



HICKORY UNITED EPC | SEPTEMBER 2025

# THE HICKORY MESSENGER



## Pastor's Pen

BY PASTOR TOM JONES

The primary theme of the Bible is redemption. No matter how far we have fallen, no matter how bad the world is, no matter how much God's people have departed from His way, God is always the one who offers us a way back. The major act of God in the Old Testament of redemption is when God brings the children of Israel out of Egypt, the land of slavery, into the promised land. In the New Testament, the major act of redemption is when Jesus died on the cross to save us from the slavery of sin. He set us free to live the promised life!

As I read through the Bible, I read again and again of new beginnings. Noah and his family had a new beginning after the flood. The Israelites had a new beginning after Egypt. David had a new beginning after Bathsheba. The Jews had a new beginning after Babylon. The woman at the well, the woman caught in the act of adultery, Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter, the Apostle Paul, all experienced a new beginning. They were all redeemed for a new life!

September is a big month in the life of our church. On the 7th, we have the Sunday School Kick-Off event. On the 14th, we will vote to call a new pastor, and on the 21<sup>st</sup>, we will celebrate Back to Church Sunday. This is the month of new beginnings for Hickory United! God has been working in marvelous ways in our church and the Holy Spirit has been moving in our midst. The story of redemption continues as God gives us the opportunity to experience a new life in relationship to Jesus Christ. This is the perfect time to come back to church, put aside the hurts and wrongs of the past, and experience the power of His love, mercy and grace!

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

## Extending the Invitation

This year's national Back to Church Sunday theme is "life is better together." God wants a relationship with us, but also urges us to seek community with each other. For our second year participating as a congregation, we are leaning into Back to Church Sunday even more with an epic celebration reception!

Save the date for September 21, 2025 at 10:00 am for a special Back to Church Sunday service. Stay afterward for a reception at 11:15 am in Covenant Center as we celebrate life being better together with hot dogs, face painting, kids bounce house, indoor youth games, family photo area and the Coolie Skoolies truck with ice cream available for purchase (cash, credit or Apple Pay)!

We encourage our Hickory United church community to embrace the invite challenge as ambassadors of Christ and use invitation cards or flyers as conversation starters to invite at least one person to attend for church service on September 21. Cards and flyers can be found in the Welcome Area table near the Sanctuary entrance. Let's do this together Hickory United!

## Joyful Noise Children's Church

Starting September 14, children Pre-K to 5th Grade will be invited to join in the choir room during the Sunday sermon time for Joyful Noise! During our time, children rotate through three different worship-related classrooms:

- Bible lesson based on the sermon for the week with Children's & Youth Director, Ms. Michaela
- Music time to work on learning songs, playing instruments, and preparing programs for special services with Music Director, Mr. Tim
- Activity time that will include lessons on participating in services and other fun enrichment activities with Joyful Noise volunteers

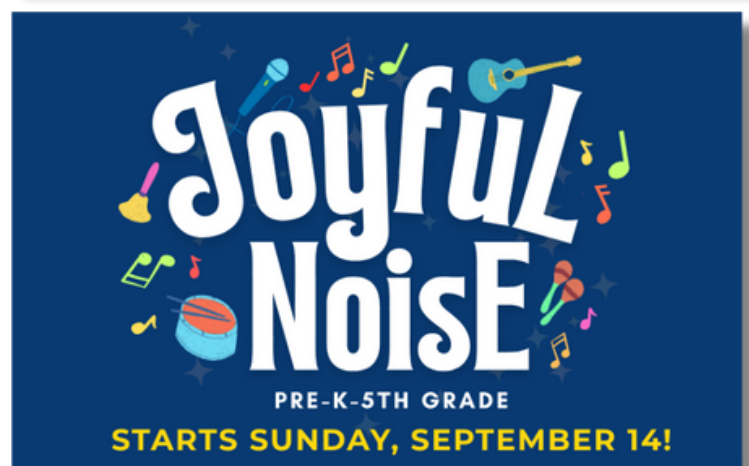
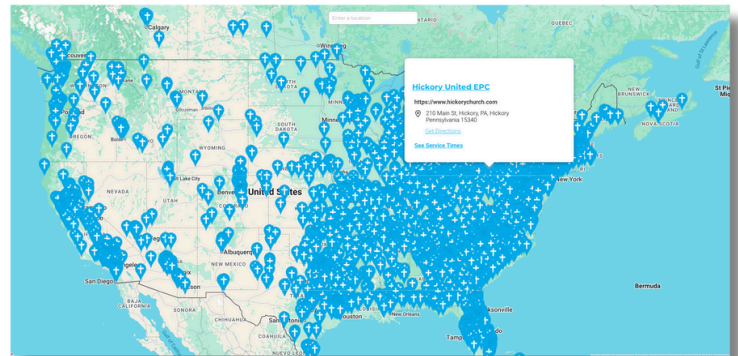
Our desire is that children will develop a better understanding of what worship is, why we do it, why God alone is worthy of worship, and to give them opportunities to participate in services more regularly. Joyful Noise will have the opportunity to participate in singing/playing with praise band and other ensembles,

