

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

11:00 MORNING WORSHIP

DECEMBER 6, 2009

Welcome and Life of the Church

Prelude: *Sleepers Wake! A Voice is Calling!*Bach

Lighting of the Advent Candle

Rebekah Ruth, Mary Barrett, and Doug Robinson

* Hymn 111 *Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying*

Passing the Peace

God's peace be with you.

And also with you.

Anthem: *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*arr. Shekarian

Elizabeth Engelberth, oboe

Old Testament Reading: Zephaniah 3: 14-20 (page 935)

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God!

* Hymn 567 *Gloria Patri*

"Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,

World without end. Amen, Amen."

Worship through the Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory: *Hashivenu*Children's Choir, directed by Susannah Smith

Pastoral Prayer / **The Lord's Prayer** (debts/debtors)

Please feel free to stand or kneel at the altar rail as an indication of a need for which you are praying in your own life or in someone else's.

Our Response to Prayer: *Hitsuji Wa / Sheep Fast Asleep* (see insert)

New Testament Reading: Colossians 1:15-23 (page 1165)

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God!

The New Testament scripture this morning will be read in Kisar, as we consider our brothers and sisters around the world and our connection to them as part of the global body of believers.

* Hymn 118 *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*

Sermon: **The God Who Inhabits**

Pastor Wesley Oden

* Hymn 116 *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

* Benediction

* Congregational Amen (Hymn 656, Threefold)

* Postlude: *Savior of the Nations, Come*Manz

*Please stand if able

Worship Leaders: Pastor Todd Leach & John Christensen

Organist: Eileen DeBoer

Acolyte: Jordan Mullen

The rose on the pulpit celebrates the birth of Maiya Fortes Holcomb to parents Phil and Rea Holcomb on October 29.

The "Tabernacle Church"—Metaphor for a Congregation's Faith, Works and Prospects

"The history of Houghton Church has been one of advance, and of dissatisfaction with improvable conditions." By 1931 words like "drafty," "unlovely," and "unworthy" were being used to describe the 1876 church. A few parishioners favored further piecemeal expansion of the old building, many spoke up for a "tabernacle church," while others desired a "more stately Gothic structure." The tabernacle designation was said to "symbolize the transience of life and give an earnest of future hope...[but] the solidity and permanence of the Romanesque architecture...proclaims that this is indeed a fitting house in which to worship God." (from a church bulletin).

Between 1931 and 1935 half of two dozen articles in The Houghton Star argued that a new and much better designed church was necessary for the college to realize its ministry potential—whether via evangelism, Christian Education, for church music study, or simply to attract students. Other articles charted construction progress and opening events. Quotes capture the spirit of the times.

[The new church should be] "a building commensurate with [Houghton's] calling as an educational and evangelistic center...[It should be] conspicuous, visible, accessible...roomy, equipped, worthy of Him." Dr. Claude Ries opined: "a vision divinely inspired and a task sacredly performed constitute the hope of Houghton College and the Church." A final challenge: "Raising of the amount needed is not a matter of ability, but of faith and willingness." The eventual cost approached \$30,000.

The 1876 church had been constructed during an economic downturn. The present church was built during the Great Depression. Both times persons of vision prevailed and what had seemed folly to some, proved to be a springboard to greater ministry. A year after this church was completed a used organ was installed. Several years later the altar which some had said would never be filled was lined two deep as seekers prayed during the 1942 revival. Soon after World War II broke out, military personnel from church and college stationed in all operational war theaters were regularly prayed for at home, their letters from the fronts excerpted in Sunday bulletins.

By 1945 returning war veterans fostered an expanded emphasis on world missions. Pastor C.I. Armstrong urged his congregation to liquidate residual building debt so that the church could support more missionaries. By the mid-50s the college had quadrupled since the church had been dedicated, and Pastor Cox launched a second worship service to accommodate Sunday crowds. During Edward Angell's second pastorate, once ample quarters could no longer handle the growing Sunday School, youth and Christian Education programs. Under the theme, "Continuous Dedication for Christian Education," the CE building was constructed in 1967-68. New church offices and library allowed those using them to stand upright, not possible in parts of their former under-the-choir-loft spaces. Sunday worship services were moved to Wesley Chapel.

