To: Members of the Houghton Community  
Re: #HoughtonIsHere

Last week, our students, like many of their peers around the country, left the residential campus of Houghton College to continue their Houghton education fully online. This means not only their classes, but their co-curricular activities, and their spiritual formation, their connections with athletic teams and residences. Even the STAR will be going virtual. We are carrying on the business of the college through Zoom meetings at least through April 19th as we seek to comply with Governor Cuomo’s recent executive order New York State on PAUSE.

The coronavirus has changed our world here at Houghton—and your world as well—forever. We do not yet know what that new world will look like. Each day we are reminded repeatedly—what we should, of course, already know as human beings—that we are not in charge of our world, that things we had taken for granted as part of “normal” life, are not.

Even in this moment however, we do know a few things for certain: There will be no “going back to normal.” In this moment, we must not only be seeking to “get through this” but also seeing to seek hints of the new reality that is to come.

In this very moment, we are called, as students, alumni and friends of Houghton College, to be the “scholar-servants” that our Houghton education prepared us to be. This is what we were made for. This is what a Christian liberal arts education is all about—to prepare us to function as critical and imaginative thinkers, community makers, and people of integrity and grace in the midst of circumstances where the determining factors are not all evident.

It is this spirit that our newest member of the Office of Advancement captured when he said, “Houghton is Here.” This sense of “here” is what we need to practice in this moment. We at the college are learning by the moment what it means to be the presence of Houghton virtually for our students. We are anticipating what it means for us to prepare to be Houghton College amidst the new realities that will emerge.

**Each of you is also part of this movement.** You are Houghton wherever you find yourself today—stewarding the gifts that God has given you for the people and the circumstances where you find yourself—even in places you would not have chosen to be. In this moment, we have the opportunity as Houghton alumni to be the Josephs, Daniels, and the Esthers in our surrounding communities—individuals who know who we are as God’s children, individuals who are trained so effectively that those around us look to us in this moment to lead them into this unwelcome place in which we find ourselves. “Who knows,” as Mordecai said to Esther so long ago, “perhaps you have come to the kingdom for just such a time as this.”

God is still in charge. We claim to know this, but it is entirely different to practice this. We serve a God who has faithfully met his people in every possible circumstance—in Egyptian slavery, in Babylonian captivity, in Persian palaces. God is ready to meet us here in this moment in ways that we could not possibly have imagined and to invite us to adventures that we would never have chosen.

We thank you for your prayers and support in this time. We will stay in touch with you over the next few weeks as we practice together what it means that “Houghton is Here.” We invite you to share your stories of this pilgrimage by using #HoughtonIsHere in your posts on whichever social platforms you use so that we can find them. And we encourage you, in the days ahead, to search #HoughtonIsHere to be inspired by other Houghton alumni and students, to witness their creativity and resilience, and to connect with and support one another.

May you see at least hints of God’s presence and improvising power in your life today. And may you know God’s peace.

Sincerely,
Shirley A. Mullen, Class of 1976
President