



HICKORY UNITED EPC | OCTOBER 2026

# THE HICKORY MESSENGER



## Pastor's Pen

BY PASTOR CLAYTON LAPOSTA

It was hard for people to believe, being that I was born and raised in Washington, that I had never been to the Hickory Apple Festival! This weekend changed that and I praise God that it has. What an incredible event held in our small community. It was such a joy to see so many members of our church stirring soup, selling raffle tickets, and singing praises to the Lord. After a busy weekend, my heart is so full and I'm so thankful for the work that the Lord is using Hickory United for.

Over the weekend, I spend most of my time hanging out at our church's booth with Alan, Dave, Jane, Larry, Ashley, Kirkland, and most of our youth group students. During those two days we talked to hundreds of people inviting them to our church and making connections. The greatest joy though was that when people saw our signs that said "Let's talk about Jesus" and "Can we pray for you", they actually did! I think each of the volunteers has at least one story of a meaningful, Gospel conversation with a stranger. Evangelism is a hard and often scary work but I think I speak for all of us when I say there are few things more worth while.

Don't believe me? Let me tell you about one conversation that I had that really stuck with me. A young woman, 20 years old, was floating around our tent for a while but never came forward. I'm guessing it took her some time to sum up the courage but once she did she simply asked, "would you pray for me?" I started asking the simple questions, "what's your name, what's going on?" As soon as she told me her name she started crying. While she didn't tell me every detail of her life, she did explain that she was extremely overwhelmed with the things going on and she feared that she would never be happy again. To me, this was a young woman searching for joy in a world that has no real ways of offering it. We talked briefly about the joy offered to us through Jesus Christ, prayed, and exchanged information to keep in touch. I will continue to pray for this young woman for the rest of my life.

Sometimes we think that missions and evangelism are things that only take place in the most remote, Gospel deprived places in the world and can only be done by professionals. And while good work is being done in places like that, you can't imagine the number of people who are desperate to know Jesus right here in our back yard. Psalm 16:11 says, "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." There are countless people looking for that joy and life today and God has placed us in this place to be lights that point to the source. So I encourage you, take a step in courage in the days to come. Who in your life is lost? Who is searching? Who has God placed in your path on purpose who needs to find what you have found? Take courage and share the Gospel. You don't need to have every skill or every answer, you just need a love for others and a trust in God who provides words and power for his glory.

## 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

### Food Pantry Donations

Donations of canned goods, vegetables and boxed cereal and pasta are welcome 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 appreciate assistance. Thank you for giving generously to help these families. Please place items on the metal rack located in the main entrance foyer.

### Family Outreach Holiday Food Drive

It's time again for the Annual Holiday Food Drive to help those in need that live in our community. Check out the leaves on the bulletin board in the greeting area to see items that are needed. Collection will begin Sunday October 25th. Once we take care of our families, we send the rest to Fort Cherry Helping Hands families. Thank you.

Items needed: bags of sugar, boxed potatoes, cranberry sauce, stove top stuffing, Jello boxes, canned vegetables, canned gravy, canned sweet potatoes/yams, cake mixes and icing and pudding.

### Blood Drive

Many thanks to all who donated blood. What a great gift and blessing to those in need!



## Help Feed Haitian Children

We are always collecting donations for our Haiti Food Distribution program.

Donations supply rice and beans to Haitian children and their families.



**Dear Church Family,**

*We are deeply grateful for the overwhelming support and love you have shown us during this difficult time. Your prayers and acts of kindness have been a source of comfort and strength for our family.*

*Thank you for honoring Phil's life with us. We are blessed to have been a part of such a caring community.*

~JENNIFER CHANDLER AND FAMILY

**Dear Friends,**

*Thank you for your recent gift of \$625 on September 16<sup>th</sup>. Rest assured that we will use your restricted funds donation according to your intentions.*

