



*Joyfully loving God,
wholeheartedly
serving others*

June 22, 2021

Dear Houghton Church Friends,

Here is some information for this week, including some important information related to church gatherings.

COVID-19 Information: Our COVID Task Force met last week to discuss the implications for our church in light of the governor's announcement that rolled back most COVID-related restrictions on almost all commercial and institutional entities. We received confirmation from the local DOH that houses of worship were included in the rollback. In view of this and considering the current low community transmission rate of COVID-19, we are excited to announce some significant changes to the policies around our worship gatherings.

Here is a summary of the changes:

- For outdoor gatherings,
 - All distancing restrictions are lifted; however, there should still be ample space available to facilitate distancing for those who desire.
 - Masks are welcomed for all but not required. Please continue to be sensitive to one another as we navigate this change; some will want to continue masking and distancing, and we support that choice.
- For indoor gatherings,
 - Reservations are no longer needed for attending services.
 - Vaccinated individuals do not need to wear a mask or socially distance, even when singing.
 - As outlined in the governor's announcement, unvaccinated individuals continue to be responsible for wearing masks. We ask unvaccinated individuals to continue wearing a mask when not distancing as well as while they are singing.
 - As with outdoor worship, we affirm those who, regardless of vaccination status, desire to wear a mask and/or practice distancing and encourage grace and sensitivity to one another.
 - While most seating in the sanctuary will no longer be restricted, there will be designated areas of distanced seating available to all, regardless of vaccination status, who desire or need to use it. Unvaccinated individuals seated in the designated areas are free to remove masks while seated and not singing.
 - There are no seating restrictions on children. It is expected that they will sit with their parents.

Worship Information

- The sanctuary will be open for worship during the 10:00 streaming service.
- We have set up space in the Community Room to watch on a large screen, singing and sharing with others.
- Outdoor worship will continue Sunday mornings at 11:15 in the church parking lot.

Outdoor Service Discussion

- The past few weeks have been particularly warm in the parking lot for the outdoor service and the heat has created some difficulties. In response, the pastoral staff has spent a great deal of time discussing various options, including changing the service to an earlier time and moving the service to the grass on the north side of the church.
- The staff has agonized over each option because every decision has implications beyond the service itself. For instance, moving the service to the north grassy area or changing the time of the service to 8:30 may reduce the effect of the heat but it creates logistical issues for set up and it changes the Sunday morning schedule for attendees, particularly families with young children. Additionally, in the recent survey of those who responded, twice as many (51%) indicated their preference that the service remain at 11:15 as those (25%) who indicated their desire for the service to be held earlier.
- After a very long discussion about the various options, the staff has concluded that we should continue meeting in the church parking lot at 11:15. We will continue to provide water bottles and sunscreen and we encourage you to bring an umbrella as further protection from the sun and heat.
- If you have further questions about any of the services, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Baptism and Dedications: In light of the vaccination progress and the low positivity rate, we are ready to resume baptisms and dedications. If you or someone in your family is interested in being baptized or in having your children dedicated, please let me know.

HWC Kids:

- There WILL be children's church this week! Hope you can join us in the Community Room during the sermon of both the 10 and 11:15 services.
- Sunday School series GROW in June: Leaders take the lead. Like a drum major leading a marching band or the grand marshal at a parade, leaders are out in front showing others the way. Legendary leaders of the Bible like Deborah, Gideon, Samson, and Ruth will help kids see what leadership looks like and how they can become great leaders too. Young leaders will grow this month learning that God gives me courage to lead, helps me learn from mistakes, and gives me leaders I can follow. Everyone can be a leader, let's take the lead together.
- **Final week to Register for VBS!** HWC Children's Ministries is excited to team with Fillmore Wesleyan Church as they host Vacation Bible School June 28 - July 1st for children PreK through 6th grade. We need group leaders to assist small groups of children as they participate in the Bible story, science, and crafts stations, game leaders, musicians, and general helpers. The evenings run from 6:00-8:30. Registration for kids ages 3-6th grade is [here](#). Interested in volunteering? We have plenty of openings from prayer partners to food contributors to small group leaders and music or Bible story helpers. Adults and teens interested in helping sign up to help [here](#). If you would like to contribute snacks to this fun ministry to our community, [click here to view the shopping list](#). Items need to be either dropped off directly to Fillmore Wesleyan Church by Sunday, June 27th or to the HWC kitchen by Saturday, June 26th so we can get it up to Fillmore.

Royal Family Kids' Camp (RFKC)—Prayer Partners Needed

- The mission of Royal Family Kids is to create “positive, life-changing moments for innocent children who have been victims of neglect, abuse, and abandonment.” Since 1995, the local Houghton RFKC has served over 400 campers, with each of these campers returning for an average of 4 summers.
- We are thrilled to report that this year's RFKC at Camp Asbury is a “go”! It is scheduled for July 11-16.
- We still need twelve prayer partners. Anyone interested in being a prayer partner should contact Laurie Dashnau by email at Laurie.Dashnau@houghton.edu. The responsibilities of a prayer partner include praying for one specific camper, counselor, or staff member along with writing a short note to that person (the note being provided); please return the note by July 5. The note will be passed along to him or her at the start of camp. Thank you in advance for considering serving in this capacity.

Church Finances

- Here are the giving totals as we begin a new fiscal year (June 2021 – May 2022).

Budget Needed: \$48,364.95 / **Budget Received:** \$44,091.96

- The weekly bulletin contains up to date financial information. 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).
- If you would like to see any church financial information, contact the church office.

Streaming Information

- Send your comments, ideas or words of gratitude about the streaming to streaming@hwchurch.org.

Resources

- Our pastors and church family are here for you. On the [COVID-19 section](#) of the church website, you will see three buttons: [Get Help](#), [Give Help](#) and [Let's Talk](#). This is an easy way to let us know how we might engage with you. Do not hesitate to use those, to call the church, or to call one of the pastors if any of those buttons reflect what you would like to communicate with us.
- If you use YouTube, subscribe to our [Houghton Wesleyan Church YouTube Channel](#).

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

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

Blessings,
Pastor Jon