Houghton Wesleyan Church

Highlights

Joyfully loving God, wholeheartedly serving others
May 2025
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The Hard Work of Growing

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.
(Hebrews 12:11)

After Cindy and I made the decision to retire, we decided to enlarge our garden. We are anticipating more time for it, though I've had a number of people tell me that they are busier after retirement than before. I tell them to stop scaring me like that!

So, after mapping out the new dimensions, I asked a friend if he might be able to bring a piece of equipment and dig it out for us. He was happy to do it. When he finished, we looked at the space and immediately both of us had second thoughts. *What have we gotten ourselves into? It's too big! What were we thinking?! This is going to be so much work!* We felt pangs of panic that we had made a wrong decision.

Before we saw it in front of us, it seemed like a good idea. Now that we were staring at it, it seemed overwhelming. What brought us back to peace was recognizing that the time and effort and energy was going to mean fresh beans and peas, tomatoes off the vine, cucumbers and squash and peppers. Focusing on the end result doesn't minimize the work in front of us, but it does motivate us and helps us to see the work from a more positive perspective.

This seems an apt metaphor for our lives with Jesus. We all want to grow more like Christ, but when we begin to realize the time and energy and effort that this growth entails, we are sometimes hesitant. Sometimes the work causes us to stop altogether. The problem is that we are focusing on the work rather than where the work is leading us.

Hebrews 12 speaks about God discipling his children. Verse 11 says: *No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.* The only way for discipline to be more than a struggle to endure is to realize where it's leading us.

This is why the spiritual disciplines like prayer, study and meditation of scripture, public worship, fasting, witnessing, doing good works, giving generously of time, talent and treasure are also called means of grace. They are disciplines we practice so that we might experience more and more of God's grace in our lives. Knowing that God's grace is the pathway to freedom, joy, peace, love, we begin to realize that it's worth the cost to experience more of the presence, power, grace and love of Jesus.

If you are wondering about the sacrifices God is calling you to, if you are struggling with these practices, let me encourage you to see them from a perspective that is rooted in grace. And to realize that God's design is flourishing—in you and through you.

Because of Jesus,
Pastor Wes

A LOOK AHEAD

How Our New Long-term Pastor is Selected

In the April ***Highlights,*** I shared the process we are following during the transition period following Pastors Wes and Cindy Oden's retirement as of June 1. That update focused on events this spring and summer, with the final all-congregation assessment report coming to us as the fall semester begins.

By the fall, our interim pastor will be ministering here, having arrived, as we now expect, in early August. He will lead the transition period as we attend to the results of the assessment and prepare for the new pastor. The interim pastor will not be a long-term pastoral candidate.

Questions naturally bubble up about the selection of the long-term pastor, so let me lay out the likely contours of the process. In the coming months, a Search Committee of 5-7 members will be created and will work with our WNY District Superintendent to gather names and make the contacts.

Ultimately, one person will rise to the top of their considerations following the due diligence of interacting with that candidate, listening to sermons, and following up with personal and professional recommendations. Then that candidate and family will be invited to spend a weekend with us. That includes delivering Sunday's sermons, meeting with the Board of Elders, and meeting many of the congregations members in both formal and informal gatherings.

Wesleyans follow the guidance set out in *The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church,* the Wesleyan handbook of organization, governance, and doctrine. It calls for each congregation to determine its own pastor rather than one being assigned by a denominational official.

At the end of a candidate's visit, the congregation will hold a meeting and vote on whether to "extend a call." With a significant vote in favor (it would not have to be unanimous, but very favorable), and considering principally the vote of Covenant members (but also considering all regular attendees' votes), we would extend a call to that pastor. Typically, the call is for four years, after which another vote would occur. The candidate would have seven days to respond to the vote.

You may direct questions to Daryl Stevenson (daryl.stevenson@houghton.edu) or to our District Superintendent Joey Jennings (jwjennings@wnydistrict.com).

In the coming weeks, our church will be undergoing an ambitious project. As part of our pastoral transition plan, our partner organization, **NextStep Church Services** (NCS), takes us through a thorough process over about a two-week period. NCS staff will be here **May 17-18** to gather our information and meet many members of the congregation. But it begins right now.