*When you choose to give restricted funds, you're doing more than writing a check, you're answering a call. You're standing beside us, helping ensure that critical areas of our ministry receive the focused support they need to make the greatest possible impact. Because of your generosity, lives are healed, dignity is restored and hope is renewed...*

~DIANA IREY VAUGHN  
PRESIDENT/CEO  
CITY MISSION

**Dear Friends,**

*Thank you for your gift to Samaritans Purse.*

*This summer we have been responding in Jesus' name to tornadoes, floods, and wildfires across the U.S., and we praise God for the army of volunteers who have faithfully served alongside us. One of our teams helped a homeowner in Texas remove waterlogged furniture and appliances, and ripped out moldy drywall and insulation from her flooded house. "There's no way we could have done this amount of work on our own," she said "God always provides – every single time."...*

~FRANKLIN GRAHM  
PRESIDENT

## New Member & Baptism

Last month, we were blessed to welcome the Klenk family as new members of our church! We also had the joy of celebrating the baptisms of Eleanor and Brookes.



# MISCELLANEOUS NEWS



## BACK TO HICKORY SUNDAY

Last month we had our Back to Hickory service. Pastor Clayton shared a powerful message from Luke about the prodigal son, reminding us that no matter how far we've wandered or how long we've been gone, there is always a way back home. What an encouraging reminder of God's love, grace, and open arms!

After service, we enjoyed our annual picnic, complete with great food, fellowship, and the always-anticipated Holy Smokers BBQ Contest! Congratulations to this year's winner, who gets to take home the coveted trophy—and proudly display it at home until next year's competition!



## WOMEN'S RETREAT

What an incredible Women's Retreat we had last month!

We were so blessed by such an amazing turnout and the opportunity to gather together, connect, encourage one another, and grow in our faith. A huge thank you to our amazing speaker, Amanda Crews, for bringing such a powerful and inspiring message. We are so grateful for the wisdom and encouragement she shared with us!

And thank you to every woman who came and made the day so special. We're already looking forward to the next one!



## OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

Since its launch in 1993, Operation Christmas Child has delivered over 244 million shoebox gifts in more than 170 countries and territories, making it the largest Christmas project of its kind globally, sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, God's Greatest Gift. Our Church Family here at Hickory United Evangelical Presbyterian Church has been packing Shoeboxes for 28 years! We have packed and sent over 4400 Shoeboxes from our Church. Cardboard Shoeboxes (free of charge) will be available in the Greeting area on Oct 11 th . Plastic Shoeboxes will be available in the Greeting area on Oct 18 th (for \$3 each).

You can pre-order your plastic shoebox by contacting Sue at 412-576-5773

In December 2025, Ken and I, had the special opportunity to travel by bus from the Washington County area to Baltimore Maryland's Processing Center. We helped to prepare shoeboxes for international shipping from this location. It was an amazing experience.

One Shoebox = One Child = One Eternal Message

- Sue & Ken Alrutz.



# MISCELLANEOUS NEWS



## FOOD AND FELLOWSHIP

Get ready for a cozy fall competition! This month's F&F is a Chili Cook-Off on October 11th after service.

Bring your favorite chili recipe and show off your cooking skills! Not a fan of chili? No problem—bring your favorite soup instead.

Come hungry, bring your best recipe, and let's enjoy some fall comfort food together!



## 5TH QUARTER

Our last 5th Quarter of the year is happening October 23rd!

Come join us as we support and serve our local youth following the Fort Cherry football game. It's a great opportunity to connect with students and build community.

We'd love to have you there—come help us make this final 5th Quarter one to remember!

## LIVING NATIVITY

It's that time of year... the Living Nativity is back! This year is extra special as we celebrate the 10th Anniversary! Mark your calendars and join us for this special Christmas tradition. December 5 & 6 6:00–7:30 PM. Bring your family and friends and experience the Christmas story come to life. We're excited to celebrate 10 years of the Living Nativity with you! We hope to see you there!

We are also looking for two more cast members (one man and one woman) and some people to help make another stage. If you are interested contact Ellen Warren 412-254-6494.



