

The Hickory Rock Messenger

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



Preparing for Easter

Palm Sunday - Sunday, March 20, 11:00 am

We will continue our preparation for Easter on Palm Sunday, March 20, when the kids and the choir will march into the sanctuary waving palms and shouting Hosanna, just as was done for Jesus the week before his Resurrection.



Tenebrae Service - Wednesday, March 23, 7:00 pm

We will have a Tenebrae service Wednesday night, March 23, during the usual Prayer & Bible Study time (7:00 pm). "Tenebrae" means "shadows" or "darkness" in Latin. This service of prayer and Scripture reading will gradually go from light to darkness, reminding us that Christ's crucifixion was an attempt to extinguish God's light from the world. But the world does not stay dark, and the service will end with the light of hope. As always, it is open to anyone.

Easter Egg Hunt - Saturday, March 26, 2:00 pm

It's time to hunt some eggs! And by "some" we mean "a lot." So invite all your friends to help us make sure we find them all. (Youth, we need your help hiding them!) The Easter Egg Hunt will be Saturday, March 26, at 2:00. (You can donate candy by placing it in the box in the Kids' Hallway.) There will be snacks, crafts, and egg-hunting areas for ages 12 and under. Rain or shine, all are welcome!

Helping Others, Making a Difference

Through our local Baptist association, we now have access to a regular sizable inventory for stocking our Food Pantry, at no cost. That means we have almost unlimited food resources to show love to people in our community who would appreciate some help with food. We will have a Food Ministry Distribution Day on Saturday, March 19, 1-3 pm. You're invited to come at 11:30 that day to help set up and volunteer (all ages can help!). It will be our first trial run, so we expect to learn a lot, but we are willing to love a lot, and we trust God to take care of the rest.



Since we started it 2 ½ years ago, our Food Pantry has assisted over 35 households. Now we can show God's love to many more and on a regular basis. There is a deep need among many Franklin Co. families, and now we can help meet that need. We are planning to have more Food Days roughly once a month, and possibly expand our Food Ministry into new ways to serve both people in our congregation and beyond. If you would like to help out, then you can be on the Food Ministry Team. Let Stephanie Rider know and listen for upcoming announcements.

Matthew 25:34-40 - "The King of heaven will say to the righteous, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me.... Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'"

Wednesday Night Topics

We began our current series on "Our Faith & Others" by learning about what it means to be Baptist. We have talked about Judaism, Catholics, and many branches of Protestants. We'll continue this series by discussing the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, and Islam. Come with questions and discussion, Wednesday nights at 7:00.



Meanwhile, the Kids Class has been talking about how to arm yourself with the full armor of God, and remember that God's always got your back. They've also helped do work of building Easter baskets for orphans and sorting food for our Food Pantry. Thank you so much, kids!

Easter Basket Smiles

For weeks we collected donations of supplies, and then it was finally time to put together Easter baskets for orphans and children of inmates. Our total was 27!! That's 27 smiles we were able to give to kids in Franklin and Nash Counties for Easter. Thank you to everyone who donated supplies and put them all together!



Ordering More T-Shirts – If you would like to order more of the great Hickory Rock shirts that were made last year, tell Sharon Barefoot what sizes and colors you'd like, \$10 each.

North Carolina Baptist Gathering

Cooperative Baptists from all over North Carolina will meet for worship, workshops, and fellowship, in an all-day conference at Hayes Barton Baptist Church in Raleigh, on Friday, March 18. And you're invited! We can carpool down in the morning and come back at night. The only cost is for lunch and supper. Talk to Pastor Stuart if you can go, or to get more information. (For workshop and speaker info, go to cbfnc.org)

Kids on Worship



This year, for their monthly Kids on Worship, the kids are learning how to tell time by the Christian calendar: basing your schedule around holy days like Easter, Christmas, and others. They've talked about how to get their hearts ready for Easter during the season of Lent, and they'll prepare for other fun times like Pentecost (happy birthday to the Church!) and Advent (happy birthday to Jesus almost!). The next Kids on Worship time will be Sunday, April 3, in the Fellowship Hall, the second half of worship.

A Word from the Pastor

There are some things in life that, no matter how many times I read them, hear them, look them up, or google them, I still can't remember it the next time I need to. They aren't important, of course. Else I would be sure to remember. They are simply random factual tidbits that pop up about once every 10 years, when you say, "Oh what was that again?"

Some of these include but are not limited to: the locations of previous Olympic games, which movie won the Best Picture Oscar last year, how to spell the word Mediterranean, and the names of Prince Charles's siblings. See? Not important at all. Totally random. Still, when you know you've looked it up twice already, it's annoying to do so again. (For the record: Atlanta was the '96 games; last year's Oscar went to *Birdman*; there are 2 r's with an e near the end; and Charles's siblings are Anne, Andrew, and Edward. Hopefully I'll remember now. (Doubtful.))



But there is one that pops up almost every year about this time. As I get ready to celebrate Easter, arguably the most important holiday of the Christian calendar, and as I see Easter items sold in every supermarket and drugstore I enter, I always ask, "What's the deal with the eggs and the rabbit again?"

As usual, I forgot, even though I probably looked it up last year. So I looked it up this year (again), and wanted to share what I found with you so that we can all keep this information on hand for ease of future reference.

Much like Christmas--with its fir trees, yule logs, and flying reindeer--Easter also has additional celebratory elements it has collected over the centuries. As with many of our strange traditions, we can blame them on Medieval Europeans.

Some people think Easter has pagan roots, but it does not. The timing of it, in the spring, is connected to the Jewish holiday Passover, which Jesus observed with his disciples at the Last Supper on the night before he died. And since Passover is in the spring, so is Easter. Within a hundred years of Jesus' death, his followers were already celebrating his resurrection every year on the Sunday after Passover.

