

MLK'S LEGACY LIVES ON AT HU

CARI WASSON '27

On Jan. 9, Houghton University's (HU) President Wayne D. Lewis announced, via email, that the annual Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Day programming would be cancelled.

MLK Day is considered both a work and an instructional day at HU. Faculty are required to come into work, and special lectures were provided in place of regular classes. However, due to roughly 20% of students in attendance, Lewis did not feel comfortable keeping the full-day programming and still calling the day "instructional."

Even with the cancellation, the day is still considered an instructional day. As such, Lewis explained, "we would have classes, continue with an MLK day themed chapel, and continue with an evening program."

When the email was sent,



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Civil Rights Leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. addresses the crowd during the March on Washington. It was during this address that he made his "I Have a Dream" speech.

the Black Heritage Club (BHC) sprang into action. Club President James Adenuga '28 said BHC decided to "plan for something to fill in for the lack of panel discussions that usually happened." The proposal was made by the club's Vice President Kenadi Nanga '26, who chose to lead a presentation on MLK's

Letter from Birmingham Jail. The letter was selected to bring conversation to a different piece of literature by MLK, not just his famous "I Have A Dream" speech. Adenuga said the presentation provided a chance to "gain a better understanding of the letter," with questions to inspire conversation among

participants. In February, BHC will host the presentation again in collaboration with the Kingdom Initiative—a program that aims to learn about, engage with, and celebrate the rich cultural diversity of HU and the Kingdom of God.

Dr. Peter Meilaender, the Kingdom Initiative advisor,

hopes to keep the interest in MLK's legacy by hosting a book club. The group will discuss Kevin Sack's bestselling novel "Mother Emanuel: Two Centuries of Race, Resistance, and Forgiveness in One Charleston Church." Sack's novel analyzes a hate crime at the Mother Emanuel Church in Charleston, South Carolina. With this as the foundation, the book then looks at the history of the black church. Meilaender hopes that the conversations sparked by the book will provide a chance to think about how "faith, reconciliation, forgiveness, [and] justice ... go together as we think about our history of racial violence and racial tension."

Lewis noted that he is "encouraged daily by students" in the way they "interact with each other and care for each

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Venezuela: "Operation Absolute Resolve"

MAKAYLA JOHNSON '27

Under the cover of darkness on Jan. 3, 2026, at approximately 4:20 a.m., the United States (US) Special Forces were deployed in Caracas, Venezuela. They completed their objective: capturing the Venezuelan president, Nicolás Maduro, and his wife, Cilia Flores de Maduro.

Matthew Olay, with Pentagon News and published through the US Department of War website, reported on US President Donald Trump's announcement of the event. According to Trump, the capture took place at Maduro's "heavily fortified military fortress in the heart of" the capital, and had the goal of bringing the

"outlaw dictator ... to justice." The mission, titled "Operation Absolute Resolve," was the product of a long preparation period and "U.S. joint forces." Gareth Evans of the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) expanded on the details of the assignment, which consisted of "months of meticulous planning and rehearsals, which even included elite US troops creating an exact full-size replica of Maduro's Caracas safe house."

Following his capture, Maduro appeared in court on Jan. 5. According to Michael Ruiz, Maria Paronich, and Brendan McDonald at Fox News, he is being charged on four accounts: "narco-terrorism conspiracy, cocaine im-

portation conspiracy, possession of machine guns and destructive devices and conspiracy to possess machine guns and destructive devices."

Cilia Flores de Maduro also appeared in court on Jan. 5, and they are both pleading not guilty on all counts.

Maduro is expected back in court on March 17 to face trial.

One point of contention over this case has been Trump's lack of receiving Congressional approval for this mission. There has been speculation about whether this is a violation of the constitutionally granted power to declare war given to Congress. Though the US did not



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The Flag of Venezuela on a Flag Pole.

Patrick Hager

KYRA BINNEY '26

The beginning of the semester brings change in Houghton University's (HU) staff. Coach Patrick Hager, the Head Cross Country and Track and Field coach since 2014, is the new Director of Vocation and Calling in the Center for Student Success. After over a decade of coaching for HU, he made the tough decision to pivot his career in order to spend more time with his family.

During his coaching career, Hager turned the Cross Country and Track Teams into top competitors in the conference. The team won two Empire 8 Conference titles in 2019 and 2023. Hager coached two athletes, Noelle Linenfelser '26 and Amos Bixler '26, to qualify for the NCAA Cross Country Championships in 2024 and 2025, respectively. Under him, many athletes won individual conference titles and pushed themselves to new personal bests.

