

May 19, 2020

Dear Houghton Church Friends,

I hope that you are well. Isn't it great to see more sunshine and warmer temperatures? Here is some information related to the life of the church.

### **Reopening**

- No matter what your situation right now, we are all wondering when we are going to return to worship and other activities at the church and what will that look like when we do. When we take into consideration the various levels of health and vulnerability of our congregation, these are challenging questions to answer, particularly for Christians. We are acutely aware of the tension between caring for the health of our congregation and the desire and importance of being together.
- In order to help us make the wisest decision for our entire congregation, we have established a Reopening Task Force to make recommendations to the Elders. The Task Force met last week and have come up with a plan on which to base the decisions about reopening. The Elders have approved this plan for our next steps:
  - We will abide by the state's mandates for when Houses of Worship are permitted to open.
  - We will start with in-house worship services before contemplating smaller groups (i.e., Sunday School, small groups, etc.)
  - We will open the church building for worship when we have protocols in place to maintain social distancing. This would include protocols for people entering and exiting the sanctuary and building, seating arrangements during worship and planning an appropriate number of services (within reason) to follow the protocols.
  - We will open the church building for worship when we have cleaning supplies and cleaning personnel to disinfect between services.
  - We will take appropriate steps to maintain the quality of online streaming for all who continue to worship online.
- The Task Force has been divided into the following subcommittees to work on these elements of preparation:
  - Facility preparations (The actual cleaning process) / Cleaning supplies/equipment (Amassing supplies for the actual cleaning process) / Cleaning protocols (How we clean, What we clean, When we clean)
  - Communication (How we inform the congregation of plans and protocols)
  - Worship Gatherings Protocols and Logistics (What gathering together looks like: entering, engaging, exiting, timing of services)
  - Programing (When to start programming other than worship services and what this will look like. Decisions related to prioritizing order of return for programs, protocols for church gatherings off-site, etc.)
  - Technology (Preparation and execution for adding in-house worship while maintaining streaming worship)
- As you can see, this process is complex and involves a great deal of time and planning. We are investing time and planning because we love each other and because we are attempting to embrace the tension of gathering as soon as we can and thinking of the needs of each other, particularly those most vulnerable.
- This is as much as I know right now. As we have new information, we will share it. Please know that we value your input. If you have ideas, suggestions or questions, please feel free to contact me either by email ([wesoden@hwchurch.org](mailto:wesoden@hwchurch.org)) or by phone (567-2024).
- Thank you for your prayers.

## While We Wait (Some things happening in the church building while we are away)

- The playground has been upgraded and refurbished with more to come.
- New Wi-Fi is being installed all throughout the church for more reliable and wider usage.
- Many equipment and physical upgrades have been made and are being made to enhance streaming and in-person worship.

## Election Update

- Our yearly elections and the vote on the Community Financial Plan will take place the week of June 7. We are offering two options for you to cast your ballot—online and by mail-in paper ballot.
- We will be sending out paper ballots May 29 and we will be sending out the online link June 1.
- [CLICK HERE](#) to access the ballot, information on people nominated and a summary of the Community Financial Plan.

## Streaming Information

- Thanks for the pictures you have sent. Please continue sending them for the preservice slides. Send them to any staff member.
- Send your comments, ideas or words of gratitude about the streaming to [streaming@hwchurch.org](mailto:streaming@hwchurch.org).

## Upcoming Events

- **Virtual Prayer Vigil:** Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. – Thursday, 6:30 p.m. The Task Force about reopening needs all of our prayers. If you are uncertain how to spend your time in prayer, let me suggest that you pray for the Task Force and the decisions being made. You can sign up now for times in 15-minute increments (<https://hwchurch.org/prayer-room/>).
- **Music Program:** Thursday, May 21, 6:30 p.m., Judy Congdon will present a program of Organ Meditations. It will be live streamed through the regular channels.
- **Sunday Worship:** this Sunday at 10:00 a.m. we will worship together online. Pastor Cindy will be preaching from Psalm 73, declaring: *God Is Enough*. The weekly bulletin, which includes the worship order, financial information, prayer concerns and events in the life of our church, is available on the church website and Facebook page or by contacting the church office.
- **Youth Group:** Youth meets Sunday night at 6:00pm. Pastor Jon will send a Zoom link.

## Ministry Opportunity

- A BIG thank you to all of our HWC Kids team members who have creatively reached out to their classes during this time. From notes, to Zoom game sessions, remote Catechism quizzing, and story time, they are what make our program thrive. Thank you! We appreciate you!
- As we look ahead to the summer and fall, we are seeking people interested in spending time with our HWC Kids on Sunday mornings. Openings are available for Sunday School, Children's Church, Jr. Church, and Nursery. Our biggest need is for 2 leaders for Jr. Church (grades K-3rd, 8:20 service), either on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Contact Emily Spateholts ([emilyspateholts@hwchurch.org](mailto:emilyspateholts@hwchurch.org) or 585-808-8925) if you would like to be a part of building the faith foundation of our kids.
- How to Pray for COVID-19 Needs in Buffalo and beyond. Last week we received a note from Ruth Strand, Spiritual Care Team – Director, Jericho Road Community Health Center, asking us to pray for Jericho Road as we pray for our communities and world. [CLICK HERE](#) to see a list of specific prayer concerns.

