

The Hickory Rock Messenger

News of how God's Spirit is moving through the ministries and activities of Hickory Rock Baptist Church



Advent and Christmas are upon us

The season of Advent is upon us: the time of year when we get ready to celebrate Jesus' arrival at Christmas. Each Sunday leading up to Christmas, we light a candle in worship, as God's light breaks brighter into the world. Look for a special devotional book on the table in the sanctuary that has devotion thoughts to read for the week before Christmas. And make use of the Christmas mailbox in the foyer to "mail" your Christmas cards to folks and save money on stamps.

Christmas events to remember:

- **Christmas lights at Hill Ridge Farms - Friday, December 15.** Hill Ridge Farms (near Youngsville) has put out tons of amazing Christmas lights, so we'll have a fun field trip and take advantage of their discounted group rates. Meet at the church at 6:30 pm if you want to carpool and ride in the van, or meet at the entrance of Hill Ridge Farms at 7:00 pm if that's closer for you.
- **Kids & Youth Practice Day - Saturday, December 16, 1:00-4:00,** the kids will practice their presentation of the Christmas story, and also have fun. Parents can drop them off for the afternoon and finish any Christmas shopping if need be. (And parents, make sure your kids/youth attend this practice time.)
- **Christmas Worship - Sunday, December 17.** During worship, the Hickory Rock kids & youth will present the Christmas story in a fun new way. What if Baby Jesus was born today? What text messages would the angel send?
- **After worship on the 17th,** we will have a **fun Christmas lunch** with delicious snacks. If there's fun food you like, then definitely bring it along. After lunch, everyone is invited to **go Christmas caroling** for the elderly and shut-ins. It will be a joy-filled day! Make sure your family and friends come join in.
- Worship on **Sunday, Christmas Eve,** will feature lovely songs from the choir, as well as the congregation singing many favorite Christmas carols, and we'll light the last Advent candle.



Packing and Sending Shoeboxes

This year, the Christmas shoeboxes we make will go right here in the Triangle, to kids of recent African refugees. Our new friends at Shiloh Restoration Baptist Church have provided us a list of kids in their congregation. So instead of not knowing who will get them, we can know each kid's age, gender, and smile! There are cards with kids' names on the table in the foyer, so grab one and wrap 1 box for each child. You can put multiple items in the box, and it doesn't have to be exactly a shoebox, just don't let the box get too big. Friends, family, and coworkers are invited to participate and even deliver them in person with us when we go around Christmas.



Food Ministry Update



We continue to have wonderful times during our monthly Food Days, the 3rd Saturday of each month. Any family who could use some extra food is welcome to come by: volunteer setup at 10 am, distribute 11-12. This ministry has grown so successful that some months we run out of food. So whenever you're doing your regular grocery shopping, you can grab an extra item or more, and donate them to the Food Ministry so they help families in our community. Put donations in the old kitchen room, which is at the end of the Kids Hallway.

"If you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday." - Isaiah 58:10

Deck the Halls

Thank you to everyone who helped put up decorations at the church, and to Mrs. Francis for telling us where they should go!

To see more pictures of the church's decorations and, later, of the fun Christmas events we're doing, check out the photo album of Christmas pictures on the church's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/hickoryrockbaptistchurch).



A Word from the Pastor

During December, TV channels are chock full of the many fun Christmas movies made over the years. But if there is one that seems to stand out over the rest as a classic for the ages, maybe it's the one that has been repeated and adapted more than any other: the Charles Dickens book *A Christmas Carol*. There seems to be a new version of it every few years. Black & white, color, animated, live-action, singing, no singing, Muppets, and Mickey Mouse. (Those last two are my favorites.)

Apparently Charles Dickens first published the story in 1843, so he must have really connected with something deep inside people for that story to continue being told and adapted into so many new versions decade after decade. Even after 174 years, what kid hasn't heard of Ebenezer Scrooge and his famous "bah humbug"?

Maybe it's lasted so long because Scrooge's transformation in the story is so heartfelt: from a greedy miser who takes as much as he can, to a merry friend who gives as much he can. Or maybe it just inspires us, because it shows a hurting world—a hurting family with a hurting boy (Tiny Tim)—but it also shows that one person can make a difference, if their heart is in the right place. (Focused outward, not inward.)



The three ghosts who visit Scrooge show him things he's forgotten in the past, things he doesn't know in the present, and things he won't get to see in the future. So it got me thinking: What might the ghosts show *me*?

