



HICKORY UNITED EPC | OCTOBER 2025

THE HICKORY MESSENGER



Pastor's Pen

BY PASTOR TOM JONES

As you already know this is my last pastor's page as the Transitional Pastor of Hickory United EPC. This is the first time I have ever left a church and known exactly who is coming next. The first time I talked to Pastor Clayton on the phone I liked him. When we had lunch together I felt like I had just met my new best friend. I encourage you to get to know him on a personal level. I think you will like him too!

As I reflect back on my two years at Hickory United, I am reminded of the words of Mordecai to Esther when the Jews were being threatened with annihilation. When Esther questioned whether or not she could do anything to save her people, Mordecai proclaimed, "And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" At one point when I was struggling with some issues I prayed for guidance and those are the words I heard the Lord speak to my heart.

God brought me here "for such a time as this." Together we have experienced the joy of what the Lord is doing in our church. I have grown in my faith and have made a lot of new friends since I came two years ago. As I potentially move on to another position, I do feel a sense of sadness because I hate to say good-bye. However, as a session member reminded me just last night, Christians never say good-bye. Instead, they say, "See ya later!"

For such a time as this God brought me here. For such a time as this God brought Pastor Clayton to Hickory United. And finally, for such a time as this the Lord brought you to this place as well! See ya later!

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

Congratulations to Clayton LaPosta!

Pastoral Candidate Clayton LaPosta delivered the sermon message and children's sermon on September 14. After service a congregational meeting was held for members of the congregation to vote on the call of Clayton as the next Senior Pastor at Hickory United EPC. Praise the Lord, the vote passed with 116 in favor! He was then approved to become an EPC denominational Pastor by the Presbytery. It's now official! Congratulations to Clayton and family, as he steps into the Senior Pastor role at Hickory United on November 2 with a formal installation at a later date.

Special thanks to our diligent Pastoral Search Committee for their prayerful efforts in finding the right candidate the Lord has appointed for Hickory United's next chapter.

Annual Fellowship Picnic

Thanks to all who joined us at Cross Creek for this year's annual picnic on September 7. We are immensely grateful to our Discipleship Team for organizing and the Holy Smokers for another year of delectable smoked dishes.

Congratulations to "Smoker of the Year" 2025 Champion, Fred Rasel, defending his title! It was a close second for Dave Sykut, followed by Josh Tustin clinching third place. Fred will once again hold the flying pig "Best Smoke of the Year" trophy until the next competition.

Kids and youth also enjoyed the park grounds and Gaga ball to celebrate Sunday School kick-off day. It was a beautifully scenic afternoon at the lake where good food and great company brought our congregation together with laughter and joy.

Back to Church Sunday Recap

This was our second year participating in Back to Church Sunday at Hickory United EPC and it was even more fruitful than the first! Service attendance was the one of the highest of the year, second to Easter Sunday. The Praise Band and Chancel Choir blessed us with a powerful song collaboration that glorified the Lord. Our post-service reception was a wonderful time of joyful fellowship and activities. The Coolie Skoolies Bus crew provided the perfect sweet treat of novelty ice cream and sundaes for dessert on a beautiful sunny day!

The best highlight? Seeing our church community gather together, enjoy one another's company, share in moments of laughter, and spread the love and light of Christ to all newcomers. God was moving! We thank everyone for their tireless support in planning, volunteering, serving, and extending the invitation to their families, friends and neighbors. Life is truly better together!



Clayton LaPosta (center) is prayed over by the congregation and Pastoral Search Committee members (left to right) Alan Shephard, Catie Reynolds, Brian Shields, Josh Tustin and Kevin York after Pastor Tom confirmed the results of the vote.



The 2025 Holy Smokers Crew of competitors include (left to right) Fred Rasel, Jake Carter, Ron Stewart, Gary Klimek, Dave Sykut and Josh Tustin.



MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

Farewell to Pastor Tom

Sunday, September 28 was Pastor Tom Jones' final service as Transitional Pastor at Hickory United EPC. Our time with Pastor Tom may be at an end, but what a blessed send-off it was! The handbells performed not one, but two musical offerings during the Prelude. All members were invited up at the conclusion of the service to pray over Pastor Tom, followed by a light farewell reception in Covenant Center. We thank Pastor Tom for his tireless service these past two years, and send him off on the next assignment God has in store with many blessings and our immeasurable gratitude.



