Houghton Wesleyan Church

# Highlights

*Joyfully loving God, wholeheartedly serving others*

*December 2018*
*Volume 52, No. 7*

## God's Gift of Preparation

*This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about…*
Matthew 1:18

The wonder of God's creative genius never ceases to amaze me. Trees, flowers, rain and sun, animals and insects bear witness to God's thoughtfulness in creating. It seems to me that an overlooked part of his creative genius is that most of the time human parents have nine months to get ready for the birth of a child. It's hard to imagine, even in our culture that impatiently demands the immediate, what it would be like if we were told one day that a baby was coming and the next day it came! No time to prepare—mentally, emotionally, physically—for this life-changing moment. Sometimes the waiting can feel like forever, but my experience and the experience of others that I've talked to, the time of preparation is essential for being ready when the baby comes.

I was struck by this fact as I once again contemplated the birth of Jesus. Of all people, Mary and Joseph need time to digest what they're being told and to prepare for what is about to take place.

Mary gets a bit more time to prepare than Joseph. Mary is visited by an angel before she is pregnant. Her response? She is troubled by the angel's words. She is afraid. She wonders if what the angel is telling her could possibly be true. She responds to this news pretty much as we would. She also has time to process it. She goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth. I can't begin to imagine the conversations they must have had. It must have been something because at some point, Mary sings her song of joy to God that she of all people has been chosen to bear the Messiah. By the time Jesus is born, she's starting to see, probably in a limited way, but she's starting to see.

Joseph has a bit less time to prepare. Matthew seems to imply that it's either the transformation of Mary's figure or her conversation with him that sets off alarm bells for Joseph. He's committed to do the right thing by the standards of that day. When God speaks to him in a dream, he agrees to take Mary as his wife and to raise her "illegitimate" child as his own. I would love to have been a fly on the wall for that conversation and the conversations they both have with their families. We don't see or hear much of Joseph after this, but by the time Jesus is born, he's ready. There must be many moments when they both thank God that they have nine months to get ready.

Advent is the church's gift of preparation for Christmas. Four weeks to think, to ponder, to explore, to doubt, to question, to focus so that when Christmas comes we're ready. Ready to worship. Ready to celebrate. Ready to follow. Ready to surrender in obedience.

During this Advent season, I want to invite you to prepare. Engage in Sunday worship. Read through the nativity stories of Matthew 1 and Luke 1 and 2. Find ways to engage your heart and those close to you in preparing once again for the miraculous, world-altering coming of the Christ Child.

Because Christ is born,

*Pastor Wes*

# PRAYER VIGIL

We have just completed our eleventh 3-week, 24/7 prayer vigil. Once again, we experienced the blessing and grace of God through an extended time of prayer. While we didn't cover every hour, someone was praying 323 of the 504 hours! Many of these hours were individuals praying, but we also had numerous hours of groups praying—families, couples, roommates, friends, youth classes, children's Sunday School classes, athletic teams and other groups.

We believe that because of our prayers, God has and will continue to work miraculously—in ways that we can see and quantify and in ways that are more hidden. Whichever, we are pleased to be part of something that God is doing, something that is beyond us.

Thanks to everyone who came to pray—your involvement is a means of God speaking into your life and is an inspiration to others about prayer. Thank you to everyone who helped prepare the prayer room for this event—your time, energy, creativity and effort was and is being used by God to inspire hundreds of people who came and continue to come to pray. A special word of gratitude to the group of people who sacrificed time and sleep during the hours of midnight and 4:00am to provide security for those who came to pray. As we have prayed and as we continue to pray, may God be praised and may our lives be transformed.

## STEWARDSHIP – A Life of Generosity

"Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"2 Cor. 9:15

The Bible tells us of the wondrous gift God gave us—Jesus Christ. We can use this giving season as an opportunity to spread this gift and to show love.

Giving and receiving gifts can be part of fulfilling what Paul says about giving in 2 Corinthians 8:7–8, "Just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others." Paul also encouraged the churches to give financial gifts to the believers in need in Jerusalem and stressed that their gifts were to be voluntary and motivated by earnest love. We can apply this same lesson to our own lives by giving to others, not just at Christmas, but year-round!

Your generous support of Houghton Wesleyan Church enables us to provide vital support for members of our community – a very busy food pantry, reach-out programming such as Celebrate Recovery which helps men and women cope with difficult situations, as well as support for other organizations such as Wellspring Ministries, Samaritan's Purse, and Royal Family Kids Camp.

