

Highlights

HOPE FOR 2021



*“For I know the plans I have for you,”
says the Lord. “They are plans for good
and not for disaster, to give you a future
and a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11)*

I was looking back at my *Highlights* article from last year. Here is the last paragraph of that article: *And one more thing. As we prepare to enter a new year, none of us know what the future holds, but we do know that God is trustworthy and good...and ultimately, that’s enough.*

To say that no one knew what the future held for 2020 was an understatement! None of us could have possibly imagined that the words *social distancing*, *masks*, *hand sanitizer*, and *ventilation* would become some of the most common words of our vocabulary. Not to mention all of the words related to the election and the racial tensions that have occupied our attention this year.

We might not have imagined what we would experience this year, but we had complete and full confidence that God would be trustworthy and good. We enter 2021 with less hope than we entered 2020. My sense is that we are more concerned about the problems of our world than we were 366 days ago.

That’s not all bad. Some of the issues of 2020 needed to be addressed and continue to need to be addressed. There is still much to do in order to be willing and sensitive answers to the prayer Jesus taught us to pray: *Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

Nevertheless, we are concerned that life will ever be what it was. We wonder when we will be a nation that sees people of color with the dignity and respect with which God sees them. We wonder if the political divisiveness that spills over into every area of life can be healed. We wonder if we will ever return to life as it was before the pandemic. We wonder how so much of the world will recover when they have minimal resources compared to what we have here. So many questions. So few answers.

Israel finds itself in a more serious, yet similar situation while in Babylonian exile. Life is not what it once was. Every day is a series of unplanned and unwanted demands. They wonder if things will ever be the same again. They weep. They despair.

Back in Jerusalem, devastated by Nebuchadnezzar’s army, the prophet Jeremiah is God’s voice. He isn’t popular because he is honest with the people about their sin. In fact, he is so unpopular that he is thrown into a cistern and put in stocks. He struggles with despair about Israel’s future.

In the midst of this struggle God speaks a word to him: *“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”* I am convinced that this is not a word limited to the prophet because it reveals the nature of God. He is a God of hope for the future through his faithful presence in the present.

So once again, let me say that no matter what 2021 holds, the one constant, the one truth we can rely on in it all is that God is good and that we can trust him. Because he is good, we trust him not to affirm our ideas or plans, but to lead us into his kingdom purposes that stretch us and call us to deeper faith.

Blessings,
Pastor Wes



EPIPHANY: Epiphany, January 6, is a day of great joy for all Christians. It completes the twelve days of Christmas; more important, this is the festival of the manifestation of God's Word made flesh. The central images of the Magi bearing gifts suggest the three races of humanity coming to worship the Christ. A second manifestation is the baptism of Jesus. A third manifestation is the wedding feast at Cana when Jesus first revealed his power. The season of Epiphany continues through Shrove Tuesday (February 25). Ash Wednesday, which is the first day of Lent, is February 26. The emphasis of Epiphany is on the revealing nature of God, his desire for all people to know his nature and power—the character of his being. The color is green which points us to life—physical and eternal. The trees green out in the spring to reveal that the trees are still alive. The grass also turns green revealing the life that has been hidden during the winter.

STEWARDSHIP—A Life of Generosity

"Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15)

God's radical generosity to us comes in the form of Grace – freely given to all. We respond to this grace with thankfulness and gratitude. Because God's grace is an "indescribable gift," one would expect our expressions of gratitude would be radical in return – coming from the very core of who we are. Simply put, stewardship is a spiritual discipline rooted in our relationship with God.

At the dawn of the New Year we can be filled with hope for what is to come as we are mindful of His many blessings in the year just past. A new year is also an opportunity to look for ways to do things better in the coming year. How can we be better stewards of what God has entrusted to our care – resources like time, energy, and money?

May you find freedom and joy in the discipline and obedience of radical generosity.



THANK YOU

to everyone who helped decorate inside and outside the church for the Christmas season. Your involvement makes the celebration even more meaningful.

Christmas Offering For Academy International/TCK Programs

Thank you for the wonderful response to the Christmas Eve Offering for Houghton Academy, \$12,746 at printing. We look forward to new arrivals as early as next semester because of your generosity. Keep praying for God's blessing on the Academy – from your Global Missions Committee.

Small Group Innovation!

Small group gatherings will commence mid to late January in a variety of traditional and innovative settings. Those interested in learning more about diverse options should contact Pastor Paul Shea.

Paulshea@hwchurch.org



COMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY MISSIONS CONVENTION

"Christ – for Such a Time as This."

Sunday, February 14: Sunday Service 10 A.M.

Dr. Myron Glick, Founder/Director of Jericho Road Ministries
Guest Spot – Kevin and Cindy Austin, Czech Republic
Special Music and Children's Sermon
HWC Global Missions picture DIRECTORY release!

Thursday, February 18: Streamed Mission Panel

Mission Focus Buffalo Outreach, 6:30 P.M.
Steve and Ruth Strand and Panel

Thank you to all the folks who expressed thanks for our children's ministry through cards, kind words, notes of encouragement, and gifts. We were so touched by your warmth and support. God is good to have inspired us and to have provided the means and opportunities to reach your family for Christ.