*We
thank
you!*



Worship Service @ Apple Festival

Oct. 5 | 9:00 am | 106 Main St., Hickory
No worship service at Hickory United campus



Food & Fellowship Meal

Oct. 12 | 11:15 am | Covenant Center
Bring a main, side or dessert to pass!



Let's bless and Welcome Leslie! Part of receiving the blessing of a new Pastor is the blessing of their spouse and family! The Women's Ministry is organizing a card shower for Leslie LaPosta. The white drop box will be in the Welcome Area to collect cards of welcome and encouragement for Leslie October 12-26. The cards will be presented to Leslie on Sunday, Nov. 2. Thank you for your hospitality!

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

NOTES OF Thanks

Dear Saints at Hickory United EPC,

We greet you in the most precious name of Jesus. We thank you for your prayers and financial support for the ministry.

Thank you for not only sponsoring our children to go to school but also for providing food for them and their families during this famine.

Thank you for check #22486 in the amount of \$2,500.00 issued on 9/9/2025. School starts next month. We are preparing for a good school year. God bless.

~ERMITHE & PIERRE

DEACON'S CORNER

Meals on Wheels

Do you know of anyone in need of meals? We would love to serve more people in our Meals on Wheels program. Recipients must live within five miles of the church. This program could not exist without our drivers. They not only deliver the meals, but they brighten each recipient's day with a smile and kind words. This means so much to those living alone. We can always use drivers! Contact Sandy Martinek: 724.986.1463

Fort Cherry Helping Hands

Donations of cereal, canned meat, fruits and vegetables, ready to make meals like Hamburger Helper and Mac and Cheese for the Fort Cherry Helping Hands program are collected Sundays when Communion is served. Financial contributions are also appreciated. Thank you for giving generously to this program. Please place your items on the collection shelf in the greeting area foyer. Thank you for remembering the families in the Fort Cherry Helping Hands program.



Next Communion: Oct. 12
10:00 am | Sanctuary
Gluten Free wafers available



Blessings and thanks to all who donated blood in September. We received 23 units of blood which will benefit 69 recipients. Stay tuned for our Spring blood drive dates!

HICKORY CHRISTIAN *Preschool*

This past month has been full of so much fun at the preschool! From starting school to Back to Church Sunday with new families our hearts have been full of love and Jesus! My teachers and I were honored to face paint the kiddos and to have the helpers we did-thank you very much to everyone who helped. This next month will be the Ride For Jesus so if you are interested in helping out, please reach out to me at the preschool email hickorypreschool@hickoryunitedepc.org!



UPCOMING EVENTS

No School - Columbus Day
October 13 - Preschool Closed



Ride for Jesus Fundraiser
October 30 & 31 | Covenant Center
Volunteers needed!

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

Dear Giving Partner,

God is a giver. God gives out of love.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

You are made in His image. You, too, are born to give out of love.

You, as part of Hickory United, are extravagantly generous. As a congregation you meet every need God places before you. Every year the church leadership asks everyone, individually, to consider giving. We are asking you to make an individual commitment to help with our collective church planning and budgeting.

Pledges will be dedicated during the service on Sunday, October 19, 2025. Should you be unable to attend this special time, please return your card to the church office by October 19. If you prefer to go paperless, you may conveniently submit your pledge online at www.hickorychurch.com/give by scrolling down to the 2026 Online Pledge Card.

Based on a review of our plans for Ministry and Mission in 2026, the church leadership has set a goal of a 50% participation pledge rate.*

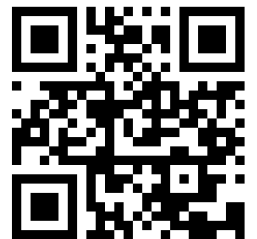
*For details about the budget and pledging please review the frequently asked questions (FAQ's) page on the give webpage. Our treasurers and members of the Stewardship and Benevolence Committee can address any specific concerns.

With sincere gratitude,

The Stewardship & Benevolence Committee

The Stewardship & Benevolence Committee
Hickory United Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Go digital!



Operation Christmas Child 2025 Begins!