Thank you for your giving through Houghton Wesleyan Church!

### REMINDER: All Gifts for Calendar Year 2019 need to be:

- Given in church on December 30 or delivered to the church office by the 31st
- Mailed with a postmark date of December 31st or earlier
- Given on-line by 2:00 pm on December 31st in order to ensure a transaction date in 2019

## CHRISTMAS EVE OFFERING 2019

# Canaan, Haiti School Project
# Goal $20,000

## Classroom Completion and Solar Power

**WHERE:** Canaan is a sprawling city 20 miles from Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Almost all residents' former homes and belongings were destroyed in the devastating 2010 earthquake. The Wesleyan Church has a strong presence and a school in a section of Canaan with over 5,000 people.

**WHAT:** World Hope International and the WNY District Wesleyan Churches and friends have committed to long term development of school, community center, water and power, and Child Sponsorship projects. Houghton Wesleyan is excited to join this effort this Christmas.

**HOW:** Our gifts will help complete much needed classrooms and upgrade solar power supply. Hundreds of children attend our Wesleyan school under the local church's leadership.
Future Child Sponsorships will guarantee long term hope and transformation.

Left: Clean water from the well

Right: Pastor Lea Dominique and her husband

Bottom: Happy School children

## HWC and friends may give to the Christmas Eve Offering:

- By check through December 24th with note, "Haiti Christmas Offering" on memo
- One-time December 24th Offering by cash or check

or

- Online Giving at www.hwchurch.org "Haiti Christmas Offering"

To the Houghton Church Congregation,

The exchanging of gifts during the Christmas season is a tangible way of recognizing God's gift of grace in Jesus. For the Houghton Church congregation, this is an opportunity for us to give gifts to our pastoral staff whose gifts of service we receive throughout the year. They are meant to be a loving response from the church family as a whole. You may give by cash or check clearly designated as "Pastors' Christmas Gift." Please give your contributions to one of the Elder representatives, David Mercer or Matthew Webb, or leave it with Patty Stalker in the church office by December 22. Gifts can also be made online. (Please remember that your gift is tax-deductible, but taxable for those who receive it.)

Thank you as you generously give. We pray God's richest blessing for you and your family during this Advent season.

Matthew Webb
(For the Board of Elders)

## CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES:

*5:00 pm: Family Service*
*7:00 pm: Traditional Christmas Eve Service*

Both services include the lighting of candles and the music and scriptures of Christmas. The 5:00 pm service will also include a time for children.
Nursery care will be available for both services for ages infant through 2 years.

## HWC College Ministries

### Christmas Caroling December 15th

The College Ministry Committee invites you to join us at 2:00pm in the Community Room on December 15th for an afternoon of Christmas Caroling throughout the community and at the Nursing Home. Hot chocolate and homemade cookies by Noah Weuthrich will be served afterward in Room 105 across from the church Library. All are invited! The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear!

DECORATING PARTY:
Please join us on Saturday, December 7, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon to decorate the sanctuary for Christmas. All ages are invited to help decorate.

# Carol Sing and Cookie Reception

**December 15 at 5:00 p.m.**
**Bring your instruments.**

Bring a plate of cookies to share (leave them in the church kitchen) before joining voices in celebrating our annual Carol Sing in the sanctuary.

## The Flower Committee Welcomes Your Christmas Poinsettias

to help beautify the sanctuary for Christmas. We have purchased a number of poinsettias which you may purchase for $ 12.00 each or you may bring your own on December 14. If you care to purchase one, please leave $ 12.00 with Patty Stalker in the church office and fill out a reservation form indicating your preferences. If you wish to honor a loved one, please leave information with Patty by December 17..

Our condolences to the family of Rolland Fletcher who died October 21. A Memorial Service at Houghton Wesleyan Church is archived on our website for viewing by those who were unable to attend the service.

# YOUTH

## OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

Thanks to all those whom so generously donated items for our packing party and to the volunteers who joined us for the packing party, we were able to pack 54 boxes for Operation Christmas Child from that event. Our church total for boxes packed this year is 113! Please pray for the children receiving our boxes, that they should come to know Christ as their Loving Father and personal Savior. Thank you for your support of this

## Sunday School Schedule

Due to the holidays and people away visiting family, we will not have Sunday School on December 22nd, December 29th and January 5th . On these Sundays, we will have one 10:00 worship service. NOTE: Junior Church will not be meeting on the Sundays that we have just one 10:00 service. January 12th we resume our regular schedule.
Thank you to all who are helping out with Children's Church and nursery during the Christmas break.