You are invited to participate. If you are 15 years or older, and regularly attend the church, then you qualify to be involved. Youth group members, university students, senior citizens, streaming viewers, and everyone else should participate. Formal church members and everyone else who attends services have a valuable perspective. There are several ways to provide your input:

Interview. Starting **Sunday May 4**, in the church foyer, please sign up in person for a short interview time slot on **Saturday, May 17**. Pick a time, morning or afternoon, for a brief and friendly interview. Leave a texting number or an email on the signup sheet next to your name and we will remind you a couple days before.

Survey. Choose either 1) or 2):

1) Take a *paper copy survey* after signing up for the interview. We are handing these out May 4 and May 11. Complete it (without your name) and return it to the specially locked wooden deposit box in the church foyer or return it to the same box in the church office **before** the May 17-18 weekend (that is, by May 16). Or,

2) You can choose the same survey by a *convenient digital method*. Take a picture by phone or iPad of this **QR code** and it will take you directly to the survey. Complete and submit! You could do it now, or any time until May 16! If you are reading this by a digital device, use this active link Houghton Wesleyan Survey.

We want at least 200 church attendees participating over the two weeks. You can do both the interview and the separate survey (we encourage it) or do just one of these. Please contribute to the pile of information we will provide to NCS.

Toward the beginning of the fall semester, NCS will return and report all the findings to the whole congregation. What are we good at—our strengths?...what do we need to do better? ...and much more helpful information for our next steps. As you see, a wide array of participants is crucial. We are counting on your enthusiastic help. Thank you.

Service of REMEMBRANCE

Families, friends, and community members are invited to a Service of Remembrance for the children in our Church family who left us too soon, from the unborn and just born to adult children. Pleases join us in the sanctuary on Saturday, May 3, at 9:00 a.m. for a time of song, Scripture, and memorial as we honor our children and their families. All are welcome.

Applications for next year are available!

Who?

• We serve children **ages two (by September 1st) through five**

When?

- We meet from **mid-September through mid-June**
- **Monday through Friday mornings from 9:00 - 11:45**
- We have **two morning** (ideal for our youngest children), **three morning, and five morning** options.

How?

- **Discounts and scholarships are available due to generous donors**
- The church provides use of the building, utilities, and custodial services. It also pays the director's salary.
- An application fee covers advertising, supplies, and equipment.
- Tuition covers salaries for teachers and assistants
- Volunteer "grandmas" give many hours each week to make things run smoothly

Valley Preschool will soon complete our 56th year. The program is designed to supplement the home experiences of preschoolers, encouraging social, emotional, physical and spiritual development. The applications, which include an information "folder" for you to keep, are on our parent bulletin board. Online applications will be available soon. Please email (casdadanner@hwchurch.org) with questions.

Our main theme this year has been animals. There is still time to see our two ocean murals in the hallway by our classrooms, one features the Leo Lionni story, "Swimmy," and the other has our own scuba divers and sea creatures. In the coming weeks we will talk about marsupials in advance of Pocket Day, learn about spring, deliver "flowers" for May Day, learn about community workers, and study animals of the rain forest, desert, and savanna. **Watch for information about a visit day for prospective students this spring!** Our "closing" graduation program is on May 30th and our last day is June 13th.

Thank you to the Jones Memorial Hospital Wellness Fund. In total they donated $20,000 to area food banks in 2025. We are grateful to be a part of that initiative. When you participate in Wellness events hosted by Jones Memorial, including the Annual GLOW 5K and Ridgewalk, you are helping support important wellness initiatives which improve the lives of community members right here in our area. For more information on how to support these Wellness Events that fund their community giving, visit **jones.urmc.edu**

May Curriculum Series "What's Next? - Puzzles don't come with step-by-step instructions for solving them. That's what makes them so much fun. You have to try to figure out the next best step to take. When Jesus left Earth, his followers had to wonder the same thing — "What's next?"

In this 4-week series about the Early Church, kids will see how Jesus' followers solved the puzzle of what to do next and the ways we can follow in their footsteps. As kids discover what to do next, they'll learn they can follow Jesus, pray for others, love like Jesus did, and share the good news."

