Houghton Wesleyan Church
Highlights

Joyfully loving God,
wholeheartedly serving others
August 2020
Volume 53, No. 3

When God Changes Things

...the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia at that time. ...again the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go there.
Acts 16:6-7

In my wildest dreams I couldn't have imagined the scenario in which we find ourselves. When the reality of the coronavirus started, I assumed that I would be working from home for a few weeks and that we would be doing exclusive online worship for a month or so. I told numerous people that when we come back together, let's have one service and a huge celebration!

As time drug on, the reality of things began to sink in. Even still, I maintained hope that the virus would slow down if not dissipate. As we began making plans to reopen, I quickly realized that the reopening was going to look very different than I originally thought. But as we set our sights on and made plans for August 2, I felt a mix of excitement that we were going to be together and concern that coming together would not be a health risk for our congregation and for others.

Now, we come face to face with the reality of the decision to postpone reopening for the time being. My involvement in the decision doesn't minimize my disappointment or make the decision any easier. But as you see in the explanation below, it is a decision based on the best medical information we have.

I don't really like change. I prefer to stick with decisions and see them to conclusion.

I feel a little like the Apostle Paul. Acts 16 tells of Paul and Silas making plans for another missionary journey. Knowing what we know about Paul, he prayed, planned and prepared. Their plan is to travel in the province of Asia and preach the gospel there. But every time they make a plan, the plan is thwarted. They had to feel disappointed. They had to question. They had to wonder what was happening.

And then Paul has a vision of a man from Macedonia pleading with him to come and help them. And Paul's willingness to change his well-laid plans, Paul's willingness to let God use the current circumstances, opens to way to the western world hearing the gospel. Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus among other cities hear the gospel and the church expands throughout the known world.

I do not know how God is going to use the changes we are all encountering, but I know that he is the master of using disappointments, unplanned pathways, every new experience for his glory, for our good and for the good of others…if we are willing to let him.

Thank you for your prayers as we continue making difficult decisions. Thank you for your openness to wherever and however God leads.

Blessings,
Pastor Wes

If you are not receiving an email or text with information related to my weekly letter and weekly video, please contact the church office (office@hwchurch.org or 585-567-2264).

Reopening Information

The realities of this pandemic are that our understanding of the virus continues to evolve and, our responses are informed as we continue to learn more. That premise has always been part of our reopening strategy—that our plans would be reevaluated in the light of changing information. Recently, there has been growing concern in the scientific community about the way in which the virus responsible for the pandemic is transmitted, specifically about the degree to which airborne (or aerosolized) transmission might contribute to the spread of the virus. Aerosolization refers to the process by which viral particles, expelled during breathing, remain suspended for extended periods of time, drifting on air currents. Because they do not settle onto surfaces as readily as larger droplets do, airborne particles increase the risk of spreading the virus, especially in certain contexts, like large indoor gatherings during which people are engaged in activities that expel more virus than normal breathing, (e.g. singing, shouting, loud speaking, etc.). And while wearing masks and distancing reduces the risk of droplet transmission, which is still believed to be the primary way that the virus is spread, it is not yet clear how much difference these measures make in reducing airborne transmission.

Coupled with the fact that people without symptoms can spread the virus, the concern about airborne transmission has implications for settings like worship services. In fact, the WHO, in response to an open letter from a large group of concerned scientists, recently acknowledged that airborne transmission may play a role in outbreaks associated with closed spaces and specifically mentioned houses of worship. Other experts, too, have recognized the likely role of this kind of spread.

Considering all this, the Task Force contemplated the viability of offering worship services with no congregational involvement (singing, responsive readings, unison prayers, etc.) in order to mitigate the risk associated with those activities. Because the risk rises as the number of people in an enclosed space increases, filling the building with people, even while distancing, would likely mean that we would need to eliminate all singing, including the worship team on the platform. Since our plan was to stream the live services, to offer an in-person service without any music or congregational involvement seemed not only unwise but destructive to the current success of our streaming experience.

In light of all this, the Elders, at the recommendation of the Reopening Task Force Worship subcommittee, feel the need to postpone our planned reopening on August 2.

While recognizing that the scientific evidence around this issue is still accumulating, and that the actual risk of airborne transmission is not quantifiable, the decision was made in the interest of congregational and community safety, weighing the best information available to us at this time. Please know that the decision was not made lightly. In fact, it was made with a great sense of sadness and lament, as all of us were looking forward to being in the building together even with the guidelines of masks and distancing.

Since we are not reopening August 2, when will we reopen? Frankly, we do not know the answer to that question at this time. The various Task Force subcommittees will continue to meet and monitor all of the scientific and medical information available to us. We will also continue to abide by the guidelines established by New York State as well as the CDC. We will do our very best to keep you informed in every way that we can.

