

# *The Grove Echoes*

## *February 2026*

**HICKORY GROVE UMC**



Hickory Grove Family,

I am writing to share an update regarding our worship schedule. After listening to many of you, and through much prayer and discernment, the initial plans for combined services on Communion Sundays have been adjusted. The Administrative Council, along with Pastors Candido, Colston, and myself, have agreed upon a new rhythm for our life together—one that differs from what was previously announced.



Going forward, we will gather for a combined worship service every other month, on the last Sunday of the month. For Hickory Grove, this new rhythm will begin on Sunday, March 29, with our Palm Sunday Cantata at 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary, followed by a potluck in the FLC.

As a church, we seek to order our common life in ways that build up the body of Christ, honor our diverse needs, and bear faithful witness to God's grace at work among us. I am grateful for your faithfulness, your honesty, and your care for our shared worship life. I look forward to continuing to deepen our life together as a church, trusting in God's nurturing grace and abiding love to guide us forward.

Gratefully,  
Pastor Caitlin

**Hickory Grove United Methodist Church**

**6401 Hickory Grove Road ♦ Charlotte, NC 28215 ♦ 704-537-4686**

**Office Hours: Monday - Thursday 8:30am - 12:15pm**

## **SUNDAY SCHEDULE**

Traditional Service: 9:00 AM (Sanctuary)

Sunday School for all Ages: 10:00 AM (FLC and Education Bldg.)

Contemporary Service: 11:00 AM (Family Worship Center)

African Service: 11:00 AM (Sanctuary)

Afternoon Adult Bible Study (Spanish) : 1:00 PM (Family Worship Center)

Latino Service: 2:00 PM (Family Worship Center)

## **Church Staff**

### **Rev. Caitlin Lai**

*Senior Pastor*

clai@hgumc.com

704-954-8096

### **Rev. Colston Wuor-Gabie Morris**

*Associate & African Ministries Pastor*

cmorris@hgumc.com

704-904-8023

### **Sharon Freeze**

*Preschool Director*

preschool@hgumc.com

704-537-4658

### **Elizabeth Stribling**

*Office Administrator*

estribling@hgumc.com

704-537-4686

### **Rev. Candido Albino**

*Assistant & Latino Ministries Pastor*

calbino@hgumc.com

704-995-2302

### **Hassan Sankary**

*Director of Music & Organist*

HSankary@hgumc.com

704-517-1056

### **Matthew Baucom**

*Maintenance*

maintenance@hgumc.com

704-537-4686

### **Patrice Wesley**

*Financial Secretay*

pwesley@hgumc.com

704-537-4686

## **African Ministry**

Greetings, Hickory Grove family,

I bring you warm greetings from Liberia, where Rhema and I are spending time with relatives and friends. We will miss being with you over the next couple of weeks; however, you are in very capable hands with Rev. Caitlin Lai, who will serve as pastor in case of any emergency.

I extend sincere thanks to Victor Teclar and Alex Kwiagaye for bringing the messages, and to all our faithful lay servants who continue to lead and support worship and ministry during this time.

To those celebrating birthdays and anniversaries this month, Rhema and I wish you joyful celebrations, longevity, and God's abundant blessings.

I am mindful that the month of January was difficult for some among us; especially those who experienced the loss of loved ones, as well as those caring for family members in hospitals and at home. It is my prayer that God will grant you comfort, healing, peace, and strength during this challenging season.

Though we are apart physically, we remain united in spirit. My continued prayer is that God will guide us and strengthen us as we serve our Lord together, faithfully making disciples for Jesus Christ for transformation of our community and the world.

Blessings,

Pastor Morris

## Latino Ministry

February invites us to reflect on love—not the fleeting kind, but the faithful, enduring love of God. Scripture reminds us, “We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). In a season that can feel cold or uncertain, God’s love remains constant, surrounding us with grace and calling us to share that love with one another.

As we move through this month, may we be attentive to simple acts of kindness, words of encouragement, and opportunities to serve. These small expressions of love are powerful witnesses of Christ at work among us. Let us continue walking together in faith, trusting that God is still shaping our future with hope.

Grace and peace to you all.  
Candido Albino





## Preschool News

We've sure had a fun January and are enjoying the cold winter. We had our usual monthly activities—Bible Stories and Music Class. During ScienceKids we learned about ice and snow and got to “ice paint”. In FitKids class we ran and jumped and moved all around, driving our imaginary cars, trains, airplanes, hot air balloons and rocket ships. We all loved Pajama Day—a day when we all wear our favorite PJs and have hot chocolate and mini pancakes. We look forward to February when we will celebrate Valentine's Day with decorations, treats and exchanging cards.

Our Bible memory verse for February is “Share what you have.” Hebrews 13:16.

We will show love to our community and “share what we have” by collecting canned pasta for the Snack Pack program during our Valentine party. We plan to do some special activities aimed at sharing our love with others.

Happy February!

