Houghton Wesleyan Church
Highlights

Joyfully loving God, wholeheartedly serving others

December 2017
Volume 49, No. 7

Living What We Sing

And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior…
Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,
"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."
Luke 1:46-47; 2:13-14

It shouldn't surprise us that the birth of Jesus includes singing. God created music and loves music. God gifts people with varieties of musical talent. Music has always been a common means of human beings expressing thought and emotion.

God's people have sung since becoming a nation. When God leads them across the Red Sea to safety, they sing (Exodus 15). When God uses Deborah to rescue Israel from their oppressors, they sing (Judges 5). When David and Saul return from a successful battle, they sing (1 Samuel 18). When the Temple is completed, and the people gather to dedicate it to the Lord, they sing (2 Chronicles 5). When the exiles return to Jerusalem, they sing (Ezra 3; Nehemiah 12). And when John is given a glimpse into the Day to come, he hears angels and choirs and saints singing (Revelation 5:9; 14:3; 15:3). It's no wonder that the church has continued this practice of composing and singing as a means of expressing our praise, prayers, affirmations and desires to God and each other.

Music has always been integral to worship. The Psalms are Israel's hymnbook. But our songs of worship are not just about the words but also the melodies that communicate mood and emotion. Many times, melodies spark emotion in us that words alone cannot do.

But sometimes, when a song is familiar, we become numb to the melodies and detached to the words. We sometimes blame the song, but the problem isn't the song—it hasn't changed—the problem is us. The songs we sing become so familiar that they seem lose their connection to us.

During this season of Advent, we are going to address this issue head on. Each Sunday we will be thinking about a different Advent or Christmas carol. We will think about what the lyrics and the melodies are communicating. Hopefully, these carols that are familiar, perhaps even perfunctory, to us will take on new meaning in our hearts. And through this renewal we will sense the power of Christ's coming in even greater and deeper ways.

Because Christ is born,

Pastor Wes

PRAYER VIGIL

We have just completed our seventh 3-week, 24/7 prayer vigil. Once again we have experienced the blessing and grace of God through an extended time of prayer. We didn't have someone praying every hour, but we did have someone praying 343 hours! Many of these hours were individuals praying, but we also had numerous hours of groups praying—families, couples, roommates, friends, youth classes and small groups, children's Sunday School classes, Junior Church, Houghton College RAs and some Houghton College athletic teams.

We believe that because of our prayers, God has and will continue to work miraculously—in ways that we can see and quantify and in ways that are more hidden. Whichever, we are pleased to be part of something that God is doing, something that is beyond us.

Thanks to everyone who came to pray—your involvement is a means of God speaking into your life and is an inspiration to others about prayer. Thank you to everyone who helped prepare the prayer room for this event—your time, energy, creativity and effort was and is being used by God to inspire hundreds of people who came and continue to come to pray. A special word of gratitude to the group of people who sacrificed time and sleep during the hours of midnight and 4:00am—this team of volunteers provided a sense of security while others prayed and spent much of their time praying as well. As we have prayed and as we continue to pray, may God be praised and may our lives be transformed.

BLOG

Read Pastor Wes' blog on the church website (www.hwchurch.org). A new blog about issues related to life, the church, and the world is posted most Wednesdays or Thursdays.

COMING ATTRACTIONS!

SMALL GROUPS start up again on January 14. Join in! Most current groups can welcome limited number of newcomers. Contact leaders: Jesse Fink, Michael Jordan, Doug Mayhle, J.L. Miller, Paul Shea, Jessica Wartinger, and Debbie Young for information. NEW GROUPS are also welcomed and forming. Contact paulshea@hwchurch.org with ideas and suggestions.

The Flower Committee Welcomes Your Christmas Poinsettias

to help beautify the sanctuary for Christmas. We have purchased a number of poinsettias which you may purchase for $12.00 each or you may bring your own on December 15. If you care to purchase one, please leave $12 with Patty Stalker in the church office and fill out a reservation form indicating your preferences. If you wish to honor a loved one, please leave this information with Patty by December 14.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES:

5:00 pm: Family Service

7:00 pm: Traditional Christmas Eve Service

Both services include the lighting of candles and the music and scriptures of Christmas. The 5:00 pm service will also include a time for children.

Nursery care will be available for both services for ages infant through 2 years.