In the meantime, we are pondering other ways of addressing the desire to be in the building together. Since the decision has just been made, we are still working on these ideas, but we do have a couple of things to share with you.

We are making plans to enable you to come in the future to the sanctuary for Judy Congdon's Thursday night organ programs. Reservations would need to be made on the church website. This would involve wearing masks and being socially distanced. We are also looking into the idea of a contemplative service of meditation and silence. This also would involve wearing masks and being socially distanced. We are working on other similar ideas. If you have suggestions, please let us know.

We share your disappointment at this decision. But we must keep in mind that we are making this decision because we care about each other—people with whom we worship and people with whom we interact outside of our church.

If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to let me know either by email (wesoden@hwchurch.org) or by phone (585-567-2024). Thank you for your prayers and support as we continue to make our way in these difficult times.

If you are interested in more information related to airborne transmission, here are some articles suggested by Dr. Dave Brubaker.

https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/931320

https://preventepidemics.org/covid19/science/weekly-science-review/july-4-10-2020/

https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-how-is-covid-19-transmitted

https://www.pnas.org/content/117/26/14857

https://apple.news/AnyjnoNg7RVqJM7J1EjpRtg

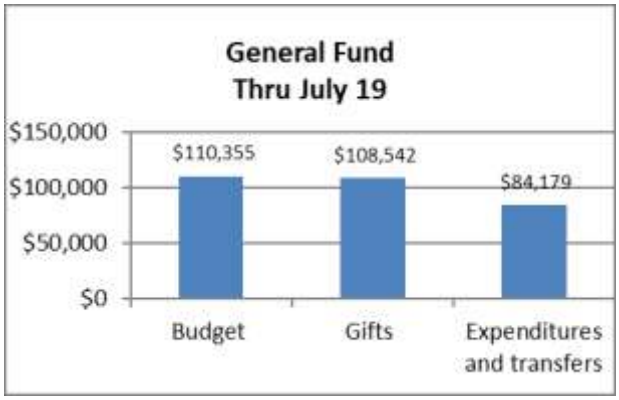
Stewardship – A Life of Generosity

Can our church thrive during a pandemic?

Our church doors have been shuttered since mid-March in order to abide by the stay-at-home order and social distancing guidelines. Maintaining the church body's sense of kinship without in-person gatherings is challenging.

We have pivoted to a digital strategy to keep connected. Streaming Sunday services and musical worship services on the church website and Facebook Live has been a great tool and enabled the ministry to continue. We now rely on social media and video conferencing apps to come together and accomplish the work of our church.

While the pews are empty and we yearn to be together physically again, we find in this unprecedented uncertain time that our church, we might dare to say, is not just surviving but thriving.



Your continued support has enabled us to purchase some better cameras, microphones and a digital sound board to improve the quality of our streaming broadcasts. A section of the balcony has been retrofitted to make space for the new equipment and the volunteers needed to operate it.

A crew of church staff and volunteers (a.k.a. the "balcony bandits") work together to plan and produce a comprehensive worship service which is live streamed through various means. In addition to the Sunday worship service, every Thursday a variety of musical programs are produced – hymn sings, organ concerts, "Klassic Klips" and more are streamed.

Who watches these broadcasts? It's hard to say exactly, but last year our in-person attendance during May, June and July averaged 414. This year's on-line viewership of our Sunday morning service during that same period is twice that number. And the Thursday hymn sing broadcasts have even greater viewership.

God has blessed your faithful support over the past several months. Your generosity has enabled us to acquire the necessary tools for us to continue ministering to our congregation and beyond. Thank you!

Can't wait to get back to your Bible Study group…small group… prayer group? Many are longing for the good old days of basic Christian fellowship. Spiritual growth and health demands interaction with other believers. We don't want to get spiritually flabby, lazy and weak so what can we do?

- Make an effort to interact with your spouse, a close friend, an accountability partner – even one on one. Spend time sharing concerns, in the Word, in prayer weekly. We need a discipleship inner circle.
- Know somebody who is alone or whom the Lord brings to your mind? Call or contact them with words of encouragement.
- Share with me stories of how God has blessed you our helped you touch others during this time.
- Anticipate the joy of re-starting small groups, adult classes or Bible studies in the Fall. HWC is discussing ways we can initiate safe and healthy group settings. In the Fall, study materials will be available tracking with Pastor Wes' twelve week sermon series. Pray for creative and wise decision making for this need in our lives.

If you have never been a part of a small group **CONTACT ME,** share your interest. I hope to link like-minded folks together.

