

Clarence “Bud” Bence ‘66

At Houghton College we feel strongly that we need to celebrate the accomplishments of our alumni. Each year nominations for alumni awards are forwarded to the college president and member of the Houghton College Alumni Association Board for individuals that have exemplified the ideals of the Houghton College mission. This year’s nominations and selections included a member of the Class of 1966.

The Houghton College Christian Service Award honors Houghton alumni who have made a significant impact for the Lord through outstanding service in a variety of areas such as church, the community, their professional career and the college.

This year, Houghton proudly presents this award to Clarence “Bud” Bence.

Dr. Bence’s nephew and current academic dean at Houghton, Jack Connell, graciously shared these words: “Bud Bence is known across the Wesleyan Church as one of our most gifted communicators, one of our most insightful thinkers, one of our most devoted churchmen, and one of our most influential teachers and mentors. He is one of those rare individuals who can, during the week, present a compelling scholarly lecture to a room full of Ph.D.s and, on the weekend, make the gospel come alive at a camp meeting or country church. When you take into account his preaching, teaching, pastoring, writing, leadership and personal investments in the lives of so many, he is without question on the short list of the most influential Wesleyans of our generation. I am privileged to call him Uncle Bud, but he’s more like a big brother. His guidance and encouragement and modeling are among God’s greatest gifts to me, and I am beyond honored to now be occupying the office at Houghton College that he so capably filled 25 years ago.”

Dr. Bence spent much of his youth being raised in upstate New York where his father served as both a Wesleyan pastor and district superintendent. In 1962, he became a student here at Houghton, earning a bachelor’s degree in philosophy in 1966 and then going onto Asbury Theological Seminary where he earned a Master of Divinity in church history in 1969.

Following Asbury, Dr. Bence went on to pastor a Wesleyan church in Rochester, N.Y., for five years before being accepted into the doctoral program at Emory University, where his studies centered on an in-depth analysis of the theology of John Wesley. He graduated in 1981 with a doctorate in historical theology.

For over three decades, Dr. Bence has served Wesleyan institutions of higher education beginning with United Wesleyan College followed by Indiana Wesleyan University. He then served as academic dean here at Houghton College for five years before returning to Indiana Wesleyan where he has since retired from full-time teaching of church history.

Even in his retirement, Dr. Bence has continued to serve by teaching courses at Wesley Seminary and being involved in overseas ministry in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean.

His commitment to and affiliation with the Wesleyan church is evident as he has been invited to give the keynote address not once but twice at the Wesleyan Church General Conferences.

Known to his friends and loved ones as “Bud,” Dr. Bence is married to his wife Carol with whom he has three grown children.

Dr. Bence has previously received the honors of an “Excellence in Teaching Award” and “Professor of the Year Award.” He was the first recipient of Indiana Wesleyan’s “World Changing Faculty Award,” and was honored as “Alumni of the Year” by Asbury.

To sum it all up, we offer these words from Dr. Bence’s Houghton College roommate and longtime friend, Jonathan Angell.

“Clarence Luther Bence, a.k.a. Bud. We have been friends for 54 years. Roommates at Houghton where, as a vital cog in the Spirit of ’66 wheel, Bud could be described as brilliant, zany, eloquent, inventive, loyal, persuasive, Godly and so much more.

“Zany, you ask? The great library check-out, missionary slides, and ‘the growing machine’ hardly scratch the surface of this side of Bud. Much more important,

however, is to consider a simple question: What have we seen for the past 50 years from our unofficial class leader?

“You have been an articulate spokesman for our Christian faith. You have been an exemplary husband, father, grandfather, son and brother. You have been a Christ-like role model for thousands of students. You have been an effective apologist for Christian education in general and Houghton College in particular. On a very personal basis, you have been a dear friend in some of my darkest days, and I know many who would say the same.

“So, on the occasion of our 50th college reunion, it needs to be stated that Houghton College loves Bud Bence. The Class of '66 loves Bud Bence. Bud, you have made us proud. You are a man of faith, a child of God and a friend to all. Congratulations!”

On this day, the 14th day of May in the year 2016, Houghton College would like to present Dr. Clarence “Bud” Bence with the Houghton College Christian Service Award.