Houghton Wesleyan Church
Highlights
Joyfully loving God, wholeheartedly serving others
August 2025
Volume 58, No. 3

Are We Mistaken?

In Luke chapter 7, John the Baptist is languishing in prison, deeply discouraged. Prior to his arrest, he had boldly announced the arrival of the Christ, and he had been convinced that Jesus was indeed that promised Savior. But now he is alone and defeated, wondering whether he was correct after all. So when two of his followers come to visit him in prison, he sends them out to ask Jesus: *Are you the Christ, or should we expect someone else?* In essence, *I thought you were the Chosen One, I announced your arrival, but now Herod's thrown me, your messenger, in the dungeon. Was I wrong?*

As we look around today and sometimes feel as though the world is falling apart, it may be tempting to ask a John-like question: *Is Jesus still on the throne? Have we been foolish to put our trust in a Savior who doesn't appear to be, umm…saving?* Jesus' answer then, as now, is vital. He tells his questioners:

> *Go back and report to John what you have seen and head: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed are those who do not fall away on account of me. (Luke 7:22)*

Two things strike me as especially important about this answer. One is that John was unable to see the evidence Jesus cited. Because of his circumstances, he did not personally encounter the many miraculous confirmations Jesus' identity that were occurring all around. That is precisely the dilemma we often face too! We may be imprisoned by health struggles or family trials. We may be surrounded by national and global griefs that obscure our vision. In a given season of struggle, we may not be experiencing the wonder-working power of God in our lives. Like John, we may be unable to personally confirm the ways God is moving powerfully in the larger world. *And yet he is working.* Perhaps he is miraculously providing for a family across town, perhaps healing an urban community in Buffalo, perhaps placing angelic hosts around a church facing persecution in Nigeria. Back in prison, John's faith needed bolstering from the testimony of fellow disciples who witnessed Jesus on the move. Likewise, we need to hear from one another the ways we see Christ at work; and we need to be attuned to the the body of Christ in our wider world, asking the Lord to show us his beauty and healing ministry, assuring us that we are not wrong to have placed our trust in him. In fact, amidst all the yuck that surrounds us today, Jesus remains our *only* Hope.

Secondly, the progression of evidences Jesus cites is important. His listing builds from healings to resurrection to…"the good news is preached to the poor." That is fascinating. The answer suggests that the *spread of the gospel* is an even more powerful confirmation of Jesus' identity and mission than raising the dead! The takeaway is that when the church is about the business of spreading *good news,* we are demonstrating the truth that Jesus is the "Lamb of God, the Savior who takes away the sins of the world." Not when we win elections or court cases or pass laws. Not when we gain power and influence. The most resounding proof that Jesus Christ is Lord is when *good news is preached to the poor.* The other evidences are huge and amazing—miraculous power unleashed and healings accomplished. But "preaching good news" doesn't even include a successful result. It is simply an action of faithfulness, bearing good news to the vulnerable. When the church is about *that* kind of business, we confirm that Jesus is indeed God's anointed, the Savior of the world.

Pastor David

Who is doing what?

Have you paused recently to ask yourself, or someone else, "Who is now responsible for …?"

With both Pastors Wes and Cindy now retired, how are the pastoral and church staff roles divided among them? Here is a quick-reference listing of current responsibilities for this summer:

Administration (pastoral transition, recruiting service volunteers, administrative records, staff coordinator) - Daryl Stevenson (interim)

Benevolent needs, safety/security, and youth issues (Australia youth missions trip) – Jon Cole

Children's Ministries – Emily Spateholts

Pastoral care needs and prayer requests (private or public) - David Huizenga or Emily Spateholts; Visitation - David Huizenga

Worship/music planning for services - Kevin Dibble

Communication, publications, and information - Patty Stalker

We want to express our profound appreciation for all of the loving words and acts of kindness at our retirement. Thank you to all who planned and carried out the celebration and the luncheon. Each and every moment was a gift and a blessing to us. As we read through the postings on the banner and the many cards, we are overwhelmed with gratitude for the privilege of being your pastors and of being your friends. Thank you.

Love,
Wes and Cindy Oden
wesoden59@gmail.com
cindyaoden60@gmail.com

Our Interim Pastor Randy Craker

Randall J. Craker was born to G. Donald & Lydia Craker in Pullman, Washington, where his dad was pastoring the Church of the Nazarene. Following his high school years in Zillah, Washington, he enrolled as a Philosophy/Religion major at Northwest Nazarene University, graduating in 1973. During his years at NNU he served in student government and as editor of the student newspaper, *The Crusader*. In the fall of 1973 he married Robinette Powell, whom he met at NNU.