When first considering the pivot in his career, Hager and his wife, Sarah Hager, knew they wanted to stay at HU. They love the community and the people around them. When the Director of Vocation and Calling position opened, Hager described it as a "light bulb moment". He shared, "It intrigued me. It sounded like work that I had transferable skills for, and I could learn the other technical parts of it."

In his new position,

Hager will continue to help students chase academic and career goals.

Hager found it hard to leave his coaching position due to the relationships he had built with student athletes that would inevitably change when they don't work together every day. While he found success in numerous titles and competition wins, he built countless relationships with his athletes over the years. The part Hager will miss the most is sharing in the success of his athletes. "When someone performs well, hits their goal, or wins a conference, you just share a moment together at the finish line where we're both excited. You did this, but we did this together. You just live in that moment for a little bit. That's the moment I'll miss the most."

While Hager's departure will be hard for the current team, they are happy for his family's future. "It is a little discouraging, since he's such a great coach," said Grace Bailey, a sophomore on the Cross Country team. "I'm really excited for him, and I hope he's going to do great things."

Hager wants his office to be a place where students feel excited to go to. He looks forward to being a resource for students in his new role; "I want to be an office or person that people are excited to come down to, [and] you do because 'he's knowledgeable' and will make you feel like [he's] taking care of you." ★

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continue to honor MLK's legacy by "celebrating those areas where we've made extraordinary progress since his leadership" and "identifying the areas where we continue to have progress to make."

Although the programming was cancelled, students are still encouraged to learn about MLK and his

legacy through events hosted by the Kingdom Initiative and BHC. Meilaender also encourages students to research stories and learn about different cultures to gain a "fuller sense of the richness of God's kingdom." The MLK programming may have been cancelled, but that doesn't mean that MLK's message has been lost. ★



THOMAS MCGLYNN '26

Dear Houghton Students, Student Council began the second semester with lots of enthusiasm. We welcomed Anna Lloyd '26 and Elwyn Foster '26 to their new positions as Residence Life and Academic representatives. Following the Q&A session held in December, we plan to hold more sessions and invite administrators who can best answer questions currently relevant to students. Please complete our February survey to help us identify current topics of importance.

Student Council will be hosting our third annual Super Bowl Party event this Sunday! We will have lots of wings, pizza, and pop available,

so come to the Campus Center (CC) basement Sunday evening for a good time with good company.

Additionally, we are proud to announce that the tablets have been installed in the residence hall laundry rooms across campus! Once activated, these tablets will allow students who use this option to log in to their laundry accounts on the tablet and use the app to complete their laundry. The collaboration between the Student Life office and Student Council made this possible, and we are excited to implement it.

If you are interested in becoming a part of Student Council, our pe-

Update 02/06: New Representatives, Tablets for Laundry, and Next Year Petitions

titions for the 2026-2027 academic year will be sent out on February 9th. Be sure to fill one out, we would love to see you put your name on the ballot!

We are so excited to help serve the Houghton community! If you have any inquiries, concerns, opportunities, or ideas, please bring these to us! We have designated representatives for all areas of campus (Academic, Athletic, Community Engagement, Diversity and Inclusion, Residence Life, Spiritual Life, Student Organizations, and all four class representatives). You can also contact us at studentcouncil@houghton.edu! God bless you all! ★

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declare war with this act, some argue that initiating aggression or military force can fall under Congress's war powers even without a formal declaration.

Further, some argue that Trump lacks a follow-up plan that is equipped for the hostility he began. Evans reported that US Senator Chuck Schumer understands that "Nicolás Maduro is an illegitimate dictator," but Trump's "launching [of] military action without congressional authorization and without a credible plan for what comes next is reckless."

Another point of contention is highlighted through Trump's rhetoric following the capture. Kylie Atwood with Cable News Network (CNN) discussed Trump's frequent mentions of his "desire to exert US control over Venezuela's vast oil resources ... both before and after Maduro's January 3 capture." Atwood also reported that "while multiple Trump administration officials have said the oil profits would go towards

benefiting the people of Venezuela." Trump himself seems to tell another story. He has mentioned "taking back the oil" in Venezuela, which he claims to have been "stolen from us," a reference to Venezuela's past nationalization of assets and infrastructure owned by US oil companies."

