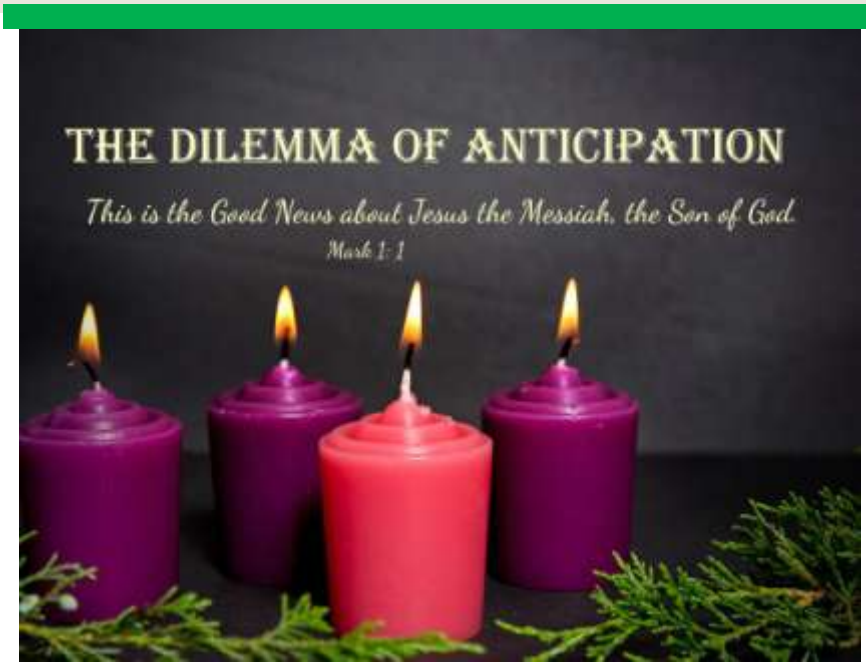
Houghton Wesleyan Church
Highlights

Joyfully loving God, wholeheartedly serving others
December 2020
Volume 53, No. 7



Anticipation about the future can be both exciting and maddening at the same time.

It's exciting because it's something we long for, something that fills us with joy. It's maddening because we don't know exactly what the future holds—we don't know if what we anticipate will be as good as we hope. It's this mindset that keeps us awake at night—sometimes we can't sleep because of worry; sometimes we can't sleep because of excitement.

Advent is both exciting and maddening as well. Advent is exciting because we know that it is leading us to Christmas, to the coming of Christ, to the redemption of all creation. Advent is also a bit maddening (or at least anxiety-producing) because we're never quite sure the path Advent is going to take to get us to Christmas. Sometimes the path is smooth and easy. But often the path is a call to trust God for the unknown, to believe God for what we hope but cannot see, to a life of faith that though the path seems unwise or unsettling, God knows what he is doing.

When I read the biblical accounts of Advent—those stories that prepare people for the coming of Christ—I see people living with both senses of anticipation. The crowd that waits for Zechariah and then can't understand why he and Elizabeth would name their son John. The people of Nazareth though not mentioned specifically but are in Joseph's mind when the angel calls him to take Mary as his wife. The hordes of Jews who must leave them homes because Caesar wants them to know that their lives are in his hands. All of these people who seem peripheral to the story are actually integral to all that happens. Why? Because Jesus comes not just for those who get top billing but for the entire cast of this supernatural drama.

This means that you and I are not peripheral to the story either. During the Sundays of Advent, I will be leading us to think about these groups of people because they are in many ways just like us. My prayer is that this Advent season will prepare us for the coming of Christ—to receive him so that we might reveal him.

