



HICKORY UNITED EPC | MARCH 2026

THE HICKORY MESSENGER



Pastor's Pen

BY PASTOR CLAYTON LAPOSTA

In our Psalter (the collection of the Psalms) there are 7 Psalms that are often referred to as penitential Psalms. The reason for the name is that these 7 Psalms express a deep level of sorrow, or penance, over sin. While these Psalms are useful any time of year, we find them especially relatable during the season of Lent.

One of those Psalms, and maybe the most well known to us, is Psalm 51. The setting for this particular Psalm is a particularly dark period in the life of King David, the man supposedly "after God's own heart." He has just taken another man's wife into his bed, he will send her husband to the front lines of war to die, and eventually the son created from this act will die. This is not the king's finest hour. When David is confronted by the prophet, Nathan for what he has done, Psalm 51 is David's response. What David did was wrong before Nathan ever brought it up but when he is confronted, the reality of this grave sin really sets in.

"Have mercy on me. My sin is always before me. Against you I have sinned. I was sinful at my birth. Let the bones you have crushed rejoice." David is pouring out his sorrow over this sin that shouldn't be coming from a child of God, the king, and certainly not someone after God's own heart.

During Lent, we are encouraged to recognize the same depth of sin in ourselves. It's hard to realize but our sin is just as offensive as David's. And so, the words of Psalm 51 become our words too when we realize how greatly we have sinned against our God.

Now while this is helpful to remind us of our sin and our need for a Savior, what isn't helpful is to stay there. This sin isn't the end of David's story and it isn't ours either. From this king's offspring the very same Savior the needs will come. After all of David's sorrow he finds comfort in this, "My sacrifice O God is a broken spirit. A broken and contrite heart, you, God, will not despise. Our sin is real, it is deep running, it is an offense against God. But a heart that mourns over it's sin, God will not turn away. So friends, if during this season you find the words of Psalm 51 being for you, know also that the words about a risen Savior and an empty tomb are as well.

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

Deacon's CORNER

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.

Easter Flower Orders

Order Easter flowers in memory of a loved one to be displayed during Holy Week in the Sanctuary. Choose from lilies, daffodils or tulips. Order envelopes available in the Welcome Area or podium in the Sanctuary entryway. Return order form and payment to the offering plate or Main Office by March 22. Flower pickup April 5 after services. Make all checks payable to Hickory United EPC with "Easter flowers" in memo line.

Meals on Wheels

Kudos to the MOW drivers, out delivering meals and smiles in the winter weather. New drivers are always welcome. Contact Kathy Yonker (412-780-2462) if you are interested in helping.



Gluten free wafers available



Sat. March 14 | 4-7 pm (Trinity Fellowship Hall)

McDonald Presbyterian Church

This annual spaghetti dinner supports McDonald Presbyterian's ReNew Youth Group. Tickets are \$12 for adults and \$6 for children. Dine in and take-out available. Menu includes spaghetti with meat sauce, salad, choice of dessert and Cellone's bread.

NOTES OF Thanks

Greetings in the most precious name of our Lord Jesus. We thank you again and again for your prayers and your financial support. We thank you again for your kindness, your love and your generosity. Thank you for checks #22601 in the amount of \$2,170.00 dated 1/1/26 and #22606 in the amount of \$100.00 dated 1/22/26. The money will be given to Eliano Pierre Louis and Pierre family. All continues to go well at the mission. We give all credit and glory to God. Children are in school receiving their hot meals. God bless.

~ERMITHE & PIERRE

The Helping Hands Committee of Washington County Children and Youth Services would like to thank you for your kindness and generosity this holiday season. Because of supporters like you, our 2025 gift drive was a great success. Thanks to you, the children we serve received gifts of every variety, from crayons and art/craft supplies to electronics, toys and clothing.

You helped to make children's lives a little brighter during the holidays. We appreciate your participation in this event and hope that you enjoyed the experience. We wish you and yours a prosperous and healthy 2026.

~THE HELPING HANDS COMMITTEE
KATE GRANT, BARB MULLEN, & BERNADETTE SAYLOR

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

Church Officers 2026 Installation

Congratulations to the new church officers who were installed and ordained. Serving terms beginning in 2026 are Elders Josh Tustin, Kevin York and Matt McDonald, and Deacons Merri Clark, Cathy Dinsmore, Joan Shields, Alan Shephard and Renee Wentzel. Bob Spencer will also be serving another term as a Deacon. May the Lord guide you all in these roles as you serve for His glory!

Our gratitude also extends to those with terms coming to a close. Thanks to Elders JD Little, Fred Rasel, Alan Shephard and Deacons Dale English, Rich Moore and Sandy Martinek for their faithful service. God bless you!