Following college graduation he spent 15 months in Longmont, Colorado, as a youth pastor. Then it was on to Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. While attending seminary he was editor of the news paper, *The Seminarian*, and wrote monthly for the denomination's youth publication, *Bread Magazine*. Craker graduated from seminary with a Master of Divinity degree in 1978. From there he moved to Sandpoint, Idaho, where he pastored for five years. In 1983 the family moved to Leavenworth, Washington, to pastor the Nazarene Church. Kirkland, Washington was the next stop on his pastoral journey, where he spent 16 years. In 2004, Dr. Craker was appointed the District Superintendent of the Northwest District where he served for 15 years. Randy and Robbie retired and moved to Nampa, Idaho in 2019. In retirement he has served a year as the interim pastor at Mt. View Church of the Nazarene in Tumwater, WA and another year at Valley Shepherd in Meridian, Idaho. He also served the Oregon Pacific and Washington Pacific districts as interim DS.

Craker has served the Church of the Nazarene in numerous roles: District NYI President, District Advisory Board member, Ministerial Development Board leader, and District Work & Witness Coordinator. He has served the global church as a member of the General NYI Council from 1983-1991 and the General Board from 2001-2023. He chaired the Global Education and Clergy Development Committee and served as a member of the Executive Committee from 2010-2023.

He joined the Board of Trustees at Northwest Nazarene University in 1994 and became a member of the Executive Committee three years later. In 2006 he was elected chair of the Board, a position he held until his retirement. He was granted an honorary doctorate by NNU in 2009.

In 1991 Randy made his first Work & Witness trip to the Island nation of Haiti where his life was changed as his heart opened to the peoples of the world. This was the beginning of 30+ trips to either build or teach, traveling to Haiti, Venezuela, Trinidad, Romania, Mozambique, Russia, Kazakhstan, China, and Bangladesh. He had a role in the beginning of the work of the Church in post-communist Romania, committing to a 3-year involvement which included recruiting teams to establish compassionate ministries, small business training, pastoral education, and building projects. In 1996 he went to Mozambique, Africa, for the trip of a lifetime. That one trip turned into nearly twenty visits and encompassed leading the "Mozambique Miracle" which established the campus of the Nazarene Seminary in the capitol city of Maputo. The Miracle project also involved recruiting compassionate ministry teams, raising scholarship dollars, providing pastoral education, and running youth camps. He continues to travel to Africa to strengthen the work of clergy development.

In retirement Randy continues to chair the board of "Next-Steps Church Services" (NCS) working with churches in transition by providing coaching and intentional interim work. In addition, he chairs "Education Development United Fellowship" (EDUF) which exists to support pastoral training for the continent of Africa.

Randy is an avid reader and sports fan. One of his hobbies is to visit major league baseball parks. To date he has visited thirty-six. The Crakers have three children Mick (Kimberly), Olivia Metcalf (Dustin), Craig (Veronica) and five grandchildren – Eleanor and Emmett Craker, Andrew and Ethan Metcalf, and Catarina Craker.

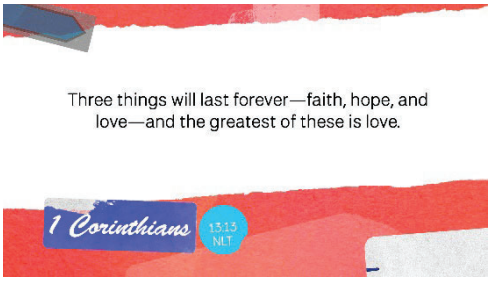
August 24 at 4:30 p.m. in the sanctuary
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
Curious about our feedback on the recent all-church assessment?
After gathering the results of 97 interviews and 147 completed surveys
we will receive our results from Next Step Church Services (NCS)

VBS August 4-7 at Fillmore Wesleyan brought to you by Fillmore and Houghton Wesleyan

New Communion Chalices

A new matching pair of chalices were recently received for our regular monthly practice of serving communion. The chalices, pictured, were the result of the creative, skillful, loving work of Naomi Woolsey, daughter of Matt and Barb Woolsey. These will be used for the first time during our August 3 services. Our heartfelt thanks go to Naomi for using her expertise in crafting such lovely pieces.

