Houghton Wesleyan Church

Highlights

Joyfully loving God, wholeheartedly serving others
October 2023
Volume 57, No. 5

The Least of These…

But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.
Matthew 19:30

Matthew 19 is a compilation of Jesus's teachings about divorce, children, wealth and sacrifice. While each teaching is multifaceted, the common thread that ties these seemingly unconnected teachings is the upside-own economy of this broken world versus the right-side-up economy of the Kingdom of God. Jesus is making the point that despite the way things operate in this world in the kingdom of God, wives have rights, children are importance, wealth can be a stumbling block and the reward for giving up our lives for Jesus is eternal not necessarily immediate.

It's evident that the disciples can't quite grasp what Jesus is trying to say. They respond to Jesus's teaching about the qualifications of divorce by stating, "Then it's better not to marry." They respond to people bringing children to Jesus by rebuking them: "Jesus doesn't have time for these nobodies!" They respond to Jesus's warning about how easily wealth can get in the way of a relationship with God by asking, "Then who can enter the kingdom?" And they initiate a conversation about their sacrifice and the kingdom with this question: "What will we get as reward for giving up so much to follow you?"

It's clear that they are struggling to understand the nature of the kingdom. And in fact, it's only at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on them (Acts 2) that they begin to see and believe and adjust. And even then, they still have their moments of misunderstanding.

I suspect we can relate to their confusion. The way the world operates gets into us. It's reinforced in a thousand ways every day. Advertisements. Promotions. Conversations. Expectations. The way our broken world assigns value and significance is everywhere. In fact, it is so common to our lives that we often have a difficult time understanding what's wrong with it. No wonder we are so shocked when someone lives in a way that is intentionally the opposite of the way we are trained to live. Think Mother Teresa.

The nature of the kingdom to which followers of Jesus are called is summarized in the last verse of the chapter. Jesus says, "But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first" (NIV). "But many who are the greatest now will be the least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then" (NLT).

As we think about the way we view things, which perspective might best describe us? My prayer is that God will open our eyes so that we might see more clearly how the kingdom operates so that through his grace we might believe it, embrace it and live it. And in living it, find the abundant life of Christ we were created to experience.

In Christ,

Pastor Wes

STEWARDSHIP- A Life of Generosity

Stewardship, generosity and giving. Is there a difference?

October 2023 – Kids Min Financial Update

HWC Kids kicked off the start of a new school year last month with many new faces, new events, and new opportunities to "Connect with God, Connect with the Church, and Connect with Each Other while Learning to Live Like Jesus!" It may be obvious where much of the money that you give to the Church is used in kids ministry – things like curriculum for our classes and the supplies needed to teach lessons. However, there are so many less obvious ways that you support our ministry and for that, we are so grateful.

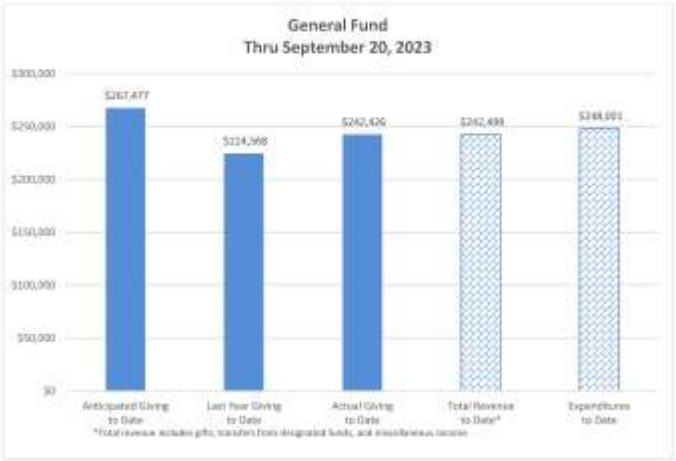
This year, money from the Facilities Stewards was designated for several updates to our children's areas. Money went towards new chairs that fit our Kindergarten and 1st graders much better so they can be comfortable and safe while they learn. Smaller amounts were designated for updates to classrooms, including blinds, whiteboards, painting, etc. We also saw the reconfiguration of spaces upstairs in the CE building. What had been four small, unusable classrooms with a dark and secluded hallway between is now two large classrooms that are open, bright, safe, and updated for the needs of our preteens.

