LOVE

GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE GAVE
HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON.

John 3:16

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

10:00AM DECEMBER 22, 2024

Prelude: Variations on Gloria and Prelude on St. Louis ……..Robin Dinda

Introit: *Rejoice Greatly, O Daughter of Zion* from *Messiah*…….G.F. Handel
Ai-Ze Wang, soprano; Kevin Lee, organ

Welcome & Prayer

*Hymn 122: ***Angels We Have Heard on High***

Lighting of the Advent Candle: Donna and Jim Zoller

Life of the Church

Celebration of Ministry: Christmas Eve Offering

Children's Sermon: Valley Preschool Christmas Story

Scripture Reading: Revelation 12:1-12
Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.
People: Thanks be to God!

*Songs of Adoration: ***Emmanuel; Come, All You Unfaithful***
(Offering will be received during the first song)

Prayer of Confession

O God, you search us out and know us, and all that we are is open to you. We confess that we have sinned:
In your mercy, Lord, forgive us and heal us.
When we long for your coming to change the world, and yet are often unwilling for change in our own hearts:
In your mercy, Lord, forgive us and heal us.
When we do not make straight paths for justice, nor offer a welcome when you come as a stranger:
In your mercy, Lord, forgive us and heal us.
When we dismiss prophets and angels and refuse to nourish your Word in us:
In your mercy, Lord, forgive us and heal us.
When we reduce our preparation for your coming to what others need to change in their lives instead of what we need to change in ours:
In your mercy, Lord, forgive us and heal us.
We turn to you, O God of infinite mercy;
We renounce evil; We claim your love; We choose to be made whole in Christ who comes in flesh to set us free and make us new. Amen.
— adapted from Nathan Nettleton

Time of Prayer

Song of Response: ***Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming***

*Scripture Reading: Luke 2:8-20
Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.
People: Thanks be to God!

Greeting One Another

Sermon: **But What About….?**
Pastor Wes Oden

*Song ***Hallelujah!*** (from *Messiah* by G.F. Handel)

*Benediction

*Postlude: Organ Flourish on "Joy to the World" ……..Michael Dell

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*Please stand if able

Acolyte: Keagan Oyer **Scripture Readers**: Jordan Crouch, Pastor Cindy Oden

Musicians:

Kristen Sanasith, Mike Jordan, vocals; Amanda Cox, piano & vocals;
Caleb Hilsher, guitar; Betsy Webb, keyboard & vocals;
Steve Olsen, bass; Dan Zambrano, cello; Dan Wartinger, cajón

WELCOME TO THE HOUGHTON WESLEYAN CHURCH. We have now arrived at the Fourth Sunday of Advent and the anticipation of Christ's birth is mounting. As we contemplate and embrace the personal and cosmic implications of the coming of Christ, may God fill us with faith, hope and love.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES: Tuesday, December 24, we host two Christmas Eve Services: 4:00 and 6:00. Both services will include the Lighting of the Christ Candle, Congregational Candle lighting, the reading of the Christmas story and music. The 6:00 service will be streamed.

NEXT SUNDAY MORNING we will gather for worship at 10:00 a.m. Pastor David Huizenga will preach.

HWC KIDS: Reminder: No Kids Connect this week. There will be Nursery and Children's Church.

- This week in Children's Church (and in materials sent via email on Friday), kids hear the joyful news that Jesus was born and how shepherds came to celebrate! BIG IDEA: Jesus is God's greatest gift. BIBLE: Luke 2:1–20; Micah 5:2–4
- December Memory Verse: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."— Luke 1:46–47 (NIV)

CHRISTMAS EVE OFFERING – The third Global Youth Outreach in this year's offering, according to Rev. Cedric Rodrigo, is a dedicated youth camp for all Sri Lanka Wesleyan Churches in 2025. This year, from Australia and Liberia to Sri Lanka and including our own teens, our Christmas Offering will inspire future leaders of the church around the world. Now is the time for each of us, young and old, to contribute online, through designated gifts or on Christmas eve.

STEWARDSHIP:

Budget Needed: $490,681.65 / **Budget Received:** $484,364.06

THE CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED for the holidays on December 25 and 31 and January 1.

REMINDER: All gifts for calendar year 2024 need to be

- given in church on December 29 or be delivered to the church office by the 30th
- mailed with a postmark date of December 31 or earlier,
- or need to be made online by 4:00 pm on December 31 with a transaction date of December 31 at the latest

MISSION MOMENT Don & Jeanie Little – Lilias Trotter Center
Praise for the completion of the online course to disciple and plant churches in Muslim communities. Pray for Don – for healing from a recent slip on the ice, hitting his head and causing a concussion and right shoulder and wrist pain. Praise there was no brain bleed or broken bones. Healing is coming slowly. Pray for financial support to come in for the new year approaching.

PERSECUTED CHURCH: ALGERIA: The major drivers of persecution in Algeria are society and extremist Islamic teachers who exert influence over state authorities. This means Christians experience persecution from their families, their communities and from the government. Most Algerian Christians are converts from Islam. They face harassment and discrimination in their daily lives, and their families and community may try to force them to continue to adhere to Islamic norms and practices. They also face pressure – from both the government and their surrounding communities – to renounce their faith in Jesus and return to Islam. Many choose to keep their faith secret. Please pray for our brothers and sisters in Algeria. Our prayers make an enormous difference to those following Jesus no matter the cost.

HOLIDAY SERVICES

Tuesday, December 24	4:00 p.m. – Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
	6:00 p.m. – Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
Sunday, December 29	10:00 a.m. – Worship Service
Sunday, January 5	10:00 a.m. – Worship Service
Sunday, January 12	10:00 a.m. – Worship Service
	11:30 a.m. – Congregational Meeting
Sunday, January 19	8:30 a.m. – Worship Service
	9:45 a.m. – Discipleship Hour
	11:00 a.m. – Worship Service

PRAYER CONCERNS: for all who are grieving; for all with health concerns: Beth Beardsley, Gary Wickard, Dick Pocock, Peter Lingenfelter, Linda Leax, Beth Pocock, Paul and Linda Roth, James Bates, Terry Ayers, Scarlett Gildemeister, Kim Pegula, Karen Gaerte, Denise Zambrano, Cameron Green, Vangie Grant, Dan and Sarah Gurley, Chelsea Ellis, Mark Mayhle, Jeshu, Kurtis and Eliyah Perry, Reuben Samuels, Emily Crikelair; for refugees throughout the world; for protection, wisdom and peace in many places of conflict, including Syria; for the community of Abundant Life Christian School (Madison, WI); for all recovering from recent hurricanes; for all churches in Allegany County.