As a church, we are praying for everyone to "grow in grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus" in these days. Our greatest hope and joy is that God has not forsaken or neglected us. Spread the Good News.

Contact: Pastor Paul Shea at paulshea@hwchurch.org

Parents, subscribe to our newly created **Youtube Channel** that includes Children's Sermons. Check it out!

Applications for Valley PreSchool

Our preschool is open to three, four, and five-year-old children. The preschool meets Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 9:00 am – 11:45 am. (September – May) on the first floor of the Christian Education Building. The early childhood program of V.P.S. is designed to augment home experiences, providing opportunity for social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical growth and development. If you are interested in more information about your child attending VPS, please contact our director, Casda Danner casdadanner@hwchurch.org.

Here is GENERAL INFORMATION and the APPLICATION FOR VALLEY PRESCHOOL FOR 2020-21:
https://hwchurch.org/…/…/2020/04/2020-21-VPS-Application.pdf

Overwhelmed? Cooped Up? Lonely? How can we help you?

We know that this time is extremely stressful and confusing for you and your kids.

Click HERE or call 585-567-2264

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MISSION MOMENTS

Each Sunday we post a "Mission Moment" in the bulletin to keep folks aware of what's new with mostly the missionary teams that our church supports. Keep alert and pray for latest news. Here is an overall list of these workers:

Kevin and Cindy Austin, GP Czech Rep.
R & L , GP East Asia
Rod and Ellen Casali, SIL Trng, Canada
John and Sylvia Christensen, SIL Indonesia
Steve and Margie Doty, SIL Trng, East Asia
L. D., SIL, East Asia
Chris and Melissa George, GP Australia
Don and Jeanie Little, LTC/Pioneers, Global
Anthony Petrillo, TEN3, Africa
Cedric and Sharlini Rodrigo, GP Sri Lanka
Alan and Cheri Shea, SIM, Liberia
Steve and Ruth Strand, WNYDistrict, Buffalo
Kris and Cory Thede, GP Haiti
Joel and Barbara Trudell, SIL Africa
Martin and Sherri Hegeman, SIM Africa
S.N., GP Europe
Jim and Karen Szymanski, TEN3 Global

GP – Global Partners of the Wesleyan Ch.; SIL – Wycliffe Bible Translators, LTC – Lilias Trotter Center; TEN3 – computer, ed, evangelism; SIM mission, WNY- Western NY. (Some names withheld for security)

Thanks from all for holding them up in prayer.

Wellspring Ministries

Wellspring is open on Wednesdays and Fridays
from 10am to 12 noon only.

- Social distancing will be in place, as well as masks required. A safety check for all clients will be done.
- A limited number of people will be in the building at one time. (no children inside, for now)
- Sanitizing of surfaces will be done regularly.
- No coffee bar or meals at this time.

We welcome donations any Wednesday or Friday during our open hours.
We welcome back, most of all, PEOPLE, and pray that we will be bearers of HIS HOPE and LIGHT to all who come.
Please take all donations directly to the Wellspring porch when open - not the Beardsley porch, as before.
Thank you for continued prayer and support. God has been so faithful to us.

Beth Beardsley (for the Board)

On August 6 at 6:30 p.m. we will have an Outdoor Time of Worship. This event has limited lawn space. We will meet together outside, socially distanced and singing. Sign up for your group here:

https://outdoorworship.youcanbook.me

CONTEMPLATIVE SERVICE

AUGUST 10, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Reserve Your Seating Here:
https://hwc.youcanbook.me/

Groups for the August 10 Contemplative Service will enter and leave the sanctuary in silence. You might also like to bring a journal or paper/pen to write during times of silent reflection. Masks and distancing required.

When you arrive at the church, enter through the glass doors that face Route 19.
Ushers will direct you to assigned seats in order to maintain social distancing.

Weekly Prayer Vigil Sign-up HERE

15 minutes

Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. to Thursday, 6:30 p.m.)

GETTING CONNECTED

In light of the implementation of hybrid learning at our local public schools this fall, many of our young families are looking for childcare solutions during the school week. We would like to connect them to anyone who would be willing to provide childcare services. If you are willing to do so, please send your name to Emily (emilyspateholts@hwchurch.org) and what ages you are willing to watch and whether you are interested in offering in-home care or in the families' home. Thanks!"

HOUGHTON FOOD DRIVE-THRU
MONDAY, AUGUST 3

NOTE: August 3, 3:30-5:00pm Allegany Co. Summer Food Distribution line will take place beginning in the church parking lot and finishing in the college parking lot. Get three cartons of food, one each of dairy, fresh produce, and meat. Call 585-209-0052 to register after 7/28.