Over time, Christians began to prepare for Easter in various ways, like with the season of Lent. During this 40-day time of preparation, people would make sacrifices and do without, reflecting Jesus' 40 days of preparation when he fasted in the desert. By about 1000 AD, Lenten practices had become more official, and many churches actually forbid people to eat things like eggs, dairy products, and meat. One of the most famous Medieval theologians, Thomas Aquinas, did authorize the eating of candy during Lent, because he believed that sugared nuts and spices acted as digestive aids on par with medicine rather than food. (Sure they do. That's my excuse too!) From then on, it was extra candy during Easter time.

When the season of Lent came to an end on Easter Sunday, people got excited as they prepared to eat normal food again, like eggs. So on the day before Easter (Holy Saturday), many churches celebrated by having a blessing of eggs at church. The eggs were "gaudily decorated with the happiest of bright colours in anticipation of their return to the dining board, were exchanged as gifts among friends and relatives; quite naturally they became known as Easter Eggs" (source: Terence Scully, *The Art of Cookery in the Middle Ages*). Kings began distributing eggs to commoners, villagers gave Easter Eggs to their manor lords, and churches decorated eggs for poor children.

That covers the colorful eggs, but what about the rabbit?

Apparently, it came from Christians in Germany in the 1500s. They associated rabbits, hares, and bunnies with the new life of spring, since rabbits give birth to large litters in the early spring time. (Go figure.) In Medieval Germany, kids were told that "Easter Hare" would judge their behavior before the Easter season, and if they had been good, they would get Easter treats. You could say that, much like Santa, the Easter Hare "knows if you've been bad or good. So be good for goodness sake!"

So there you go. Eggs and rabbits at Easter. It's neat to think that over a thousand years ago, kids would go to their church on the day before Easter, smiling at the pretty colored eggs they found, and our kids will do that too! The smiles I see on the faces of the kids who come to our Easter Egg Hunt each year are inspiring. Their joy is downright explosive. When we fling wide the doors and release them to the churchyard of hidden eggs filled with candy, the excitement is palpable. It's impossible not to smile as you watch them smile with every egg they find.

Easter is a time of joy. Just like the dark cold of winter is pushed out by the warmth of spring, the dark cold of our emptiness is pushed out by the warmth of Jesus. The loneliness of life and the fear of death are put aside on Easter, as we celebrate the unexplainable miracle of resurrection. May our joy be explosive on Easter Sunday, like a child at an Easter Egg Hunt. May we be thankful that death is not the final end to our existence.

As the Lenten season comes to a close, I hope you have a very happy Easter. Enjoy the sunshine, the newness of life, the fun eggs, and even the furry bunnies.

Grace and peace,

Stuart

(P.S. This random fact also deserved to be shared: while looking up information on the Easter Bunny, I learned that in Australia, the preferred animal is the Easter Bilby. Apparently, bilbies are marsupials native to Australia, whereas rabbits are an invasive species there. In the 1980s, the bilby became endangered, so support grew for making it the Easter animal of choice. Kids receive stuffed bilbies in their Easter baskets, with bilby shaped chocolate. Crikey!)

Youth Trips

Be praying for the great group of youth and adults going to Richmond for the Weekend Mission Trip on April 8-10. (There are still 1-2 spots available if you're able to go.) Pray for safe travel, servant hearts, and a willingness to work at whatever God has for us that weekend.

Also, make plans for Youth Camp, July 4-9. It will be a missions-focused week, where everyday we'll have Bible study in the morning, go to a work site in the afternoon to demonstrate God's love through service, then experience great worship at night.

Nursery Schedule



Hickory Rock loves kids, especially little cute ones! We are pleased to offer childcare for ages 5 and younger during worship. So whenever you see someone with kids, you can tell them that Hickory Rock has a great nursery with loving nursery workers! Below is the nursery worker schedule the next few weeks. If you can't make it on your day, simply find someone to switch with. (If you want to be removed or added to the nursery worker list, let Sara L. know.)

March 20 - Sara L.
March 27 - Charlene
April 3 - Jeanette

April 10 - Kim D.
April 17 - Linda
April 24 - Sharon

Upcoming Events

March 19, Saturday, 1:00-3:00 pm - Food Distribution Day

March 20, Sunday, 6:45 pm - Baptist Women

March 23, Wednesday, 7:00 pm - Tennebrae Service

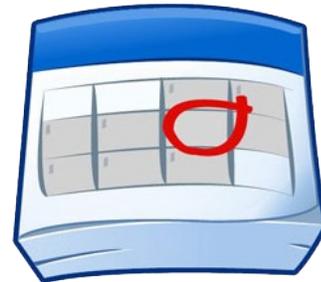
March 26, Saturday, 2:00 pm - Easter Egg Hunt

March 27, Sunday, 11:00 am - Easter Worship

April 3, Sunday, 11:30 am - Kids on Worship

April 8-10, Friday-Sunday - Youth Weekend Mission Trip

June 28-July 1, Tuesday-Friday 6:00 pm - Vacation Bible School



"Friendship"

by Faye Johnson

Three little girls would start to school
To form a lovely bond.
All through life they stay the same,
Keep friendships they have found.

Mothers feel the pride of each,
As they keep them by their sides.
Smiles on each face, to know this day,
The friends that God would guide.

The paths they walk will often lead
Them in a different way.
But still they find a way to stay
Within their friendship way.

Now time has passed, and all retired.
But still they stay the same.
Go out to eat, and often meet,
Through all of life's great game.

One said, "I want to paint."
The others said the same.
Everyone picked up their paints,
And to my house they came.

Through many years, I've watched them grow.
Now they make me proud.
As they've used their love to fill their homes,
Where beauty now abounds.

(Dedicated to Jewel McGhee)