During H. Mark Abbott's pastorate and the 50th anniversary of the church construction, the old organ was rebuilt and enlarged, the sanctuary remodeled and ministries beyond Houghton were expanded. By adding a so-called "contemporary service" J. Michael Walters returned worship services to what was by then called "the Village Church." Both services were nicely filled, but a foyer once thought spacious was cramped, handicapped access didn't exist, restrooms were inadequate, and exposed entry stairs further complicated the exchange between services. A new front, constructed in 1991, more than doubled the foyer, enclosed the entrance and enlarged the restrooms. Midweek ministries expanded and some church spaces were used to enable the county to offer local services, and a food pantry outreach was begun.

Arrival of Wesley Oden as pastor led to establishment of a third Sunday morning service. The church staff was enlarged. With the installation of the new tracker organ, mutual church/college ties were further expanded to the benefit of both. Over the past two years the pastor has worked with the elders to articulate the church vision and mission for a new millennium. Now commencing its 76th year, the "tabernacle church" and its congregation are still on the move.

Change isn't the only constant. The church endures as an "Ebenezer" for countless individuals as returning visitors tell their stories: "At that altar I was called to the mission field, or, "my wife and I are the second generation of our family to be married here," or "the singing in this church became my devotional life." Again, "the prayers of women in Houghton church steadied me in my teens, helped me to focus and maintain energy in medical school."



Apparently the only steel framed building in town for another decade, until Wesley Chapel was built Houghton Church hosted such large-scale programs as Handel's "The Messiah," seen in this early 1950s production. The church provided meeting space for two of six Wesleyan General Conference sessions held in Houghton.



Christian Education Building ground-breaking in 1967 was led by Dr. Claude Ries. Standing left to right are: Deyo Montanye, Elisabeth Eyler, F. Gordon Stockin, Penny Holloway, unknown, Edith and Sherman Bolles, E. Douglas Burke, Willard G. Smith, and Stephen Calhoun. The new facility ended severe overcrowding, brought most activities under one roof, provided space for departmental meetings, two nurseries, the Community Room, and kitchen. The mortgage was paid off in 1983.

Flouting Conventional Wisdom—Again!

In a congregational history replete with cooperative church/college moves considered bold and risky both financially and in terms of potential divisions in the congregation, the acquisition of the Louder tracker organ is another example of this congregation's continuing vision and unity. It also demonstrated Pastor Oden's pastoral and diplomatic abilities and the congregation's confidence in his leadership.

A decade ago the church recognized that its aging Midmer organ—purchased used in 1935, twice rebuilt and increasingly difficult to maintain—was near the end of useful life. Several contributed to an organ fund although there was yet no procedural consensus. Six years ago the college's Greatbatch School of Music was launching its graduate program. Organ professor Dr. Judy Congdon had envisioned a recital-grade historically conceived tracker organ to supplement the college facilities. (Until the 1960s the old church organ had served both institutions).

(over)



“Working with the Houghton volunteers has been one of the most enriching experiences of my entire career...Thanks to these volunteers the organ will forever belong to the people of Houghton in a way that no money could possibly buy... This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.”
—James Louder



(continued)

In 2005, after a joint college/church organ committee researched and presented various options, the congregation voted to proceed with their recommendation to build a new tracker organ in the church to be jointly owned and operated with the college. Chosen to build the instrument was James Louder of Montreal. A finance committee launched a simultaneous church and college music alumni effort to underwrite unsubscribed costs. Ultimately, nearly 300 individuals—parishioners, college music alumni, and other friends participated.