Houghton Church Parking Lot

August 12, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

YMCA PLAY PACK PROGRAM

The YMCA of the Twin Tiers and Project Play WNY is excited to distribute free Play Packs to promote play at home and continuing an active lifestyle during the Covid-19 pandemic. Our goal is to distribute 1,200 Play Packs to families at 25 locations throughout Cattaraugus & Allegany County. It is important for kids to remain active even during a global pandemic. In the result of severe weather, location pick-ups will be rescheduled for a later date.

Play Pack Includes:
Rubber Ball, Two Tennis Balls, Jump Rope, Frisbee, Bubbles, Sidewalk Chalk, & State of Play Deck of Cards!

FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!

A Note from Kathy (Zike) Martinez:
Wilbur Zike has a BIG birthday coming up on July 30th, his 89th and to celebrate him this year, we are asking you to send him a birthday card on his birthday to wish him well and give any favorite memories you have of time spent together or something you appreciate about him. I know he will enjoy hearing from you! Wil and Jane are doing well. His address is 7687 Greenbrier Dr. N. E., Rockford, MI. 49341.

Please join our family in congratulating Adelaide Faith Sullivan on her high school graduation. In order to comply with social distancing and no large gatherings, we will be celebrating Adelaide's graduation with a card shower. Please take a moment to write her a note about a special memory, something you appreciate about her, or a prayer that you have for her and send it to her through snail mail (she LOVES paper and pen gifts in the mail). Your words and prayers are greatly appreciated as she moves to Houghton College on August 21, for her first year of college- majoring in writing and art.

Our mailing address is
113 S. Main St., Belfast, NY, 14711.

August 15, 2020 8:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

The Walters
9788 Fancher Heights
Houghton, NY 14744 585-610-0740

- Household Furniture, baby furniture...bookcases
- Power Tools, Hand Tools
- Lawn Furniture
- Kitchen items
- Sports equipment...and more!

Thank you for your letters, cards, and expressions of encouragement. You made our transition to Heritage Homestead, Gerry, NY easier.
New Address and landline for
Ellen & Alfreda Kreckman
4600 Route 60—Unit 30
Gerry, New York 14740
Landline: 716-985-5821

* At It's All Good! we offer a wide variety of both organic and conventionally grown fresh fruits and vegetables, flowers, camp wood, some antiques and other collectibles.

- For stand to car pickup, simply call in your order and we will have it ready and load it when you arrive.
- 9391 Route 19, Houghton, NY 14744
- Open Wed-Sat 10-5 all summer and into the fall!
- For It's All Good! weekly stand updates visit the "Laurie Machamer" Facebook page.
- To order or for more info call or text Laurie: 716-713-3789

Blessings!
Tom & Laurie Machamer

Vintage Finds - Treasured Memories

located at 41 Main Street in Belfast is open again.

- Our current hours are Thursday and Friday 1-5 pm, Saturday 11-5.
- Our store inventory can be viewed along with announcements and updated hours on Facebook or Google Business by searching Vintage Finds Treasured Memories.
- Curb side pickup available.
- 585-365-1901

HOUGHTON ACADEMY

Houghton Academy, in partnership with K12 Inc., is pleased to announce the launch of our new online learning platform — Houghton Academy Online! Houghton Academy Online will extend, beyond geographic limitations, the traditional Christian college-preparatory education that Houghton Academy has offered for over 137 years.

For more information about Houghton Academy Online, please visit www.houghtonacademyonline.org or email us at inquiries@houghton.academy.

SUNDAYS IN AUGUST

August 2 (10:00 am Online)
am Rev. Dr. Michael Jordan

August 9 (10:00 am Online)
am *God of All Nations* (Psalm 96)

August 16 (10:00 am Online)
am Pastor Jon Cole

August 23 (10:00 am Online)
am *Walking in Unity* (Psalm 133)

August 30 (10:00 am Online)
am *Can Everyone Put Their Confidence in God?*

Every Thursday beginning at 6:30 p.m. we stream a time of worship that can be accessed on the website, Facebook, or Roku. We provide DVDs of Sunday services and Times of Worship for those who do not have Internet access. Call the church office for more information (585-567-2264).

CHURCH STAFF

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

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

Cindy Oden, Assistant Pastor
567-2024 cindyoden@hwchurch.org

Paul Shea Assistant Pastor
567-4597 paulshea@hwchurch.org

Amanda Cox, Music & Worship Director
amandacox@hwchurch.org

Emily Spateholts, Children's Ministry
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Ann McNeill, Children's Ministry
437-5151 annmcneill@hwchurch.org

Andrew Silbert, Director of College Ministries
716-450-9179 andrewsilbert@hwchurch.org

A "Thank You" to all who helped with the Ice Cream Drive Through on July 15! We were so happy to see your faces!