Maduro's capture opened dialogue about the extent of the US' international powers. Critics argue that the US has overstepped its authority in

pursuit of oil interests, while others praise the Trump administration for freeing Venezuelans from a dictatorship. As the country awaits the trial set to take place in March, the case remains unresolved. ★

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This article is written from a Western perspective, and we encourage readers to read further on the Venezuelan and global view of this issue.

- The Editors ★

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Can You Turn Your Cheek to Class Politics?



MACKENZIE YOHE '27

Imagine you are leaving Sunday church service to go to brunch with friends. On the way there, you pass through a neighborhood that is clearly poverty-stricken. Your first thought is, "Oh, those poor people. I bet the food ministry could help them!" This thought is familiar, compassionate, and deeply shaped by the language many churches use when they speak about poverty. Charity, after all, is a central Christian virtue. Compassion that stops at charity, however, risks narrowing our moral vision. When poverty is framed as solely an opportunity for aid, the deeper question of why such poverty exists is quietly set aside.

To begin, contemporary poverty on a vast scale is not a personal failure or a natural condition. Rather, it is the predictable outcome

of an economic system that continually extracts wealth upward. Capitalism functions through a rigid class relationship: the working class survives by selling its labor power, while the capital class accumulates wealth by owning land, resources, and financial institutions. This system extends globally. Churches respond to the problem by donating millions in charitable aid to countries in the global south but rarely denounce the capitalist sys-

This notion may seem disconnected from Jesus' teachings, but it is more closely aligned than one imagines. After stating that loving God is the greatest commandment, Jesus adds, "And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39). What exactly does this mean, and how does it relate to justice? According to philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff, in his book *Justice in Love*, love and justice are fundamentally compati-

"When poverty is framed as solely an opportunity for aid, the deeper question for why such poverty exists is set aside."

tem that produces and maintains that poverty. The relationship between capital and labor is not neutral; it prioritizes profit over human life. Institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank enforce debt structures, while multinational corporations strip resources from native lands. Refusing to name this injustice creates churches that are moral band-aids, rather than institutions that fight for equality and justice under Christ.

ble. They are not opposites; to love properly, one must also promote the just treatment and flourishing of the other. Justice in love looks like calling out the unjust systems that prevent your neighbor's flourishing.

Jesus performed justice in love repeatedly. He confronted the economic and religious corruption of the Temple (Luke 19), openly condemned the hypocrisy of religious leaders (Matthew 23), and in Mark 7 rebuked leaders for manipulating the law for personal gain. Jesus consistently stood against unjust systems, fighting for the just treatment of those around him.

The question, then, is how do we define our neighbor? Jesus does not offer a neat definition, but the Torah gives us clues. Embedded within the law

"Neutrality while ignoring the cries of the vulnerable...is taking the side of the oppressor."

is the protection of the fatherless, the widow, the poor, the oppressed, the foreigner, and the stranger (see Exodus 22; Leviticus 19; Deuteronomy 24). The Year of Jubilee is the clearest example of this concern. After seven cycles of seven years, debts were canceled, land was returned to those who had lost it, and the land itself was given rest. Leviticus 25 embodies God's concern for justice and the formation of a society not built on inequality.

Though these commands belong to the Old Testament, the principles behind them remain. God is deeply concerned with justice and the protection of the vulnerable, so too is his Son. Our neighbors include the guy in Humanities 101 you cannot stand, the mother asking for formula outside Walmart, and the immigrant struggling to survive. To love your neighbor is to embody God's concern for justice, to stand against systematic injustice, and to love those made in the image of God: everyone.

When the topic of class politics enters religious conversation, many people shy away from "taking a side". They position themselves in the middle, claiming neutrality as the safest option. I urge you to reject this way of thinking. Neutrality while ignoring the

cries of the vulnerable and the injustice produced by capitalism is not neutral at all. It is taking the side of the oppressor. In doing so, you abandon the call to love your neighbor and foster a negligence that invites others to do the same.

Jesus did not remain neutral. He healed the sick, welcomed the outcast, and openly critiqued unjust systems. If Jesus made this a core element of his earthly ministry, then it must be central to ours as well.

Saint Maria of Paris, a nun who led resistance efforts during World War II, spent her life running shelters, hiding Jews, and smuggling people to safety. She worked among the vulnerable every day until her martyrdom by gas chamber in 1943. Her most famous words still ring true: "The Church must turn to the cry of the world, to the social hell, to injustice, to crises..."