May Memory Verse

Kid's Club:
Saturday, May 17, 9:30-11:00am

Preteen Hangout:
Sunday, May 18, 6-8pm - 6th graders join youth group and 4th grade invited to preteen hangout

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE BIALEK FAMILY

on the birth of Justice Jackson "Jack" on April 18th.
He joins parents Jeremy and Julie and siblings Ali, Jair, JD, Jonah, Annalisa, Jordan, Jacob, Judah, Joey, Jamin and Amelia.

On May 11, 9:45am in the Community Room, we will be gathering for our Annual Meeting of the congregation. We are experimenting with this time when many people are already here. Adult Discipleship classes will not meet. Children's Kids Connect classes will meet. During this time together, brief updates will be presented from Pastor Wes, Daryl Stevenson (Chair of the Elders), David Mercer (Treasurer), Mike Spateholts (Facilities Stewards Chair) and Paul Young (Stewardship Committee Chair) who will explain the 2025-2026 Community Financial Plan. There will also be an update on the pastoral transition. This is an opportunity to get information and to ask questions related to the various areas of our church.

ELECTION OF LEADERS: Will offer three options for voting again this year: In Person (May 18), Online (May 12-18) and by Absentee Ballot. If you are voting by Absentee Ballot, contact the church office by May 12. We will need to receive mailed ballots by Friday, May 16. For online access to the ballot, we will send a link the week of May 12. All online ballots must be cast by noon on May 18.

COMMUNITY FINANCIAL PLAN: You will be receiving information related to the Community Financial Plan in the coming weeks. The vote about the Plan will take place with the Election of Leaders, in person, online and by mail.

BAPTISMS

Congratulations to Jerry Oden, Christian Roorbach, Evie Fink, Lilah Walton, Isobel Walton, Grace Walton, Braydon Walton, Willow Knapp, Ezra Knapp, Addie Boon, Alexa Fulkrod, Hinley Kladke, Eden Sardina, Jonah Sardina, Henry Sardina, Deanna Jimmerson, and Jordan Crouch, who were baptized on Easter Sunday morning!

STEWARDSHIP—A Life of Generosity

As we enter the last month of our fiscal year, we are so grateful for your generosity! In a few weeks, our congregation will have the opportunity to vote on the proposed 2025-26 Community Financial Plan (CFP), sometimes referred to as the budget.

The 2025-26 CFP supports the mission of Houghton Wesleyan Church to **exalt** God joyfully, **know** God intimately, **serve** one another wholeheartedly, and **share** Christ's love locally and globally. The way we allocate our resources throughout the course of a year reflects these aspirations.

Our goals when building the 2025-26 CFP included:

- ⇒ Expressing appreciation for our staff
- ⇒ Maintaining our support for local and global outreach
- ⇒ Ensuring that all ministries have sufficient funds to do their work for the kingdom
- ⇒ Caring for our facilities as good stewards of what we have been entrusted
- ⇒ Preparing for the future by continuing to set aside funds for emergencies and future projects

The proposed CFP reflects the tension between **fiscal responsibility** and **faith in our God** to meet our needs. There are a few items in next year's CFP which we are stretching toward in faith:

A vote to approve the 2025-26 Community Financial Plan indicates your commitment to support Houghton Wesleyan Church through your faithful giving. Prayerfully consider how you can support it with your gifts.

The proposed CFP is posted on the church website at www.hwchurch.org/vision . You may also obtain a paper copy by contacting the church office after it is available.

May 2025 HWC Youth News:

Youth Group in May – Sun evenings 6-8pm – 7th – 12th

- **May 4 – High School – Pornography**
  - **Junior High – God Doesn't Make Mistakes**
- **May 11 – No Youth Group – Mother's day!**
- **May 18 – 30 Hour Famine**
- **May 25 – End of the year Foam Party!**

Prayer Breakfast, Wed Mornings in May – 7am:

May 7,14,21,28

Pancakes and Prayer in the community room.

Discipleship Hour (SS) 9:45 in the youth room, 7th – 12th grades:

May 4 – Jeremiah – Mike Jordan
May 11 – Youth will join the annual meeting in the commuity room
May 18 - Pre-trip update from the Australia team.
May 25 – Youth day at church, Grad reception in the youth room during SS.

