



Houghton Wesleyan Church

Highlights

*Joyfully loving God,
wholeheartedly serving others*
December 2021
Volume 54, No. 7



Welcoming Jesus in Our Myths

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

Over the course of the past few months, each Sunday we've been thinking about myths that affect us without us always realizing their subtle impact.

When we started on this “mythical” journey in September, I mentioned that during the 1952 Christmas season, C.S. Lewis invited Joy Davidman—who was eventually to become his wife—to spend the holidays at his home, The Kilns. Joy asked Lewis to autograph her copy of his book *The Great Divorce*. He wrote, “There are three images in my mind which I must continually forsake and replace by better ones: the false image of God, the false image of my neighbours, and the false image of myself.”

As we embark on another Advent season, I am reminded that if anything resets our false images, it's the incarnation. John writes in the prologue of his Gospel: *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.* Jesus is born to reveal to our misguided and confused minds and hearts the truth of who God is, the truth of who we are, and the truth of who others are—that God is love, that we are loved unconditionally and that all people have value and significance as beloved creatures of God.

There are so many things that grab our attention at this time of year. Most of these things are good and wonderful and we are better for engaging in them. But in the midst of the songs and stories, in the midst of the trees and decorations, in the midst old traditions and new ventures, Advent calls us to remember that Jesus comes full of grace and truth in order to repair and re-engage our false ideas.

I wonder how different we would be, how different our relationships would be, how different our world would be, if we could see and receive and experience the coming of Jesus as God intends. I am convinced that just as the birth of this child in Bethlehem is more glorious than anyone could have imagined, so the results of our openness to him will be more glorious than we could ever imagine. May it be so for you and for me this Advent season.

Because Christ has come,

Pastor Wes



Christmas Eve Services

Both services include the lighting of candles and the music and Scriptures of Christmas.

4:00 – Outdoor Service

6:00 – Indoor Streamed Service in the Sanctuary



Stewardship – A Life of Generosity

Recently Pastor Jon attended a youth ministry convention at which, the 9 Square-in-the-air company, held a competitive 9 square tournament. On the line for the winner was a complete 9 square game system. That’s about a \$1000 worth of youth ministry fun! Without going into too much detail about gameplay mechanics, you should understand that being tall is a significant advantage in 9 Square. Since Pastor Jon is taller than most people, he entered the competition with high hopes of bringing home a brand new 9 square game for our youth ministry, and he was on the way to doing just that.

Then he began to listen to the stories of some of the other youth pastors and their hope of winning a youth ministry tool that for many of them was financially out of reach. He was struck with the knowledge that all of the youth ministry needs in our church are generously met. And so, knowing that many youth leaders have minimal financial resources and with a sense of gratitude for what our church provides, he decided to withdraw from the event.

It's only because of your generosity that we are able to invest as much as we do in the young people in our community! In addition to one-time requests (technology, missions, big events), the youth budget is routinely used for things like:



- * Youth group supplies
- * Refreshments
- * Investments in the youth room
- * Curriculum
- * Volunteer staff training and “thank-you’s”
- * Bibles and other books that we can give out to parents and students
- * Defraying the cost of trips and events to keep the price low enough that all students can attend.

This ministry that focuses on the well-being and spiritual development of our young people would not be possible without your generous giving! Thank you for your faithfulness and generosity.

Christmas Carol Sing and Smores

December 19 at 4:00 in the Church parking lot
Come join your voices in celebrating our annual carol sing outside this year! Then stay to join us for hot cocoa and smores. The church will provide the cocoa and everything needed to make the smores.



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 17th. 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 13th. Thank you!



CHRISTMAS OFFERING FOR MISSIONS 2021!

December 23, 2021

HAITI LaGONAVE O₂ Project



In partnership with the Wesleyan Church of Haiti, the LaGonave Wesleyan Hospital Long Range Plan, and World Hope International Houghton Wesleyan is receiving gifts at Christmas (until December 31) to upgrade the Oxygen Production Facility at the Hospital. Goal \$20,000. The LGWH aim is to provide a Christ-centered healthcare system that is sustainable, equitable and serviceable for the community of LaGonave, Haiti.



Why Oxygen Production? With current political and economic instability, Covid 19 demands, and isolation from Port-au-Prince O₂ supply, the answer is to provide for their own needs. World Hope is assisting in a complete upgrade of the facilities that already has a medical school, solar power, desalination facilities, and is the main health facility on the island. For 120,000 people.

