

THE HICKORY MESSENGER

HICKORY UNITED EPC | DECEMBER 2022



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.*

Season of Excitement & Awe

BY PASTOR DAN CLARK

Macy, our oldest granddaughter, will soon be turning nine years old this coming December. Years ago, when her third birthday was on the horizon, our daughter, Jennifer, shared that the theme for Macy's birthday party was The Polar Express. The Polar Express is a 1985 children's fantasy book written by Chris Van Allsburg. In the book, you read about the magical adventure of a young boy to the North Pole via the Polar Express train. During his adventure he learns about friendship, bravery, and the spirit of Christmas. With Macy's birthday party theme in mind, I constructed a three year old's 'sized' Polar Express locomotive out of appliance sized pieces of cardboard painted black and installed working lights, a cow catcher, moving wheels, and of course, a tinkling silver bell.

Recently, our youngest daughter Sarah has shared with us that she is now 21 weeks pregnant. We ask that you cover Sarah with your prayers for the remainder of her pregnancy because she miscarried about a year ago. As I ponder both Macy's upcoming ninth birthday, and Lord willing, the arrival of another grandchild in five months or so, my mind naturally returns to when I first learned that Judy was pregnant.

I remember like it was yesterday. I remember how my excitement, and yes, my anxiety, grew more and more with the unexpected news we were having twins, the appearance of Judy's ever-enlarging baby-bump, feeling and seeing the movements of the babies across her tummy, and then, finally, the birth of our twins.

(CONTINUED ON PG. 2)

Sunday Worship Services:

8:30 am Contemporary

11:00 am Traditional

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PASTOR'S PEN

(CONTINUED FROM COVER)

During the Advent season, we are asked to ponder all things Jesus and His birth. But as I ponder Jesus' birth, I have always wondered, how did the heavenly host, the angels, react to the initial news that the Creator of all that is seen and unseen, would voluntarily be reduced to the size of a human baby for the sole purpose of rescuing humanity.

Imagine all the first questions they might have asked. "Wait. What?" Or "Why?" Or "When?" Or "How?" Or "Where?" Were they anxious, excited or both? Though in the grand scheme of God's plan, they really had no say in Jesus' divine mission of salvation. But as far as what they thought of Jesus, they did express to us how magnificent such a gift is.

We read in the Gospel of Luke: The angel said to the shepherds, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly hosts appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." Luke 2:10-14

May the same awe and excitement expressed by heaven's angels on the day that Jesus Christ was born, excite and empower each of us to share the real 'reason for the season.' To God be the honor, glory and praise!

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
~Pastor Dan*

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

Through Work of Our Hands, by His Hand

Coming January 2023!

Craft a gift of comfort and prayer this season for those in need! Anyone interested in learning to knit can create a warm wearable item to be donated to the community. Knitting lessons will be led by Mary Jordan and all knitting projects will be donated on behalf of Hickory Church's Prayer Shawl Ministry. Participants will be advised on supplies and materials. This session is open to the public! Come and learn a new skill and leave having created a tangible item that will benefit someone in need and brighten their holiday.

**Saturdays 1-2 PM | Parlor
(4 week session)**

**Text or call Mary to sign up:
412-760-5825**

"Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!"

~ PSALM 90:17

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

CONTINUED

JANUARY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

DECEMBER

12

SEND TO:
COMMUNICATIONS@HICKORYUNITEDEPC.ORG



GRAB A PAPER COPY IN THE LOBBY!
CALENDAR RUNS NOV 27 THROUGH DEC 24

A FAMILY ADVENT CALENDAR



HICKORY STUDENTS
6TH-12TH

Luminaries

Sunday, December 4th 945am
in the Youth Loft during IGNITE
SERVICE PROJECT FOR
LIVING NATIVITY



HICKORY STUDENTS
6TH-12TH

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Sunday, December 18
9:45AM @ IGNITE