With almost 75 volunteers in kids ministry alone, much of our budget goes to encouraging them in their ministry each year, whether it is a kickoff breakfast, end of the year gift or celebration, or birthday and holiday gifts of appreciation as well as resources to aid them in their teaching. Every week, they can visit our volunteer "break room" to grab a coffee or snack to give them energy to tackle the big job of teaching our HWC Kids.

It's the little things that we are able to do because of your contributions that really create a program that is meeting the needs of our kids and their families, whether it be sending a birthday card to each HWC kid, creating a place for them to submit prayer requests, a fun way to encourage collective Scripture memory, a get well package during a prolonged illness, "busy bags" to allow them to be a more integrated part of our main services, and so much more.

Thank you for the ways that you support kids ministry at Houghton Wesleyan through your money, prayers, time, and more. Children are not the future of the Church – they are part of the Church now – and your giving makes that clear to them, their families, and the people that serve them.

Emily Spateholts, Children's Ministry Director



Time. Talent. Treasure.

Dear church family:

When a person says: "You make me feel seen," it means that they feel valued and loved. To have eyes that *see* a person means recognizing someone for who they are and what they do. It breaks through the formality of roles and our bubbles of protection—you over there and me in here.

It is often the case that we see our church pastors as leaders up front but we might feel a bit invisible to them. Our pastors deliver sermons, lead worship, read scripture, organize worship and discipleship opportunities, write articles of encouragement, call to see how you are doing this week, shake hands at the door, and pray with us and for us. But our response to them may often be…silence. Possibly, like me, you mean well, you plan to say something, but life moves on. You hope others took the time to say to them what you thought.

Each year, our church participates in the national Pastor Appreciation month. This October the Elders invite you to *see* your pastors in a fresh way. *See* our pastors as caring persons with hope and enthusiasm for promoting your spiritual journey but also in need of response and encouragement themselves. They are not immune from warm supportive and constructive feedback and from prayer support for their own personal struggles or discouragements. We invite you to *see* them with new eyes and to cross that boundary between you to let them know that they are *seen*.

God will help us all to share some of our time, talent, treasure, and many other good things which He has given us to show that they are truly *seen* and appreciated. Join your Board of Elders in using creative ways to highlight your gratitude for their service. Reciprocate their love for you. You likely have thought about this, so gather your strength, determine not to put it off, and reach out to show they are *seen* and appreciated.

Think of how each pastoral member has blessed you and other family members through our Sunday services, other social and youth activities, or even their calls and home visits with you. Consider sending them a personalized signed note, maybe a gift card, possibly some garden produce, or even a warm handshake with a sincere verbal expression of thanks that says, I *see* you and care about you.

Their daily work, like ours, is never quite complete nor perfect and it can feel like being on a never-ending treadmill. But let's encourage our pastors by *seeing* them, encouraging them, and connecting to them. Your word or act may be just what is needed at this moment.

We are grateful that you are part of our nurturing church family. Let's *see*!

In Christ's service,

Daryl Stevenson

HWC KIDS

Kids Connect: "Are We There Yet?" – A 5-week series from the Old Testament on the Israelites & the Wilderness: Can you imagine needing to walk through the desert? You'd be surrounded by cacti, sand, snakes, and more sand. With the heat of the sun, we'd wind up so thirsty and wondering "Are we there yet?" That's probably how the Israelites felt as they wandered around the desert, waiting to enter the Promised Land. But no matter how tired our feet get, we can focus on what's happening in our lives right now rather than just on where we're going. In this five-week series based on stories from Exodus, we'll explore how we can choose to be thankful, love God and others, turn to God when we're lost, go to God when we need rest, and remember God's promises.