# KIDS & YOUTH MINISTRY

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

## KIDS

### UPWARD

Registration for our upcoming Basketball and Cheer season is open as of October 1. We are excited to offer a fun and encouraging environment where children can develop their skills, build friendships, and learn the value of teamwork.

Basketball: Ages 4 through 8th grade.

Cheer: Ages 4 through 5th grade.

Practices will be held at Hickory Church for one hour each week, beginning in December and continuing through February.

Games will be held every Saturday from January 9 through February 27.



Sign up Here



## YOUTH

### YOUTH GROUP

Youth Group is still happening EVERY week!

Join us Sunday evenings from 6:00–8:00 PM in the Covenant Center and the Youth Room for a fun night of fellowship, games, discussion, and community. Best of all—DINNER IS ON US!



## WE NEED YOUR HELP!

We're looking for volunteers to help provide dinner for our youth group. Dinner doesn't have to be fancy—pizza, tacos, hot dogs, or any other kid-approved meal will do. We just ask that you provide enough to feed 15–20 kids.

Meals can be dropped off at 6:00 PM, or give Denise a call and she'll be happy to come pick it up. Please bring the food in a disposable container—we'd like to keep things simple and avoid playing the "Whose Dish Is This?" game.

Receipts can be turned in to the church for reimbursement. Interested in helping feed the next generation—or just looking for an excuse to buy a lot of pizza? Contact Denise at 412-478-2170 or Aka081959@gmail.com.

# OCTOBER CALENDAR

ALL EVENTS, DATES & TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

## SPECIAL DATES THIS MONTH

- 10/1 **UPWARD Basketball registration open**
- 10/4 **Apple Festival Service** | 9 PM
- 10/11 **Worship & Communion** | 10 AM  
Food and Fellowship (Chili Cook Off)
- 10/12 **Colombus Day**
- 10/18 **Blood Pressure Checks** | 8:45 AM
- 10/23 **5<sup>th</sup> Quarter** | 8:30 PM
- 10/25 **Family Night**
- 10/31 **Halloween**

## Staff CONTACTS:

### PASTORAL & MINISTRY

#### SENIOR PASTOR

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

[pastor@hickoryunitedepc.org](mailto:pastor@hickoryunitedepc.org)

#### LAY PASTOR

Lou Templeton | (724) 356-7835

#### MUSIC DIRECTOR

Heidi Clark | (724) 356-4424

[music@hickoryunitedepc.org](mailto:music@hickoryunitedepc.org)

### ADMINISTRATIVE / SUPPORT

#### OFFICE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Michelle Danna | (724) 356-4424

[office@hickoryunitedepc.org](mailto:office@hickoryunitedepc.org)

#### COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

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#### TREASURER

Melissa Fluharty | [treasurer@hickoryunitedepc.org](mailto:treasurer@hickoryunitedepc.org)

#### ASST. TREASURER & CONSULT

Linda Carter

#### AUDIO VISUAL TECHNICIAN

David Sykut | [david.sykut@hickoryunitedepc.org](mailto: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](mailto:hickorypreschool@hickoryunitedepc.org)

## NEXT MONTH (NOVEMBER)

- 11/1 **Worship (Memorial Sunday) & Communion** | 10 AM  
Daylight Savings Ends
- 11/8 **Veterans Day Service** | 11 AM
- 11/14 **Women's Craft Day**
- 11/26 **Thanksgiving** | Office Closed
- 11/27 **Black Friday** | Office Closed
- 11/29 **First Sunday of Advent**

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



## JOIN THE PRAYER TREE:

[communications@hickoryunitedepc.org](mailto:communications@hickoryunitedepc.org)

## SUBMIT A PRAYER REQUEST:

[hickorychurch.com/prayer](http://hickorychurch.com/prayer)



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### GET THE NEWS!

TEXT 'HICKORYUNITED' TO 84576 & JOIN THE MAILING LIST!