Mark your calendars for Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Ministry 2025! Collection & Dedication Day will be held during the worship service on Sunday, Nov. 16.

Starting September 28, free cardboard shoeboxes will be available for pick-up in the Welcome Area! Plastic shoeboxes are also available (\$2.50 ea.) to help keep gifts dry and provide a reusable container for the children. Contact Sue Alrutz at 412-576-5773 if you would like plastic shoeboxes.

As you shop for items to pack inside your boxes this year, please note that bar soaps are no longer accepted items in shoeboxes. Thank you to everyone who participates in this global ministry of bringing the Gospel to children all over the ends of the earth! God bless you! Good news. Great joy.



Good news. Great joy.

KIDS & YOUTH

HICKORY UNITED Kids

This October, our Pre-K-5th graders will be learning from the Gospel of John. Each week, they will cover a new story about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ! Kidventure this year will be mirroring our Sunday School lessons! Each week, we will reinforce our young students' learning by revisiting the passage and topic they learned about the Sunday prior.



In September, we kicked off Youth Sunday School by resuming our study of the Gospel of Mark! It was such a joy to be back in the classroom with everyone studying the life of Jesus. We also welcomed Sunday School teacher Jake Carter; many thanks, Mr. Carter, for volunteering this year!

This year in Youth Group, we are beginning our year with a study of Biblical Genres. In September, we covered the Law, the books of History, Poetry, and Wisdom Literature. We will continue and complete this series this month with the Prophets, Gospels, Epistles, and Apocalyptic Literature. Join us as we explore these genres as well as enjoy weekly pizza and gym games!

UPCOMING EVENTS

SUNDAY SCHOOL 8:45 AM



Kids: Fall KidVenture

Tuesdays | 5:30-7:00 pm | Covenant Ctr.



Joyful Noise Children's Church

Sundays during service | K-5th grade | Choir Rm

Pre-K-5th graders are learning a song together in preparation for a future service offering, and they have started learning basic movements to accompany the chorus. Our kiddos have also been getting a lesson that pairs with what their parents learn from the sermon.



Harvest: Youth Group

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



Harvest: 5th Quarter Night

Oct. 24 | 8-11:45 pm | Covenant Ctr.

Grades 6-12

Join us for another 5th Quarter night after the FC home game for fun, gym games, snacks and sodas.

First Grade Bible Presentation

As a symbol of spiritual growth thus far and continued growth in coming years, Michaela Walker alongside Sunday school teacher Sherry Strnisa, presented first graders with Bibles during the Sept. 7 service.

Bibles are signed by Pastor and given on behalf of the Discipleship team, Sunday school teachers and our congregation. Receiving Bibles this year are (left to right) Lydia Kobryns, Kinsley Powell, and Valerie Cole. Congratulations girls!

OCTOBER CALENDAR

ALL EVENTS, DATES & TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

SPECIAL DATES THIS MONTH

- 10/5 **Worship @ Apple Fest | 9 am (106 Main St.)**
10/8 Women's Bible Study begins | 10 am (LB)
10/12 **Worship | 10 am** with Guest Speaker Pastor Evens (S)
Communion | 10 am (S)
Food & Fellowship | 11:15 am (CC)
10/13 **Columbus Day - Preschool Closed**
10/19 2026 Pledges Due & Service Dedication | 10 am (S)
10/24 Harvest 5th Quarter | 8-11:45 pm (CC)
10/30 Preschool Ride for Jesus Fundraiser
10/31 Preschool Ride for Jesus Fundraiser
Kids Ministry Halloween Event | 4-7 pm (CC)

NEXT MONTH

- 11/2 **Daylight Saving Time Ends**
Pastor Clayton's First Day & Communion | 10 am (S)
Food & Fellowship | 11:15 am (CC)
11/4 **Election Day**
11/7 Harvest Worship Night | 7 pm (YR)
11/9 Living Nativity Cast Fittings (LB)
11/11 **Veterans Day Service | 11 am (S)**
11/16 Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Collection | 10 am (S)
11/21 Harvest Gratitude | 7-8:30 pm (YR)
11/27 **Thanksgiving Day - Office Closed**
11/28 **Office Closed**
11/29 Hanging of the Greens | 9 am (S)

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

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

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