Sharon Freeze  
Preschool Director









# Hickory Grove UMC

## SUPERBOWL CHILI SALE

Support the United  
Women in Faith

Pickup in FLC  
9:45am or after  
Contemporary  
Service



\$10  
Include Fritos  
& dessert

February 8, 2026

[www.hickorygroveumc.com](http://www.hickorygroveumc.com)

### *Grounded in Gratitude*

Join Pastor Caitlin on Wednesday nights at 7pm in the Trinity Room through February 18th as we explore and enrich our understanding of gratitude in our daily lives.





A decorative border of red hearts with a textured, fabric-like appearance surrounds the central text area.

PLEASE JOIN OUR

Youth & Children

Valentine's  
Day Event

FEBRUARY 8  
AT 12:30PM - 1:45PM

Children in Trinity  
Room

Youth in Parlors

[HICKORYGROVEUMC.COM](http://HICKORYGROVEUMC.COM)



## ROOM IN THE INN

RITI is about to start again !! This will be Hickory Grove United Methodist Church's 25<sup>th</sup> year supporting our unsheltered neighbors. Congrats Hickory Grove – quite an accomplishment !!

We have opened our church to provide shelter and food for the homeless people during the winter months of December through March. The basic goal is to keep our neighbors and guests from the Roof Above organization from freezing on cold winter nights. A greater goal is to provide a more personal relationship to homeless people, at least for a night, and to foster a deeper understanding of the depth and complexity of the issue.

We support this ministry with a variety of different roles while our guests are with us. These roles include drivers, innkeepers ( spend the night with our friends ), cooks, set up the Gym, provide snacks and clean up the Gym the next morning. If you see a role that appeals to you and would like to help us, please contact Randy Bunnell @ 704-905-6177. We really can use more volunteers !!

The dates we will be hosting our guests this season are December 18<sup>th</sup>, January 15<sup>th</sup>, February 19<sup>th</sup> and March 19<sup>th</sup>. Please let us know if you can help and please continue to



*We Care Food Needs*  
**BOXES OF  
TEABAGS AND  
JELLY**

# Midday Mercies

2026 Collaborative Lenten Services  
with East Charlotte United Methodist Churches

**FEB 25** MEMORIAL UMC  
4012 Central Avenue

**MAR 04** THE VINE UMC  
2101 Belvedere Ave

**MAR 11** COKESBURY UMC  
6701 Idlewild Road

**MAR 18** COMMONWEALTH UMC  
2434 Commonwealth Ave

**MAR 25** HICKORY GROVE UMC  
6401 Hickory Grove Road

Wednesdays 12pm | Light Lunch Provided

Join United Methodists around East Charlotte for *Midday Mercies*, a traveling 20-30 minute worship service that will meet at different churches in our area each Wednesday throughout Lent. The service will begin at 12pm with a light lunch to follow.



## A Binding Truth Documentary Screening

On Sunday February 1 from 4pm-6pm, First Presbyterian Church Charlotte will host a screening of *A Binding Truth: A Documentary* about two Myers Park High students who reconnect after a shocking discovery changes their lives. FPC is located at 200 West Trade St and there is free parking in the lot across the street. You may read more about their story here: <https://www.hdkirkpatrickphd.com/de-jimmie-lee>



# ASH WEDNESDAY

## ASHES TO-GO

FEBRUARY 18TH

6:30AM TO 8:30AM

IN THE MAIN CHURCH PARKING LOT

*Lent Begins*

Magrey R. deVega

## EMBRACING THE UNCERTAIN

*A Lenten Study for Unsteady Times*

## *Lenten Study*

Join us in the Family  
Worship Center  
Trinity Room

Feb. 25, Mar. 4, Mar. 11,  
Mar. 18, Mar. 25, Apr. 1  
at 7:00PM



# METRO DISTRICT DEEP SOUTH *Pilgrimage*

Cost includes: bus transportation, hotel accommodations, entrance fees to all sites, and a ticket to the play.

**Itinerary Highlights:**

- The Edmund Pettus Bridge
- All three Equal Justice Initiative sites:
  - The Legacy Museum
  - The National Memorial for Peace and Justice
  - The Freedom Monument Sculpture Park
- The Rosa Parks Museum
- Lowndes Interpretive Center
- The Civil Rights Memorial Park
- Dexter Avenue Church and Parsonage
- The play *To Kill a Mockingbird* in Monroeville



**REGISTER  
NOW!**

**APRIL | 9-12 | 2026**

**\$250 PER PERSON**

You may register by emailing Ravonda at the Metro District Office.

[RBritt@wnccumc.org](mailto:RBritt@wnccumc.org)



## **Memorials and Honorariums**

(received in the office by January 28th).

If we receive your donation after that date, the Memorial/Honorarium will be listed in the March Grove Echoes.

### **Memorials:**

#### **Evelyn Davis**

Snack Pack– Jeff and Channing Kirkpatrick

#### **Edna Highsmith**

Snack Pack– Jeff and Channing Kirkpatrick

#### **Linda Logan**

Snack Pack-Martha Bunn, Katherine Sistrunk, Jack and Nita Merritt

General-Koinonia Class

#### **Patty Marks**

General: Sylvia Cash

