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A Vision of Our Common Life

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Leader: Our common life expresses who we are. Houghton University is a community dedicated to Jesus—dedicated by a larger Christian community, The Wesleyan Church.² Houghton is also a liberal-arts college. We empower students to serve God and their human communities in a distinctive way. The capacities we work to cultivate, the God we serve, the context in which we do this work—all shape our common life.

Community: This common life requires shared commitments.

With the help of God’s Spirit and one another, we commit to a life together:

- of rejoicing—celebrating God and God’s gifts;
- of gentleness—approaching one another with compassion and humility;
- of peace—relinquishing things that threaten to take the place of God in our lives;
- of paying attention to what matters—the true, the honorable, the just, the pure, the lovely, the admirable.

These are starting points, ideals. A meaningful commitment to any of them must be embodied in specific practices and restraints.³

Leader: A short statement about our common life can only gesture at these specifics. We must work them out continually as we reflect together on scripture, on our tradition, and on our lived experience.

Houghton is a rejoicing community.

We revel in the good gifts of God. We gather for worship to praise God, to pray, to hear God’s Word read and proclaimed, and to be fed at the Lord’s Table.⁴

We rejoice in the truth as it is discovered in the academic disciplines and as it is revealed to us, through Scripture, tradition, reason and experience.

We speak the truth to one another with candor and grace; we listen to each other so we can understand, humbly respond, change and grow.⁵



As the Holy Spirit has equipped us, we joyfully learn and we joyfully teach; this is





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Houghton is a gentle community.

We are joyfully and humbly accountable to orthodox Christianity—the faith once for all delivered to the saints. ⁷

We offer our gifts to the Church to help with its discernment and future. Our curriculum, our worship, our beliefs and practices: Christ is all and in all! ⁸

We make room for each other: speaking what is useful for building up, our words giving grace to those who hear, ⁹ gently restoring those in a season of doubt or crisis, guiding each into the Word of truth, making room for the Holy Spirit's creative work in our lives. We receive each other as we receive Christ. ¹⁰

We make room for difference of opinion: we dialogue well. We listen charitably to understand each other, speak winsomely, truthfully and lovingly, and submit to each other out of reverence for Christ, ¹¹ leaders honoring the wisdom of the body, members honoring the duty of the leaders.

Houghton is a community at peace.

Our lives are ordered in all things and secure. ¹²

To worship God's gifts is idolatry; to enjoy God's gifts is peace.

We do not worship money. We live simple lives of joyful gratitude. ¹³

We do not worship productivity. We honor the Sabbath as essential to God's character and our flourishing. ¹⁴ We proclaim that the earth is the Lord's and ours to steward. ¹⁵

We do not worship power and affirmation. Our identity is rooted in Christ, not in praise or shame from others. ¹⁶ We esteem the weak, the poor, and those on the margins ¹⁷ We mourn our world's persistent racism and division. ^{17a} We will build an equitable community, people of all nations and races sharing each one's joy, enjoying each one's gifts, bearing each one's burdens.

We do not worship the works of our hands. We use the power of technology to





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nourishes and brings joy; we do not abuse food by regularly eating too much or too little. We do not normalize alcohol, for the sake of our common life. ¹⁹ We celebrate the gift of sexuality, which brings new life into the world and binds together husband and wife for faithful, fruitful service to family, church and world. ²⁰ We celebrate single people, since singleness has a place of preferential honor in the Body, showing us how to deny ourselves and follow Christ into full and joyful life. ²¹

Laying aside the world's false gods, and the sin that so easily entangles, we pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ²²

Houghton thinks on praiseworthy things.

We celebrate the beauty of the earth: we prayerfully conserve God's creation, and draw on it for human flourishing in sustainable ways.

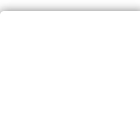
We give thanks for the joys of human love, for costly, Christlike friendship that meets our need for intimacy and security, for families whose love complements that of the Body of Christ.

We yearn for a world of righteousness, where everyone lives out God's will for their lives.

