

# ***The Grove Echoes***

## ***July 2025***

**HICKORY GROVE UMC**



Happy Summer and Blessed Season after Pentecost!

In June we wrapped up our children, youth, and young adult ministry and are now on summer break. I hope that you, too, can carve out a moment (maybe a whole day or two!) to pause and rest in this season. I also wrapped up year two of ministry with you all at Hickory Grove and am so excited to start year three!

I want to especially thank all of our leaders for our children and youth, as well as all of you who lead through our choirs and our worship bands. I am thankful for those of you who run our livestream, sound, and powerpoints each Sunday, as well as those who serve as ushers and adult Sunday school teachers. I give thanks for our Admin council, our staff, and our pastors Colston and Candido. I am so grateful for our quilters, our Snack Pack and WeCare volunteers. I am so thankful for the gifts that God has given to each of you (all of us!) and the ways that you lean into them for the work of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ day in and day out. In case I haven't said it recently – we cannot possibly do or be church without YOU. I give God great thanks for your prayerful presence, and your willingness to follow the Holy Spirit as you step in and lead. If you are looking for a way to get plugged in and serve, please talk to myself, Pastor Colston, or Pastor Candido.



With the school year out, I hope that you will continue to financially support our Snack Pack program in partnership with Hickory Grove Elementary School so that we can start the next academic year strong! I also hope that you will continue to support WeCare with your financial donations, your time volunteering in person, and in responding to any food or clothing requests.

Summer is a time of pause as well as a time of transition. This summer we are starting something new: a partnership with Sanctuary Counseling Group! Liz Holloway is a LCMHCA Clinical Mental Health Counselor and offers services on a sliding scale. Her office will be located on the church office hallway and I invite you to check out the insert in this newsletter to learn more about Liz and her specialties. I am excited and thankful that we can offer mental health support to our church and our wider community.

Lastly, as we look ahead to August, I hope you will both spread the word and make plans to serve our families with children during our Vacation Bible School Monday August 11 – Wednesday August 13th. If you are not already part of the planning team (our next meeting is July 16th!), keep your eyes and ears alert for VBS volunteer sign ups that we will be rolling out later this month.

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**



## Confirmation/ Graduation Sunday



## **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**

*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 Secretary*

pwesley@hgumc.com

704-537-4686



## **African Ministry**

Greetings Hickory Grove Family,

I bring you warm greetings from Rhema, our children, and me, in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We are pleased to share that we have been reappointed to serve the Hickory Grove congregation for another year. We recently concluded a wonderful and spirit-filled annual conference at the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church, held in Lake Junaluska from June 19–22, 2025. We enter this new conference year with a renewed sense of commitment to serve the people of Hickory Grove and the surrounding community. I pledge to deepen my connection with many of you as we work together in unity to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

I am especially grateful to the Men's Ministry for hosting a meaningful Father's Day celebration. Many thanks to all who contributed to the success of this program. For the first time, the Men's Choir sang and served as the choir for the occasion—a milestone worth celebrating.

I am also thankful to the African Ministries for organizing a successful "Grand Stars" Father's Day celebration. Special appreciation goes to the women of Naomi Circle, whose support—from grilling and prepping the food to setting up and serving—made the day both memorable and joyful.

This month, we will observe two significant independence celebrations: America's Independence Day on July 4 and Liberia's Independence Day on July 26. We look forward to celebrating both with joy and reflection, and we encourage everyone to take part in the activities and fellowship.

Thank you all for your continued faithfulness and support. May God's blessings, peace, and guidance be with each of you during this summer season.

Rev. Colston Wuor-Gabie Morris









## Latino Ministry

Blessing! As July unfolds with its warm, sun-drenched days, we are invited to revel in the beauty and bounty of summer. This season is a vivid reminder of God's creation and a perfect time to reflect on the wisdom found in the Bible. The longer days of summer are perfect for building community. Acts 2:46-47 describes early Christians meeting with "glad and sincere hearts." Gather with friends and family, sharing meals and fellowship, mirroring this spirit of unity and love. As we enjoy summer's abundance, let's remember 2 Corinthians 9:7, "God loves a cheerful giver." Engage in acts of kindness and generosity, caring for creation and helping those in need. May this July be a time of joy, renewal, and deepened faith as we journey together in God's light.