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new features.**



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<https://get.theapp.co/ybr4>



HICKORY CHRISTIAN *Preschool*

Winter Behind, Spring Ahead

BY ASHLEY LEWIS, PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR

We had a wonderful month celebrating the love of Jesus here at the preschool. Our Valentine's Day parties were a highlight, filled with special crafts, stories, games, and treats. Our Sarris Candy fundraiser was a great success, raising over \$1,500.00. I want to extend a special thank you to all the church members who participated and supported us. To close out the month, our four-year-olds are looking forward to a special field trip to the Trolley Museum. This year is flying by, and the teachers and I are soaking up every minute with these incredible children before they head off to Kindergarten. It is truly an honor to serve the Lord and His children.



UPCOMING EVENTS

March 12 & 13 | Parent Teacher Conferences

March 31 | Easter Party

April 1 | Easter Party

April 2-7 | Easter Break

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS



Food & Fellowship
MAR. 8

- JOIN US IN COVENANT CENTER AFTER WORSHIP FOR A POTLUCK AND FELLOWSHIP!
- BRING A MAIN, SIDE OR DESSERT TO SHARE!
- DISH DROP-OFF 8:55-9:30 AM IN COVENANT CENTER

Food & Fellowship

Mar. 8 | 11:15 am | Covenant Center
Volunteers for prep/set-up needed. Contact Lynn VanNasdale.



Annual Name Your Price
FLEA MARKET
MARCH 14 9A-1P
Hickory United EPC
210 Main St. Hickory, PA.

Flea Market Donation Drop-off:

Mar. 12 & 13 | 1-7 pm | Covenant Ctr.

- Only drop-off items during designated times. Unload help available. Item pickup not available.
- Please no clothing, shoes, TV's, non-flat screen computer monitors, cribs, and expired car seats.
- Large items that cannot be carried while shopping should be dropped off at Fellowship Hall.

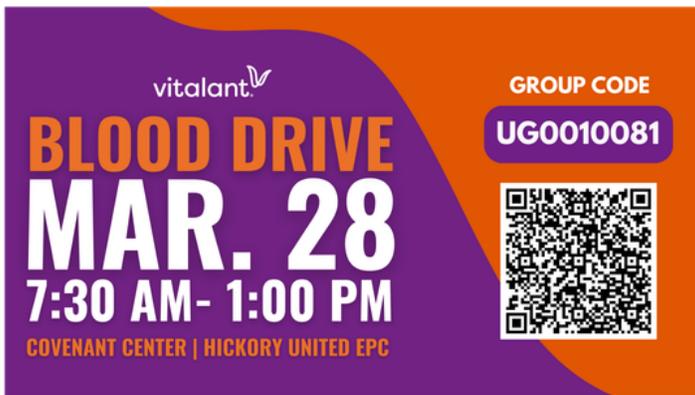
Flea Market Shopping:

Mar. 13 | 7-8 pm | Covenant Ctr.

- Church members only can pre-shop the sale

Mar. 14 | 9am-1 pm | Covenant Ctr.

- Flea Market hours open for the general public



vitalant
BLOOD DRIVE
MAR. 28
7:30 AM- 1:00 PM
COVENANT CENTER | HICKORY UNITED EPC

GROUP CODE
UG0010081



Spring Blood Drive

Mar. 28 | 7:30 am - 1 pm (Covenant Center)
Walk-ins welcome, appointments encouraged.



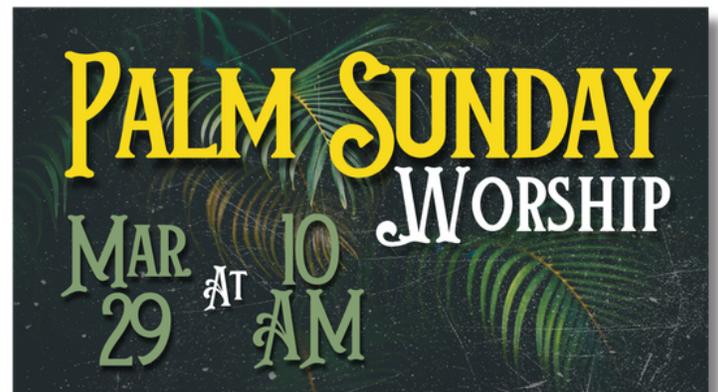
GET LUCKY
CHANCE TO WIN
\$10,000

Be Someone's Lucky Charm and You Could Win BIG!

Donate between March 1-April 5 and you'll be automatically entered for a chance to win a \$10,000 gift card. Your donation is a lucky charm for patients in need. Schedule today.

[Make an appointment at vitalant.org](https://www.vitalant.org) or call 877-25-VITAL

Use blood drive code: **UG0010081**



PALM SUNDAY
WORSHIP
MAR 29 AT 10 AM

Palm Sunday Service

Mar. 29 | 10 am | Sanctuary

Join us for the start of Holy Week with Worship!