We yearn for a world of justice, where the world's persistent cruelty is exposed and disarmed, dividing walls of hostility are broken down, ²³ and the last enemy is destroyed, even death itself. ²⁴

All that is true,
All that is noble,
All that is right,
All that is pure,
All that is lovely,
All that is admirable:

this is the cry of our hearts and to this we give ourselves.





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Leader: We are certain to disagree about the implications of our ideals. To live in harmony and do our shared work, we need to graciously accept decisions different from those we would make ourselves.²⁵

Community: We will not lie about what we see as better, but will seek the best interpretation of one another's words and choices. We will not undermine those who act on our behalf.

Leader: It is easiest to shape a common life face to face. The core of Houghton's mission is education in an incarnate community, including not just class meetings, but shared meals and recreation and worship. But we recognize that many people contribute to our common life periodically or at a distance. We will discern together what to require of those whose connection to our common life is more limited, granting freedom in Christ where a practice does not contribute importantly to our shared work.²⁶

Community: We will fall short of our best intentions; we know this before we begin. We will need to forgive and bear with one another when we let each other down. The test of our integrity is not whether we fully embody our ideals, but whether we go on affirming them and strive to embody them more fully—whether we are a people of repentance and grace. We will know these are truly our ideals if we impress them on one another: if we talk about them in our homes and as we walk along the path, if we urge one another and ourselves to live into them further, to put them into practice.

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their local churches and participate in ministries. We encourage students to do the same, while we recognize that students may come from other religious backgrounds, or none at all.

⁵ We are created for community (relationship with others). We need each other and are better because of each other. Consequently, personal communication is encouraged, whenever possible, rather than electronic communication.

⁶ Throughout the footnotes, biblical references are included to identify the biblical allusion in the text of the document. We seek to be faithful to the scripture as a whole in this document, rather than to identify specific portions of the document with individual texts, thus avoiding the danger of proof-texting.
Habakkuk 2:14

⁷ Jude 3

⁸ Colossians 3:11

⁹ Ephesians 4:29

¹⁰ Matthew 25:34-40; The Rule of St. Benedict

¹¹ Ephesians 5:21

¹² 2 Samuel 23:5

¹³ We spend our time, resources, and money purposefully recognizing these as gifts from God.

¹⁴ We attempt to keep the perspective that work is for God, and that we need rest and worship to sustain our work.

¹⁵ We are charged with caring for all of creation.

¹⁶ Our value is based on who we are in Christ, not on bank accounts, degrees, titles, power over others or the acceptance or rejection we receive from others.

¹⁷ James 2:1-4

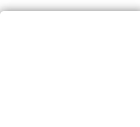
^{17a} The Methodist movement in the United States (which created The Methodist Episcopal Church, The African Methodist Episcopal Church, The Wesleyan Church, The Free Methodist Church, The Church of the Nazarene, The Church of God-Anderson, and the United Methodist Church) was significantly involved in social activism for women, children, and the anti-slavery movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These denominations have also been involved in varying degrees with racial and gender equality movements over the past fifty years.

¹⁸ Ephesians 5:29-30

¹⁹ Alcohol is not allowed on any of the college properties or at any college function (on or off campus). We choose to model an alcohol-free lifestyle for our students that is counter-cultural to much of the world around us. See handbooks for specific guidelines.

²⁰ While there are differing perspectives on the LGBTQ relationships within the Christian community, Houghton University's policies are based on the definition of marriage between a man and a woman as stated by The Wesleyan Church.

²¹ Not everyone will marry, and not everyone who marries will always be married, but many will be single





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does not mean we have to like the decision, but we will abide by it and not seek to discredit the decision or decision-makers.

²⁶ Commuters on a residential campus, non-residential campus students and faculty, graduate students, mature age students, and on-line students and faculty have significantly different communities than those on the residential campus. There may be different expectations of these people.

²⁷ We anticipate using this Vision of Our Common Life during opening convocation and other times of the year to remind us all of our commitment of living intentionally as a Christlike community with each other.

CURRENT STUDENTS

EMPLOYEE INTRANET

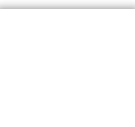
EMPLOYMENT

HIGHLANDERS SHOP

LIBRARY

PRIVACY POLICY

ADA





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