Youth Group Happenings

Dates to Remember:

December 10: Lip Sync Competition
December 17: No Youth Group
December 24: No Youth Group/Christmas Eve
December26: All Church Prayer Brealfast 10AM
December 31: No Youth Group/New Year's Eve

STUDENT PROFILE

Hello! My name is Christian Habecker. I have been attending Youth Group for a year and a half. My favorite part of Youth Group is the games we play at the end. I continue going to Youth Group because it is a chance for me to see friends from other schools, and the activities that we do are fun. One thing that I have learned from my time in Youth Group is that it doesn't matter how many times you mess up, God will always love you.
Favorite Verse:
"Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."
- 1 Corinthians 15:58

Christian Habecker

To the Houghton Church Congregation,

The exchanging of gifts during the Christmas season is a tangible way of recognizing God's gift of grace in Jesus. For the Houghton Church congregation, this is an opportunity for us to give gifts to our pastoral staff whose gifts of service we receive throughout the year. They are meant to be a loving response from the church family as a whole. You may give by cash or check clearly designated as "Pastors' Christmas Gift." Please give your contributions to one of the Elder representatives, David Mercer or Matthew Webb, or leave it with Patty Stalker in the church office by December 21. Gifts can also be made online. (Please remember that your gift is tax-deductible, but taxable for those who receive it.)

Thank you as you generously give. We pray God's richest blessing for you and your family during this Advent season.

Matthew Webb
(For the Board of Elders)

Carol Sing and Cookie Reception

December 17 at 5:00 p.m.
Bring your instruments.

Bring a plate of cookies to share (leave them in the church kitchen) before joining voices in celebrating our annual Carol Sing in the sanctuary. If you are able to bring an extra plate of cookies, we have a small group that is willing to package them to be given away through the food pantry for the Christmas season.

take them a meal

For those times in life when filling their table will warm their hearts.

Thank you for your prayers for Nancy, Jon, Luke, and Emma Cole. Because people are asking about taking them a meal or two, we are opening this up to the congregation. You may go directly to **TakeThemAMeal.com** and locate the schedule by the recipient's last name (**Cole**) and the password is **volleyball** .Thank you for praying for and helping the Cole family as they are dealing with Nancy's breast cancer diagnosis.

STEWARDSHIP *A Life of Generosity*

Christmas is a time to reflect on God's greatest gift - sending Jesus to earth. As the book of John describes Jesus coming to earth it tells us "In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:4-5). We are grateful for this gift of light in our world full of darkness. We give to God's Kingdom as part of showing our gratitude and to spread light to the world.

Reminder: All gifts for calendar year 2017 need to be

- given in church on December 31st or be delivered to the church office by the 31st,
- mailed with a postmark date of December 30th or earlier,
- or need to be made online by Thursday, December 28th with a transaction date of Friday, December 29th at the latest.

UP-TO-THE-MINUTE MISSION HEADLINES!

CHRISTMAS EVE OFFERING PLANNED – The annual offering received at the two candle-light services on December 24 will go directly for aid and assistance in Puerto Rico following hurricane Maria. Gifts may also be received at the Church Office and online (**https://www.hwchurch.org/giving/** - choose ***Christmas Eve Offering*** from the designation choices. Details will follow but contacts have been made with Wesleyan Academy, a Christian elementary and high school with Houghton connections, which was seriously damaged; and World Hope International with their provision of generators, medicines and emergency supplies under Wesleyan Church supervision. Be in prayer and preparation.

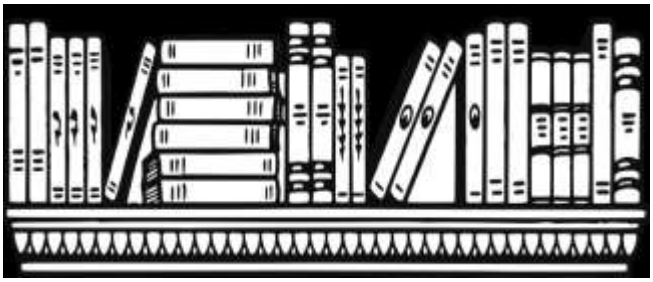
FAITH PROMISE GIVING TESTS FAITH – With six months remaining Faith Promise gifts have reached the one-third mark. Faith Promise relies on God providing funds above and beyond our normal planned church giving. Our six Wesleyan mission families are supported by Faith Promises. We pray for God's supply of the $20,000 plus still needed.

MISSION CONFERENCE DATES ANNOUNCED – February 4,7,11. Save these dates. Adult classes will have programs on the 4th and 11th. An all-generation MISSION TOUR night will be in the mid-week on the 7th. Major speaker and programs for all ages are planned for the 11th. Guests will include Dr. Don Little, and Drs. Romy and Linda Caringal. Plan now!

MISSIONARY MAILBAG – Pick up your copy of the monthly *Missionary Mailbag*, at the sanctuary and C.E. building foyers. If you prefer contact valiandelizabeth@gmail.com for email version.

From the

Library Shelves



We have a number of Advent and Christmas books in our collection—for both adults and children. There are endearing Christmas tales, family advent activities, Christmas celebration ideas, and devotionals and meditations that quiet our souls and prepare our hearts for the Christmas season. We also have some family Christmas DVDS. In the children's room there is a whole shelf of Christmas books---and we have Christmas DVDs there also. Come on in and see for yourself!!