*Decorations in the Sanctuary after
Hanging of the Greens (above)*

Sharing the Miracle

BY LYNN VANNASDALE

The only Live Nativity I ever attended was facilitated by Latter-Day Saints at the Temple Square in Salt Lake City. Though I am not Mormon, I went anyway. Hundreds of other people did too, and the event ran almost nightly for nearly a month. It was a spectacle to behold with the parade of cast members on camel back, swelling instrumental music and faces lit by amber and blue floodlights under the vast night sky. I was transported. A story I had seen, heard and read made a greater impact than it had before. I also was not regularly attending a church during this time in my life.

My point is, there are many people that haven't written Jesus off entirely yet - and we know Jesus hasn't written them off either. The Hickory Church's Living Nativity experience is not much different than mine. Any child or adult (churched, un-churched, de-churched, whoever) might come and have a new relationship with the message, and potentially a new (or renewed) relationship with Christ.

The miraculous birth story of our Savior is one rife with salvation and hope...a promise of a future in an eternal kingdom of unending peace and love. It's a sobering and inspiring reminder to spread the good news of great joy.

Imagine if the entire church community uses the hope and joy within us, (knowing what we know about Jesus), to take unified action and invite others to share in our hope and joy this season. What a gift!

NATIVITY IMPORTANT DATES

REHEARSAL

12.4 | 1:00 PM

PERFORMANCE

12.10 | 6:00-7:30 PM

RAIN DATE

12.17 | 6:00-7:30 PM

Advent Season Calendar

1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT - NOV. 27

WORSHIP | 8:30 & 11 AM

2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT - DEC. 4

COMMUNION | 8:30 & 11 AM

3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT - DEC. 11

CHRISTMAS CANTATA | 9 AM

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT - DEC. 18

WORSHIP | 8:30 & 11 AM

CHRISTMAS EVE SATURDAY - DEC. 24

CANDLELIGHT SERVICE | 5 & 7 PM

CHRISTMAS DAY SUNDAY - DEC. 25

UNIFIED WORSHIP | 9 AM

*Hope
has
come
alive*

HICKORY UNITED EPC
**6TH ANNUAL
LIVING NATIVITY**
DECEMBER 10 | 6:00-7:30 PM
ONE NIGHT ONLY | FREE ADMISSION

Nativity Challenge:

- **Invite 2 people to Living Nativity (friends, family, co-workers or strangers!)**
- **Grab Nativity postcards from the Welcome Area and use as invitations or distribute in your community.**

Deacon's Corner

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Angel Tree Brings Tidings of Comfort and Joy

If you have taken an angel from our Angel Tree, here is a guide for shopping and returning your gifts. Remember to sign out your angel at the table in the welcome area!

Red Ribbon Angels - These are City Mission angels and have a quick turnaround time. They MUST be returned on Sunday, 12/4. Per City Mission, please place the gift in a gift bag with the angel attached, DO NOT WRAP.

White Ribbon Angels - These are from the Fort Cherry Angel tree. These gifts must be returned by Sunday, 12/11. Per Fort Cherry Angel Tree Committee, attach the angel to the gift and DO NOT WRAP.

Gold Ribbon Angels - These angels are from the Deacons Outreach. These gifts must be returned on Sunday, 12/11 and can be wrapped or in gift bags with angels attached.

Envelopes - These are for monetary donations which the Deacons will donate to the Fort Cherry Angel Tree Committee. Place cash or check payable to Hickory United EPC noted for "FC Angel Tree." These can be placed in the offering plate, dropped off at the church office or given to any Deacon by Christmas. Be sure you look on the front and back of the angel for this information. Sign out your angel on the sheet provided in the greeting area or call/text Tracey Fasnacht at 724-747-2571. Thank you in advance for your giving hearts!