## KIDS' CLUB

### Live Nativity at its Family Christmas Party and Dinner December 11, 5:45 - 7:15

A celebration of the coming of our Savior and Lord Jesus is our joyful topic of the December Kids' Club meetings. We meet only twice in December, - on the 4th and the 11th.
The December 11th Club starts at 5:45 for our Family Celebration. Parents are asked to bring a dozen cookies or another holiday snack to complement our pizza supper. Kids, we hope to see you and your families there for songs, crafts, and our living nativity.

Once again, Jr. Church is accepting donations of winter coats, hats, and gloves for a local charity through the month of December! If you have items to donate, please drop them by either Emily and Ann's office, the primary assembly room, or the box in the CE foyer. Thanks!

Available in the Children's Corner in the church foyer.

From the
# Library Shelves

We have some new children's Christmas books in our library. Find out what happens when Little Raccoon thinks Christmas is not for her in Everyone is Invited to Christmas by Susan Jones. Written along the same lines as Good Night Moon is Margaret Wise Brown's On Christmas Day. And we have a beginning reader book: Jesus is Born.

New non-Christmas books in our children's area are beginning reader biographies, some horse stories and more.

Our adult section has Eli Knapp's The Delightful Horror of Family Birding and Don't Miss It, Reggie Joiner's book on how short a time you actually have with your children. There are more books in Neta Jackson's Windy City Neighbors series, and we have Catching Christmas by Terri Blackstock.

Have a Blessed and Joyous Christmas season!

# The Heart of Christmas

Chester Barker commissioned H. Willard Ortlip to create this example of installation art around 1950.. For several years Mr. Barker erected the painted plywood display each Christmas season in the village park adjacent to the store on Route 19. He then donated the piece to Houghton Wesleyan Church which continued its seasonal exhibition on church property. As time and weather took their toll, Aileen Ortlip Shea and Marjorie Ortlip Stockin periodically restored their father's work. The annual display was discontinued in the 1980s, but the tradition was restored in 2001 for the church sesquicentennial and again last Christmas. May its display remind all of the Christ of Christmas.

## FOOD PANTRY

Thank you to all who contributed to our church food pantry during our November 24 coll n. During the past year we have helped more than 100 families from Houghton and surrounding commun es through this ministry. If you are s ll interested in don ng please feel free to drop o items at the church ce.

# Valley Preschool

We are having a fantastic year at Valley Preschool! We have eighteen, delightful three, four, and five-year -olds this year who are bright, energetic, fun, cooperative (with us and each other), and enjoyable learners. Laura Dibble, Joy Mansfield, and I are very grateful for our two volunteers, Joan Zeija and Brenda Montanye, who help make our jobs even more fun! We've also enjoyed having three students from Houghton College join us for music activites from week to week. Our Open House in conjunction with the Harvest Extravaganza was a busy place, but not as busy as the gym! We have done a lot of learning and a lot of projects this fall which I hope you got a chance to see in our hallway. Watch for more in December as we learn about the first Christmas and make more projects to reinforce that learning and build our other skills. Our Christmas program will be the morning of December 20th.

Our third community "Stone Soup" dinner is scheduled for Friday, January 24th from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. Two-thirds of our families are getting the Stone Soup Discount this year, so they and we are very thankful for the success of past dinners. VPS parents provide many of the soup ingredients, but we need people to make cookies and brownie-type desserts.

If you could bake a dozen or two (or three!) cookies or brownies, please contact me at casdadanner@hwchurch.org or at 567-4314.

# Young at Heart

**(formerly Houghton Area Senior Citizens)**

**December 12 Luncheon served at noon**

**Program: New Horizons Music**

Our December gathering will be on Thursday, December 12. Our meal begins at noon at the Houghton Church Community Room, and following good fellowship over the meal, Diane Emmons will present information on the New Horizons Music. Program.

As a reminder, here is our potluck meal schedule: initials A-F bring salads, G-N bring desserts, and O-Z bring casseroles (or swap with a friend!). Bring your own table service.

Everyone 55 and older (including any caregivers) will be warmly welcomed. Ask a friend who may not normally come to join you, and all of us.
Questions? Contact Daryl Stevenson at 716-397-6864 or at daryl.stevenson@houghton.edu.

