless you.

~ERMITHE & PIERRE

Family Outreach Holiday Food Drive

Thank you to everyone who donated items for this year's Family Outreach Thanksgiving Food Drive. Your generous giving blessed five local families in need this holiday season. Distribution was on Saturday, November 20.

Fort Cherry Helping Hands

Donations of canned goods, vegetables and boxed cereal and pasta are requested for collection on Sundays when Communion is served. These items will be distributed through the Fort Cherry Helping Hands program to families in our area who require additional assistance. Thank you for giving generously to help these families. Please place items on the metal rack located in the main entrance foyer.



Nursery Relocation

Nursery Care on Sunday mornings is now located downstairs in the Preschool (Fellowship Hall). What a blessed problem to have in needing more space to accomodate our littlest disciples!

This also requires a dedicated team of rotating Nursery attendants who are available to volunteer during Sunday services.

Volunteer sign-up is located on the cork board outside the Main Office. All volunteers must have current PA clearances on file. Contact the Main Office if you need assistance or have questions.

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

Operation Christmas Child 2025 Recap

Another fall season brought another opportunity to make disciples of all nations with Operation Christmas Child's shoebox ministry. On Sunday, November 16 congregants brought forward their carefully (and prayerfully) packed shoeboxes during the service to be distributed to boys and girls around the world. Pastor Clayton also said a dedication prayer over the boxes with the help of the kids.

This year, Hickory United packed 150 shoeboxes. That's 150 children hearing the good news of the Gospel in the most remote corners of the globe. Remember to keep the children receiving these boxes in your continued prayers. We thank everyone for their generous spirit and may god bless you this holiday season!



HICKORY CHRISTIAN Preschool

Holidays at Hickory Christian Preschool

BY ASHLEY LEWIS

During November we had the most beautiful opportunity for our 3 year olds to sing at the Veteran's Day Service! They did an incredible job singing America the Beautiful! We also had the chance to celebrate Thanksgiving during parties and we look forward to all the beautiful events unfolding in December. The students are putting on a play to give glory to the Lord in the miracle of Jesus' birth. They will be sharing how Jesus is our Prince of Peace! We pray the Lord's blessing on you and your family as you celebrate this holiday season!



With Love,
The Preschool

UPCOMING EVENTS

Christmas Program

December 19 @ 6 pm | Sanctuary



MISCELLANEOUS NEWS



Secret Sisters Reveal Donut Party

Dec. 13 | 9 am | Library

RSVP by Dec. 10 to Cindy Semack: ckt@hky.com

New Adult Sunday School Study!

Starting December 21, Ron Stewart leads a new study during the Sunday School hour in the Parlor called "Inquiring Minds Want To Know: Is Genesis History?"

This study is based on the video series "Is Genesis History?" with the addition of "Evolution's Achilles' Heals," and printed resources. The course is presented in layman's terms from the perspective of a Ph.D. scientist who is also a Christian. We will discover and discuss the considerable volume of information that supports a Biblical view of creation. At the same time, we will uncover some of the problems with today's form of "science" guided by paradigms and research funding. This class will give parents and others a basis for refuting the current educational paradigm of a godless world view.

"There are two primary paradigms of history: one defined by natural processes occurring slowly over billions of years, the other defined by recent, direct actions of God as recorded in the Bible." (Del Tacket). We will approach this subject through video presentations followed by discussion.



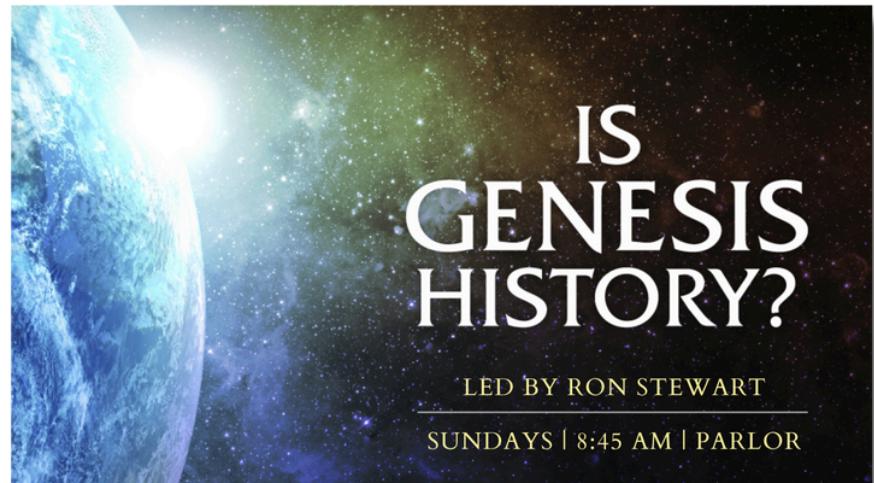
Contact Jackie Fawley: jdfawley@gmail.com if interested.