Upcoming Events:

30 Hour Famine:

Saturday May 17 - Eat lunch at home, then meet at the church at 1 pm on Saturday.

1 – 7pm - service projects and food pantry food drive or Carwash

Sunday May 18

2pm – meet in the youth room for food pantry drive or Carwash.

(Whichever day has the best weather will be the carwash day.)

We'll break our fast at the Youth group dinner at 6pm.

From the
Library Shelves

We have recently gotten many new books that are now ready for you on the **NEW** shelves.

Among them are two fiction series by Sarah Sundin: *Waves of Freedom* and *Wings of the Nightingale. Homeland Heroes* is a series by Donna Fleisher. There is also *Uneasy Citizenship* by Daniel Bennett; and a couple of parenting books, *You Can't Make Me!* by Cynthia Tobias, and *Feeding the Mouth That Bites You* by Kenneth Wilgus.

In the children/junior room there are additions to the *Imagination Station* historical fiction series, and the *Nate the Great* series. We also have quite a few more *Elephant and Piggie* books.

Happy Reading!

RFKC Prayer Support and PreCamp CleanUp

Royal Family Kids Camp is coming soon - July 6-11 - and there is a new way that you could support camp this year. On Saturday, July 5th, a group of volunteers are going to assist Camp Asbury in Perry, NY with a "pre-camp clean-up" to get ready for RFKC. Camp Asbury has faithfully served and hosted our camp for over 30 years and we'd like to show our appreciation by helping their staff get ready for our big camp. Would you consider joining us that day in getting some of the facilities ready for our campers and staff? Please contact Emily at emilyspateholts@hwchurch.org if you are interested in pitching in

Royal Family Kids' Camp needs new (and returning) prayer prayers for 2025! If you're willing to pray for a child or staff member attending this year's camp (to be held July 6-11 at Camp Asbury in Silver Springs), writing him or her a note (provided to you ahead of time) and then praying for him or her daily during camp itself, please email Laurie.Dashnau@houghton.edu. Thank you for considering being part of this vital ministry.

BUILDING PROJECT: 2025

Fundraising Goal:	$250,000
Gifts Received:	$191,103
Pledges Outstanding:	$ 62,300
TOTAL	$253,403
Remaining to Goal	**$ (3,403)**

CompassCare Walk for Life, May 3, 3-5pm

Houghton Wesleyan Church

Did you know...

in 2024 CompassCare
-served 3083 women in NY, the US, and internationally in person and online through Telecare.
-gave away $3.2 million in free medical care.

In 2024 408 women submitted their lives to Christ.

CompassCare Mission:
Because all people are made in the image of God and are equally valuable, CompassCare is dedicated to erasing the [perceived] need for abortion by transforming a woman's fear into confidence.

CompassCare pioneered the Linear Service Model, a duplicatable method with with trackable results.
In Rochester, there was a 50% decline in the abortion rate.

CompassCare has trained 650+ prolife agencies with improved outcomes.

Our goal for our local walk is to raise $5,700 to enable CompassCare to serve 10 women.

Come walk to stand for the value of all life, sponsor a walker, be a pledge raising walker, or donate to the team at **CompassCareWalk.com**. Search for "Houghton Wesleyan" or a walker of your choice.
Also find patient stories, videos and pictures there.

$570 serves one woman considering abortion.

CompassCare is expanding into NYC, the Nation's abortion headquarters.
New medical offices opened in Brooklyn and the Bronx in 2024.

CompassCare's goal for the 2025 Walk is to help 1,640 women considering abortion—1/3 of the projected patient load for 2025.

70% of women who had abortions felt coerced.

In Brooklyn for every 100 black babies born, 114 are aborted.

THE RAPIDS ARE COMING!

