Houghton Wesleyan Church
Highlights

Joyfully loving God, wholeheartedly serving others
December 2022
Volume 55, No. 7

Advent as a Prison Cell

A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Isaiah 40:3

On November 21, 1943, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote a letter from Tegel Prison. "A prison cell like this is a good analogy for Advent," he said. "One waits, hopes, does this or that—ultimately negligible things—the door is locked and can only be opened from the outside."

I read these words many years ago. And I must admit that they confused me. Surely, our waiting in this world is more "ultimately negligible things." Surely, there is significant meaning to what we do. I think that there is and I think that Bonhoeffer would agree. After all, it was his work to expose the injustice of the Nazis that led them to arrest him.

So, somehow his analogy doesn't mean powerless or hopelessness. But it does remind us that the power and hope with which we live and the work that we do as we live, must be realized and viewed from the perspective of the waiting, the in-between world that Advent reminds us of and calls us to.

Advent reminds us that, like the people of first century Palestine, we live between the now and the not-yet. And this indeed like a prison…but a prison that may seem permanent, a prison that may seem hopeless. But it's not. As one writer says, "Through Advent, we learn how to live in these two concurrent realities: We have already been delivered, and yet our deliverance is still to come."

Often we feel frustrated and cynical about the world in which we live. Everything seems upside down. Everything feels completely out of sync. Good is called evil and evil good. Truth is called lies and lies truth. Power rules. Money controls. All feels lost.

Into this struggle, comes Advent once again.

Advent is not just about preparation for the first appearing of Jesus; it's also (some would argue, more so) about preparation for the second appearing of Jesus. In a way, the first appearing of Jesus makes all things righteous, true and good possible; the second appearing of Jesus gives us perspective that despite how it seems, all things righteous, true and good will ultimately prevail.

Advent opens our eyes. Advent helps our focus. Advent reminds us that because of Jesus—come and coming—God's way is the way of hope, of joy, of peace, of love, of life. In every circumstance. In every situation. In every loss and victory. In every pain and triumph.

So, as we embark on the season of Advent, may God help us to see the reality of the kingdom. And in this vision, may we know the joy of his grace to you, to me and to everyone.

Because Christ has come and is coming,

Pastor Wes

Christmas Eve Services

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

4:00 – Family Service in the Sanctuary
6:00 – Indoor Streamed Service in the Sanctuary

Stewardship – A Life of Generosity

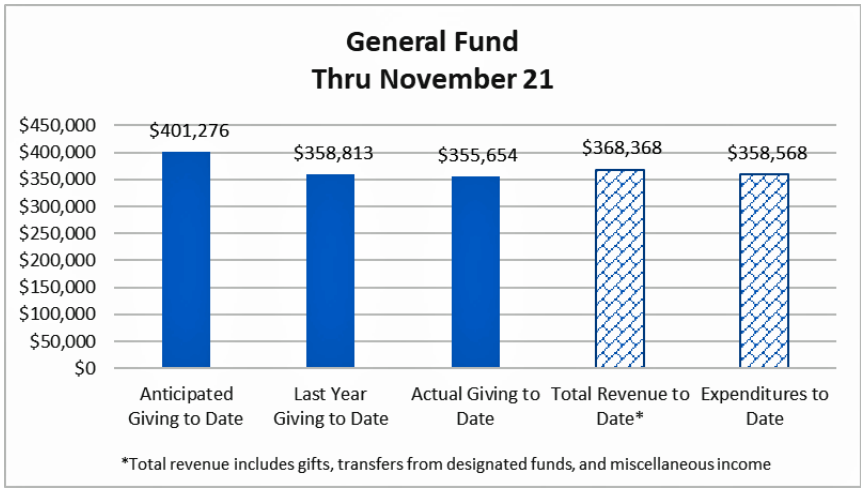
Harvest Festival

On Saturday, October 29th , we welcomed over 250 people into our doors for our annual Harvest Festival! Families from our Church, the broader community, and Belfast and Fillmore Central Schools spent the morning playing games, doing crafts, petting animals, taking hayrides and fire truck bucket rides, bouncing in a bounce house, and taste-testing the best chilis in the Church. We sent home over 150 treat bags filled with food, treats, toys and, most importantly, the good news of God's love and an invitation to participate in our children's ministries. And all of this we did because of your generosity! Thank you!

One of our over 50 volunteers, a community member who had never been to our Church, expressed surprise and delight over our beautiful facility and free entertainment. They couldn't believe all of the fun that we were offering at no cost. Similar to that volunteer, we had people enter our doors who had never been here before. Our public schools graciously let us send fliers home to all preschool through 4th grade students. For those that came, they got a glimpse of what the Church is about – fellowship, service, community, love, and fun – and a discipleship message telling them of God's love and grace to them.