Because Christ has come,

Pastor Wes

Stewardship – A Life of Generosity

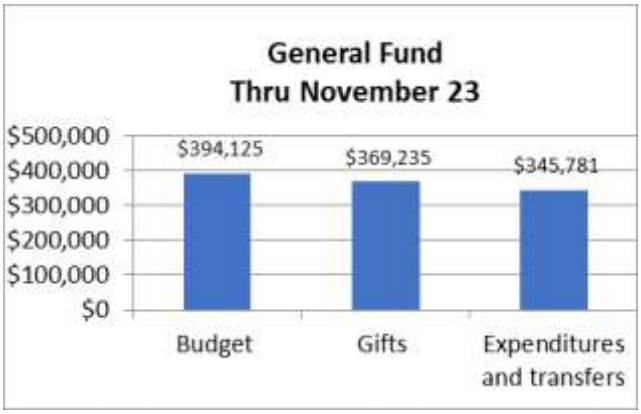
As the old song goes, "there's no place like home for the holidays." This year, those heartfelt lyrics have added significance. When the days grow shorter, the weather gets colder and we cope with increasing local COVID cases, we all find ourselves going into hibernation mode, retreating into our homes where it's warm and safe.

What will the Christmas celebrations be like this year? Will we be able to gather with friends and family? One thing for sure is that Christmas 2020 will be different from any we've experienced before. Even in the midst of so many unknowns, we eagerly anticipate celebrating the birth of Jesus – God's greatest gift to us. While we cocoon in our homes at the same time we must remember we're created by God for relationships with others and to be involved in helping others.

This is a season of much giving and receiving. Our giving to God's work through the church is one way we express our gratitude. Additionally, giving sparks joy and thanksgiving in us knowing that our gifts have helped others experience God's love.

May your generous support of Houghton Wesleyan Church bring you joy and be as much a blessing to you as it is to others.

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



CHRISTMAS MUSIC

Christmas Streaming Events:

December 10 at 6:30 p.m. Hymn Sing 2020

December 17 at 6:30 p.m. Organ Meditations on Advent

December 20 at 6:30 p.m. Rebroadcast 2019 Carol Sing

Christmas Prism 2020 will be available for viewing from Friday, December 11 at 8:00 p.m. through midnight Christmas Day at this link https://www.houghton.edu/prism/.

GLOBAL/LOCAL INVESTMENT in YOUNG LIVES!
HOUGHTON ACADEMY *Mission Kids/Third Culture Kids Scholarships* **
Partnerships/exchanges with overseas Christian Schools
Donate on the church web page or mail checks to the church office
(P.O. Box 127, Houghton NY 14744) by December 30!

Over the years a significant part of our church's global outreach has been international students who have come to Houghton Academy. These students have brought rich diversity and relationships to our congregation and by God's grace we have impacted individual hearts and future global leaders.

In 2020, largely due to the COVID pandemic, enrollment in the HA international boarding program has been drastically reduced, impacting many aspects of the Academy program. But with this comes two tangible opportunities for growth and ministry:

- to offer global missionary families' students new scholarships to the Academy, and
- to renew and expand partnerships and exchanges with international schools.

With a generous Christmas Offering, HWC can immediately share in this vision.

Academy Administrator, Jon Keith reports: *" There are already a few student prospects for second semester – one or two from Wesleyan Academy in Puerto Rico, and one from an English House ministry in Guatemala. We can put funding to use fairly soon."*

In a year full of surprises, 2020's Christmas Offering provides global impact with local implications for a ministry that has dramatically served the Kingdom of God from a humble hilltop in the Genesee Valley since 1883.

Previous Christmas Offerings: 2017 - $24,000 for Puerto Rico hurricane relief and school restoration;
2018 - $22,000 for Badr City Wesleyan Church construction in Egypt;
2019 - $18,500 for Canaan School project in Haiti;