Where is LaGonave Hospital? Serving the 120-130,000 people on a 270 sq.mi. island of Gonave, ten miles off the main land of Haiti. The Wesleyan Church has been there over 7 decades with 27 churches, 2 high schools, 18 primary schools. Our church's past links includes supporting Dr. and Mrs. Storer Emmett in their years of service there.

HOW TO GIVE: In person on Sundays in December, at Christmas Eve December 24, on line at <https://www.hwchurch.org/giving/>

For more information Visit: <https://hospitalwesleyan.org>; <https://worldhope.org/projects>;
FaceBook – “Hope and Health_A Virtual Tour of La Gonave Wesleyan Hospital.

SHORT TERM MISSION Prayer:

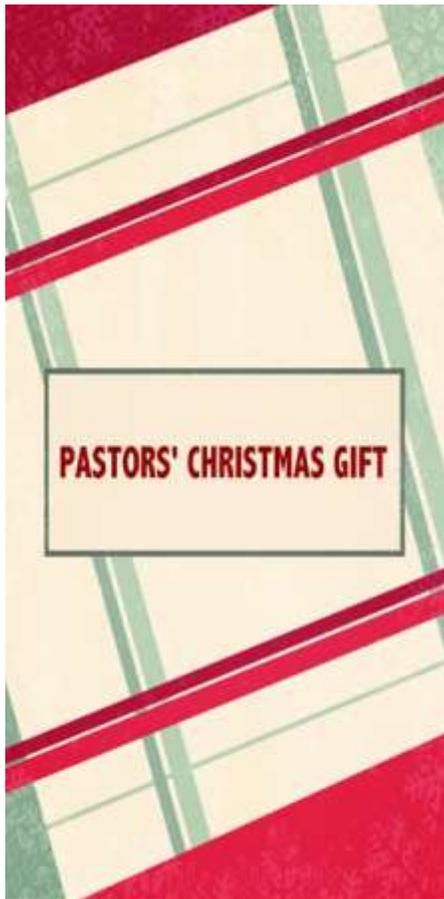
Jim and Donna Zoller as they represent HWC is Cairo, Egypt and beyond December 1-10. Pray for safety, gracious and good contacts, and for the growth and health of the multiple Standard Wesleyan Churches of Egypt including the Badr City Church which HWC contributed to several Christmas Offerings ago.

Anthony and Nancy Petrillo, Anthony III, Jared Winkens, and David Roorbach as they complete their final two weeks in Tanzania developing materials and testing the pilot elementary program for school children in Africa. Pray for health, good partnerships, witness for Christ, future plans, and a safe trip home.

ADULT DISCIPLESHIP NOTES:

Adult Sunday School class DATES - Final two weeks are December 5th and 12th. Thanks to all who have led and participated. Classes will resume on January 16th.

Banding Together 2021-22 – We are grateful for the good number of Banding Together clusters that have commenced this Fall. These consist of three to five disciples meeting once a week or every other week to share insights from the Word, hold each other accountable in their walk with God, and pray for God to reach others on their hearts. Anyone interested in more information should contact paulshea@hwchurch.org.



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, creativity, and sacrifice as they have continued to minister to us in the midst of the pandemic. These gifts are meant to be a loving expression of gratitude from the church family as a whole.

If you have been blessed by their ministry and would like to contribute confidentially 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 19** using these avenues, or give it directly to the church office, David Mercer, Dick Harter or me. (Please note that your gift is tax-deductible, but is taxable for those who receive it.)

Thank you for your generosity. We pray God's richest blessing for you and your family during this Advent season.

Daryl Stevenson (on behalf of the Board of Elders)

HWC KIDS!

- **Joy to the World!!** What are your go-to Christmas traditions? It's amazing how different all of our Christmas celebrations can be, especially when you take into account how Christmas is celebrated all over the world. This month, we'll be reminded what a universal gift Jesus is, and how Jesus brought good news, joy, and peace on that very first Christmas so that the whole world could know God!

- **Join us in memorizing this month's verse from Luke 2:14** - "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." HWC Kids, stop by the Welcome Desk or send us a video to say your verse; add your sticker to the chart and get a prize. Great job to everyone who's memorized the verses for September - November! We're proud of you!

- **Family Advent:** Join us and your family this Advent season in anticipating and celebrating the Savior's birth! Use the materials we have provided (with special permission from "Fits of Charm" on Etsy) to read a little bit of the Christmas story each day, have fun with the activity or conversation prompt provided, and add an "ornament" to your Thankful Christmas Tree. After Christmas, we encourage you to bring in your *Thankful Christmas Tree* to be hung up at church.

