



**Colorectal cancer** is the second leading cause of cancer death in the United States, behind only lung cancer. The National Cancer Institute estimates that **152,810 people** in the United States received a diagnosis of colon or rectal cancer in **2024**, and approximately **53,010 died** of it.

Colorectal cancer awareness is important because many cases of cancer of the colon or rectum are preventable. Screening by colonoscopy can help prevent this cancer.

Cancer of the colon or rectum is more common in men than women. The median age of diagnosis in the United States is **66 years**, while about **78% of newly diagnosed patients are aged 55 and older**.

Factors contributing to an increase in early-onset colorectal cancer, according to the AACR (American Association of Cancer Research) Cancer Progress Report 2024, include:

- *Unhealthy diet and microbiome*
- *Obesity*
- *Chemicals in the environment*
- *Use of antibiotics*
- *Consumption of alcoholic beverages*
- *Sedentary behaviors*

Symptoms of Colorectal Cancer:

- *Rectal bleeding*
- *Change in Bowel Habits*
- *Narrowing of the stool*
- *Abdominal pain*
- *Fatigue*
- *Unexplained weight loss*

According to the AACR Cancer Progress Report, consumption of red meat should be limited to **no more than three servings (a total of 12 to 18 ounces) a week**, and shouldn't include processed meats like hot dogs, bacon, and salami, because these foods can increase the risk of colorectal cancer, among others. On the other hand, a **diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts, whole grains, and fish** can help lower the risk of developing certain cancers and many other chronic conditions.

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20:** *reminds us that our bodies are not our own, but rather they belong to God. Therefore, we are called to honor God with our bodies by taking care of them. This includes eating a healthy diet, getting enough exercise, and avoiding things that can harm our bodies.*

Sylvia Sekle-Dueh, Deaconess  
Health and Wellness

# The Grove Echoes

## March 2025

HICKORY GROVE UMC



Hickory Grove,

We are living in a troubling “us” vs. “them” society. For Christians we are experiencing not only political issues and matters of personal opinion, we are wrestling with deeply spiritual issues and positions that affect the lives of real people, some of whom you may know! What is Jesus’s greatest commandment? To love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22). If that is the case, then why do we speak about and treat others in a way that does not reflect God’s love? We need Jesus to help prevent us from leaning into the temptation of looking at someone different as the “other.” Worse – to completely disregard one’s experience of life and not see that person/group as human. This season of Lent, I invite you to turn away from that temptation and turn towards God, remembering that those whose life experience you may be discounting or calling the enemy (“the other side!”) are children created in the image of God. It’s a truth that may be hard to swallow for some, but that is a truth nonetheless for all who claim that Jesus is their Lord and Savior. This season of Lent, I invite you to be bearers of God’s love and justice, countercultural to what our society is demanding from us today.

As a church we will be embracing one another in Christ’s invitation to love one another through our United Methodist Connection. For four Wednesdays during Lent we will be having a noonday service at Cokesbury, Memorial, Hickory Grove, and Commonwealth UMCs. During Holy week, we will have an interactive service in Spanish remembering the Last Supper with Holy Communion on Holy Thursday at 7pm, and a combined Tenebrae service with Commonwealth, Cokesbury and Memorial on Good Friday at 7pm. The schedule is on the next page, and I pray that you will enter this new liturgical season with intention.

Pastor Caitlin



**Hickory Grove United Methodist Church**

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



## ***Lent, Holy Week, and Easter 2025***

### **Wednesday March 26, 2025**

Mid-Week Service

12:00pm-12:45pm

Location: Commonwealth UMC

*2434 Commonwealth Ave.*

Light Lunch provided

### **Wednesday April 2, 2025**

Mid-Week Service

12:00pm-12:45pm

Location: Cokesbury UMC

*6701 Idlewild Dr.*

Light Lunch provided

### **Wednesday April 9, 2025**

Mid-Week Service

12:00pm-12:45pm

Location: Memorial UMC

*4012 Central Ave.*

Light Lunch provided

### **Wednesday April 16, 2025**

Mid-Week Service

12:00pm-12:45pm

Location: Hickory Grove UMC

*6401 Hickory Grove Rd.*

Light Lunch provided

### **Sunday April 13, 2025**

Palm Sunday Combined Service

and Cantata

Location: HGUMC Sanctuary

11:00am-12:00pm

### **Maundy Thursday April 17, 2025**

Interactive Last Supper service with Holy

Communion (Spanish)