Celebrate Palm Sunday and the triumphal entry of the Messiah! Hosanna in the highest! Joyful Noise participants will also share a specially prepared musical offering during service.

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

Scout Sunday 2026

Special thanks to Boy Scout Troop 1365 & Cub Scout Pack 1365 for their service during Worship on Sunday, February 8. Scoutmaster Trevor Fawley thanked the congregation for their support while scouts served as greeters, ushers, candle lighters, collected the offering, and presented and retired the flag. Scouts and Cubs in attendance also recited their Scout Law & Oath and led the congregation in the Pledge of Allegiance. Hickory United is a faithful supporter of Boy Scout Troop & Pack 1365.



An Upward Cause For Celebration

BY LYNN VANNASDALE

Every year for the past 14 winter seasons, Hickory United has participated in Upward Basketball through the Upward Sports program, which touts a variety of structured Christian sports program offerings that churches can implement at their campuses. When the late member Frank Strnisa introduced the basketball league to Hickory United EPC, it launched what is now the largest and longest outreach ministry effort at the church for families within Hickory and its surrounding communities. This program takes a (not so) small village every year to coordinate and staff. It is one hundred percent volunteer run and one thousand percent fruitful.

From December through February, volunteers coach players ages 4 through 8th grade not just how to play basketball, but how to grow in their relationship with God. January-February game days (for eight straight weeks every Saturday), transform Covenant Center into an arena where a couple hundred families sit court side to cheer and support their children. The Buck Stop offers concessions and every half time consists of a devotional lesson or activity. Starting this season, recreational activities (board games, painting, drawing, etc.) were offered for players and their siblings in the Youth Room to help pass the time. This was a huge hit!

The 2026 season has already flown by with final games and the Upward celebration potluck held on Saturday, February 28. From silly shenanigans, players bonding on and off the court, incredibly supportive crowds, and volunteers serving with their whole hearts, bringing Upward to our local communities for another year has been a blessing. We thank all the families that entrusted us with their children and all of our volunteers who mentor, disciple, and serve as ambassadors of Christ. There is a hope that the Upward community will keep their connections strong and attend other upcoming events throughout the Spring and beyond, but the greater hope is that seeds planted take root. We pray that each and every family who has participated in Upward comes to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Hearing an upward calling to join our team? Contact Upward Coordinator Jackie Fawley: jdawley@gmail.com



THE LIVING EASTER

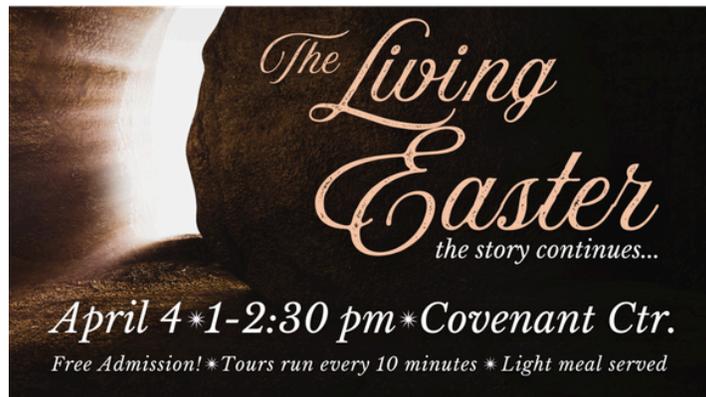
First Annual Living Easter

For the first time ever, Hickory United brings to life highlights of Jesus' ministry and the Gospel message with The Living Easter. The story continues after the Living Nativity, with an experience that transports you back in time to meet and hear from key Bible characters including John the Baptist, Mary Magdalene, disciples and more! As you walk through the experience, you'll meet these characters one by one at the moment Jesus has just gone ahead. Twelve stations, twelve testimonies, one eternal story. As you follow Jesus's footsteps, what you find at your journey's end will change everything. Mark your calendars Easter weekend for April 4 with performances from 1-2:30 pm in Covenant Center. Admission is free! Walk-through tours run every 10 minutes. Stay after to enjoy complimentary homemade soup, fresh bread and refreshments, kids craft and indoor play area.

Living Easter Invitation Challenge

In one month, we are going to share the good news with the community by bringing to life some of the most powerful moments in Jesus' ministry. This also includes sharing the news of the Living Easter event! Starting Sunday, March 8, the postcard invitation challenge begins. Postcards will be available in the Welcome Area for you to invite at least one person to attend. This could be a friend, family member, neighbor, coworker or stranger.