September 2025 HWC Youth News:



<u>Youth Group in September – Sun evenings 6-8pm – 7th – 12th grades</u>

- Sept 7 – No YG
- Sept 14 – Beach Party and Hotdog roast – 3:33-5:55pm
- Sept 21 – Keep It Simple – 1 – Faith is a Decision!
- Sept 28 – KIS 2 – Hope is a Promise

Sometimes we over complicate things… this fall we begin with a series titled, "Keep It Simple" in which we will be encouraged to focus on what is most important. Faith is a Decision, Hope is a Promise, and Love is an Action. Can't wait to see you in Youth Group!

<u>Prayer Breakfast begins on Wednesday, Sept 10, 7am in the Community Room</u>

Sept 10, 17, 24

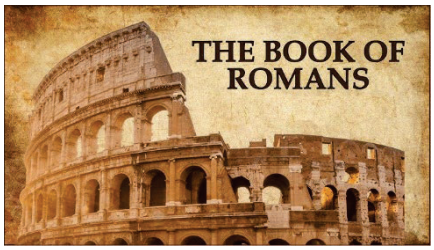
For the HWCYG annual permission slip click here.

<u>Discipleship Hour (SS) in Sept:</u> *This year in SS we are focusing on the NT and will begin in Romans!*

- <u>Aug 31</u> – **Parents meeting in the Community Room! 9:45 am**

Ask questions, get critical info, listen to the plan for the year, and sign an annual permission slip. Youth Group parents, this one is for you. (Also…donuts.) 😊

- <u>Sept 7</u> – Youth Staff Meeting! Students go to Sunday School with their parents.
- <u>Sept 14</u> – This week we begin our 4-week series on Romans!
- <u>Sept 21</u> - Romans
- <u>Sept 28</u> – Romans



<u>Fall Events:</u>

<u>Sept 14 – Beach Party and Hotdog Roast – 3:33-5:55pm</u>

<u>Oct 12 – Storm the Heights – 3:33-5:55pm</u>

<u>Oct 31 – Nov 1 – Regional Follow event at Revive, Hamburg</u>

<u>Dec 14 – Progressive Dinner</u>

August Curriculum: "Timeless - Time travel is such an exciting concept to imagine! If we could hop into a time machine and visit the past, we might be surprised by how much has changed—and how some things stay exactly the same. One thing we'd discover is that God's love and faithfulness are timeless. In this 5-week series, kids will explore how God's messages to us never change, no matter the time or place. They'll learn that God's love is timeless, we can seek God any time, God is good all the time, God takes the time to forgive, and God is with us at all times."

AUGUST MEMORY VERSE

August Kids Club/Family Event - Saturday, August 16th, 9:30-11:00am - More details to come!

Children's Church: Want to get to know our youngest Church members and show them God's love? We are hoping to have Children's Church available for both the early and late services this coming year as our families and needs have changed. Would you be willing to serve one or two Sundays a month? Please reach out to Emily at **emilyspateholts@hwchurch.org** for more information. Thank you!

Congratulations!

Amos Jonathan Ogden was born June 30th to parents Hannah and Luke and big siblings Brooks, Ezra and Dorothy

Choir News

Church Choir is a decades-old yet still vibrant ministry of Houghton Wesleyan Church. Twice each month during the academic year the choir gathers for an hour on Tuesday evenings for the joy of singing God's praises together and the rewarding tasks of polishing music to present in worship.

About twice per month (plus Christmas Eve) the fruits of our labors are offered as anthems in worship. New members of all ages (high school and older), are always welcome! Music reading ability is helpful, as is previous choral singing experience, but no audition is required. If this ministry might be a fit (or perhaps a calling) for you, please speak with any choir member or contact Judy Congdon for more information and a schedule for the 2025-26 choir year.

Musical Memories Cafe

Where Music Connects Community

Houghton Wesleyan Church Community Room
Evening of August 8
5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Questions or to register (no later than 4 days prior to the event) call Office for the Aging at 585-268-9390.

Ardent Solutions

Allegany County New York

Houghton Meals on Wheels volunteers needed. Due to recent retirements and job transfers, we are short at least two Meals on Wheels volunteers. A new volunteer would need to have a valid driver's license, interview with Karen Chamberlain at Office for the Aging, fill out some paperwork, and be willing to have a background check. Each volunteer delivers meals one day each month and the route currently is all in Houghton and takes about 25 minutes. There are 20 volunteer drivers so it is easy to switch dates if you have a conflict.
If interested please contact John Van Wicklin at john.vanwicklin@houghton.edu or text/call 716 359 5747.

Valley PreSchool

VPS

Looking for a **half day** option for your preschooler? Consider Valley Preschool for the 2025-26 school year

Serving the community for generations!