As work on the instrument began, an architect and an acoustician were hired to determine renovation requirements for the organ and to otherwise update the church. To save money and facilitate construction and installation of the instrument, Louder transferred his operations to Houghton where skilled craftsmen and other volunteers in the community lathe-turned the walnut stop pulls, built organ case doors, polished the metal pipes, crafted, sanded and sealed some wooden ones—more than 1,000 hours of donated effort. College organ students earned credit assisting Louder in the process of “voicing” the instrument.

At the organ’s dedication builder Louder summed up: “from the beginning the Houghton organ project has been special because of the organ’s two complimentary roles. It will serve in the first place to glorify God and to inspire His people during worship. As a teaching instrument, it will also serve for the training of young organists, the students of Houghton College. This too is a holy purpose.”

The new organ includes 1987 pipes in 37 ranks, has 29 stops with space for a 30th. Recitalists on the five-concert inaugural series uniformly and lavishly praised the organ as a recital instrument. Including non-organ renovation, the contracted project cost was \$505,060. As we celebrate this 75th anniversary, the majority of the project is paid for, some renovation expense and a bridge loan to the builder outstanding.



Church Staff, clockwise from top left: Youth Pastor Jon Cole, Associate Pastor Todd Leach, Senior Pastor Wesley Oden, Discipleship Pastor Cindy Oden, Outreach Pastor Laurie Smalley, and Music and Worship Director Amanda Cox



