

Houghton College continues to value and invite the thoughts of the alumni community. This particular dialogue, including the recent open letter, has afforded the opportunity to clarify further the way in which Houghton strives to do something genuinely distinctive. Contrary to the assumption that the college is falling behind in an inexorable direction of society, Houghton is taking an entirely distinctive approach to this set of issues.

Many institutions of higher education exist where students can experience the increasingly typical cultural response to the questions raised by members of the LGBTQ+ community. There are also many faith-based colleges and universities where students would not be encouraged to engage in difficult conversations regarding sexuality. This distinctive approach that Houghton takes provides space for these difficult conversations in an environment grounded in a traditional Biblical understanding of sexuality.

In 1883, Willard J. Houghton founded this institution to meet the needs of the underserved local population. He recognized the critical intersection of a life-bringing Christian faith and high-quality education that could alter the trajectory of a person's life. At present, LGBTQ+/same-sex-attracted students who wish to explore their faithful understanding of a Biblical sexual ethic have very few places in the world that center their particular struggles and concerns. We have determined to continue in the mission set down by our founder, where Houghton College will embrace the call to serve those students seeking this unique learning environment.

We acknowledge and lament the ways in which Houghton has failed to embody this mission fully. We thank those alumni who bravely shared the stories of their experiences with us. In collaboration with our current students, we are working to make changes that will support the ongoing journey of our cherished community members. Plans were already underway prior to the open letter for the recently announced student cooperative, which fosters a healthy relationship between LGBTQ+/same-sex-attracted people and a college with traditional faith commitments by:

- Creating a space for dialogue and connection for all students on LGBTQ+ topics.
- Advocating for LGBTQ+/same-sex-attracted students' continued inclusion.
- Increasing visibility and understanding of LGBTQ+/same-sex-attracted individuals in the Houghton community by providing tools and resources that enable us to love others well in a Christlike way.

We recognize that the Christian call to love our neighbor as ourselves is complex, often messy, and frequently interpreted differently by Christians who share the same faith. When we find ourselves in disagreement, understanding is the first step to bridge the divide between

opposing beliefs. Thank you for this opportunity to clarify more fully the context of Houghton's commitments on sexual ethics:

1. Houghton College, as a Christ-centered community, is called to love and to be faithful.
 - Called to love means that we will welcome, educate and encourage all members of this community, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, sexual identity, age or religion. We do not tolerate incidents of abuse or mistreatment within this community and investigate all official reports that are made by students, faculty and staff.
 - Called to be faithful means that we will remain committed to model a traditional sexual ethic that is in continuity with the vast majority of Christians around the world and throughout time.
2. Like all voluntary communities in our country, Houghton College seeks to be clear with prospective members about the particular commitments of this community.
 - Our values as a college remain unchanged through the shifting priorities of the broader culture. We will care for, accept and love all our students and alumni, as Christ commanded, without compromising these beliefs.
 - While individuals of all backgrounds are invited to join this community, we clearly express in advance the expectation that all members will take time to understand and live according to the behavioral guidelines laid out in the Vision of Our Common Life while living, working, and studying here. This includes abiding by a traditional Christian sexual ethic.
3. Houghton College is an educational institution of The Wesleyan Church.
 - We are committed to the core beliefs of our church, The Wesleyan Church, even as we welcome into community those who may not share the same values.
 - As an educational institution of The Wesleyan Church, we seek to bring together the best of scholarship with our understanding of scripture.

Houghton College is proud of our alumni, including those who are members of the LGBTQ+ community and those who disagree with the college's position on this and other issues. As an institution of Christian higher education, we believe that faithful Christians can disagree and remain in community together, and we want to continue to model this well for our current and future students. As Houghton continues forward, unapologetically, to foster a caring environment for students seeking this unique community, we welcome continued engagement from current and graduated students. You may email MyStory@houghton.edu to share your Houghton experience with us. We welcome the opportunity to continue to faithfully follow Christ and model an important conversation to the wider world.