CHILDREN AGES 2*-5
(*children must be two by September 1st)
meet 9:00am - 11:45am

VPS Application

Apply before August 8th and save $25 on the application fee

Tuition discounts and partial scholarships available

VPS Information

For additional information or questions:
-Contact Casda Danner, director-
casdadanner@hwchurch.org
585-567-4314 or 585-567-2264

Attendance Options:

- Tuesday and Thursday
- Monday,Wednesday and Friday
- M-F

Valley PreSchool admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin.

T**he Food Pantry** has been a part of our church ministry for many years, providing food for upwards of 100 people each year. When someone contacts the church with a need, food from the stocked pantry at the church is gathered based on particular needs. A shopper from the church supplements the request with fresh meat, vegetables, eggs, milk, and specific needs (diapers, wipes, formula, etc.) Though we do help members of our congregation occasionally, for many of the people we help, this is their only connection with a church.

- Food Pantry Shoppers are Needed
- Food donations may be brought to the church any time the office is open or on Sunday next to the foyer Coffee Bar
- Thank you for your generosity in donations, food and time!

Words from Wellspring

Did you ever wonder what Jesus did with leftovers?

"Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." John 6:12

At Wellspring Ministries we 'gather up' what is used and left over, only to give it away for a new use to others. Thank you for every leftover - even garden produce. We love leftovers that are in good clean condition.. Lunch, clothes, toys, home furnishings, books, tools, are free. Wellspring is open - Wednesdays and Fridays - 10 am to 1:15 pm, with free lunch at 11:55.

Thank you to our volunteers and donors who make Wellspring thrive!

Ministry During the School Year

WORSHIP SERVICES

- *Sunday Morning* (8:30 am)
  Contemporary in style. Nursery for 0-2 yrs provided. Children's church (during sermon) for 3-6 yrs. Weather permitting, location is outdoors Jun-Sept.
- *Sunday Morning* (11:00 am)
  Blended style. Nursery provided. Indoors year round.
- *Koinonia* (Sun evenings, 7:00 pm @ HU Chapel)
  Student-led worship band and a brief devotional.

SMALL GROUPS

- Variety of small groups
  Several days & times, sizes, topics available.
- Banding Groups
  3-5 women or 3-5 men, centered on scripture reading and response.
- Details on specific groups and options?
  Email: *DavidHuizenga@HWChurch.org*
- Men's Saturday Breakfasts (approx monthly)

DISCIPLESHIP HOUR (Sundays, 9:45 am)

- Kids Connect (2 yrs-6th grade) and Youth Group (7th-12th grade) plus these adult classes:

Kaleidoscope (varies weekly, Comm Rm)	*Exposition of Acts (Rm 9)*	*Moms That Pray (Rm 6)*
University Fellowship (college age, Rm 10)	*Women of the Word (Rm 7)*	*The Chosen (Rm TBA)*
Parent Coffee & Connections (Rm 108)	*Devotional Classics (Rm 11)*	*Fighting Shadows (Brd Rm)*

YOUTH (Grades 7-12)

- *Youth Group* (Sundays, 6 pm)
- *Discipleship Hour* (Sundays, 9:45 am)
- *Prayer Breakfast* (Wednesdays, 7:00 am)
- Lots of great activities for spiritual growth & fun:
  Blue Foam Slide, Kingdom Bound, Adirondack Camping, Niagara Mission Trip, Follow Youth Conference, Refresh Week, 30-Hr Famine, Progressive Dinner, and many, many more.

COLLEGE AGE

- Pastor on HU campus 3 or more days/week
- *University Fellowship* (Sundays, 9:45 am)
- *Koinonia* worship and prayer (Sundays, 7 pm)
- *32:16 Scholars* (Rural Poverty Cohort, w/ HU)
- Invitations for home-cooked meals
- International student transportation help
- Spring/summer mission trip support
- *Sabbath Together* annual mini-retreat
- Various fellowship & spiritual growth events

CHILDREN

- *Kids Connect* (3 yrs-6th grade) - Discipleship Hour classes for all grade levels @ 9:45am each Sundays
- Children's Sermons - during indoor Sunday worship services or available online
- *Kids Club* (PreK-6th grade) - 1 Sat/mth Oct-May. Loads of fun, plus spiritual formation.
- *Family Fridays* - s'mores, fellowship, yard games, and more at a local home (throughout the summer)
- Family Room (Rm 4) - available for parents to use during Sunday worship. Services streamed on screen.
- *Valley PreSchool* - a long-time ministry to children. More info? Email: *CasdaDanner@HWChurch.org*
- All staff and volunteers complete a rigorous process of application, interview, references, and sexual abuse prevention training. A minimum of two adults are present at all times during child care & activities.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