- In order to give our volunteers a break to celebrate the holidays with their families, **we will not have Sunday School from December 19th through January 9th**, starting back up on the 16th. Enjoy the extra time with your families!

- Up to this time, due to lack of demand and volunteers, we have not been able to offer Children's Church during the 11:00 indoor service or on the second week of the month during the 8:45 outdoor service, nursery, or junior church. As the weather changes and kids are able to be vaccinated, please let us know if you are in need of any of these programs, or if you are willing to volunteer to serve in one of these areas. We want to give as many people as we can the opportunity to come back to in-person worship! Contact Emily at emilyspateholts@hwchurch.org.

- **Kids' Club** will celebrate Christ's coming in their December meetings. During the next month, children who attend are invited to bring a food gift to give to the pantry that will bless families in the area this holiday season. God's great gift to us - JESUS - is our Good News! Let's celebrate Him!

Mark your calendars for "Nativities from Around the World"

December 12th, 1:00-3:00pm, Community Christmas Event

featuring "Nativities Around the World" at Houghton Wesleyan Church. Enjoy the beauty and diversity of nativities from all over the states and the world, set up in our front atrium. Everyone is welcome! If you are willing to loan a nativity for the event, please contact Emily Spateholts (emilyspateholts@hwchurch.org) for more details or to set up a drop-off time.



OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD SHOEBOXES

Thank you to all who helped pack boxes for Operation Christmas Child!

We collected and dropped off 97 boxes here at the church and there are 22 online. The online Shoebox Assembly is open until November 30 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.

FOOD PANTRY: Thanks to everyone who brought food for our Food Pantry. Donations of food are always welcome and may be dropped off at the church office.



SAVE THE DATE! January 28, 2022!

Watch for more info on our STONE SOUP EVENT in your next Highlights.

From the Library Shelves



Add to your Christmas season enjoyment with books and dvds from your church library. We have some Christmas devotionals on the devotional shelf in the back room. There are also a number of Christmas books on the front room table, including The Advent Jesse Tree; Jotham's Journey; On This Holy Night and others you can enjoy on your own or with your family.

We also have a few Christmas themed DVDs: Silent Night; The Christmas Project; The Last Straw and others that are great for a family movie night.

The children's room has some new Christmas books on the new shelf, while down on the Christmas shelf there is The Donkey's Dream; Christmas in the Barn; The Innkeeper's Daughter; Birthday Party for Jesus; The Best Thing about Christmas and many others.

Have a Blessed Christmas season!



*the family and friends of Bob Brown who died September 16
and of Mary Boomhower who died October 28.*

Both services are available online.

YOUTH NEWS



"Teenagers are
'Co-creators &
co-conspirators in the
divine work of the
church.'
-Marko

Currently, the youth group is meeting in-person for Sunday school on Sunday mornings. We have begun the year looking at the book of Exodus and will end the semester in the book of Job.

Sunday School

- Nov 21 – Nikki Elsaesser Testimony
- Nov 28 – Baptism
- Dec 5 – Job
- Dec 12 - Job

Sunday School



Youth group is also meeting in-person on Sunday Nights – 6 – 8pm in the Community Room:

- Nov 21 – Advent – Where there is no Hope – Bring it!
- Nov 28 – Advent – Where there is no Peace – Bring it!
- Dec 5 - Advent – Where there is no Joy, Bring it!
- Dec 12 - Advent – The Not-so-Silent-Night, Christmas Party!



District Winter Retreat - January 28-30.

We're looking forward to the District Winter Retreat which is being planned for the last weekend in January. *Due to the nature of a retreat weekend, this will be a "Mask-Optional" event.* Look for registration information to come out by the first of December.

What you can do:

- Please pray! Let's pray that God would intervene and that COVID would go away! There are lots of good reasons for that and one of those is that we can't wait to restart prayer breakfast.
- Pray for young people who tend to be/have been deeply affected by quarantine and isolation.
- Snack Calendar! It is well known that teenagers feel loved when they are being fed. If you would like to provide a snack, even one time this year for youth group, we would be grateful! I think there is only one date left for this semester, but there are still several dates available for the spring. Contact me if you are interested. Thank you for your prayers!



Bargain Book Sale!

The Bargain Book Sale is back in December at The Highlanders Shop! Shop hundreds of books ranging from \$2.00 - **\$20.00 in a variety of genres, including children's books and activities! We are located in the Reinhold Campus Center at Houghton College.** Open Monday – Thursday 9:30 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., Friday 9:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Saturday 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Welcome to the 3rd Annual
Christmas Tree Burning Fundraiser

sponsored by the
Houghton Volunteer Fire Department,
January 9th.

