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## HONORING PASTOR WES ODEN

ABIGAIL BATES '26  
AND  
VICTORIA ARNDT '25

Down the hill from Houghton University sits the Houghton Wesleyan Church where Pastor Wes Oden currently serves as the lead pastor. He will be 66 this summer, although he commented that he doesn't look like it. Oden will be retiring this year, 29 years after he, his wife, Cindy, and their two sons first arrived in Houghton, N.Y.

Oden "could not have been more surprised" when he received a call from President Wayne D. Lewis, Jr. that he would be awarded the Willard J. Houghton Medal at Commencement this May.

"I'm very honored," he said, but added that "at the same time I feel very humbled [and a little undeserving] because, I mean, it's the kind of recognition that is never just about you. It's always about other people."

He said it has made him better appreciate the accep-



Houghton Wesleyan Church Group Photo  
From left: Jon Cole, Emily Spateholts, Cindy Oden, Amanda Cox, Wes Oden, and David Huizenga

tance speeches at Oscars. "You just don't do these things alone," Oden said. "Whatever the recognition is for, it's always about everybody in my life."

The Willard J. Houghton Medal, since 2008, has been presented to individuals who "have embodied in particular and powerful ways over the course of a lifetime, the commitments

and aspirations that are at the heart of a Houghton education." Lewis is honored to give Oden this award, as the Medal is a way to "celebrate models of Christian leadership and service" for students and the Houghton community.

"Pastor Wes is the embodiment of the ideals of Houghton University," said Lewis. "His ministry, lead-

ership, and living exemplify what it means to be a Christian scholar-servant... This is a wonderful time to celebrate what he means to the Houghton community and Houghton University."

Before coming to Houghton, Oden worked as a pastor in two churches in Wisconsin for ten and a half years. Oden mentioned that he felt intimidated by

the Houghton Wesleyan congregation during the candidating process, as many were well-learned in the Bible and assumedly more educated than him. It was during a conversation with Cindy, on the plane back home, that she said, "You know, they're just like everybody else. They want to be loved. And they want to experience the love of God and they want to experience the love of people."

When Oden first arrived at the church in 1996, there were discussions about doing "something about the organ." Ten years later, starting in 2006, the church began the long process of purchasing a new organ. "We finally said 'We gotta do something' because it was falling apart," Oden said, explaining that the organ is an important part of the church's worship.

But not everyone wanted to spend money on

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## ISA Soiree

KELSEY CURTIS '27

Tonight, the International Student Association (ISA) is having a soiree in the Center for the Performance Arts atrium at 8 p.m. The soiree will be a night of celebrating different cultures that are represented at Houghton University (HU).

Prashansa Chakarapani '27, President of ISA, said the event serves to "remind us of how diverse Houghton is. We are a population of out-of-state students, international students, Missionary Kids, and Third Culture Kids." She added that the night is about sharing how people have experienced and lived in different cultures in their "own unique way."

The event will have live music, food prepared by community members



Cultural Foods

COURTESY OF UNSPLASH - CURATED LIFESTYLE

and professors, and "ice-breakers," where attendees will participate in an activity to help get to know one another better. There will also be community members in attendance, who "are eager to interact with the students," Chakarapani added. She also noted that there is a dress code for the event, "Come dressed like you would

for a formal event back at home. Most importantly: be colourful!"

Lee Camacho '27, an ISA member, assisted in planning the soiree. He was most excited about two aspects of the event: hearing people's stories and seeing a map that will display where attendees are from. Camacho said he loves to "exchange life stories" with others and

the soiree is an opportunity to talk to new people who do not normally talk with each other.

The soiree is a way of achieving ISA's goal: "helping international students integrate well into Houghton... and giving them a safe place to share experiences," reported Chakarapani. She shared that being an international student comes with

many challenges. She named the distance from home as the biggest challenge, which can present issues like people having a hard time understanding them. This not only comes in the form of talking with others but also how they live. Chakarapani added that people may not understand "even something as simple as how you eat."

Camacho said another challenge with being an international student is "culture shock," or a feeling of disorientation when immersed in a new culture. He further shared that ISA is a web of international students who can provide "support and guidance" to one another when someone is struggling.

A large concern that ISA faces frequently is international students struggling to be involved with HU's community while staying "in touch

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# Remembering the Chamberlains

President Daniel Chamberlain and his wife, Joyce Chamberlain served Houghton's community during Daniel's presidency at Houghton University (formerly known as Houghton College) from 1976 till 2006.



▲ Jonathan A. Gates  
English/Secondary Education, Bible  
"How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word."

"As a Houghton University undergraduate and later a faculty member, I recall singing Charles Wesley's hymn "I Want a Principle Within" in conjunction with chapels in which President Chamberlain delivered the message. Though not an imposing man, President Chamberlain's yearning for a foundational principle of godly fear, sensitivity to sin and the ability to resist temptation—the essence of Wesley's hymn—resonated deeply with me as a young scholar, and Dr. Chamberlain's life and service have remained a model to me as I have served for many years in Christian higher education."