Kids' Club News - Let's Grow in the Lord in 2021! Families can now elect to receive printed copies of our Sunday School Curriculum in the US mail and to be part of Kids' Club Virtual. Two online times are now offered. Children may sign on to Miss Ann's Zoom meetings on Wednesday nights at 6:30 or Friday afternoons at 3:30. There we will share our activity sheets, reinforce the monthly verse using American Sign Language, and receive incentive rewards for memorizing scripture. Each Zoom meeting will last about 30-45 minutes.

Contact annmneill@hwchurch.org if you would like to receive the materials in print-ed form. Also let Ann know if you'd like to receive a Kids' Club Virtual Zoom invitation link. She'll send out invites to past members, but she doesn't want to miss anyone. God is good! Join us!

Ann McNeill (716-801-3425)

Director of Children's Ministries (HWKids RFKC, Library & Cradle Roll)

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday is January 17

Every year in the United States alone, more than one million babies are aborted. Statistics show that 12 % of U.S. women who obtain abortions are younger than age 20, and at current rates, nearly one-fourth of American women will have an abortion. Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, January 17, 2021, is a day to celebrate and focus on choosing life.

The Wesleyan Church supports the sanctity of life and those who choose to trust God despite difficulties. January 17, 2021, marks Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, an event observed the third Sunday of every January. Wesleyans are encouraged to observe this day on which many take a stand for human life.

Because all human beings are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and are "fearfully and wonderfully made," (Psalm 139:14) abortion grieves his heart. God, the Creator of the universe, deeply values human life and it says so in his Word:

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! (Psa. 139:13-17 NIV).

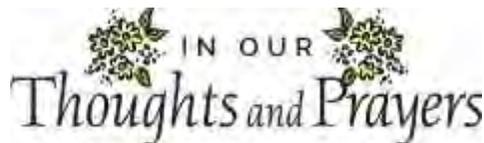


CONGRATULATIONS

Lucy Raphaelle Giannini was born on December 20 to Heidi and John Giannini and big sister Gloria.



THANK YOU: The Pastoral Staff would like to thank you for your generosity and gratitude to each of us this Christmas season. We were overwhelmed by the outpouring of love and appreciation we felt through your many gifts, personal acts of kindness, and your affirming words. We feel privileged to be a part of the godly tradition of the Houghton Wesleyan Church and to participate in ministry with you. We look forward to the year ahead and all that God has planned for you and for us.



Our condolences to the families of

- ◇ for Josie Adenuga and her family at the death of her mother, Joan Aina nee van der Puije,
- ◇ for Karen Williams and her family at the death of her sister, Alyce Petrzelka,
- ◇ for Jane Allen and her family at the death of her sister, Carol Alstadt,

Stone Soup Dinner Fund Raiser for Valley Preschool

It's time for our fourth community-wide Stone Soup Dinner! We are glad to be able to hold this event again this year even though things will look a little different. This donation dinner gives our church family, current and former Valley Preschool families, and the greater community an opportunity to contribute to a general fund to help off-set rising tuition costs. It is something in addition to our scholarship program that we started to help make Valley Preschool affordable to more families.

This year three of our seven students have benefited by being able to have a \$10 per month discount on tuition from the funds raised last year. However, due to our very low numbers, we are grateful to have this fund for day to day expenses also. Our goal is to raise enough money to have a reserve for families next year in spite of also having to make up for a lack of students this year.

Our Stone Soup Dinner on Friday, January 29th will be a drive-thru event with take-out only. We plan to have both 16 ounce and 32 ounce to-go containers of soup (beef or vegetable) available for pick-up from 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. While we don't usually do them, pre-orders are very important this year, as we don't want to grossly over or under estimate soup and container amounts. Consider ordering soup and donating it as a prepared freezer meal the church is providing to those needing meals in these times, and make two donations at once!

Date – Friday, January 29, 2021

Time – 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.

Place – Houghton Wesleyan Church (under the outdoor “overhang” of the C.E. Building by the kitchen door)

Food – Stone Soup (beef soup or vegetable soup)

Payment – Donation by cash or check

Take Out Only

If you have questions (or an order!), please contact Casda Danner at 567-4314 or casdadanner@hwchurch.org

To order, please email the following information to casdadanner@hwchurch.org, call the church office to drop off a paper form (585.567.2264) or use for online ordering: <https://tinyurl.com/vpsstonesoup>

Name _____

Type, size, and number of containers needed _____ Beef _____ Vegetable
 _____ 16 oz. _____ 16 oz.
 _____ 32 oz. _____ 32 oz.

Approximate time between 5:30 & 6:30 for pick-up _____

Contact info. for order confirmation

Email (preferred) _____ or phone _____

Come enjoy some warm soup on a cold evening and support Valley Preschool!