In Christ,  
Rev. Candido Albino





## Annual Conference 2025

The Annual Meeting of the Western North Carolina Conference was held June 19-21 at Lake Junaluska, NC. HGUMC was represented by lay delegates Jennifer Stribling, Lili-ana Molina, and Abraham Karva, as well as Pastor Caitlin, Pastor Candido, Pastor Colston, and Deaconess Sylvia Sekle-Dueh. HGUMC members Susan Fox, Tom Fox, Randy Bunnell, and Marcella Bunnell, also served as delegates for the Metro District. At the Annual Conference, Pastor Colston led worship during the Opening service, our Latino Band performed lakeside during the Friday Night Connect time, and our former Senior Pastor Rev. Dr. Sam Moore both preached the Memorial service and retired from full time ministry! You can learn more about the 2025 annual conference at <https://www.wnccumc.org/ac2025> or talk to any of our HGUMC delegates.



From the Finance Committee – Chair, Randy Bunnell :

April 2025 Update :

**Proverbs 11:24-25 states : “One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.”**

Thank you – I can’t say it enough – we do appreciate your giving. It keeps HGUMC alive with the ability to do God’s work and further His Kingdom !! So thanks again for all you do !!

I wanted to give you a financial update through April. Unfortunately, we are behind our budget. You will see that the data tells us we appear to be in decent shape. This was due to a one-time refund check received from the IRS from the Employee Retention Credit program created back in Covid days ( thank you Mike Dulin who uncovered the program and applied for the rebate !! ). So please keep your pledges current and do what you can to give a bit more to help us close the deficit. 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 !!

		YTD April 2025			YTD Budget 2025
		General Fund			General Fund
Receipts		\$210,827			\$212,669
Expenses		\$207,281			\$212,669
Variance		\$3546			0
	YTD April 2025		YTD Budget 2025		
	Building Fund		Building Fund		
Receipts	\$20,777*		\$27,135		

\*Our monthly note payment for the FLC Building is \$6625. Through April in 2024 we have averaged \$5194. As mentioned previously, we still have a 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 thank you again for supporting HGUMC !!



## **All Hands Needed!**

This announcement is for ALL United Women in Faith! But it is an event for anyone who wants to participate!

We will be making fidget quilts for people with dementia. This does not require that you know how to sew! Just a desire to learn and give a gift to those who need to be remembered and loved. A fidget quilt is about 18" square and has lots of things attached to keep their hands busy. So, start gathering your supplies now. If you sew and have fabric and batting that you'd like to use, great! If not, we will have some quilt bases ready for embellishing so bring things like beads, zippers, buttons, lace, rick-rack, old keys, small charms, etc. Basically anything that can be attached that has an interesting texture or shape. (Nothing sharp, please.) Let's get creative and have fun for a good cause.

We will meet in the Trinity Room Saturday, August 2, 1-3pm. But even if you can only come for part of the time, we will love for you to come and have fellowship together. Just bring your scissors, your own drink, and smile! And invite anyone who would be interested!



## SANCTUARY COUNSELING GROUP

Our mission is to walk with our clients as they journey towards the healing of their minds, hearts, and souls. We believe that health and healing are open to all. Sanctuary Counseling Group is a 501c3 nonprofit that offers low-cost mental health services to our North Carolina communities!



LEARN MORE

Sanctuary Counseling Group (SCG) is able to offer services to those in need, no matter their financial abilities. SCG accomplishes this life changing work through donations to our Samaritan Scholarship Fund. Will you donate today?



### Client Focus:

- Children
- Teens
- Adults
- Families
- LGBTQ+

### Specialties:

- Play Therapy
- Mood Disorders
- Women's Issues
- Life Transitions
- Abuse

**LIZ HOLLOWAY, M.A., LCMHCA**

((704) 504-7844 (c)  
(704) 375-5354 ext. 422 (o)  
lholloway@scgnc.org

**Virtual Services  
Harrison UMC**





# *Hickory Grove UMC* Vacation Bible School

August 11 - August 13th

6pm-8:30pm

Dinner  
will be  
provided

3 year olds - 5th grade

Must be  
potty  
trained

Register at

[hickorygroveumc.com/form/11394](http://hickorygroveumc.com/form/11394)