My friends, we cannot selectively turn our cheeks to either systemic injustice or class politics. The essential calling of Christians is not merely to alleviate the symptoms of injustice, but to tear out its roots. We are called to justice in love. ★

Mack is a double major in Special Education and Bible Theology. She is a member of the track and field team, aspiring theologian and feminist.

SPEAK OUT!

Letters to the editor should be less than 300 words

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Stranger Things: Season 5 Review

WARNING: MAJOR SPOILERS

On one hand...

NATALIE WADIN '28

The Netflix show, *Stranger Things*, captured hearts over the last ten years. This year, the show wrapped up with an intense season worthy of a watch party with Eleven's waffles and some tissues. The final season brought crazy plot twists, emotional highs and lows, and a bittersweet ending that satisfied fans who wanted to see the characters experience a peaceful ending after enduring years of chaos.

While some fans may have wanted more small-detail explanations in Season Five, it wrapped up the show's important aspects well: a group of underdog friends going on unthinkable adventures and making it out the other side—or out of the Upside Down.

Relationships were resolved and strengthened: El and Hopper's struggle and resolution to trust one another helped them find peace. Jonathan, Nancy, and Steve ended on good terms, putting earlier tensions aside. Finally, Steve and Dustin's fight led Dustin to express his grief, and care for Steve, strengthening their relationship and bringing tears to viewers' eyes.

Along with the emotional plotlines, *Stranger Things* also

delivered entertaining and shocking plot twists. Will's ability to control Vecna in the episode "Sorcerer" was a twist to rival Henry Creel himself. The Upside Down turning out to be a wormhole brought back the Sci-fi element from previous seasons. Additionally, Steve's near-death scene had fans on the edge of their seats. Besides nail-biting twists, the CGI leveled up the Upside-Down world, the demogorgons were even more savage, and the final villain, the Mind Flayer, was not a smoky being anymore, but a larger-than-life, terrifying, gory monster.

Overall, Season Five delivered an impactful ending to the series, with emotional scenes of resolved conflicts, dramatic plot twists, intense action, and the continued well-loved theme of friendship. The show creatively wrapped up the series by mirroring its beginning: the main group of Mike, Will, Dustin, and Lucas, and now Max too, playing one last round of Dungeons & Dragons and closing with the younger generation of kids filling in for them. While the world doesn't want to admit it, the show is done. But I'm sure you've heard stranger things before. ★

On the other hand...

LILY WORDEN '28

After waiting three and a half years with eager anticipation and high hopes for a mind-flaying wrap-up to the Netflix favorite, fans across the globe spent this past winter holiday season watching the final installment of *Stranger Things* — only for it to be a complete flop. From plot holes to bad writing to scenes that were just plain disappointing, Season 5 served as a less-than-satisfactory ending to the series that kept watchers on the edge of their seats for almost a decade.

If you thought Season 5 would answer all of your questions about the *Stranger Things* universe, you thought wrong. In fact, you may be left with even more questions than you started with. Why did Henry need twelve kids in order to close the space between his world and Hawkins? Who is Doctor Kay and when did she come into the story?

Further still, some of the scenes were poorly written such as Jonathan and Nancy's "un-proposal," which sparked so much confusion that the Duffer Brothers had to come out and confirm that they had broken up. And a five-season build just for a five-minute final battle scene? What hap-

pened to Starcourt Mall-level brawls? By the time fans had wrapped their minds around how exactly Vecna and the Mind Flayer were connected, they were both dead.

Stranger Things has never been a happy and optimistic show, so why did everything wrap up with a neat little bow? Aside from Eleven's annoyingly ambiguous ending, all of the characters came out unscathed. While we don't necessarily want anyone to be scathed, it feels unrealistic that everything would end so perfectly after five seasons of mayhem. The ending was anticlimactic and uncharacteristic to the show fans have known and loved.

Viewers sat down to watch Season 5 with high expectations, desiring a nostalgic, satisfying, and clarifying ending to their favorite show. Unfortunately, many were disappointed, and I would recommend they rewatch the earlier seasons to relive the better days of *Stranger Things*. ★

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STRANGER THINGS WORD SEARCH



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- Nancy
- Terry Ives
- Eleven
- Murray
- Lucas
- Eddie
- Mad Max
- Steve
- Jonathan
- Dustin
- Robin
- Billy
- Will
- Joyce
- Barbara
- Demogorgon
- Hopper
- Hawkins
- Bob the Brain

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