- Professor of English Jonathan Gates '85

"When I think of President Chamberlain the phrase that always comes to mind is scholar-servant, as he (and also Joyce) modeled this for the Houghton community every day. I also can still picture the way he would simply point toward God with his hand when receiving applause in Chapel or other settings. It was such a simple gesture, but one clearly intended to teach and remind us of the One truly worthy of our thanks and praise."

- Provost and Dean of the Faculty David Davies '01



David Davies

"Dan and Joyce Chamberlain consistently exemplified Houghton hospitality. The way they welcomed people to campus was a powerful example of what today we call the Houghton community."

- Professor of Communication Douglas Gaerte, hired in 1988



Douglas M. Gaerte

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an organ.

Oden expressed that it had the potential to be a divisive issue, yet he said they tried to walk through the issue in a way that was redemptive rather than divisive. "Probably one of the things that I think God has given me the ability to do is to be a person who helps people navigate things and tensions in a way that, hopefully, brings people through," he said. "Without thinking so much about winning and losing, but how we care for each other as we walk through [issues]."

After the organ affair, Oden remembers talking with a group of younger guys who he described as being "take it or leave it" kinds of people. They went to the earlier service without the organ, so the instrument didn't matter as much to them.

He remembers saying to them, "I really appreciate you guys not letting an issue like this be divisive." And they responded with, "Why would we let that be divisive? We care too much about each other to let something like that come between us."

Oden described this story as indicative of the church's spirit. The church tries "to create a spirit of unity within [their] differences," whether it comes to COVID, politics, or any other issue.

"I am such a better pastor because of this church," he said, adding that "I think I'm just a better leader. I'm a better Christian. I'm a better pastor in general ... They were willing to say 'That didn't work.' They were willing to say, 'That's gotta get better.' But they were also willing to say 'Well, we see the improvement. This is good.'"

Oden said the greatest part of his experiences at Houghton has been "seeing people come alive in Jesus," no matter what stage of their journey. He mentioned baptizing Houghton Academy and university students, and hearing about new experiences from those who have been walking with Jesus for 50 years.

After retirement, Oden plans to remain in Houghton with his family, particularly spending time with his grandchildren, and participate in pulpit supply in area churches.

He and Cindy have also considered writing books on pastoral ministry and devotion.

Oden said that one of the hardest things about retirement is no longer being a part of people's lives in the same way.

"You walk through people's lives in the greatest moments and in the most difficult moments," he said, explaining that "You walk with people through celebrations, their spiritual joys, their family joys; births, baptisms, weddings and all those things.

"And then you walk with people through difficult things; deaths and divorces and relational breakdowns and job losses and whatever, all those things.

"Really," he said, "in the end, that's what ministry is all about." ★

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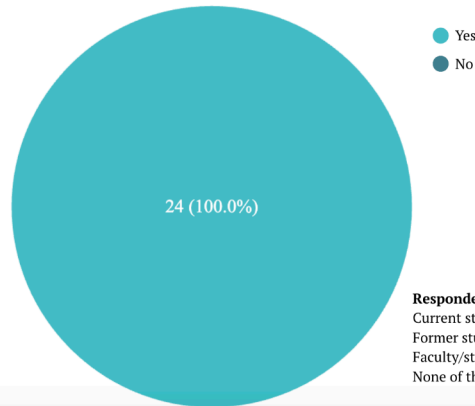
with their own cultural identity," Chakarapani commented. When looking at this issue and keeping their association goals in mind, ISA planned their soiree with the help of MuKappa, the Black Heritage Club, and the Hispanic Heritage Club.

Grace Findley '27, Vice-President of MuKappa, shared that she is "excited to hear stories about how people's cultures and home countries have influenced their experiences at Houghton."

MuKappa, a national collegiate organization, helps missionary kids, "MKs", and third-culture kids, "TCKs", transition well to living and attending college in the United States. Findley said that the soiree "offers TCKs and MKs a unique chance to express how growing up in a culture different from their parents has shaped their appreciation and embrace of various traditions and perspectives." ★

## Question of the Week

Is acceptance the same as affirmation?



Respondents:  
Current students (22)  
Former students (2)  
Faculty/staff (0)  
None of the above (0)

Also on the STAR website & HUB



Have you ever had a friend give you a life-changing piece of advice?



# Who Cares?



AMANDA ZAMBRANO

If you had the opportunity to attend chapel on Monday, you had the chance to hear some of the story of Houghton's 4th president, Dr. Daniel Chamberlain, and his wife, Joyce. The Chamberlains both passed away in 2024 and our time in chapel honored their legacy and celebrated the ways God used them to bless generations of Houghton students. Dr. Davies, Dr. Gaerte and President Lewis all shared stories about the Chamberlains.

I imagine at least some of you came away with the question: Why?

If you'd not yet had your coffee and were feeling a bit tetchy on a Monday morning, you may have even asked: So what?

If you didn't go at all,

there's a reasonably good chance you asked yourself: Who cares?