Next

Communion:

December 4

8:30 & 11:00 AM

2022-2023 Deacons

Lisa Alexander

Kenneth Alrutz

Tracey Fasnacht

Jackie Fawley

Janet Greene

Patti Jacobs (Moderator)

Mary Jordan (Vice Moderator)

Sharon Mechtel

Barb Rea (Secretary)

Deb Rea (Treasurer)

Denise Rollinitis

A Deacon's Role in the EPC:

According to Scripture, those who bear the office of Deacon should especially exhibit the spiritual qualities of the Christian and should be steady and reliable. The first duty of the Deacon is sympathy and service, and together the Board of Deacons carries out the ministry of compassion. As the law of love places certain duties upon each Christian, the Deacon is especially bound to fulfill those duties and to be an example to all.

Ref: The Ordination and Installation of Deacons Book of Government 14-1E.

THANK YOU DONORS!

78
LIVES
IMPACTED.

vitalant.



BLOOD DRIVE

26
DONATIONS
RECEIVED!

SAVE THE DATE
MARCH 25, 2023



STEWARDSHIP

and Mission Ministry Team *Managing God's Gifts To Us*

December 4 - Second Sunday of Advent

**“With righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.”
Isaiah 11:4**

Isaiah encourages equity for the poor and the meek of the earth. In preparation for the family sharing of gifts at Christmas, Advent invites us to actively share gifts with the poor and the meek.

December 11 - Third Sunday of Advent

Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them." Matthew 11:4-5

What Jesus offers are not things that people want (as in Christmas gifts) but things they need: sight, the ability to walk and to hear, especially to hear the good news. A steward might be thinking: How can we bring these necessities to the needy around us?

December 18 - Fourth Sunday of Advent

“To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 1:7

If Paul were writing to us, he would tell us that we too are called to be saints. That’s both a joy and a challenge. How should we live as saints? As a Christmas reflection, that’s something to consider!

December 26 - First Sunday after Christmas

“Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.” Hebrews 2:11

The birth of Jesus proclaims that despite all the challenges and disappointments of it, we are truly brothers and sisters of Jesus, and one another. How is that for a Christmas gift? And how in the world can we live up to it? Isaiah’s hoped-for time of peace will be echoed by the coming King, Jesus. As Christian stewards, we can work to reduce the level of rancor and hateful discord in our society.

***Our Culture of
Thankfulness
& Generosity***

Notes of THANKS

Dear Church Family,

I want to thank everyone for the prayers, cards, thoughts and meals during the past few weeks. A special thank you to Melissa Fluharty for covering the treasurer work for the last three weeks giving me peace of mind as I recuperated. My back surgery went well and I am feeling well and recovering quickly. The kindness and giving is so appreciated. What a Blessing to be part of Hickory Church.

~ LINDA CARTER

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD SHOEBOX SUNDAY 2022

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Shoebox Sunday Recap

BY SUE ALRUTZ

Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Dedication Sunday was held on November 13th. Praise the Lord, a total of 170 shoe boxes were delivered to the North Franklin Collection Center from Sunday, 11/13 through Thursday, 11/17. Here shoeboxes are officially documented, counted and placed into large cardboard crates and loaded into tractor trailers. On Sunday 11/20, they will be transported to Charlotte, NC where each will be officially examined and processed. Each individual shoebox is prayed over by the hundreds of volunteers and made ready for the next part of their journey, traveling by airplanes and cargo ships out of the USA to various locations across the world. Once they arrive at their assigned countries, they will be taken by various modes of transportation including: trucks, buses, boats, camels, horses/mules, canoes, etc. Many are actually carried by hand to remote villages and tribes into the hills and mountainous areas, literally to the "Ends of the Earth."



Thank you so much for your generosity and dedication this year and throughout the past 25 years. Each shoebox is truly a gospel opportunity and will change the life of a child in need, many times touching the hearts of their family and extending the Good News of Jesus Christ into their community.

Please continue to pray for that one child, already chosen by GOD for your shoebox gift, that he/she may be touched by the love of Jesus and forever transformed as a Child of the King!