## Resources

- We now have a Houghton Wesleyan Church YouTube Channel. [HERE IS THE LINK](#) to access it. It would be helpful to us if you could subscribe to our page.
- In addition to the HWC Kids Facebook page, parents are invited to subscribe to our newly created [HWC Kids Youtube channel](#), where we are working on uploading the videos from our virtual Sunday School lessons and Children's sermons the last few weeks. Check it out.
- Many devotional resources are available. Here are a few:
  - [Barnstorming: Seeking Sanctuary in the Seasons of a Rural Life](#)
  - Seedbed is a daily devotional from J.D. Walt (<https://www.seedbed.com/>).

- Here are a couple of Bible reading resources:
  - YouVersion is a daily Bible reading program (<https://www.youversion.com/>).
  - Here is a blog for listening to daily Bible reading....an Old Testament, New Testament and Psalm passage each day: [www.dailyradiobible.com](http://www.dailyradiobible.com).
  - Dwell is an audio Bible app that is providing free access for churches until June. The app provides Bible reading in voices with various background music: <https://dwellapp.io/covid19>.
- If you are interested in prayers related to the Coronavirus, here are some videos from Prayercast:
  - <https://prayercast.com/you-reign-coronavirus.html>.
  - <https://prayercast.com/coronavirus.html>
- It is not too late to engage in prayer for Muslims around the world during Ramadan (April 23 – May 23). Here are some resources to help us pray for Muslims during these 30 days.
  - The website Prayercast is sending a daily email with a brief video highlight ways to pray for Muslims during this time. Sign up to receive the email at [www.LoveMuslims.org](http://www.LoveMuslims.org).
  - 30 Days of Prayer for the Muslim World is an information and prayer booklet. You may access it at <https://www.30daysprayer.com/>.

### Church Finances

- Thank you for your generosity that is enabling us to continue upgrading our streaming, continue ministries (as best we can) and to help various people in need. In these uncertain times, thank you for what you are able to give.
- For financial gifts, we encourage you to use [ONLINE GIVING](#) or to mail your check to the church (P.O. Box 127, Houghton, NY 14744).
- For your convenience we are now accepting credit cards on our on-line giving site. In order to avoid the higher fees associated with credit cards, we do encourage you to consider using the bank transfer option (EFT). If using a credit card is better for you, we have added the option for you to donate the transaction fees if you wish, but you are under no obligation to do so.

### Connecting

- The pastoral staff continues to pray for you and to support you. Even as we are making contact with you, please do not hesitate to contact us if you want to talk or if you have a need.
- Stay in touch with others. Please limit calls to between 9:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.
- We have created links on our webpage to address needs: “Get Help,” “Give Help,” and “Let’s talk.” You may access these links here: <https://hwchurch.org/covid-19-updates/>.

If you have questions, concerns or needs, do not hesitate to contact us (585-567-2264, [office@hwchurch.org](mailto:office@hwchurch.org), or any of us individually). If you have needs in the coming weeks, please let us know.

Thank you so much for your support and prayers for our church, our county, our nation and our world. The heart of our faith is that God is good, and that God is faithful. He is at work—when we see it and when we don’t.

You continue to be in our prayers. We pray God’s grace and comfort upon you.

Blessings,

Pastor Wes [wesoden@hwchurch.org](mailto:wesoden@hwchurch.org)

Pastor Cindy [cindyoden@hwchurch.org](mailto:cindyoden@hwchurch.org)

Pastor Jon [joncole@hwchurch.org](mailto:joncole@hwchurch.org)

Pastor Paul [paulshea@hwchurch.org](mailto:paulshea@hwchurch.org)

Children’s Ministry: Emily [emilyspateholts@hwchurch.org](mailto:emilyspateholts@hwchurch.org) and Ann [annmcneill@hwchurch.org](mailto:annmcneill@hwchurch.org)

Worship Ministry: Amanda [amandacox@hwchurch.org](mailto:amandacox@hwchurch.org)

College Ministry: Austen [austenkewin@hwchurch.org](mailto:austenkewin@hwchurch.org)

Office: [pattystalker@hwchurch.org](mailto:pattystalker@hwchurch.org) (office hours are Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to noon and 1-4 p.m.)

If you need assistance with streaming on the website or Facebook, contact Patty Stalker (585-610-6883).

If you need assistance with streaming on a device (Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire, etc.), contact Nathan Danner (585-567-4314).

#### Roku Connection Instructions

- Download the Houghton Wesleyan Church App.
- Open Roku.
- In the search box, type HOUGHTON WESLEYAN CHURCH, then click on it.
- Click on ADD CHANNEL
- Click OK.
- Return to the Home Screen. You will see our App in the list.
- Click on the Houghton Wesleyan Church App to access live or archived services.

#### AppleTV Connection Instructions

- Connect the iPhone to your AppleTV streaming device.
- Use an iPhone to access the Houghton Wesleyan Church website ([www.hwchurch.org](http://www.hwchurch.org)).
- Click WATCH ONLINE.
- Choose the live service.