Generosity was displayed in countless ways that day, including:
- General donations to our special events fund
- Donations of candy and snacks
- Commitment of time from over 50 volunteers from our Church, community, and the Houghton University baseball team
- Willingness to participate in the chili cook-off which also allowed us to feed our volunteers and a few families in need
- Sharing of baked goods and fall treats to feed our participants
- Donations from local businesses of food as well as items for our chili cook-off prize
- An atmosphere of excitement and welcome for our visitors and Church members

Thank you for giving so willingly of your time, money, gifts and talents to make our annual event such a hit!



Christmas Carol Sing and Cookie Reception

December 18th at 4:00 p.m.
Bring Your Instruments
Bring a plate of cookies to share (leave them in the church kitchen) before joining voices in celebrating our annual Carol Sing in the sanctuary.

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 16th 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 12th Thank you!

2022 CHRISTMAS OFFERING

WYCLIFFE THAI FOUNDATION HEADQUARTERS

- A 2 phase project to build a new building on Foundation owned land -

10+ years renting office space that is simply not condusive to the growth of the foundation.

New building that will allow for current growth of the foundation as well as future growth.

Phase 1 (COMPLETELY FUNDED):
Constructing the steel & concrete support structure, along with the roof.
Already begun with the site preparation and moving materials to location.
The plan is to break ground in December.
Total cost: $80,000
Already raised: $80,000

Phase 2 (WHERE WE COME IN):
EVERYTHING ELSE
Office space for staff & occasionally others.
Multi-purpose room: workshops, prayer meetings, & other events.
Media room: recording oral Bible stories, songs as well as promotional videos.
Total cost: $169,000
Already raised: $53,000

With a long history of supporting missionaries from our own congregation for years to Asia, HWC has a unique opportunity to help in a BIG WAY with this building project and with the continued growth of Wycliffe Thai Foundation.

Wycliffe Bible Translators Singapore has made a **commitment to match $26,000** on other donations. HWC Missions Committee has set a **church goal of $26,000.** Combined with WBT Singapore's commitment that would give Wycliffe Thai Foundation another $52,000 towards their total cost. Please prayerfully consider this amazing opportunity to further the growth of the gospel in Asia.

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. The Board of Elders encourages annually this opportunity for the Houghton Church congregation to give monetary gifts to our pastoral staff, who share their gifts of service back to us throughout the year. Our gifts are a loving expression of gratitude from the church family as a whole.

You have very likely been blessed by their ministry in some way and you may want to contribute confidentially to this monetary gift. If so, you may mail (or drop off) 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. You may also give on-line at www.hwchurch.org/giving and choose the 06 Pastors Christmas Fund designation. Please give by December 18 using these avenues or give it directly to David Mercer or Dick Harter. Your gift is tax deductible but is taxable for those who receive it.

Thank you for your generosity. We pray for God's guidance, strength, and blessing on you and your dear ones, now and throughout the year.

Daryl Stevenson
(on behalf of the Board of Elders)

From the
Library Shelves

It is hard to believe the Christmas season is upon us! But we have just the right items in our church library to get you in the spirit.

In our adult section there are a few books by Max Lucado that are about Christmas. We also have some books about Advent, such as *The Advent Jesse Tree* by D.M. Lambert. For your family movie night, we have a number of Christmas DVDS you can enjoy.

There are some new Christmas books in our children's room. *This is Christmas* by Crystal Bowman and Teri McKinley, and *Good News! Its Christmas!,* by Glenys Nellist. They join books we already have, such as *I Can Count to Christmas!,* by Diana Lawrence, and *The Christmas Promise* by Alison Mitchell, to name a few.

So come on in, enjoy and have a Blessed and Joyous Christmas season!

SAVE THE DATE! January 27, 2023!
Watch for more info on our STONE SOUP EVENT in your next Highlights.

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.

WNY District Youth Winter Retreat January 27-29, 2023 Penn York Camp

- **Early Bird Registration**
- **Cost $90**
- **Deadline December 15**

HWC kids HWC kids HWC kids HWC kids HWC kids HWC kids HWC kids HWC kids

- December Kids Connect: " Why are there so many Christmas songs about angels? Because angels show up all throughout the Christmas story with great news! In this four-week series, kids will explore the foundational stories of Jesus' birth with a focus on the angels who were there to witness them! From the city where Jesus was born, to the cities we live in today, the angels' message is just as important now as it was then! Jesus is God's plan, calms our fears, makes everything new, and is God's love for everyone!"

This Month's Memory Verse

December Kids Club: Christmas Camp-Out: Gather around the "campfire"! It's time to celebrate the season with a fun camping trip. The best part is....you don't have to go anywhere! We're bringing the great outdoors inside fora cozy indoor Christmas Campout where we'll spend time together learning about the gift of Jesus. More details to come

Pajama Pass: Kids of any age (including families and those young at heart!) are invited to wear their holiday pajamas to Church on Christmas morning. Enjoy Christmas morning at home and come as you are to celebrate Christ's birth!

- No Kids Connect on December 18th and 25th and January 1st and 8th. Nursery will be offered all Sundays and Children's Church will be offered on all but Christmas morning.