Special thanks to Lynn VanNasdale for her support with media, pictures, and videos to promote OCC this year and to Connie and Rick Weaver for their assistance with the overall Mission Project.

Blessings,
Ken, Amy and Sue Alrutz

Therefore, go forth and make disciples of all nations, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

-Matthew 28:19

HAVE A HEART FOR HAITI: LACROIX NEW TESTAMENT MISSION

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UPDATE AS OF 11.6.22:

If you have been watching the news you are seeing that there is political unrest in Haiti. I have been watching it closely and my heart goes out to the people who are living in these circumstances. Pastor Pierre and his wife, Ermithe are monitoring the situation from Florida at this time but are in communication with the leadership and staff at the mission in LaCroix.

I wanted to take a minute to reassure you that your donations are not in any way compromised by the things that are happening in the country. Donations are kept in the US until they are needed to pay salaries of the staff or purchase food for distributions or to feed the children. We use bank to bank wire transfers to get the money to the people in need. This is the safest way to assure that your donations are used to help the people of LaCroix and the children that you support.

We are thankful for your generous gifts, and work hard to be sure they get where they need to go to help the people. We are an all-volunteer organization, so all of your donations help the Haitian people.

We have grateful hearts to be able to walk along with You, Pastor Pierre and Ermithe Pierre and the leadership at the mission.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT,
Denise Douglas, President
Friends of Haiti

Food distribution at the LaCroix New Testament Mission:



**Just a few of the
1,000 people from
villages around the
mission receiving
food because our
congregation is
contributing to the
Haiti fund!
God bless you.**

Preschool Blessings

Through Bible Time, Center Time, Circle Time, and structured classroom time 56 students spend part of their week learning and beginning to develop their faith in Jesus Christ at The Hickory Christian Preschool.

We are looking for some new items and to replenish supplies to keep these children excited about learning! Consider donating to our Preschool Blessings Wish List on Amazon. Your donations are appreciated by the students and teachers! Click the link below to bestow Preschool Blessings:

[Amazon Wish List](#)



Thankful Reflections

BY MARIA MOORE

At Thanksgiving time, we reflect upon our many blessings and consider all the things for which we are thankful. Our Hickory church family is definitely one of mine! Thank you for your continued support of Hickory Christian Preschool. Your prayers and financial support are greatly appreciated.

Last month we celebrated the beauty of fall with a Fall Party. The students had a great time hearing fall stories, making crafts and playing games.



Order Sarris Candy for Christmas online at SarrisCandiesFundraising.com with our **Group ID# 10-1157 (HICKORY CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL)**

- Access to hundreds of products online,
- Every purchase earns 25% profit for our group.
- Orders ship directly to you for a small fee.
- Contact the preschool with questions at 724-356-7337

We hope you have a very Merry Christmas and a blessed and Happy New Year. We pray you receive God's greatest gift, His Son.

DECEMBER CALENDAR

ALL EVENTS, DATES & TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

SPECIAL DATES THIS MONTH

12/1 (Thu) Upward Practices Begin (CC)
12/3 (Sat) Upward Training | 9:00-11:00 am (CC)
12/4 (Sun) Second Sunday of Advent
Communion | 8:30 & 11:00 am (S)
12/10 (Sat) Living Nativity | 6:00-7:30 PM (Lower Lot)
12/11 (Sun) Third Sunday of Advent & Christmas Cantata
Unified Service | 9:00 am (S)

12/17 (Sat) Live Nativity Rain Date | 6:00-7:30 PM (Lower Lot)
12/18 (Sun) Fourth Sunday of Advent
12/24 (Sat) **Christmas Eve**
Candlelight Service | 5:00 & 7:00 pm (S)
12/25 (Sun) **Christmas Day**
Unified Service | 9:00 am (S)
12/26-12/30 **Office Closed**
12/31 (Sat) **New Years Eve**

