

June 2, 2020

Dear Houghton Church Friends,

As we continue to figure out these difficult circumstances, I pray that you will sense God's grace in your life and in those who are near you. Here are some reminders and some new information related to Houghton Wesleyan Church.

### **Church Election Now**

- Our yearly elections and the vote on the Community Financial Plan are happening this week. You may vote either by mail-in ballot or online. If you haven't received a link to vote (multiple people may use one link), [CLICK HERE](#) to access the ballot. If you haven't received a paper ballot (if this is your preference), contact the church office immediately to receive one.
- Votes will be counted until Sunday, June 7, 5:00pm. Results will be posted in the Highlights and on our website, June 8.
- [CLICK HERE](#) to access information on people nominated, a sample ballot and summary of the Community Financial Plan.

### **Staffing Information**

- We are excited to welcome Andrew Silbert to our church staff as Director of College Ministries. Andrew will be working ¼ time in addition to his full-time position with Sodexo.
- Andrew ('08) and Addie ('07) are both Houghton College graduates and they have, along with their girls, Jovie, Norah and Eliza, been a part of our church since 2014. As you have opportunity, share a word of support and encouragement with Andrew.

### **Reopening**

- The Reopening Task Force is comprised of church staff: Wes Oden, Cindy Oden, Emily Spateholts, Steve Pocock, Jon Cole; healthcare professionals: Calvin Schierer, David Brubaker, Doug Mayhle, Heidi Huizenga, Jamie Potter; and lay leaders: Matt Webb, Mike Spateholts, Ken Bates. We are working as a group and in subcommittees. Thanks for your prayers.
- The Reopening Task Force is at work making plans related to when and how we will come together again for worship and other activities in the church building. As we embrace the tension of opening as soon as it is appropriate and recognizing the need to be fully prepared for reopening, we are doing so within the parameters of the following guidelines:
  - 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 continue to encourage small groups to connect remotely, and, as possible, to meet using appropriate precautions taking into consideration the most vulnerable in the group and in the circle of people with whom we interact outside the group.
  - 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 following the protocols recommended by the CDC.
  - 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.
- We are creating a survey in order to solicit your feedback that will help us with our decisions. The survey should be available within the next week or so.

## Upcoming Events

- **Virtual Prayer Vigil:** Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. – Thursday, 6:30 p.m. The Reopening Task Force appreciates your 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 [HERE](#) now for times in 15-minute increments and [HERE](#) for the Prayer page.
- **Music Program:** Thursday, June 4, 6:30 p.m., Amanda Cox will lead a time of worship music. It will be live streamed through the regular channels.
- **Sunday Worship:** this Sunday at 10:00 a.m. we will worship together online. Pastor Paul will be preaching Matthew 28:16-20 and Luke 24:45-49, *On a Trinity Mission!* 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 or by contacting the church office.

## Kids Ministry

- This Sunday, we're excited to start our new Children's Ministry curriculum, GROW (<https://growcurriculum.org/childrens-ministry-curriculum/>). GROW is put together by a diverse and talented team of ministry leaders from all over the country and focuses on teaching and discipling kids, equipping volunteers, and empowering parents. Their intent on taking faith deeper, not just wider, with very Biblically accurate content has us eager to see our Children's Ministry continue to grow.
- As we begin to plan for the Fall, whatever it may look like, we are in need of people to join our team. We will have open positions as leaders and assistants, every Sunday (or Wednesday) or once a month, for all age groups. If you are interested in joining our amazing team, contact [Emily](#) or [Ann](#).

## Valley Preschool

- Though we can't know for sure what the fall looks like yet, the Valley Preschool team is starting to prepare for the 2020-2021 school year. Valley Preschool meets three mornings a week at the Church and is a great introduction for children to school with plenty of hands-on lessons and social interaction with peers.
- If you have or know of a 3-5 year old who might be interested in preschool, we invite you to fill out an application today; these are available on Facebook, the website, at the Church office or by contacting Casda Danner ([casdadanner@hwchurch.org](mailto:casdadanner@hwchurch.org)) or Emily Spateholts ([emilyspateholts@hwchurch.org](mailto:emilyspateholts@hwchurch.org)).

## Streaming Information

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

## Church Finances

- In these uncertain times, thank you for your generosity. Our fiscal year ended May 31. In the coming weeks, we will provide year-end information related to income and expenses.
- For financial gifts, we encourage you to use [GIVE ONLINE](#) 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.

## Community Events

- Houghton Academy Graduation is this weekend. We offer our sincerest and richest congratulations to the class of 2020. It has been a joy to interact with them at the church and all around the community. I know that they appreciate our continued prayers and support as they move into the next stage of life.
- Pray for students, teachers, staff and administrators of our local schools as they finish the school year, work on plans for graduation and make plans for the summer and fall.

## 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/>.

## Resources

- We now have a Houghton Wesleyan Church YouTube Channel. [Here is the link to access it](#). It helps us if you subscribe to our page.
- In addition to the HWCKids Facebook page, parents are invited to subscribe to our newly created Youtube channel, HWC Kids ([https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8XkJmfQ99pmZhh-nuOl\\_iA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8XkJmfQ99pmZhh-nuOl_iA)), 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 (<https://barnstorming.blog/author/briarcroft/>).
  - 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/>.

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