special programs for Christmas, Palm Sunday, and Easter, lighting of the candles in the Sanctuary, collecting the offering, and more! We are hopeful and excited about helping these children "start off on the way they should go" (Prov. 22:6) with worship and deepening their relationship with God in ways that will have an impact for them for the rest of their lives. If you have any questions or would like to volunteer with Joyful Noise, please reach out to Michaela and Tim: [youth@hickoryunitedepc.org](mailto:youth@hickoryunitedepc.org) or [tim.vannasdale@hickoryunitedepc.org](mailto:tim.vannasdale@hickoryunitedepc.org).

*"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into His presence with singing!" (Ps. 100:1-2)*

## NATIONAL BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY

(Below) Each pin represents a church that has registered as a participating location in the US for 2025 with Hickory United's pin highlighted. Churches in Canada, South America, Africa, Europe and Australia are also registered.





# MISCELLANEOUS NEWS



## Annual Fellowship Picnic

Sept. 7 | Lunch @ 12:30 pm | Shelter #3  
Cross Creek Park, 1 County Line Rd, Avella



## Congregational Meeting

September 14 following Service | Sanctuary



## Ladies' 4 week Bible Study

Wednesdays | 10:00 am | Library  
Meets weekly October 8-29

Join us for some sweet fellowship on Wednesday mornings in October for a 4 week study (homework included). The Bible Study is called *Gratitude* written by Lifeway Women. Fostering a heart of gratitude has many benefits! It glorifies our Father, you get closer to Him, increases joy & peace, spiritual maturity, increases empathy, enhances immune system, and the list grows on!

Contact Janet Bell or Merri Clark for book orders. Sign-up at Back to Church Sunday reception on 9/21 or the Welcome Area 9/28. "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His faithful love endures forever" (Psalm 106:1).

## NOTES OF Thanks

Dear Saints at Hickory United EPC,

"Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name" (Ps. 103:1).

We greet you in the Holy name of Jesus, our Lord. We thank you for the privilege you give us to thank the Lord for His provision. Thank you for your obedience. Thanks for check #22448 in the amount of \$1,700.00 issued on 7/21/25. We thank you for your prayers. They keep the ministry going in the midst of chaos. God is good. School will be back in session next month. We pray for a good school year. God bless.

~ERMITHE & PIERRE

# DEACON'S CORNER

## Helping Hands Program

Donations of cereal, canned meats, fruits and vegetables and ready to make meals (like Hamburger Helper and Mac and Cheese) are collected by the Deacons on Communion Sundays. This food goes to the Fort Cherry Helping Hands. Please place items on the collection shelf in the welcome area foyer.

## Send Your Surplus Garden Harvests!

Got surplus garden veggies as summer winds down? Donate extra garden vegetables for families in need! Drop-off by Thursdays to the short red bin near the Main Office for the McDonald Food Pantry.

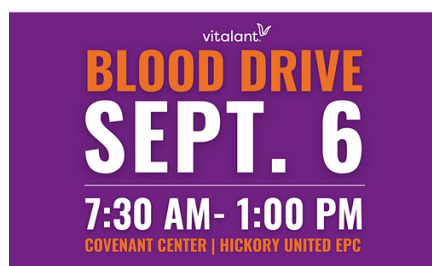
## Fall Blood Drive

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](http://vitalant.org) with group code: UG0010081.



## Next Communion: Sept. 7

10:00 am | Sanctuary  
Gluten Free wafers available



## Baptism News



Praise the Lord! Maggie Jo Gottardi was baptized by Pastor Tom on Sunday, August 24, 2025 during service. Congratulations to Maggie, proud parents Shawn, CJ and extended family. God bless you!

# KIDS & YOUTH

## HICKORY UNITED Kids

This year, our Pre-K through 5th graders will begin "Explore the Bible," a new curriculum designed to cover every book of the Bible over the next three years.

For Fall 2025, students will study Genesis, John, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles, and Psalms, discovering God's plan for creation and His constant protection of His people from the very beginning.