RECURRING WEEKLY MEETINGS/CLASSES/GATHERINGS

SUNDAYS

- Worship Service | 8:30 am Contemporary & 11:00 am Traditional (S)
- Sunday School - Adults | 9:45 - 10:45 am (Various Locations)
- Hickory Kids (Pre-K - 5th grade) | 9:45 - 10:45 am (Various Locations)
- IGNITE (6th-12th grade) | 9:45 am (L)

MONDAYS

- Fit Club | 8:00 am (CC)
- Tim Vannasdale Small Group | 7:00 pm (P)
- Volleyball | 7:00 pm (CC)

TUESDAYS

- Staff Meeting (Every Other Week) | 10:00 am (Parlor)
- KidVenture | 6:30 pm (CC/L) *ends December 13*
- Boy Scout Meeting | 7:00 pm (CC)
- Dartball League | 7:00 pm (CC for Home Games)

WEDNESDAYS

- Fit Club | 8:00 am (CC)
- Merri Clark Small Group | 10:00 am (P)
- Children's Melody Makers | 6:30 pm (CR)
- Praise Band Practice | 7:00 pm (S)
- Cub Scouts | 7:00 pm | (CC)

THURSDAY

- Handbells | 6:30 PM (CR)
- Choir | 7:30 pm (CR)

FRIDAYS

- Fit Club | 8:00 am (CC)

SATURDAYS

- Yoga Class | 9:00 am (CC)

RECURRING MONTHLY MEETINGS/GATHERINGS

- Building & Property Meeting | 7:00 pm (P) | Every 2nd Wednesday
- Discipleship Meeting | 6:30 pm (LB) - *Monthly meetings are fluid, please check the online church calendar*
- Deacons Meeting | 7:00 pm (LB) | Every 4th Monday
- Outreach Committee Meeting | 6:30 pm (P) | Every 2nd Tuesday
- Prayer Shawl Ministry | 12:00 pm (CC) | Every 2nd Wednesday
- Preschool Team Meeting | 12:30 pm (FH) | Every 1st Tuesday
- Security Team Meeting | (P) Every 1st Tuesday
- Session Meeting | 6:30 pm (P) | Every 3rd Wednesday
- Stewardship Meeting | 6:30 pm (P) | Every 1st Monday **after** 1st Wednesday
- Women's Cancer Survivors Group | 12:00 pm (CC) | Every 4th Wednesday - *Currently not meeting*
- Women's Ministry Meeting | (P) - *Monthly meeting days and times are fluid, please check the online church calendar*

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



Pastoral & Ministry

Pastor Dan Clark | dan.clark@hickoryunitedepc.org

Lay Pastor, Lou Templeton | (724) 356-7835

Director of Music Ministry, Tim VanNasdale | tim.vannasdale@hickoryunitedepc.org

Kids & Youth Coordinator, Dan Bender | dan.bender@hickoryunitedepc.org

Administrative / Support

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Communication Coordinator, Lynn VanNasdale | communications@hickoryunitedepc.org

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Hickory Christian Preschool

School Director, Maria Moore | (724) 356-7337 | hickorypreschool@hickoryunitedepc.org

Facilities

Sexton, Eugene Short | (724) 356-4424 | eugene.short@hickoryunitedepc.org

Facilities Assistant Housekeeper, Will Smith | (724) 356-4424

Prayer Tree

Phone Requests: Sharon Mechtel | (412) 496-9147

Email Requests: Sharon Merckle | sharon.merckle@yahoo.com



TEXT
HICKORYUNITED
TO 84576
hickoryunitedepc.flocknote.com



MOBILE APP

Open your phone's App Store (Google Play or iTunes App Store). In the search bar, key in **Hickory UEP Church**. Download our app, then open and create a sign-in with a password of your choice that you will use for future sign-ins.



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SCAN ME
WITH A
CAMERA
PHONE!