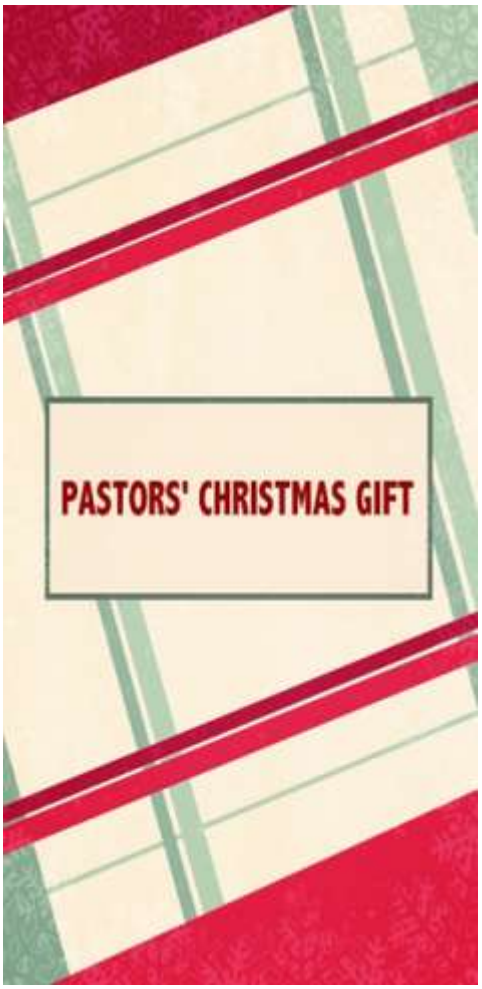
2020 - HA GLOBAL OUTREACH ! It's up to us to invest in precious lives from around the world!

PRAYERFULLY CONTRIBUTE NOW to the Christmas Eve Offering 2020

Missionary letter excerpt from Ellen and Rod Casali ministering at Canada Institute of Linguistics, an educational arm of Wycliffe:

"I'd like to share the following from Mike Cahill, PhD, a colleague and friend from our days in Ghana who is developing a valuable video series addressing the challenges of orthography development. 'Some [videos] deal with people factors like who needs to be involved in a successful project--who are the stakeholders? Who makes decisions? What are the stages? What about different dialects? Others deal with more technical things, like how to represent (spell) consonants, vowels, tones? How to decide if words are joined or separated? How do you test an orthography?'

If you want to see a sample, I'd recommend this first one on *What is an orthography? It's about 12 minutes, and you can see it here (https://sho.co/1DHM5).* kingdom whose residence is uninhibited by viruses and visa constraints."



Dear Houghton Church friends,

One of the tangible ways that we celebrate the gift of God's Son during this Advent season is by exchanging gifts with friends and family. For the Houghton Church congregation, we have an opportunity to give gifts to our pastoral staff, who share their gifts of service with us throughout the year. This year especially we have been blessed by their diligence and creativity and sacrifice as they have continued to minister to us in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. Gifts to our pastoral staff are meant to be a loving response from the church family as a whole.

If you would like to contribute to this monetary gift for our Pastoral Staff, you may mail your gift to the church (Houghton Wesleyan Church, PO Box 127 —9712 Route 19, Houghton, NY 14744.) Be sure to designate Pastors Christmas Gift on the check memo. Gifts may also be given on-line at **www.hwchurch.org/giving** and choose the "06 Pastors Christmas Fund" designation. Please give by December 21. (Please note 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.

Douglas Gaerte (on behalf of the Board of Elders)

The Church 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 to drop off at the church office by December 18th. If you would like to purchase one or more poinsettias, you may use the online giving option, mail a check to the church (indicate poinsettias), or drop off payment at the church office. If you wish to purchase a poinsettia in memory or in honor of a loved one, please email (pattystalker@hwchurch.org) or call Patty (567-2264) with your information by December 17th. Thank you!

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 (Subway today) 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.

CONGRATULATIONS!

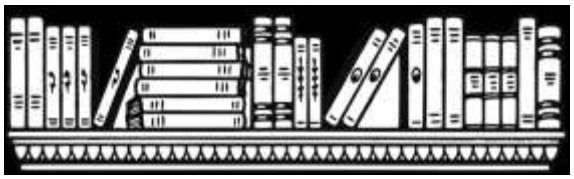
Emily, Mike, and Sarah Spateholts at the birth of Samuel James on November 10, 2020

Kristen, Garrett and Liam Luckey at the birth of Adelyn Noelle on November 20, 2020

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD SHOEBOXES

Thank you to all who helped pack boxes for Operation Christmas Child!
We collected and dropped off 111 boxes here at the church and there are 28 online. The online Shoebox Assembly is open until December 5 if you still want to send out a shoebox.
A special thank you to Ann McNeill who organized everything and drove the boxes to the collection site.