October Scripture Memory: "I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." — Isaiah 43:19b (NIV)

Harvest Festival donations of candy and individual packages of snacks (pretzels, goldfish, animal crackers, etc.) can be dropped off at the Church Office.

October is Pregnancy, Infant, and Child Loss Awareness Month:

In lieu of our traditional Bereavement Service, we are choosing to honor our children lost too soon and their families in a couple of different ways this year. "Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day is observed on October 15th each year. In the United States, 1 out of every 4 pregnancies ends in miscarriage and 1 and every 160 pregnancies end in stillbirth." (https://pregnancyafterlosssupport.org) Please take a look at the special display in the nursery to honor and remember the children in our Church that are waiting for us in Heaven. Additionally, we encourage anyone interested to participate in the "Pink and Blue Awareness Project - The Pink and Blue Awareness Project is a 100% volunteer run project that makes and donates bracelets to be worn in October for Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month. We wear these bracelets beginning in October to raise awareness and to honor the thousands of babies lost to pregnancy and infant loss every year. One in four women suffer pregnancy and infant loss, often in silence. Wearing this bracelet shows your support for these families." (https://www.thecooperproject.org/pink-and-blue-project) Pick up a bracelet at the CE Welcome Desk to wear during the month of October.

October 2023 HWC Youth News:

Youth Group in September

- Oct 1- Great Leaders Follow God's Lead
- Oct 8 – Storm the Heights!
- Oct 15 – Over the Top – Be Generous with Your Time
- Oct 22 – Over the Top – Share the Good News!
- Oct 29 – Over the Top – Care for Each Other!

Prayer Breakfast is at 7am in the Community Room:
October 4,11,18,25

To fill out the HWCYG annual permission slip click here.

Discipleship Hour (SS) in September; We're studying the Gospels:

- Oct 1 and 8 - Matthew
- Oct 15,22,29 - Mark

Upcoming Events:

October 8 – Storm the Heights! - 3:33-5:55

This full-contact capture-the-flag type game will leave you bruised, muddy, and hungry! Luckily, we will also have delicious chili and cornbread and a warm bonfire! ☺ Starts at 3:33 pm! Bring your game face and be ready to get dirty!

Permission Slip and close-toed shoes Required!

Parents, If you would like to help provide chili, cornbread, or dessert for this event, please contact PJ!

Follow – Dec 28-31 - at the Duke Energy Convention Center in Cincinnati, OH.

- **Register before the final deadline, Nov 1, $300**

The HWC Youth Group will leave from HWC at 8 a.m. on Dec 28 and return at approximately 5 p.m. on Dec 31. Your registration cost includes Hotel, conference admittance, travel, and food. You will need to pay for your own lunch on the days we travel. We'll stop for fast food. Partial and full scholarships are available! Ask PJ about those.

Register for Follow 2023 here!

Check out the promo video here! (*watch closely, you will see people you recognize!* 😊)

If you attend Follow, District Winter Retreat (Jan 26-28, 2024) will be half-price ($50).

A memorial service for Richard, Lillian, and Tim Fuller

will be held at the Houghton Wesleyan Church on Saturday, October 14 at 10:30 AM.

The family will receive guests in the church foyer prior to the service beginning at 9:30 AM.

A private family burial will be held at Mount Pleasant cemetery.

Wellspring Words for October

Praising God -

- for the East Hill Foundation Grant of this summer that has enabled us to begin the foundation work for positioning 2 generators.
  Also, we have been able to increase our buying of fresh fruits and vegetables for our meals, instead of reliance on canned foods.
- that our building was power washed in August, looking a bit whiter.
- that Tops continues to give us day-old baked goods for our coffee bar.

Asking God -

-for a few folks who would join us as volunteers, even once or twice a month, to help in the kitchen or other areas.
- for the Holy Spirit to open hearts to the good news of Jesus' love and mercy

Thanking YOU -

- for so many terrific donations that end up in homes throughout western NY - even fresh green beans from Houghton soil! YOU bring joy.