Scrooge saw fun times in Christmases gone by, and I would too. Big family get-togethers at my grandparents' house on Christmas Eve night. Having supper that seemed to take forever as the kids waited impatiently for the adults to finish eating so we could finally exchange presents. After the meal, everyone took the same seats they took every year, and us cousins were in charge of handing out the gifts. "This one's for Aunt Shirley. This one's for Grandmom. This one's for me!!" We would take turns opening presents, going from youngest to oldest. And of course you open the bigger presents first. Much like Scrooge at one of Old Fezziwig's Christmas parties, those Christmas Eve nights at my grandparents' house were full of joy.

So what would the Ghost of Christmas Past show you? Fun times at parties and with family? Probably. And maybe even some memories that aren't so joyful, like when Scrooge was shown the time his fiancée left him because he loved money too much. Not all Christmas memories are merry.

And what might the Ghost of Christmas Present show me? Maybe, like Scrooge, I would visit scenes of family Christmases going on, with people coming together to share a meal and share the joy. But maybe the second spirit would also show me families here in Franklin County who, like Bob Cratchit's family, are trying to have a merry Christmas despite not having much food to share, not having many presents under the tree, and worried about someone's health. The Ghost of Christmas Present told Scrooge that Tiny Tim would die soon if he didn't get the medical attention he needed, and Scrooge was sad. I bet I would be too, if I saw the condition of many folks in our county who are even today struggling to get by, feed their family, get medical care, and try to be merry.

The visions only got sadder for Scrooge when the third spirit arrived, the Ghost of Christmas Not Yet to Come. Scrooge saw the Cratchit family grieving over the death of Tiny Tim, and he also saw his own grave, with no one grieving him.



Hopefully my Christmas future won't be that depressing, but I do wonder what it would be like. Scrooge saw what people said after he died. So it raises good questions: What will people say about you? What will they remember, and how will they describe you? What things that you did will people be thankful for? What things that you did will people still feel hurt by?

When Scrooge saw the way he would be remembered, he didn't like it. He sobbed to the third spirit, promising to change. When he woke up, it was still the present, so he decided to live differently; he decided to act differently, and it changed his legacy. So it raises other questions: How do you want to be remembered when you are gone? And is there anything you need to change about the way you live and act now to make sure that happens?

Hopefully the same can be said of us as was said about Ebenezer Scrooge after he decided to live for others instead of himself. Here are the last lines from the book:

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew... And it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless Us, Every One!

May we see the world as God sees it, and leave it better than we found it.

Grace and peace,

Stuart

Wednesday Night Discussion Topic

On Wednesday nights during the winter, the Adults are reading and discussing the Psalms. There are many different genres in the book of Psalms, so we're talking about all of them: psalms of praise, thanksgiving, request, coronation, but also fear and loss. Come at 7:00 pm on Wednesdays to think about how the psalms can comfort and inspire you with their poetry and beauty.



The mission of Hickory Rock is to show our love for God through prayer, service, and fellowship, as we proclaim God's love for all people, encouraging them to grow in the hope, peace, and joy of Jesus Christ.

Upcoming Events

December 15, Friday, 6:30 at church or 7:00 there - Christmas lights at Hill Ridge Farms

December 16, Saturday,

11 am-12 pm - Food Ministry Day (10 am setup, 11 am distribute)
1-4 pm - Kids & Youth Christmas practice

December 17, Sunday,

11 am - Christmas worship
12 pm - Fellowship lunch & snacks
1 pm - Christmas caroling

December 27, Wednesday - no Wednesday night activities

December 31, Sunday, 12:05 pm - End of year Business Meeting

Every Wednesday -

7:00, Building Faith. All school-aged kids are invited to learn about God and have fun.

7:00, Prayer & Bible Study (adults). Share prayer concerns, then have an interesting discussion to explore the Bible and other spiritual issues.

7:50, Choir Singing. Anyone who enjoys music is invited to come, sing along, and enjoy the fellowship.



"Searching for Peace"

by Faye Johnson

Must man forever stumble, in the darkness of his mind?
Search, strive, hope, for peace he can never find?
Some build a wall, hide from all the things he cannot bear to see.
Some walk in utter silence, in hope to better be.

Some dream away the hour, search for a better life.
Never find the thing they're seeking,
Stumble through the midnight hours,
To wake in deepest sorrow, still looking in his mind.
Ever working, ever striving, for the thing he hopes to find.

If only he would open to the wonder of God's Word.
Learn to walk in light as his eyes begin to read.
He must open up his mind to the beauty of the world.
When walking close beside him, read of his life in the holy of all books.
For Jesus said, "Peace I bring, my peace I leave with you."

To receive a color copy of *The Hickory Rock Messenger* by e-mail, send a message to info@hickoryrock.org. If you would like to change your address or add someone to the newsletter list but do not have e-mail, call the office and leave a message.

Hickory Rock Baptist Church | 1580 Firetower Rd. | Louisburg | NC | 27549 | 919-497-0604
hickoryrock.org | facebook.com/hickoryrockbaptistchurch