

# *The Grove Echoes*

## *February 2025*



The month of February is widely known as Black History Month. I had the privilege of going on a Deep South Pilgrimage in 2023, where we journeyed to places that hold great significance in the fight for civil rights and equality.

One of those places in particular was the Birmingham City Jail in Birmingham, AL. In an area outside of the jail stands a plaque with excerpts of MLK's letter. He wrote his letter in response to a statement given by white religious leaders of the South. If you've never read MLK's Letter from Birmingham Jail before, please look it up online. If you don't have access to a

browser, please let me know and I'll print the letter out for you! As a white United Methodist Christian and pastor, I was struck to learn that two of those leaders supporting segregation and inequality were Methodist Bishops! Immediately, I confess I felt disgust and shame, while at the same time I took my reaction as an invitation to think more deeply of my own identity as a white person, pastor, and ultimately, Christian. At the time of my pilgrimage it had been 60 years since MLK's letter was initially written (now 62 years). What can I learn? What is my role? What customs, beliefs, or patterns have I inherited? How can I do things differently? Downtown Birmingham is also filled with quotes, murals, statues, and signs pointing to the significance of the events in Birmingham during the Civil Rights movement. The photo here, part of Birmingham's Civil Rights Heritage Trail was taken on May 6, 1963. At that time the police stopped and arrested a group of children who were marching from Sixteenth Street Baptist Church to City Hall. In this photo, a young girl calls us to remember a biblical verse about true godly love. As Martin Luther King Jr. was first and foremost a pastor, faith, morality, and justice are known as the foundations of the non-violent movement. On this day police arrested 1,000 people, many whom are known as "local unsung heroes."

I invite you to take time this month to reflect on our nation's history, particularly the history of Black Americans. Give thanks for the gifts of the black church, the resilience of the Saints who have gone before us risking everything asking the question "Can a man love God and hate his brother?"

"Those who say, 'I love God', and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also." – 1 John 4: 20-21

Blessings,  
Pastor Caitlin



**Hickory Grove United Methodist Church**

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

**Office Hours: Monday - Thursday 8:30am - 2:30pm and Friday 8:30am - Noon**

## **SUNDAY SCHEDULE**

Traditional Service: 9:00 AM (Sanctuary)

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

Contemporary Service: 10:45 AM (Family Worship Center)

African Service: 11:00 AM (Sanctuary)

Afternoon Adult Bible Study (Spanish) : 1:00 PM (Asbury 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor -212)

Afternoon Children's Bible Study: 1:00 PM (Asbury 2nd Floor—205)

Afternoon Youth Bible Study: 1:00 PM (Asbury 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor - 209)

Latino Service: 2:00 PM (Sanctuary)

## **Church Staff**

### **Rev. Caitlin Lai**

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

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## **African Ministry**

Greetings Hickory Grove family,

Rhema and I would like to wish those of you who are celebrating your birthdays and anniversaries for the month of February with longevity and God's blessings.

February is a special month. It is the shortest month with 28th or 29th days. It is notable for Valentines Day and Black History month. I am looking forward to each Sunday as we reflect and highlight the many contributions and historical legacy of the month.

We will also continue to acknowledge the losses of our brothers and sisters who are grieving their loved ones. It is my prayers that God will continue to strengthen you during this difficult time.

For those in the African Ministries, we will host the "Room In The Inn Ministry" to provide care on February 27, 2025. Please put this date on your calendar.

May God fill you with God's grace and peace during  
this month.

Blessings and Peace,

Rev. Colston Wuor-Gabie Morris









## Latino Ministry

In difficult times where love is divided between numerous social, intellectual, cultural and political determinants, the Church of Jesus Christ must rise up as an agent that exudes love and peace. Our peoples are trying to decipher the future that seems uncertain and confusing. Let us continue to love everyone regardless of their origin, color, sex or language just as Jesus the man did and continues to do as Jesus God. Let us dedicate in the "month of love" a time to show our love to someone who is different from us and I am sure that God will be pleased with our love.