## December 14th ~ 7:00 p.m.

### at Houghton Wesleyan Church

## A Christmas Recital

featuring Christmas Favorites including

*Wizards in Winter* by the Trans Siberian Orchestra

**Makena James, Organ & Piano**

**Dr. Sara Massey, Handbells**

**Reception to follow.**

# Houghton College Annual Art & Craft Fair

## December 12 & 13, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Houghton College is pleased to host its Annual Christmas Art & Craft Fair. Each year, the Art and Craft Fair is held in the beginning of December and provides community members and students the opportunity to find something special for the holidays while supporting local artisans and small businesses from across Western New York. This year's selection of vendors will sell handmade, one-of-a-kind artwork and local goods

# December Sales at the Highlander Shop

...and

## Bargain Books

Hundreds of titles selected just for you! 40%-80% off the retail price (priced as marked). Browse the tables in the middle of the store.

## Trade Book Sale

20% off trade books, Bibles, and journals (excludes bargain books)

# Wellspring Ministries

Dear Church Family,
The big event of November was the recent opening of our **"Christmas Room".** It provides the opportunity for parents to choose 2 gifts per child, ages 0 to 18yrs. We are still looking for items, so please consider doing a little shopping for us when you are in the stores. All items are welcome, but we especially need infant and teen gifts. Please label these for the Christmas Room. Spread the word to others you know who would be blessed by having help with gifting at Christmas. The Room closes December 20.

Quite a crowd was served a delicious traditional Thanksgiving meal on November 22. As before, the Sheriff's Department and men from Genesis Bible Church (Scio) carried the individual meals to each person seated at tables. Folks were so appreciative. The Christmas Dinner is set for **December 20** at 11:30am.
Then we close until Wednesday, **January *8 - our reopen date.***
We would love to have you come, too, to visit, eat, and take items home that you may like or need. Wellspring is for EVERYONE! We are open every Wednesday and Friday from 10am to 1:30pm. Any Monday or Tuesday smaller items you want to direct to us can be left on the Willis Beardsley porch table. Please no drop-offs over Christmas/New Year weeks.

Thank you for standing with us in 2019. *Your kindness to others is kindness to Him.*
"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Matt. 25:40.

A blessed Christmas season to our HWC family. Keep us on your prayer lists.

Beth Beardsley (for the Board)

**FREE Kodak Carousel Slide Projector with 4 slide trays. 567-4479**

Santa Claus is Coming to Town!

Tracy's Delightfuls & Gift Baskets Holiday Open House
December 8th 11:00 am - 4:00 pm
Pictures with Santa from 1:00 - 4:00
(Please bring your own camera)
Join us for Basket Raffles, Hot Coco, S'mores Crafts, Wagon Rides & More...

This is a Pet Friendly Event!

# SUNDAYS IN DECEMBER

**December 1** (8:20am, 9:40 and 11:00am)
a.m. Worship Services

**December 8** (8:20am, 9:40 and 11:00am)
a.m. Worship Services

**December 15** (8:20am, 9:40 and 11:00am, 5:00 pm)
a.m. Worship Services
p.m. Carol Sing and Cookie Reception

**December 22** (10:00 am)
a.m. Worship Services
p.m. NO ACTIVITIES

**December 29** (10:00 am)
a.m. Rev. Mike Walters
p.m. NO ACTIVITIES

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*5:00 pm: Family Service*
*7:00 pm: Traditional Christmas Eve Service*

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# CHURCH STAFF

**Wes Oden,** ***Senior Pastor***
***567-2024*** **wesoden@hwchurch.org**

**Jon Cole,** ***Youth Pastor***
***307-9950*** **joncole@hwchurch.org**

**Cindy Oden,** ***Assistant Pastor***
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**Paul Shea,** ***Assistant Pastor***
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**Amanda Cox, Music &** ***Worship Director***
***567-4870*** **amandacox@hwchurch.org**

**Emily Spateholts,** ***Director of Children's Ministries (Sunday ministries & Valley Preschool)***
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**Ann McNeill,** ***Director of Children's Ministries (Wednesday Kids Club, Library, RFKC, Cradle Roll)***
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**Austen Kewin,** ***Pastoral Ministry Resident***
**austenkewin@hwchurch.org**

***Church Office, M-F, 8 AM-Noon & 1-5 PM,***
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