CAN YOU HELP?? We are missing some books and DVDs:

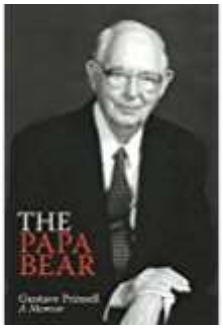
Captured, by Carolyn Paine Miller
Jacob's Way, by Gilbert Morris
Simply Christian, by N.T. Wright
*Amish Grace (*DVD)
Where's God When I'm Scared (DVD)
Angels, by David Jeremiah
Green Eggs and Ham, by Dr. Seuss
Saul of Tarsus (DVD)
Larry Boy and the Bad Apple (DVD)
Little House on the Prairie (DVD set)

If you have seen these, please let us know so we can update our check-out file.

HAVE A BLESSED CHRISTMAS SEASON!

Thank you, everyone, for the many prayers, cards, flowers, and other remembrances for Louise. We still covet your prayers.

Gus & Louise Prinsell



Note: Dr. Prinsell's autobiography is available in the church library but is also offered on Amazon Kindle, iTunes, and Google Books.

FAMILY EVENT NIGHT

Christmas Caroling followed by Hot Cocoa and Cookies

Kid's Club will be going out Christmas caroling on December 13th from 6-7. We would like to invite you to join us! We will meet in the Community Room before we go out and again afterwards for cookies and hot cocoa. We welcome Christmas cookie donations if anyone loves to bake! Please talk to Pastor Laurie if you have any questions. Thank you

Remember to wear warm clothes and bring flashlights!

Sunday School Schedule

Due to the holidays and people away visiting family, we will not have Sunday School on December 17th and December 24th or December 31st and January 87h. On these Sundays, we will have one 10:00 worship service.

NOTE: Junior Church will not be meeting on the Sundays that we have just one 10:00 service. December 17, 24 and 31 and January 7.

December Memory Verse:

Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David.

-Luke 2:11 CSB

We collected 183 shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child this year.

Our condolences to the family of Marjorie Kellogg who died November 14.

FOOD PANTRY

Thank you to all who contributed to our church food pantry during our November 19 collection. During the past year we have helped more than 100 families from Houghton and surrounding communities through this ministry. If you are still interested in donating please feel free to drop off items at the church office.

Valley Preschool will be having a short open house on

Friday evening December 1st from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.

In addition to being a chance for those who don't get to see us in operation during the day to have a look around, there will be an opportunity to do a little Christmas shopping for those on your list who might like **Usborne books** this year. Claire Bintz will be there with these quality books during the open house hours and that morning from 8:30 to noon, so stop by and do some shopping close to home while you support Valley Preschool. Purchases made will give Valley Preschool the opportunity to select free books

December 7 & 8, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Houghton College is pleased to host its 31st Annual Christmas Art & Craft Fair. Each year, the Art and Craft Fair is held in the beginning of December and provides community members and students the opportunity to find something special for the holidays while supporting local artisans and small businesses from across Western New York.

This year's selection of vendors will sell handmade, one-of-a-kind artwork and local goods including, but not limited to:

* Alpaca wool scarves, socks, gloves, shawls, and sweaters
* Books, journals, cards, stationery, and other paper gift items
* Delicious local maple syrup and jams
* Naturally based makeup and skin care
* Original artwork, greeting cards, and prints of original paintings
* Pottery such as mugs, bowls, cups, plates, candleholders, and serving ware
* Soaps and bath products
* Stained glass pendants
* Sterling silver, bead, and glass jewelry items
* Textiles, such as baby blankets, pillowcases, coasters, and more
* Wooden crafts including toys, ornaments, cutting boards, utensils, decor and more

Sunday, December 3rd

12:30pm - 4:30pm

Sleigh Rides

Load at the Inn - $1

Photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus for the entire family, including pets, at Buddy's Place!

Vendors | **Christmas Readings** | **Ornament Making**

Christmas Marketplace Vendors (local, individual businesses such as LulaRoe, Essential Oils, Tastefully Simple, Paparazzi Jewelry, and more) located at Buddy's Place, the Inn at Houghton Creek, and STEPS Dance Studio. Live music by Houghton Academy students.

Enjoy Additional Christmas Events in Fillmore - Saturday, Dec. 2nd

Houghton Area Senior Citizens

December 12 Luncheon served at noon

We are meeting on Tuesday this month!