I love you,

Rev. 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 germs and how they spread—yuck! In FitKids class we learned that cheerleaders are athletes who do gymnastics and cheer on their friends. We worked on core strengthening exercises and even learned a few cheers. 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 “Love One Another” John 15:17. 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



Pajama Day Fun



Our Bible Verse—“A friend loves at all times”





FitKids Class



Playground fun



January artwork

From the Finance Committee – Chair, Randy Bunnell :

4th Quarter Update :

**Deuteronomy 15:10 states : “You shall give to Him freely and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to Him, because for this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake.”**

Thank you – thank you – thank you !! We can’t thank our congregation enough for stepping up. As you know, going into the last few months of the year, we were ~\$42,000 behind our budget for our General Fund. We ended 2024 ~\$16,000 behind and made the deficit considerably more manageable – so thank you all so much !! I know our Lord will continue to bless you in all your work and all you undertake !!

However, we are not done. We must continue to keep our church financially stable. This cannot be done without your pledges and donations. We are growing – we do see more people attending our services and we are adding ministries to support those people. However, we need your financial support to do so. Please continue to pray for our wonderful church !!

	<b>YTD December 2024</b>		<b>YTD December 2023</b>
	General Fund		General Fund
Receipts	\$469,762		\$436,824 (reserve used)
Expenses	\$485,959		\$446,389
Variance	(\$16,197)		(\$9,565)

	<b>YTD December 2024</b>		<b>YTD December 2023</b>
	Building Fund		Building Fund
Receipts	\$71,227*		\$79,801

\*Our monthly note payment for the FLC Building is \$6625. Through December in 2024 we have averaged \$5935 per month vs \$6650 per month through December in 2023. As mentioned, we still have a healthy reserve, but that will go away quickly if we do not hit the monthly need of \$6625. Please continue to see what you can do to help bring this Fund back up to the monthly note level – thank you so much for your efforts.

If we all work together we can do great things in our community – pray hard and thanks again for supporting HGUMC !!



**Memorials and Honorarium (received in the office by January 20th).**

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

**Memorials:**

**Evelyn Davis**

Snack Pack: Channing Kirkpatrick

**Edna Highsmith**

Snack Pack: Channing Kirkpatrick

**Honorarium:**

**Randy and Marchella Bunnell**

General: David Bunnell

**Jatana Royster**

General: Mary Wyant

**Susan Fox**

General: Mary Wyant

**Patty Smith**

General: Mary Wyant



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## February is American Heart Month



**Heart disease** kills an estimated **630,000** Americans each year. It's the leading cause of death for both men and women. In the United States, the most common type of heart disease is coronary artery disease (CAD), which can lead to a heart attack. High blood pressure is a leading cause of heart disease. Nearly half of U.S. adults have high blood pressure, which puts them at risk for heart disease and stroke. And just 1 in 4 people with high blood pressure has it under control.

### Symptoms of Heart disease:

- **Palpitations:** A feeling that your heart is beating too fast, too strongly, or irregularly
- **Dizziness or lightheadedness:** Feeling faint or losing consciousness
- **Nausea or vomiting:** Feeling sick to your stomach or throwing up
- **Sweating:** Excessive sweating, especially when you're resting
- **Shortness of breath:** Feeling out of breath during activity or at rest, or waking up short of breath.
- **Swelling:** Swelling in your feet, ankles, legs, abdomen, or neck veins
- **Pain:** Pain in your chest, upper back, neck, jaw, or arms
- **Wheezing:** A symptom of fluid buildup in the lungs, which can be caused by heart failure
- **Coughing:** A symptom of fluid buildup in the lungs, which can be caused by heart failure

### Take Action to Protect Your Heart:

- Eat heart-healthy diet
- Increase physical activity
- Maintain healthy weight
- Know and control your heart health numbers
- Get quality sleep
- Not smoking
- Manage stress

**Proverbs 4:23**, "*Above all else, guard your **heart**, for everything you do flows from it,*" emphasize the importance of protecting one's inner thoughts and motivations as the source of actions and life choices. **Proverbs 17:22**, "*A joyful **heart** is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones,*" highlighting the positive impact of a cheerful attitude on physical well-being.

Blessings,  
Sylvia Sekle-Dueh, MSW  
Deaconess  
Health and Wellness Ministry