In September, the focus will be on the book of Genesis, with four lessons covering God's creation of the world, Adam and Eve's sin, Cain and Abel, and Noah and the Ark. We can't wait to get started!



We are so excited for this year of Sunday School with our 6th-12th graders! This past year, we read through the first half of the Gospel of Mark, and this upcoming year we will read the second half.

Our deep dive into this Gospel has taught us so much this past year about who Jesus was and how we might be transformed into his likeness. We are looking forward to continuing our learning this year, and we can't wait for you to join us!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

SUNDAY SCHOOL 8:45 AM



### Kids: School Year Kick-Off

Sunday, Sept. 7 | 8:45 am | Hickory United Fellowship Picnic at Cross Creek post-service.



### Kids: Parents' Night Out!

September 19 | 5-9 pm | Covenant Ctr.  
Open to ages K-5<sup>th</sup> grade

Drop off your child and enjoy the night out while the kids have fun staying in!



### Harvest: Youth Group Kickoff

September 12 | 5-7 pm | Covenant Ctr.  
Grades 6-12

Gym games, coloring station, and rock, paper scissors tourney with prizes!



### Kids: Fall KidVenture

Tuesdays | 5:30-7:00 pm | Covenant Ctr.  
Starts September 9 for K-5<sup>th</sup> grade



### Harvest: Youth Group

Weds. | 7:30-9 pm | Covenant Ctr./Youth Rm  
Resumes September 10



### Harvest: 5th Quarter Night

September 26 | 8-11:45 pm | Covenant Ctr.  
Grades 6-12

Come after the FC Football game for social time, gym games, snacks and sodas!



# HEART FOR HAITI

LA CROIX NEW TESTAMENT MISSION | 8.26.25

Dear friends in the Lord and privilege partners in God's ministry,

Shalom, shalom to you all in the glorious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! What an amazing grace it is to serve the kingdom of God together. It is truly a blessing from the Almighty God that we at the mission can continue serving Him! While teachers and students enjoy their much-deserved vacation, the mission administration and school management are diligently preparing for the upcoming academic year.

## YOUTH CONFERENCE IN LACROIX NEW TESTAMENT

These pictures were taken at a youth conference organized at the mission for the summer. Twenty young people walked from Diegue (Paul) more than three hours to attend this conference. We expressed our appreciation for their great effort. After a wonderful time of worship, praise, and prayer, the first conference kicked off. It was a full day of sessions with various speakers, all centered on Christian moral values. Many questions were raised, and several workshops were organized following the conferences. The young attendees eagerly asked if there would be another event like this at the mission and when it might happen. We encouraged them to pray to God about. They left feeling fulfilled, and we give glory to God for it.



## BUILDING A HOUSE FOR A YOUNG WIDOW

Edeline is a widow who was married to Joacius, a member of the New Testament Church. About two years ago, Joacius tragically passed away in an accident, leaving behind his wife and three children. The New Testament Mission stepped in to help by providing her with a house. The family was overjoyed to move in, and they have all found their happiness again. All glory to God!



# SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

ALL EVENTS, DATES & TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

## SPECIAL DATES THIS MONTH

- 9/1 **Labor Day - Office Closed**  
9/7 **Communion | 10 am (S)**  
Sunday School Kick-Off | 8:45 am  
Annual Fellowship Picnic | 12:30 pm (Cross Creek Park)  
9/9 Fall Kidventure Session begins | 5:30-7 pm (CC)  
9/10 Harvest Youth Group resumes | 7:30-9 pm (CC/L)  
9/12 Harvest Student Kick-off | 5-7 pm (CC/L)  
9/13 Pie with the Pastor (Candidate Meet & Greet) | 6:30 pm (CC)  
9/14 Candidate Preaching & Congregational Mtg | 10:00 am (S)  
9/19 Parent's Night Out (K-5) | 5-9 pm (CC)

- 9/21 **Back to Church Sunday | 10:00 am (S)**  
**Back to Church Sunday Reception | 11:15 am (CC)**  
9/26 **Harvest 5<sup>th</sup> Quarter | 8-11:45 pm (CC)**  
9/28 **Pastor Tom's Last Sunday**

## NEXT MONTH

- 10/5 **Worship @ Apple Fest**  
10/12 **Communion | 10 am (S)**  
**Food & Fellowship | 11:15 am (CC)**

(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](http://hickorychurch.com/calendar)

## Staff CONTACTS:

### PASTORAL & MINISTRY

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#### ASST. TREASURER & CONSULT

Linda Carter

#### AUDIO VISUAL TECHNICIAN

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Will Smith

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