WELLSPRING MINISTRIES

Church Family -

The **'stream of time'** keeps flowing and we are about to step into the **waters** of a new year at Wellspring. It does look different yet again.

face masks and distancing continuing
sanitized seating for those waiting to 'shop'
no noon meal, with limited open hrs. of 10 am to noon
(Items can be taken there, however, as early as 9:15 am)

We did provide 56 Thanksgiving meals in giveaway bags for folks to take home.

These were distributed by Belmont Rotary Club members.

-Our Christmas Room provided gifts for well over 200 children in the area.

Parents just loved the idea of selecting gifts from our nice age-leveled shelves.

-We did not have a Christmas dinner for the general clients, as usual, but honored

the volunteers in a special way this year.

-We closed on Friday Dec. 18 at noon and will reopen Wednesday January 6 at 10 am. Please continue to check our [Facebook page](#) for any changes to those dates or precautions.

Thank you for keeping us in the black and able to respond to needs. We thank Gudy Stevenson for her several years of service on the board. God used her gifts in specific ways, and we sadly bid her farewell. Please pray and consider **'getting your feet wet'** with us. The **water's warm!** (Join teammates Bob, Donnie, Beth, and Bill from HWC.)

Gratefully, Beth Beardsley (for the board)

-from Amos 5 - **"But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an overflowing stream."** - our prayer for this place

From the
Library Shelves

Happy New Year!

In this new year, come in and discover what there is for you in our church library. We have books for all ages, even the very young ones. There are story CDs, or books on CD, for adults and children. And movies for the whole family to enjoy together. We have recently finished processing quite a number of new books and some DVDs. So come on in and see what you can find to enjoy!

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.



I would like to leave a special note of appreciation for the 16 families who rallied together to purchase a beautiful very reliable Dodge Grand Caravan for my ministry with the Amish folk. Although never expected it is quite appreciated. I call it my black Amish buggy with 283 black and white, brown and white paint horses underneath the hood. I love it and so do many of my patrons.

I want to say a little bit about my ministry. Not only do I offer services at a lower price than most drivers out there; but try to change the face of driving out there. Some things I do is not state that I "haul" Amish I believe hauling is for products like groceries and other goods; these are people not goods.

When I hear of a baby being born I try to at least get them a package of diapers and other essentials that are baby items. Also if I know there is a birthday I try to purchase a small item for them. Sometimes I do allow a short unexpected free ride not often. I also in my free time and only to those I am seriously acquainted with will stop and visit and help with chores like cleaning house or barn or just plain visit if that is what is needed. Many times have I shared meals bringing food with me. This year has been a joyful experience.

Thank you all for continuing to make it possible..

Barbara Elliott



Welcome to the 2nd Annual

Christmas Tree Burning Fundraiser

sponsored by the

Houghton Volunteer Fire Department,

January 3rd.

The fire will be lit at 6:30pm. Bring your own chair! Hot Chocolate will be available as long as supplies last. Drop off your tree at the north end of the fire hall parking lot anytime on Saturday the 2nd, or Sunday the 3rd. Pick-up available in the Town of Caneadea on the afternoon of the 4th. Email Jon Cole to get on the list for pickup. Jon.Cole10@Houghton.edu



Vintage Finds Treasured Memories will only be open on Saturdays in January as we do some renovation work and rearranging of our layout. If there is something that you would like to purchase outside of Saturdays, please contact us at 585-365-1901 to arrange a time to meet you at the store. 41 Main Street, Belfast, NY Phone: 585-365-1901

*Valley Bread and Bounty in Fillmore NY: Providing joyfully baked wholesome whole wheat, gluten free, and vegan bread to nourish the body and uplift the soul. Newly launched and growing! Message, email, or visit our website.
Email: valleybreadandbounty@gmail.com Website: ValleyBreadandBounty.com Phone: 585-365-3450*

Missionary letter excerpt from Don and Jeanie Little ministering with Pioneers in the Middle East and Africa

Don recommends three books he has been reading this year:

Ronald J. Sider. *If Jesus is Lord: Loving our Enemies in an Age of Violence* (2019)

Timothy C. Tennent. *For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality & the Human Body* (2020).

Rob Reimer. *Soul Care: 7 Transformational Principles for a Healthy Soul* (2016).



January 3 (10:00am Streaming)

a.m. Pastor Paul Shea "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory" Luke 24

January 10 (10:00am Streaming)

a.m. Dr. Terry Paige

January 17 (10:00am Streaming)

a.m. Pastor Wes

January 24 (10:00am Streaming)

a.m. Pastor Wes

January 31 (10:00am Streaming)

a.m. Pastor Wes

CHURCH STAFF

Wes Oden, Senior Pastor

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Amanda Cox, Music & Worship Director

567-4870 amandacox@hwchurch.org

Andrew Silbert, Director of College Ministries

716-450-9179 andrewsilbert@hwchurch.org

**Emily Spateholts, Director of Children's Ministries
(on maternity leave)**

Ann McNeill, Director of Children's Ministries

(Wednesday Kids Club, Library, RFKC, Cradle Roll)

716-801-3425 annmceill@hwchurch.org

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

567-2264 office@hwchurch.org