Location: HGUMC Family Life Center

7:00pm-8:00pm

### **Good Friday April 18, 2025**

Service of Tenebrae with Combined

UMC Choirs

7:00pm-8:00pm

Location: Cokesbury UMC

*6701 Idlewild Dr.*

### **Easter Sunday April 20, 2025**

Sunrise Service

Location: In front of HGUMC Sanctuary

7:00am-7:30am

Combined Easter Service

Location: Sanctuary

11:00am-12:00pm

## **Room In The Inn Ministry**

Patrick Bryant is a barber at The Brink in Fort Mill, SC. This barber drove all the way from Fort Mill to provide haircuts for the men of Room in the Inn on February 27th. Blessings!





## Memorials and Honorariums

(received in the office by February 20th).

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

### Memorials:

**JoAnn McMurray**

Snack Pack: Jeff and Channing Kirkpatrick

### Honorarium:

**Margaret Norwood**

General Fund: Epworth/Cokesbury Sunday School Class



As March is approaching, an invitation is being extended by Habitat for Humanity of the Charlotte Region to their annual Building Futures Symposium the evening of March 26<sup>th</sup>. This annual advocacy event aims to bring the community and industry experts together to amplify the affordable housing challenges faced throughout the Charlotte Region. This year, the symposium is featuring author and writer, Clint Smith, followed by a fireside chat with Laura Belcher, President and CEO, Clint Smith, and JuDon Marshall, President and CEO of WFAE.

This free event takes place on Wednesday, March 26th at Central Piedmont Community College's Dale F. Halton Theater from 6:30-8:30 p.m. You are encouraged to share this event with your network to bring as many caring community participants as the Halton Theatre will hold!



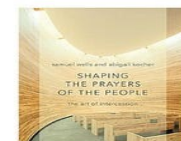
The Metro District is offering the opportunity to become a lay servant through the basic course or to become, or maintain your status as, a certified lay servant through an Advanced Course.

**Certified Lay Servants must take an advanced course every three years to maintain certification.** We hope you will join one of our classes listed below.

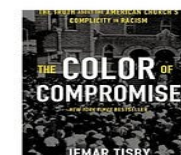
**Deadline to register is March 17, 2025**



**Basic Lay Servant Ministries Course** - "God calls you to a life of servanthood as a disciple of Jesus Christ. ...Lay Servant Ministries is the first step for many laypersons toward their faith journey as they strive for a closer relationship with the Lord,



**Advanced Course: "Shaping the Prayers of the People: The Art of Intercession"** by Samuel Wells and Abigail Kocher. Praying in public can be daunting, but prayer is something one learns. This course on praying in public will help the participant grow in confidence and skill in public prayer and enrich their personal prayer life.



**Advanced Course: The Color of Compromise: The Truth About American Church's Complicity in Racism** by Jemar Tisby. An acclaimed, timely narrative on how people of faith have historically - up to the present day - worked against racial Justice. The course is both enlightening and compelling, telling a history we either ignore or just don't know. Equal parts painful and inspirational.

## MARCH 29 & 30, 2025

*All courses will be held at University City UMC, 3835 W W.T. Harris Blvd., Charlotte - (You MUST attend all ten hours to receive credit for the course.)*

SATURDAY - 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

SUNDAY - 2:00 PM - 5:30 PM (followed by a closing session)





### **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)

### **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

#### **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





# Preschool News

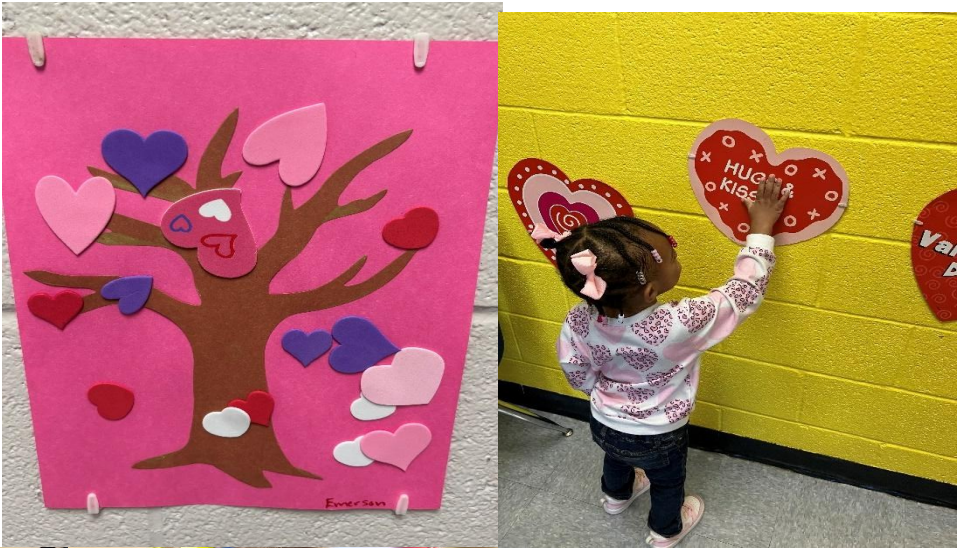
February was a really fun month at Preschool and we enjoyed celebrating Valentine’s Day with all of our friends and showing love to our community by collecting canned pasta items for the Snack Pack program. Our party included a story, songs, and making a Valentine card and a heart craft to send to our shut-ins, as well as decorating our rooms. We also had our class pictures made.