*Custodian
Steve Pocock*



*Secretary
Patty Stalker*

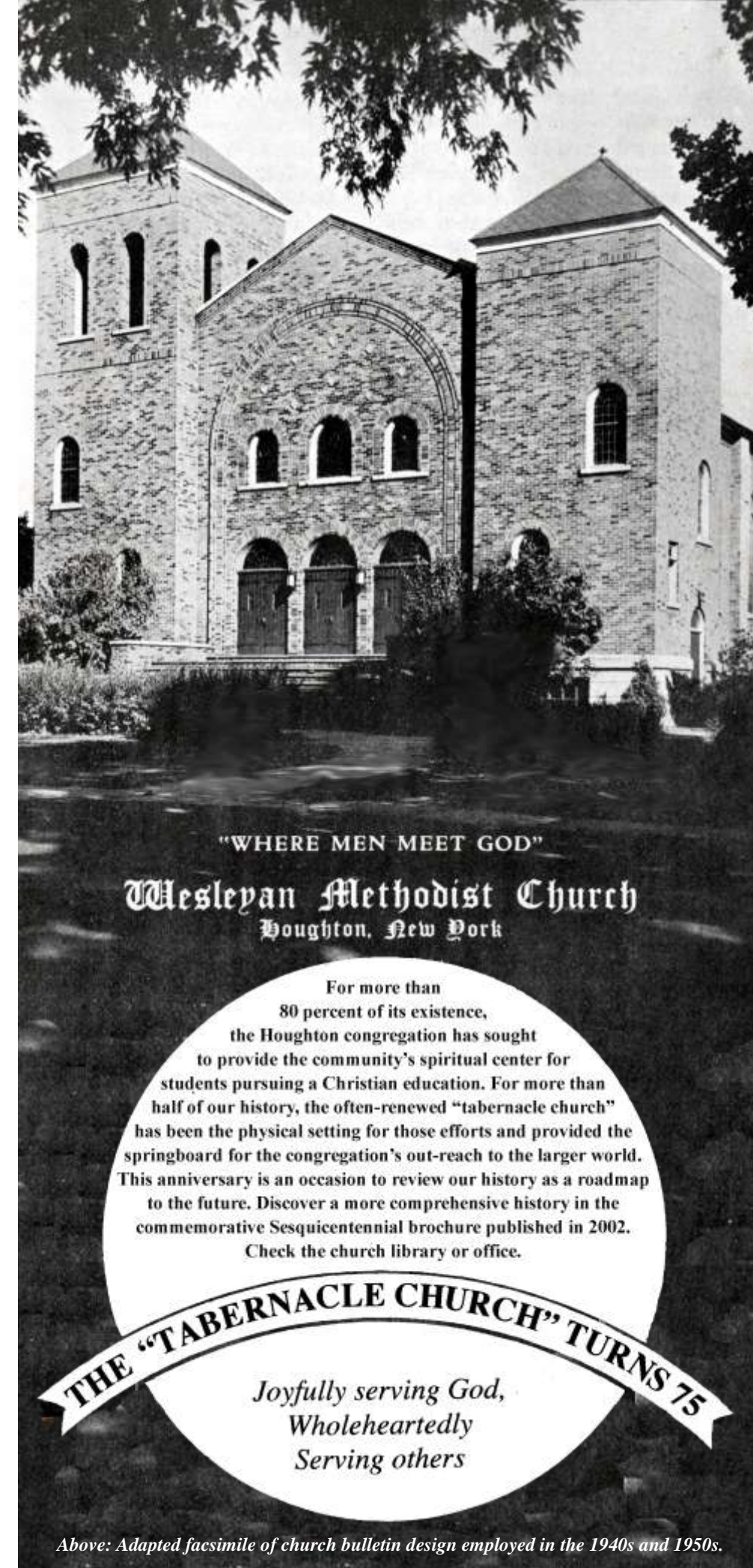
Leadership, Vision, Work Foster Advance

Across 157 years 34 men and one woman are known to have pastored the Houghton church. When Wesley Oden became the 34th minister in 1996, the average pastoral tenure back to 1852 averaged four years. Only three individuals had achieved double-digit ministries, the longest being that of the Rev. J. R. Pitt, during whose leadership the present sanctuary was built. Today Dr. Oden’s tenure ranks him second.

He recalls his impressions as a candidate: “The storied history of this congregation, the academic prowess and the challenge of ministering to such a diverse group including students was intimidating and humbling, but we felt God was leading us to Houghton...Cindy and I appreciated the quality of facilities—the woodwork, stained glass, the organ, the feeling of dignity. Nothing seemed lavish, but nothing seemed to have been built on the cheap.”

Dr. Oden expanded to three the Sunday morning worship services. He noted that this was done less for the sake of individual preferences than because parishioners [have] “varied experiences and because of the various ways we hear and experience God.” He believes that the same preacher in all morning worship services is an important means to connection, oneness and achieving our purposes. Pastor Oden envisions the combined endurance and change of the church structure and programs across the past 75 years as a model for future ministry and outreach. “The Houghton Church has a long history of supporting missionaries and the work of the Kingdom all over the world. Now, building on our past, we are working to foster a greater connection to the global church, recognizing other communions as equals in the work of the kingdom. Hopefully, we will learn from what God is doing in other places.”

Additionally, this fall the church has built on another historic priority. “Being a church that prays seems to have been part of our DNA through the decades,” Oden observed. “What may prove to be the most profound realization of that perception may be the recently designed Prayer Room and the prayer vigil initiated there.” Oden explained: “More than 400 people, including 150 collegians, participated in that three-week 24/7 effort. Anecdotes of God’s healing and restoration arising out of this event and its future potential make me wonder if creation of the prayer room may prove to be the most significant structural change since God directed the people to build 75 years ago.”



“WHERE MEN MEET GOD”

Wesleyan Methodist Church
Houghton, New York

For more than 80 percent of its existence, the Houghton congregation has sought to provide the community’s spiritual center for students pursuing a Christian education. For more than half of our history, the often-renewed “tabernacle church” has been the physical setting for those efforts and provided the springboard for the congregation’s out-reach to the larger world. This anniversary is an occasion to review our history as a roadmap to the future. Discover a more comprehensive history in the commemorative Sesquicentennial brochure published in 2002. Check the church library or office.

THE “TABERNACLE CHURCH” TURNS 75

*Joyfully serving God,
Wholeheartedly
Serving others*

Above: Adapted facsimile of church bulletin design employed in the 1940s and 1950s.