Discipleship News

What is a Banding Group? It's three or four women, or three or four men, meeting regularly to share and discuss their responses to a weekly scripture passage and share their spiritual journeys together. These groups are a powerful way to deepen relationships and increasingly grow into faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

Here are two Banding Group opportunities:

• **Contact Pastor David** if you are interested in a banding group. He's flag-waving for a "new year, new habit" to encouarge many HWC attenders to consider this discipleship opportunity for 2023. Whether you've already spoken with potential group members, or you hope to join a group that currently has space for a new member, he'd love to help make it happen for you!

• **Wed, January 18, 7:00pm** – There will be a gathering for all existing group members to share together how the Lord is at work in their banding group experiences. Anyone who is thinking about joining a banding group is also very welcome to come and hear encouraging testimony of God's faithfulness.

College Ministry Update

University Fellowship continues with 15-20 students gathering each Sunday during discipleship hour. This semester we've heard from missionary Leah Doty, tackled the topic of women in ministry, and spent numerous weeks looking at several themes from David Watson's book on discipleship titled *Called and Committed.*

Did you know that community members of any age are welcome to attend HU's Koinonia? Each Sunday at 7pm in Wesley Chapel, HU musicians and prayer leaders put together a time of contemporary worship singing and a brief devotional. These students invest a tremendous amount of care and preparation in this ministry, and the leaders meet together to bathe each gathering in extended prayer both immediately before and after worship. Come and worship!

Drive Through Food Distribution on December 14 in the church parking lot
To register call 585-209-0052 after December 6, 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.

December 2022 HWC Youth News:

Youth Group in December:

- Dec 4 – Advent
- Dec 11 – Progressive dinner! We'll break into groups and go house to house in the community having a different course at each home. We are still looking for dinner hosts for this event. If your family would like to host one course, (Appetizers, Salads, Soup, Bread, main) for about 20 students on this evening, please give Pastor Jon a call!

Youth group will resume after the Christmas break on January 15.

Prayer Breakfast 7am in the Community Room

PB is on for December 6 and 13 and will resume after the break on January 17.

Discipleship Hour in Dec – It's beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas!

Sunday School will be happening Dec 4 and 11 and will resume after Christmas on January 15

(For the HWCYG annual permission slip click here. Or scan here*!)* ---------→

Wellspring Words

Said by Martin Luther - **"It is the duty of every Christian to be Christ to his neighbor."**
(To represent Him and His comfort, peace, understanding and not His judgment to people in pain.) What a privilege is ours to represent Jesus Christ to folks, including our volunteers! Working alongside Bob, Bill, John, Paul, and Donnie from HWC is no trivial blessing! Our goal is "to live lives worthy of the Lord, pleasing Him in every way." Col. 1:10

To Note:
~ Jim Arthur, our CEO is back... carefully on that leg! A praise!
- The Christmas Room is open to parents of children birth to 18 years. Many nice items are on the shelves. Thanks to any who added items, and there is still time to add gifts, labeled please for this Room.
- Our Thanksgiving meal was just amazing - complete with the traditional dishes. The turkeys, squash, and pies were all donated. Several from the sheriffs' department handed out the meals and beverages to each person at the tables.
- Donations of food goods have come in from several sources, enabling us to keep food boxes available.
- Friday, December 21 is the Christmas dinner at 11:30. We thank The Belmont Rotary Club for donating the hams for this meal.
- Wellspring Ministry is closed after the December 21st meal, until Wednesday, January 4, 2023 when we reopen.

May all of our beloved HWC family have a Christmas centered on the GREATEST GIFT of ALL - JESUS,

Beth Beardsley (for the Board)

Celebration of Life: Jake Jacobson
Family and Friends are invited to gather in the church Community Room on December 3 at 2:00 p.m. Streaming begins at 1:30 **HERE.**

Tuesday December 13th - Caneadea Fire district election

If you are a resident of the town of Caneadea, please come to the **Caneadea Town Hall between 6 and 9pm** to vote! Exercise your civic duty and vote for your local board of fire commissioners. See Pastor Jon with questions.

Pete Roeske
SNOWPLOWING
service
585-689-0368

VALLEY BREAD & BOUNTY
10 West Main St.
Fillmore, NY

585-207-5031

valleybreadandbounty.com

Monday Closed
Tuesday Closed
Wednesday 3:00 pm - 7:00 pm
Thursday 7:00 am - 6:00 pm
Friday 7:00 am - 6:00 pm
Saturday 8:00 am - 5:00 pm
Sunday Closed

VALLEY
bread and bounty

SUNDAYS IN DECEMBER

December 4 (8:30 Indoors / 11:00 Indoor/Streaming)
a.m. *Good News in Our Uncertainty* (Luke 1:26-38)

December 11 (8:30 Indoors / 11:00 Indoor/Streaming)
a.m. *Good News in Our Self-Interest* (Matthew 1:18-25)

December 18 (10:00 Indoor/Streaming)
a.m. *Good News in Our Ordinariness* (Luke 2:8-20)

December 25 (10:00 Indoor/Streaming)
a.m. *Trouble at the Inn* (Luke 2:1-7)

Reminder: gifts for calendar year 2022 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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