We are looking forward to the month of March when we will welcome spring, have individual pictures made, and enjoy our special classes.

Registration for the 2024/25 school year will begin on March 17 for currently enrolled students and on March 24 for the public. All forms will be on the HGUMC website. It’s always an exciting time to being to plan for another school year. Please let your family, friends, and neighbors know about our school!

Our Bible memory verse for March is “Create in me a clean heart, O God” Psalm 51:10 and we will talk about how God’s love and grace washes away our sin so we can be clean again.

Sharon Freeze  
Preschool Director



# African Ministry

Greetings Hickory Grove family,  
I am grateful to God for allowing us to enter the month of March which usher in the season of Lent beginning on Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2025. As United Methodists, Lent is an important season. It is a time for us to engage in self-reflection, repentances and prepare for Easter. It is a forty-day journey with Jesus where individuals focus on deepening their relationship with God. It is my prayer that God will give you the strength to spend time in prayer, fasting and allowing yourself to be in service to others as you prepare your heart for the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ.

Rhema and I wish those of you who are celebrating your birthdays and anniversaries for the month of March with longevity and God’s blessings.

Many thanks to all of you who assisted with the “Room In The Inn Ministry.” Especially the Men organization for providing the breakfast and snacks, Beatrice Cooper and her family who provided the dinner and the lunch for our friends in the Room inn the Ministry. It was a very successful time of fellowship with our brethren. We are also grateful to all you who helped in the celebration and climaxing of our Black History Month; it was a wonderful fellowship.

Rhema, Kaniis, Colnik and I will be on the Annual Pilgrimage to the Washington DC and the Baltimore, Maryland areas from March 6-9, 2025, with Hunters Chapel, Inclusion Community, Mt. Zion United Methodist Churches and other friends from the community. Two years ago, these three churches embarked on the Deep South Pilgrimage for a “Journey Around Race” (JAR). The experiences have been good. At the end of that Pilgrimage, our trip leader Dr. Anthony Hunt, extended an invitation to these churches who would like to visit the Washington DC and Baltimore, Maryland areas to learn more about the race history.

At the end of the Pilgrimage, my family and I will be traveling to Liberia for some time. We will be leaving you in the capable hands of Rev. Caitlin Lai, Alex Kwiagaye, and Victor Teclar.

Please keep us in your prayers for traveling mercy.  
Blessings and peace to all,

Rev. Colston Wuor-Gabie Morris







Hope is like sugar in coffee; just a few beans sweeten and help to pass the bitter moments of life. Just have faith; Believe with all your heart that your best days are right in front of you. God opens paths where there is none. When all the doors close to you just wait and trust. Some see a hopeless end, while others see endless hope. Do not give up or get discouraged, there will always be a door out and a light of hope at the end of the tunnel. Cry if you have to cry, but after the tears smile. SMILE because God is with you Hope is that light that is not seen, but felt, if you have faith in God. It is that light that tells us that we are not alone, that He is there by our side and is the harbinger of a new dawn, which is approaching our lives. Do not lose hope; when the sun goes down, the stars come out. The sun rises for you also; Just open the window. Do not lose hope, because things come when you least expect it. If the road is difficult, it is because you are going in the right direction. Hope is what keeps you breathing, even when the pressure of life is suffocating you.

In the month of February, we had at HGUMC Latino Venue, the Couples Workshop, the Prayer Cell at Lourdes and Rudy's house and my birthday #65. Thank you all for so much love ...

Dios los bendiga,  
Rev. Candido Albino