Hours: Wed. and Fri. from 10 am to 1:15 pm, with lunch at 11:45

Beth B.(for the Board.)
- our prayer - "Serve wholeheartedly..." Ephesians 6:7

We are excited to be planning our **15th Annual Prayer Vigil Event** (October 29 – November 19). This year's vigil will focus on God in our lives. As we move closer to the end of October, we will provide more information. Please be praying that this event will bring life-change through the power of the Holy Spirit as we encounter God together.

IN OUR Thoughts and Prayers

Pray for the family of David O'Brien who died on September 11.

Pray for the family of Ken and Karen Gaerte (including Doug and Phyllis Gaerte and Emily and Michael Spateholts) at the death of their son-in-law, Joe Scarcella, on Sept. 20.

Get those shoebox gifts ready to bless children around the world!
Operation Christmas Child collection week is in November, but now is the time to start purchasing items and filling boxes. Any shoe box will do, but the church will also have printed shoe boxes available in mid-October in the Christian education building, as well as packing suggestions and tracking labels. More than ever gifts such as school and hygiene supplies, toys and clothing are needed. Thank you for your generosity and love.

From the
Library Shelves

We have some new books! Here is a sampling: ***Consider It Pure Joy,*** by Kristin Milligan —a story about a mother's legacy; ***Just Do Something***, by Kevin DeYoung- a liberating approach to finding God's will; ***In the Name of Jesus***, and ***Life of the Beloved***, both by Henri Nouwen, an author Pastor Wes references frequently. There is also new fiction by a variety of authors, including Tessa Afshar, Stephanie Grace Whitson, and Di-Ann Mills.

The junior area has some new books also: the ***Sadie Rose*** series, and more in the ***Guardians of Ga'Hoole*** series.

New books for the children's area are currently being processed, but in the meantime you will notice that we have separated out on the shelves a number of series books, such as ***The Magic School Bus, The Imagination Station, Elephant and Piggie, Young Cam Jansen,*** and ***Henry and Mudge***.

Please remember to sign your items out according to the directions on our bulletin board by the check-out desk. Enjoy!!

KNOW YOUR MISSIONARIES!

Check the monthly Missionary Mailbag,
use the Mission Directory (both available in church foyer),
and keep eyes open for new display coming to CE Atrium soon.

John Rhett

Self-Evaluation

Selected Work from 50 Years in Art

The Ortlip Gallery welcomes you on Friday, October 27th from 6:00-7:30 pm to the opening reception for John Rhett's exhibit, *Self-Evaluation: Selected Words from 50 Years in Art*. Light refreshments are provided and a brief gallery talk begins in the Recital Hall at 7pm.

Vintage Finds, Treasured Memories

In preparation for the Christmas season, Vintage Finds Treasured Memories will be having a furniture inventory reduction event during the month of October. We need to clear our stage of as much furniture as possible so that we can set up our Christmas displays. We encourage anyone looking for bed sets, dressers, dining tables or chairs, rockers or side tables to stop in and see us for a great deal on real wood furniture.

-ALL WOMEN -

Save the date:
Saturday, November 11
at 9:00 am.

Join us for a morning of making new friends, renewing old friendships, eating delicious food, and stretching our minds.

Watch for further updates!

SUNDAYS IN OCTOBER

October 1 (8:30 a.m. Indoors / 11:00 a.m. Indoors/Streaming)
When You Feel that Worship Is Broken (1 Chronicles 15)

October 8 (8:30 a.m. Indoors / 11:00 a.m. Indoors/Streaming)
When You Feel Unwanted (2 Kings 7)

October 15 (8:30 a.m. Indoors / 11:00 a.m. Indoors/Streaming)
When You Feel Your Plans Crumbling (Matthew 4)

October 22 (8:30 a.m. Indoors / 11:00 a.m. Indoors/Streaming)
When You Feel the Status Quo Changing (Luke 4)

October 29 (8:30 a.m. Indoors / 11:00 a.m. Indoors/Streaming)
Moment of Truth—What Is Your Name? (Genesis 32)
Pastor Cindy Oden

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A private family burial will be held at Mount Pleasant cemetery.

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