Well, I'm so glad you asked! In my work as Houghton's Director of Advancement Communication, I often find myself in the unofficial role of Houghton's Storyteller. While I'm not nearly as gifted a storyteller as, say, Prof. Gaerte or Prof. Dashnau, I am blessed with regular opportunities to tell Houghton stories past

and present. It's rare for me to go through a whole day without reflecting on what a privilege it is to tell these stories. They're our stories. Most importantly, they're God's stories.

Whenever I dig into a new storytelling project, I find myself thinking about the many ways the Bible

people just like you and me who have stories that God wanted us to hear and remember on the tough days.

So, why?

When we see God moving in and through the lives of others—including people like Dr. and Mrs. Chamberlain—we're inspired, we're encouraged, and often we receive helpful insights into living out

the work that God did in and through the lives of those who have gone before us. Storytelling pays tribute to people who labored on the foundations and framework upon which our lives are built. These foundations are the stories of the saints of the scriptures; the saints of the church; and the saints in our families and neighborhoods. Whether it's the story of Hannah in I Samuel or the story of your granddad last week, some part of who you are, and some part of your faith, rests on those stories. And the stories in this framework aren't limited to the people you personally know; they're the stories of persecuted Christians in the Middle East and the pastor next door and that kid in your class last week. So, when we tell the Chamberlains' story, we're telling a chapter of your story.

But really, who cares?

Well, I do, for one. Stories matter; the stories we choose to tell are important. I care about the stories I tell and the stories I hear because I need stories I can remember when I'm uncertain or discouraged—stories illuminate the vast array of God's ways of working in and through His people. I care because all too often I neglect the hospitality that Mrs. Chamberlain modeled so very well. I care because I routinely forget to point

*"The Scriptures are full of the stories of women and men God called to serve Him."*

*"They're your stories. They're our stories. Most importantly, they're God's stories."*

uses stories. The Scriptures are full of the stories of women and men God called to serve Him. It tells us of their weaknesses, their faith, their failures and their successes. Take a look at Hebrews 11—it's chalk full of

our lives as Christ-followers. This is part of the point of Hebrews 11—our faith is undergirded and built up by the stories of the saints.

Okay then. So what?

The act of remembering through storytelling honors

people to Jesus in moments of crisis, as Dr. Chamberlain did in the Fall of 1981. I desperately need the reminder of their lives because I'm still learning and practicing the many callings God has placed on my life.

I think, if you ask around, you'll find I'm not alone in caring about the stories of the saints who've gone before us and walked beside us. I'm willing to guess that at some point today you interacted with someone who has his or her own story about Dr. and Mrs. Chamberlain—a story he or she no doubt recounts in a moment when it is most needed to inspire or encourage or challenge.

Maybe, with little bit of reflection, you'll find that you care, too. ★

*Amanda (Shine '05) Zambrano is the Director of Advancement Communication and Editor of Houghton Magazine. When she isn't chasing her two somewhat feral boys, Amanda is usually found scribbling away in a notebook, with her nose buried in a book, or valiantly attempting to finish some sort of overly ambitious needlework project. A classically trained flautist, and a community theatre enthusiast, Amanda can occasionally be found on a stage somewhere near Houghton, New York.*

Have an opinion you want to share?

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## SPEAK OUT!

Letters to the editor should be less than 600 words

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The mission of the Houghton STAR is to preserve and promote the values of dialogue, transparency and integrity that have been the ideals of Houghton University since its inception. This is done by serving as a medium for the expression of student thought and as a quality publication of significant campus news, Houghton area news, and events.

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# The Houghton STAR

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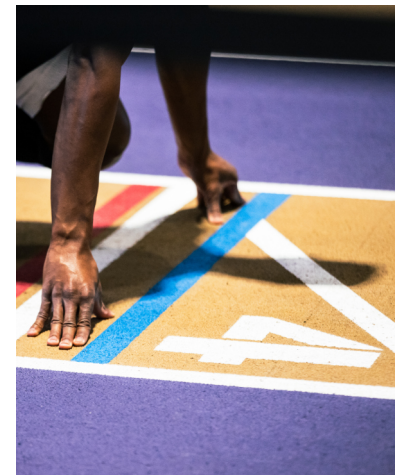


Review

Bolt (2008)

Written By: Caleb Tiedemann '25

This one right here is a certified childhood classic. Have you ever found one of those movies you grew up with where every scene is memorable and opens up a place in your mind where you can remember watching it all those years prior? That's how Bolt feels to me. It is a unique narrative taking place from the perspective of a famous dog who has to find his way home in the real world. While it gives vibes of Homeward Bound, the beauty of its animation, the friendships forged between animals, and the general humorous predicaments they find themselves in makes a fun-loving and easy-going film..



Artist of the Week

Luke George '26



My name is Luke George, and I'm a senior Business & Marketing Communication double major. I primarily photograph sports, where I like to showcase the emotion and detail that the athletes pour in. I've been able to photograph several different sports over the years, and hope to continue this work after graduation.