After you invite one, we encourage you to invite one more! Other ways to engage with the invite challenge include placing postcards at your favorite local businesses, community centers, libraries, etc. in addition to sharing the event on your social media accounts. We ask that you prayerfully consider who is on your heart to invite and ask the Lord to put the right people in your path. Let's use this time during Lent to help lead others to the foot of the cross and hear about all that Jesus has done.



Looking for a way to get involved and serve? Join the Living Easter Crew!

Contact event organizer Ellen Warren:
ellenwarren@hotmail.com

Holy Week Events



Palm Sunday - Mar. 29
WORSHIP | 10 AM

Maundy Thursday Service - Apr. 2
COVENANT CTR. | 7 PM

The Living Easter - Apr. 4
PERFORMANCES | 1-2:30 PM

Easter Sunday - Apr. 5
WORSHIP SERVICES | 6 & 10 AM
BREAKFAST | 7:30 AM
EGG HUNT | 8 AM

KIDS & YOUTH

HICKORY UNITED Kids

This March, Pre-K-5th graders are jumping into the books of Exodus and Leviticus! Our young students will learn about the birth and calling of Moses and the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea. Then, they will learn about how God gave the Israelites laws and that God instructed them to build something called a tabernacle, which was where God's presence would dwell. Join us in March as we see in Exodus and Leviticus the great love that God has for his people.

HARVEST STUDENT MINISTRY

Join us as we approach the end of the Gospel of Mark! We will spend March in Mark 14, in which we see Christ share the Last Supper with his disciples, after which he is betrayed and arrested. We will pay special attention to Jesus' actions as he remains obedient even as he is abandoned and in anguish. We will wrap up the Gospel of Mark in April with Jesus' resurrection and ascension. See you in Sunday School!

QUESTIONS?
CONTACT MICHAELA:
YOUTH@HICKORYUNITEDPC.ORG

KIDS & YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL 8:45 - 9:45 AM

Kidventure Returns!

Kidventure is a free to attend weeknight Bible study program in Hickory United's Kids Ministry where we focus on helping young believers build community and friendships with their peers and mentors, strengthen their knowledge of Scripture, and deepen their understanding of God. K-5th graders are invited weekly for games, snacks, crafts, and a lesson in Covenant Center!

KidVenture Spring 2026 Session runs March 3-May 12, weekly on Tuesdays from 5:30-7:00 pm in the Youth Room/Covenant Center.

Parents & guardians are encouraged to drop-off at the gymnasium double doors to the right of the main entrance. You are also welcome to park and accompany your child inside.

Harvest Youth Group Update

In February, we started a video series at Youth Group called Alpha! Consisting of 10 episodes, the Alpha Youth series explores the big questions of life, faith, and purpose.

Made for this generation, the new Alpha Youth Series creatively unpacks the real questions young people have around the Christian faith, such as "Who is Jesus?" and "How does God help us overcome evil?" Each episode explores a different topic and is designed to spark genuine, open conversation. Visit alpha.org/youth to learn more about the Alpha series!



Join us for Harvest Youth Group
Sundays from 6-8 pm!



HARVEST YOUTH EVENTS



Praise & Prayer Night

Mar. 6 | 7-8:30 pm | Youth Room



Trivia Night!

Mar. 20 | 7-8:30 pm | Youth Room
Test your knowledge against other teams!

MARCH CALENDAR

ALL EVENTS, DATES & TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

SPECIAL DATES THIS MONTH

- 3/1 Communion | 10 am (YR)
- 3/3 Kidventure resumes | 5:30-7 pm (CC)
- 3/6 Harvest Praise & Prayer Night | 7 pm (YR)
- 3/8 Daylight Savings Time | 2 am
- Food & Fellowship | 11:15 am (CC)
- 3/12-3/13 Flea Market Donation Drop-off | 1-7 pm (CC)
- 3/14 Annual Flea Market | 9 am - 1 pm (CC)
- 3/20 Harvest Trivia Night | 7 pm (YR)
- 3/28 Blood Drive | 7:30 am - 1 pm (CC)
- 3/29 Palm Sunday - Worship | 10 am (S)

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

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

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

NEXT MONTH

- 4/2 Maundy Thursday - Service & Communion | 7 pm (CC)
- 4/3 Good Friday - Office Closed
- 4/4 The Living Easter | 1-2:30 pm (CC/FH)
- 4/5 Easter Sunday
Worship & Communion | 6 am & 10 am
Breakfast | 7:30 am
Egg Hunt | 8 am
- 4/15 Tax Day
- 4/17 Parents' Night Out (K-5th) | 5-9 pm (CC)

(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



JOIN THE PRAYER TREE:

communications@hickoryunitedepc.org

SUBMIT A PRAYER REQUEST:

hickorychurch.com/prayer



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210 MAIN STREET, HICKORY, PA.



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