From the
Library Shelves



Welcome! We are working on some more new books for the library—and other new books are on the shelves waiting for you. There are also Christmas books and DVDs for all ages that you might be interested in now.

Remember, you need to call the church office and make a reservation to come to the library. Or if you just need to drop books off, the Library bin is outside by the community room doors.

Have a Blessed Christmas season!

The Harvest Treat Bag drive-through was a huge success! We had beautiful weather on October 31st and a great turn-out. Thank you for all of the treats that were donated to fill the bags. We deeply appreciate all of your generosity in giving candy and snacks to fill the bags. We were excited that several families from the surrounding area also engaged in the event. Thank you!

In the United States each year, roughly ¾ of a million children are victimized by abuse or neglect. COVID is increasing the vulnerability of children, including hundreds of children living here in Allegany County. Here are snapshots from the stories of some of our Houghton RFKC campers:

⇒ Brad was removed from his home after both of his parents beat him so hard that they broke one of his legs four inches below his hip.

⇒ Mary and Tammy were removed from their home because their mom continually failed to protect them from the unwanted sexual advances of her boyfriends.

⇒ Jane was in the custodial care of her grandparents from age 2 – 6 because both her parents were in and out of jail on drug and theft charges. At the death of her grandparents, she is in need of a new foster family.

⇒ Consider the case of 8 year old Mark whose own mother told him to his face that he was fat, worthless and no good and that she wishes he had never been born. She wished she had an abortion instead of having him and she repeatedly told that to him—to his face—before dropping him off to live permanently with his grandmother.

In 1994, a group of volunteers in Houghton and surrounding communities organized the first Houghton Royal Family Kids' Camp with the goal of providing positive memories in a residential camp environment for maltreated children in Western NY. We held our first camp in July 1995 for 28 campers, ages 6 to 12.

During the week of July 11 to 16, 2021 we will host our 27th annual Royal Family Kids' Camp for 52 children at Camp Asbury on Silver Lake, NY – about 25 miles north of here. Our local camp is one of 250 RFKCs worldwide that serve over 7,000 children ages 6 to 12 each year.

Why the name RFKC?

- Because all children are part of God's royal family and have a royal heritage
- As such, they deserve to be treated royally. [Matt. 25:40 says…whatever you do to "the least of these" you do unto me]

The Houghton RFKC is sponsored by the Houghton Wesleyan Church. Our children are referred mainly from Allegany Department of Social Services, and we have about 60 to 65 volunteers who work with 52 children for the week.

- We have 26 counselors for 52 campers – a 2:1 ratio!
- We have 30 additional full-time, residential volunteers who work in various roles such as drama, music, activities, recreation, photography, etc. We also have a camp grandma and grandpa and a camp nurse and a camp child welfare specialist

We have about 15 day workers who come to camp to help out with various special crafts and activities.
Abuse is a sad reality…but RFKC …**is one happy place!** The money we raise creates what our campers refer to as *"The Best Week of the Year!"* Camp days are filled with swimming, singing, Bible stories, drama, boating, fishing, crafts, lots of great food, tons of smiles, hugs, laughter and MORE SWIMMING!

Please pray for RFKC:
Heavenly Father…As King David said in the 40th Psalm…
You incline your ear to the cries of your children
You lift them up out of the muck and the mire
You place them on firm ground and take their hand and guide them along
You place a song in their heart…a song of gratitude to you.
Help us to be your hands and heart in response to the cries of children at our doorstep. Help us to replace the cries with songs of gratitude to you. Amen.

WE NEED YOU! All of our staff and counselors are unpaid volunteers. The vast majority of our volunteers are members of the Houghton and Fillmore communities. Please pray and ask God if He has a place for you to serve His Children through Royal Family. We need volunteers of all ages and backgrounds. If you have questions, please contact Nancy Murphy nancy.murphy@houghton.edu. If you are already serving with Royal Family, talk to your neighbors and friends about ways they can get involved.