The first letter of your last name determines your food to share: A-F Salads G-N Desserts O-Z Casseroles

Our annual pilgrimage to Houghton Academy begins at 1:00 p.m. (transportation available) where we will enjoy a program of traditional and contemporary holiday music presented by the bands, choirs, and bell choirs of HA

Wellspring Ministries

Reminders:

- The Christmas Room opened November 15 for families with children to shop at no cost. Items for this room are still welcome.
- Christmas Dinner: Wednesday, December 20
- Reopening: Wednesday, January 3
- Donations on the Beardsley Porch Mondays & Tuesdays only, please
- Thank you for your support this year

Helping Hands Christian Alliance

At Buddy's Place

Barbara's Cards: Usually 75cents per card, for Christmas 60 cents per card or bakers dozen for 4 dollars.
New card designs- come and check it out just in time for that last Christmas rush.

New Item being added this month ;

- Candy made by Becky Stanton, up to and including Sponge Candy only available through holidays and winter months.
- Added just for the Christmas season: knitted Christmas tree decorations by Sandy Roederer -beautiful sleds skis, and baby booties for newborns all low priced and available only for Christmas season; all these and more are not to be missed.

Hours this season beginning December 1 - 31 will be Mondays 9-3 Thursdays 9- 12 Fridays 9-6 Saturdays 9-9 Sundays 12-9. NOTE: we will be at the Craft Fair December 7 & 8.

The 13th Annual Counselors' Classic Basketball Tournament

will be held on Wednesday & Thursday, December 27-28 at the Nielsen Center on the Houghton College Campus.
The tournament will feature varsity teams from
Bolivar-Richburg Central School
Cuba-Rushford Central School
Fillmore Central School
Genesee Valley Central School
Whitesville Central School

Game times both days are 2:45; 4:30; 6:30 and 8:00.

The tournament supports the scholarship fund of the Allegany County Counselors Association. Contact Bruce Campbell for additional information.

DECEMBER AT THE CAMPUS STORE

Books Galore!

December Book Sale! 20% off trade books, Bibles, and journals!
Bargain Books Are Here! Hundreds of Bargain Books are now out with a variety of genres discounted 40-80% off list price!
Introducing our New Read & Return Program!
Buy it, read it, return it! Purchase a book marked with a sticker, keep the original receipt, enjoy the book, return it to the Campus Store, and receive a 50% refund! Books eligible for the refund are marked by an indicating sticker, must be returned within 6 months of purchase accompanied by the original receipt, and be in good condition at the discretion of the staff.

Christmas Sales

Annual Christmas Sale!

December 5th from 9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Stock up on Christmas gifts with 30% off most items in the store and have them gift wrapped for free! Come visit Santa and get a free picture taken between 4:30-7:00 p.m.

Gift & Jewelry Sale

Check out our new gift section as well as Fair Trade gifts and receive 20% off December 6th – 9th. Jewelry will also be Buy One, Get One ½ off during this time.

Winter Clearance Event

December 11th – 22nd (while supplies last) – a huge variety of items deeply discounted!

HELP TO DECK THE HALLS & SANCTUARY FOR ADVENT/CHRISTMAS - If you are interested in helping to decorate the church for the holidays, please join us on Saturday, December 2, at 10 A.M. Coffee and Christmas cookies provided! Just show up or contact Elsa Kettinger (315-515-9818) with questions.

SUNDAYS IN DECEMBER

December 3 (8:20am, 9:40am and 11:00am, 5:00pm)
a.m. *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* (Luke 1)
p.m. James McLean, Intern preaching

December 10 (8:20am, 9:40am and 11:00am, 5:00pm)
a.m. *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* (John 1)
p.m. Andrew Sherman, Intern preaching

December 17 (10:00am, 5:00pm)
a.m. *Joy to the World!* (Luke 2)
p.m. Carol Sing/Cookie Reception

December 24 (10:00 am, 5:00pm and 7:00pm)
a.m. *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day* (Matthew 1)
p.m. Christmas Eve Services

December 31 (10:00 am)
a.m. Pastor Paul Shea
p.m. NO ACTIVITIES

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES:

5:00 pm: Family Service
7:00 pm: Traditional Christmas Eve Service

Both services will include the lighting of candles and the music and scriptures of Christmas. The 5:00 pm service will also include a time for children.

CHURCH STAFF

Wes Oden, *Senior Pastor*
567-2024 **wesoden@hwchurch.org**

Jon Cole, *Youth Pastor*
307-9950 **joncole@hwchurch.org**

Cindy Oden, *Assistant Pastor*
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Paul Shea, *Assistant Pastor*
567-4597 **paulshea@hwchurch.org**

Amanda Cox, Music & *Worship Director*
567-4870 **amandacox@hwchurch.org**

Laurie Smalley, *Children's Ministry Director*
567-8302, **lauriesmalley@hwchurch.org**

Church Office, M-F, 8 AM-Noon & 1-5 PM,
567-2264 **office@hwchurch.org**