Holiday Food & Fellowship

Dec. 14 | 11:15 am | Covenant Center

Bring a main, side or dessert as we gather this holiday!



ADVENT EVENTS



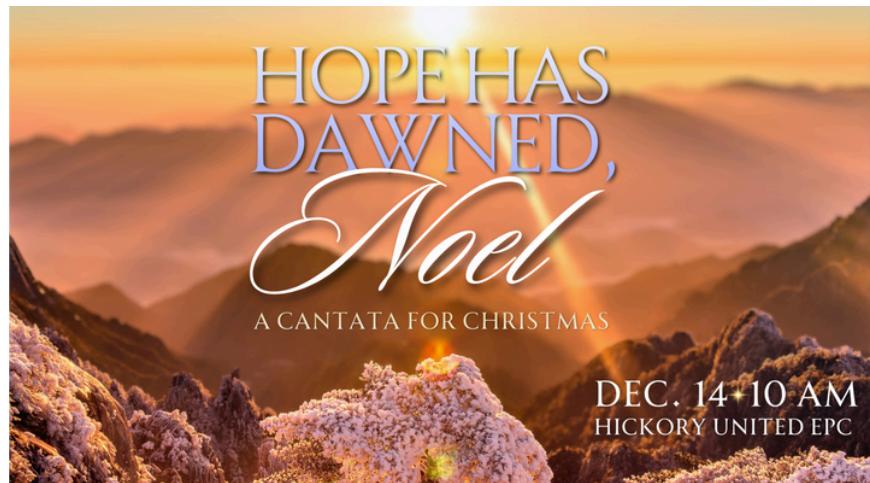
Back for its 9th year in a row, Hickory United's outdoor live Nativity reenactment brings the miraculous story of Christ's birth off the pages of Scripture and transforms it into an interactive, immersive experience. Each station during your walk-through tells one part of the larger story, transporting you back to Ancient Biblical times on a journey through the Nativity like never before.

The Living Nativity offers live actors, animals, and decorated sets and cookies and hot cocoa for all attendees. Admission is free.

After your walk-through, we invite you indoors into our gymnasium to continue holiday celebrations with music, food, kids craft, activities/games and family photo area.

The world was lost in darkness, awaiting a Messiah. Then, a dawn of new hope as the world had never seen, born in a modest stable. Come to Bethlehem and experience anew the magnificent Christmas story through words and music. From tender to triumphant, this cantata brings a fresh touch to beloved carols while introducing beautiful new songs that stir the heart and soul. It is truly an amazing and unforgettable celebration.

Join us for a special Choral Cantata written by Mary McDonald, performed by the Chancel Choir, directed by Tim VanNasdale and featuring live orchestral accompaniment. Mark your calendars for December 14 @ 10:00 am and add it to the list of your Advent celebrations!



Celebrate Christmas Eve with evening worship, carols, Communion and a candlelight hymn sing of "Silent Night." Communion will be observed at both service times.



KIDS & YOUTH

HICKORY UNITED *Kids*

In Winter 2025-26, kids will study the books of Luke, Matthew, Ezekiel, Daniel, Acts, 1 & 2 Peter, and Hebrews. These studies will show kids how God planned for the rescue of His people throughout history. Letters from Peter and the book of Hebrews further highlight God's ongoing rescue of those who trust in Him!

HARVEST STUDENT MINISTRY

Our 6th-8th graders are continuing to read through the Gospel of Mark! As we get closer to Jesus' crucifixion, we continue to see tensions rising between Jesus and those who oppose him. Join us as we continue to study the dynamics at play here!

NO SUNDAY SCHOOL DECEMBER 28!

Upward Scheduling:

- 12/4 | Practices Begin
- 12/24-1/1 | Winter Break

No Practices!