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 8th, or Sunday the 9th. Pick-up available in the Town of Caneadea on the afternoon of the 8th. Email Jon Cole to get on the list for pickup.
Jon.Cole10@Houghton.edu



Wellspring Ministries



Isaiah's words in chapter 58 are true of Wellspring this past year as we've experienced the hungry and oppressed. Our **light** in Allegany County and beyond has risen in the darkness a little brighter, as He promised. We have endeavored to please Him by applying His Word to our society. JESUS is the true **LIGHT** - the source of it all. We, the lower **lights**.

Dates to know

11/17 to 12/22 - Christmas Room open for parents or guardians of children from birth to 18 years

12/7 - Volunteer Appreciation Dinner in Belmont, NY

12/22 - Christmas Dinner - 11:30 am - then closed until Wed. 1/5/22

Prayer Needs

Continual Covid concerns/safety measures; Sensitivity to needs that are often unexpressed initially; wise use of Benevolent Funds; Devotional speaker needed for the 4th Wed. of each month (5-6 minutes before meal); Helpers to assist with hauling items into building, as well as substitutes in the kitchen; Christmas Room items - especially gifts for children 3 and under, and teens.

Our thanks to you for continued prayers and financial support. As we end the year, we are so grateful for the **LIGHTS** of Houghton Wesleyan, who shine so brightly - Bob S., Bill D., Paul S., Donnie S. Do visit any Wednesday or Friday - 10am to 1:15pm, and consider donating items or time as a volunteer. Your step will be **light-er** if you do! Because He is the **Light** of the world, we wish you a de**LIGHT**ful holiday season and year to come. Keep shining!

Beth Beardsley (for the Board)

Drive Through Food Distribution on December 8 in the church parking lot
To register call 585-209-0052 after November 30, 8:30 a.m.



Leave your name, phone number and the number of families you are picking up for.
The Cuba Cultural Center will return your call and give you a time and number.

CHRISTMAS PRINTING

Take the hassle out of printing your Christmas letter and Christmas cards! The Highlanders Printing Press is a full-service print shop located in the Highlanders Shop. We stock a large variety of specialty papers and offer finishing services including folding. Request a quote or submit a job at www.houghton.edu/printingpressorder ! Stop by or call us with questions at 585-567-9620.



The children of the church are invited to participate in living nativities during the Christmas Eve services. The outdoor service takes place at 4 p.m. on December 24th and the indoor service at 6 p.m. The church will supply the participants with animal ears or an angel halo, but children who prefer not to dress up may also participate by holding flowers. There is no need for a rehearsal as the children will simply line up at the front and take their cues from Miss Ann and Miss Emily, the narrators.



This Little Chapel Donation Trailer will be parked at the church during the month of December. "The Tiny House of God" was built on wheels to travel from church to church, community to community. Its mission is to be a collection point for bibles and other Christian literature (Bibles, books, devotionals, children's materials, etc.) that are no longer used and donated for the purpose of being distributed to people who deeply desire the gospel. These materials equip pastors and missionaries in places that have few resources. The Little Chapel started its ministry in 2021 and is shipping materials via Love Packages in Butler, Illinois who has a network of distributors throughout the world. Drop off your materials at any time! There are primarily two criteria in deciding what material we accept: Something that will lead someone to faith in Christ and/or something that will disciple a believer (please ensure that materials are in good condition).

Winter Clothing Collection

-An emergency request: From now to mid-December drop off donations of sweatshirts, sweatpants, warm coats and boots for men, woman and children at the church office for the Vive Shelter in Buffalo.



(Request comes from The Strands and Urban Advocacy/ Jericho Road.)

SUNDAYS IN DECEMBER

December 5 (8:45 Outdoors / 11:00 Indoor/Streaming)
a.m. *Advent in a Comfort Zone* (Matthew 2:13-23)

December 12 (8:45 Outdoors / 11:00 Indoor/Streaming)
a.m. *Advent in a Bakery* (Matthew 2:1-12)

December 19 (8:45 Outdoors / 11:00 Indoor/Streaming)
a.m. *Advent in a Nursery* (Matthew 1:18-25)

December 26 (8:45 Outdoors / 11:00 Indoor/Streaming)
a.m. Dr. Paul Young

Reminder: gifts for calendar year 2021 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.

CHURCH STAFF

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Amanda Cox, Music & Worship Director
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Emily Spateholts, Children's Ministry
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