Wellspring Ministries

Wellspring Ministries first came on my radar after my mother-in-law died, and I had to find a place to which I could donate her clothes. When I dropped things off at the Angelica building, I was invited to take a tour of the facilities. Director Jim Arthur gave me an overview of Wellspring's mission and activities, which involved carefully sorting donations to be sure they were in good working condition, whether clothing or household goods, and then displaying them nicely for clients to take, all at no cost. Then he explained Wellspring also offers a free hot lunch to anyone who cares to stay and participate. Coffee and donated baked goods were also available through the hours before lunch.

Since those days in 2008-2009, Wellspring has added a kitchen addition and improved the facilities for clients to enjoy. Now in these pandemic times, Wellspring still offers its services, although with new procedures to comply with protecting the public. I have been privileged to be a part of this incredible ministry to the people Allegany County and even beyond for the past 12 years, first as a volunteer, and for the past 8 years or so, as a board member. My last meeting as such will be in December.

As a fellow board member, I also want to thank Steve Rennie, a Fillmore resident and Houghton grad, for his years of service to the board, as he, too, is stepping away from those responsibilities. Beth Beardsley, a member of our church, remains in her board position, and Bob Stalker, Donnie Stockin, and Bill Doezema currently volunteer on a regular basis. We are so grateful for their service and trust the Lord to continue placing this ministry before others in our congregation who will volunteer to carry on the work. Our volunteers come from among our clients and other churches in the area.

Thank you for your support and prayers for this ministry.
Gudy Stevenson (for the Board)

The Highlanders Shop & Printing Press

We will be open to the public once again beginning Monday, November 30th from 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Monday – Friday. We will be closed from 11:30 a.m. December 22nd – January 17th with Printing Press hours by arrangement January 13th – 15th.

Stop by to get some unique Christmas gifts in our Fair Trade International Market section, check out our book sale with prices comparable to Amazon, have your Christmas letters printed, or get some Highlander gear!

To submit a printing request, use our online order form at www.houghton.edu/printingpressorder.

Reminder: All gifts for calendar year 2020 need to be

- **delivered to the church office by the 31st**
- **mailed with a postmark date of December 31st or earlier,**
- **or need to be made online by December 31st at 2:00 p.m..with a gift date of December 31 or earlier.**

Wellsprings Ministry Update

Wellspring will be open December 2, 4, 9, 11, 16 and 18 for "give away" areas and the Christmas Room. Hours are 10 a.m. to noon. Parents may select 2 gifts per custodial child as long as the gifts last. No meals will be prepared.

SUNDAYS IN DECEMBER

December 6 (10:00 Streaming / 11:15 Outdoors?)
a.m. *But Isn't It About Us?* (Luke 1:57-66)

December 13 (10:00 Streaming / 11:15 Outdoors?)
a.m. *But What Will People Think?* (Matthew 1:18-25)

December 20 (10:00 Streaming / 11:15 Outdoors?)
a.m. *But Doesn't That Say Something About Us?* (Luke 2:1-7)

December 27 (10:00 Streaming / 11:15 Outdoors?)
a.m. Pastor Paul Shea

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES:

Due to the nature of the pandemic in our area and the projected future of the pandemic in our area, our Christmas Eve service will be streaming only. We will be providing more information as we draw closer to the 24th.

CHURCH STAFF

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

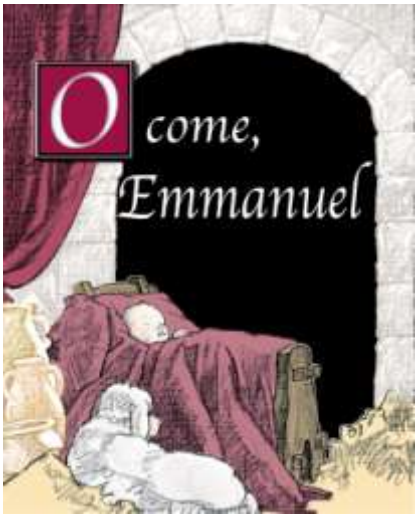
Jon Cole, Youth Pastor
307-9950 joncole@hwchurch.org

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

Ann McNeill, Children's Ministry
716-801-3425 annmcneill@hwchurch.org

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

Church Office, M-F, 8 AM-Noon & 1-4 PM,
567-2264 office@hwchurch.org