- Volunteers needed for Nursery, Kids Connect, Youth Group, Tech Team, or Worship Team
- Nursing Home Worship Services (Wed, 4pm)
- Wellspring Ministries • Meals-on-Wheels delivery
- Communion Servers • Coffee set-up/clean-up
- Food Pantry Shoppers • Student transportation
- Baking for Sunday University Fellowship

ONLINE (www.HWChurch.org)

- Stream 11 am Sunday worship services
- Watch archived sermons and services
- Watch children's sermons
- Sign up for weekly HWC info letter and express other communication preferences:
- Website has more info about all of HWC's ministries

PRAYER

- Annual Prayer Vigil (3 weeks, November)
- Prayer Room (located below sanctuary foyer): For individuals or small groups, an inviting and creative space for prayer. Renewed each year before the annual prayer vigil.

MISSIONS & MORE

- Annual Missions Conference (each spring)
- HWC supports 35+ missionaries around the globe
- Assistance for student spring/summer missions
- *Project G.R.A.C.E.* (local benevolent needs)
- *Celebrate Recovery* support group (Thur, 7 pm)

Wednesday Prayer Group mees in the Conference Room from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Prayer requests are shared and sent out by the group throughout the week.

Wednesday Morning Women's Bible Study
Begins September 10
9:30—10:45 a.m.
In the Good Shepherd Room
Led by Denise Zambrano

Celebrate Recovery Meets Thursdays, 7:00—8:30 PM in Room 105 across from the Church Library CR is safe place to find community and freedom from the issues that are controlling our lives.

CHURCH STAFF

Daryl Stevenson, Staff Coordinator, daryl.stevenson@houghton.edu
Jon Cole, Youth Pastor, joncole@hwchurch.org
David Huizenga, Assistant Pastor, davidhuizenga@hwchurch.org
Judy Congdon, Organist & Choir Director, judycongdon@hwchurch.org
Kevin Dibble, Music & Worship Director, kevindibble@hwchurch.org
Emily Spateholts, Children's Ministry, emilyspateholts@hwchurch.org
Church Office, M-F, 8 AM-Noon & 1-5 PM, 567-2264, office@hwchurch.org

Steve Pocock Retiring

After 22 years of caring for our Houghton Wesleyan Church physical plant, Steve Pocock is stepping up to retirement as of October 1. After a long career in ministry overseas, Steve and Audrey settled back into Houghton, their hometown. Audrey recently retired from the university and Steve will soon follow, allowing for a range of new experiences together, both for some travel and volunteering their time in ways they will choose.

Letters of interest for carrying forward the full time custodial position and to request a detailed job description may be sent either via email to office@hwchurch.org or ground mail to Houghton Wesleyan Church, P.O. Box 127 (9712 Rt 19), Houghton, NY 14744. Including a brief resume of work history is suggested but not required to begin a conversation. Candidates should be willing to undergo a New York State background check.

Term of service, renewed annually, would commence in October, 2025. Customary and reasonable compensation and benefits apply. Applications will be taken until the position is filled.

August 24 at 3 p.m.

Please join us August 24 at 3:00 p.m.
outside on the north lawn for Ice Cream
and a time of fellowship

SUNDAYS IN AUGUST

August 3 *Journeying Together* (Luke 9:28-36) Communion
8:30 a.m. Outdoors / 10:00 a.m. Indoors & Streaming

August 10 *Thank God for Andrews* (John 1:35-40; 6:5-9; 12:20-22)
10 am.. outdoor service only followed by the Pig Roast and Picnic

August 17 *The Transformation of John* (Mark 1:16-20)
8:30 a.m. Outdoors / 10:00 a.m. Indoors/Streaming

August 24 *The Ministry of Encouragement* (Acts 4:36-37)
8:30 a.m. Outdoors / 10:00 a.m. Indoors/Streaming

August 31
8:30 a.m. Outdoors /11:00 a.m. Indoors/Streaming

CHURCH PIG ROAST AND PICNIC
SUNDAY, AUGUST 10,

We are combining our worship services for one outdoor service at 10:00 a.m. with a picnic and barbeque to follow. The service will be streamed, and a radio broadcast will be available for all who desire to remain in a vehicle. The church will provide meat and table service. We are asking you to bring a couple of dishes to share. You are also invited to bring lawn chairs or a blanket to sit on in case we run out of table space. We will have some games for children. In the case of inclement weather, the picnic will be moved inside. Thank you.