Play Ball Again! The Genesee Rapids Baseball team is ready to start their 11th season on June 6. They are still short of placing 4 of their 36 players with host families. If you would be willing to help them out by hosting 1 or 2 potential Yankee stars, please contact Ken Bates or Thom Kettelkamp (585 365 5439)

REFRESH
RETREAT & FAMILY CAMP

JULY 20-25, 2025

More info at refreshathoughton.com

summertime

- **June 1 (10:00 a.m. only) indoors and streamed Odens' Retirement Celebration following**
- **June 15 -August 24 (8:30 Outdoor / 10:00 Indoor/Streaming**
- **August 10—10:00 a.m. Outdoor Worship followed by Pig Roast and Picnic**

CLEAN-UP DAY MAY 3 …8:30AM TO NOON

We are hosting our annual work day on Saturday, May 3, 8:30 a.m. – Noon. You can stay the whole time or part of it. We will be working mostly outside and mostly sprucing up the grounds. We will supply some tools. If you have tools you can bring, be sure to label them. We will provide cinnamon rolls and coffee. Families are welcome. It's a great time to meet new people as we work together.

Share with Family and Friends as we Celebrate the Lives of~

Saturday, May 24, 10:00 a.m.
Dan and Joyce Chamberlain

Saturday, May 31, 1:00 p.m.
Alice Fletcher

Saturday, June 14, 11:00 a.m.
Paul Parks

Saturday, June 14, 6:30 p.m.
Beth Beardsley

Introducing Rev. Randy and Robbie Craker

Houghton Wesleyan Church is partnering with NXTStep Church Services (NCS) to appoint an interim pastor for the coming year. After a warm and pleasant Zoom get-acquainted session recently with our Board of Elders, the Elders have invited Rev. Craker to lead us during this transitional year. To be clear, he will not be HWC's long-term pastor.

Rev. Craker, and his wife and partner in ministry, Robbie (Robinette), have served with the Church of the Nazarene. He has been a youth pastor, lead pastor in several churches in the northwest for 26 years, and then District Superintendent of the Northwest District for 15 years. He has served on and led District-wide Ministerial, Education, and Clergy Development boards, led committees and boards within the denomination, traveled over 20 times to world areas to train pastors, and chaired the Northwest Nazarene University Board of Trustees for 15 years until his retirement.

In retirement he has been an active board member with NCS and trained as a T.I.P. (Transitional Interim Pastor). They have previously served for two assignments.

His background includes graduating from Northwest Nazarene College in 1973 (pre-seminary and philosophy) and completing his MDiv at Nazarene Theological Seminary in 1978.

Randy and Robbie live in Nampa, Idaho and have three married children and five grandchildren.

Houghton Wesleyan is pleased to announce that our invitation to Randy and Robbie Craker to come lead us has been accepted. They will arrive in Houghton about August 1. The church is renting for them Sylvia Greenway's home on Fancher Heights.

Items in the Medical Loan Closet

Thank you Sally Johnson for organizing the items in our loan closet. At recent count there are 6 walkers (3 with wheels); 3 wheelchairs (1 small); 1 pr of crutches; 3 sliding boards; 1 pivot transfer disc; 2 commodes and 1 raised toilet seat; 3 shower chairs (1 bench style); 4 bed rails; 1 medical overbed table; 1 eggshell chair cushion; 1 backrest cushion; assorted foam padding/wedges; and 1 therapy ball.

Items are on loan as long as you need them and available by calling the church office (585) 567-2264.

SUNDAYS IN MAY

May 4 ***A Portrait of God*** **(Deuteronomy 32)** Pastor Cindy Oden
- 8:30am – Worship Service
- 9:45am – Kids Connect, Youth Sunday School, Adult Discipleship
- 11:00am – Worship Service/Streaming

May 11 ***Service of Prayer and Healing***
- 8:30am – Worship Service
- 9:45am – Kids Connect, Annual Meeting
- 11:00am – Worship Service/Streaming

May 18 ***God Who Redeems*** **(Ruth)**
- 8:30am – Worship Service
- 9:45am – Kids Connect, Youth Sunday School, Adult Discipleship
- 11:00am – Worship Service/Streaming
- 5:00 pm—***Music Celebration***: you are invited to a celebration of music in the church sanctuary. This gathering will include songs by the church choir, an ensemble, a men's quartet and Pastor Wes.

May 25 Youth Sunday
- 8:30am – Worship Service
- 9:45am – Kids Connect, Youth Sunday School, Adult Discipleship
- 11:00am – Worship Service/Streaming

CHURCH STAFF

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