- 1/10/26 | Games Begin



UPCOMING EVENTS SUNDAY SCHOOL 8:45 AM



Harvest Open Gym

Dec. 5 | 6th-12th Grade | Covenant Center

As the weather gets colder, come inside and stay toasty during indoor Open Gym after Upwards practice. Pizza, snacks and free time!



Harvest Christmas!

Dec. 19 | 6-12th grade | Youth Room

Our Youth Group Christmas Vigil will be a special time of prayer focused on the Incarnation of our God! After that, we will have our traditional gingerbread house competition!



A Joyful Noise Christmas!

Dec. 14 | Pre-K - 5th grade | Sanctuary

Join us during Worship @ 10 am for the Joyful Noise Christmas Program!



Harvest: Youth Group

Weds. | 7:30-9 pm | Covenant Ctr./Youth Rm

In Youth Group this December, we will continue to crochet scarves for the prayer shawl ministry. We will also continue our Genre series! In addition to learning about different genres of the Bible, we will spend some lessons comparing and contrasting passages from different genres. See you there!

NO YOUTH GROUP DEC. 24 & 31!



Harvest Winter Retreat

Jan. 23-25 | 6-12th grade | Camp Ligonier

The EPiC Retreat is a weekend winter retreat hosted by Ligonier Camp and Conference Center. Attendees will participate in a variety of fun and engaging activities throughout the weekend and will attend evening worship, speaker sessions, and discussion times with their small groups.

DECEMBER CALENDAR

ALL EVENTS, DATES & TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

SPECIAL DATES THIS MONTH

12/4 **Upward Practices Begin**
 12/5 **Harvest Open Gym | 8-10 pm (CC)**
 12/6 **Living Nativity Performance | 6-7:30 pm (Lower Lot)**
 12/7 **Second Sunday of Advent & Communion | 10 am (S)**
 Living Nativity Performance | 6-7:30 pm (Lower Lot)
 12/13 **Secret Sisters Reveal Party | 9 am (LB)**
 12/14 **Third Sunday Advent & Choral Cantata | 10 am (S)**
 Joyful Noise Christmas Program | 10 am (S)
 Food & Fellowship | 11:15 am (CC)
 12/19 **Preschool Christmas Program | 6 pm (S)**
 Harvest Christmas | 7 pm (YR)
 12/21 **Fourth Sunday Advent | 10 am (S)**
 12/22-1/2 Preschool Closed Christmas Break

Staff CONTACTS:

PASTORAL & MINISTRY

SENIOR PASTOR

Clayton LaPosta | (724) 356-4424 (Ext. 102)

pastor@hickoryunitedepc.org

YOUTH MINISTRY DIRECTOR

Michaela Walker | (724) 356-4424 (Ext. 103)

youth@hickoryunitedepc.org

MUSIC MINISTRY DIRECTOR

Tim VanNasdale | (724) 356-4424 (Ext. 111)

tim.vannasdale@hickoryunitedepc.org

LAY PASTOR

Lou Templeton | (724) 356-7835

ADMINISTRATIVE / SUPPORT

OFFICE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Michelle Danna | (724) 356-4424

office@hickoryunitedepc.org

COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Lynn VanNasdale | (724) 356-4424 (Ext. 106)

communications@hickoryunitedepc.org

TREASURER

Melissa Fluharty | treasurer@hickoryunitedepc.org

ASST. TREASURER & CONSULT

Linda Carter

AUDIO VISUAL TECHNICIAN

David Sykut | david.sykut@hickoryunitedepc.org

FACILITY ASSISTANT

Will Smith

HICKORY CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL

PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR

Ashley Lewis | (724) 356-7337

(724) 356-4424 (Ext. 101)

hickorypreschool@hickoryunitedepc.org

12/24-1/1 **No Upward Practices**
 12/24 **Christmas Eve - Office Closed**
 Candlelight Services | 6 pm & 8 pm (S)
 12/25 **Christmas Day - Office Closed**
 12/26 **Office Closed**

NEXT MONTH

1/1 **New Year's Day - Office Closed**
 1/4 **Communion | 10 am (S)**
 1/10 **Removal of the Greens | 9 am (S)**
Upward Games Begin
 1/11 **Food & Fellowship | 11:15 am (CC)**
 1/19 **Martin Luther King Jr. Day**

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

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



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 GOT AN *upgrade*.

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724-356-4424



OFFICE@HICKORYUNITEDEPC.ORG



210 MAIN STREET, HICKORY, PA.



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