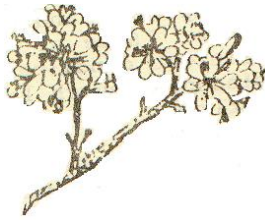


# THE ALMOND TREE

## Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill

The Rev. J. Randolph Alexander, Jr., Rector  
The Rev. David Crosby, Associate Rector  
Jennifer Addington, Editor



December 4, 2013

*"I said to the almond tree, 'Sister, speak to me of God.' And the almond tree blossomed." Nikos Kazantzakis*

### Unplug the Christmas Machine

This is the shocking title of a book by Jo Robinson and Jean Coppock Staeheli. In it the authors fire a broadside attack upon the machine the secular world has made of one of our most sacred Christian holidays.

Christmas is about God loving us so much that He gave His Son to become one of us (see John 3:16). It is not centrally about trees, or presents, or a snowy evening, or even family. All those things can be nice additions, but we live in a culture that relentlessly worships those additions and ignores the true miracle of Christmas, the Incarnation. What are some concrete things we as Christians, and members of Immanuel, can do?

*Spend some time pinching your own skin—just above the elbow should be fine.* Now imagine God, the God of the Universe, wearing flesh just like yours, walking about on this planet. Go further: imagine Jesus with acne, or pulling a tooth, or having an upset stomach. Pursue it as far as you are able. That is the miracle of the Incarnation.

*Stick with Advent while it is Advent.* The Sundays and weekdays of the season of Advent are a real counter-cultural gift from the Church—a time with a 3-fold message of waiting, watching, and remembering: Christ's first Advent as a Babe in Bethlehem, His second coming at the end of the age, and paying attention to how Christ is coming to each of us now, in our daily lives.

*Send Christian Christmas cards whenever possible*—cards with a picture of the Holy Family, the Christ Child, or a Scripture quotation. You may notice these cards are getting harder to find.

*Practice saying "Merry Christmas," at least to Christian friends, instead of the banal "Happy Holidays."* I always wonder which holiday someone has in mind, and have even been known to ask.

*Take time to breathe.* Listen for the angels. Watch a child's face light up and imagine the collective face of humanity alight and aglow at the gift of the Christ Child, God Incarnate.

*As much as possible, resist the tyranny of the "should"*—I should match this gift, I should bake this. . . Leave room for what truly matters, and some room for yourself alone.

Just so that I don't sound too much like Andy Rooney at his curmudgeonly best, let me say that I love Christmas, through and through. In fact, I find I love it even more as I remember what, and Whom, the Christ-Mass is really all about. That is my goal this Advent and Christmas at Immanuel, and I get to share it with all of you wonderful folk.

Here is a question I want to ask this Advent, and I offer it to you: Where is God seeking to do a new thing in your life? In what stable of your life is Jesus seeking to be born? Asking these kinds of questions can help bring us back to that ancient manger in new ways as followers of that most blessed Babe.

See you in Church, and a blessed Advent,

Randy

## Invitation to Confession

As you know, our most common form of Confession in Anglicanism takes place during the regular Sunday liturgy. Some are surprised to learn that the Episcopal Church also offers Confession privately to a priest for those desiring it. In fact, this option is characteristic of the majority of Christianity, including all of the Orthodox family of churches, the Roman Catholic Church, and our own Anglican tradition. Please see pages 446-452 in the Book of Common Prayer for the two rites that we use.

The difference between us and some other traditions is that we *offer* private confession, we do not require it. An old saying says it well: "All may, none must, but some should." Private confession is good for those times when we need to unburden our hearts and seek God's forgiveness, in the presence of a fellow human being who is sworn to secrecy, who is serving as an instrument to declare God's forgiveness and the restoration of right relationship to the broader Church. Advent is a particularly good time to engage in such unburdening. As in our sister churches, what is confessed to a priest is kept in the strictest confidence. The priest also gives counsel and encouragement.

I can tell you that priests really do forget what they hear in Confession, perhaps a little gift from the Spirit. But I feel I need to make another offer to you: if any of you feel you need to make a private confession and would not like to do so in the presence of any of your parish clergy, I would be happy to find another priest for you and set up the arrangements. Just let me know. Otherwise, the parish clergy always stand ready to set up an appointment with you. It is an honor and a privilege.

*The Rector*



**CHRISTMAS PAGEANT SIGN-UPS!** It's time to get ready for the Christmas Pageant! The Pageant will be performed on December 24 at the Christmas Eve 5:00 p.m. service at Episcopal High School's Callaway Chapel.

Sign-ups start today. Both speaking and non-speaking parts are available. Parent volunteers would be wonderful too! The sign-up board will hang in the Sunday School hallway through the 22nd but of course last minute sheep, angels and stars are always welcome.

Pageant rehearsals for speaking parts will take place at 11:15 a.m. on Sundays December 15 and 22nd, and the morning of Monday December 23rd (time TBD). Please continue to check the Sunday bulletin, the Almond Tree emails and the Sunday School emails for updates.

If you have any questions, want to sign up your child virtually or volunteer, please call or email Ashley Chappell at 240-429-0293 or [ash22301@yahoo.com](mailto:ash22301@yahoo.com). Thanks!

**UPDATE ON 2014 PLEDGES:** We are grateful to the 141 individuals and families who have committed, as of the first week of Advent, a total of \$427,672 in support of the parish in 2014. But we still haven't heard from 66 of you who pledged last year, plus members who may be making this commitment for the first time. The current gap between our 2014 pledges and the 2013 operating budget of \$575,000 is \$147,320.

Please consider making a pledge if you have not done so. You can do it online at [icoh.net](http://icoh.net) — look for the purple stewardship button. Or you can ask an usher or our parish administrator for a green pledge card. (The green cards are on a table in the narthex.) The future health and growth of Immanuel depends on your strong support right now, as we hope to strengthen our ministry to youth and families in 2014 and to continue exploring both new and existing programs. Many thanks for considering this request. Your Wardens & Stewardship Committee

# CHRISTMAS AT IMMANUEL



## ADVENT/CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

(Unless otherwise noted, all services, except for the Pageant on Christmas Eve, will take place in the Zabriskie Chapel.)

### December 15, 3<sup>d</sup> Sunday of Advent

8:00 a.m., Holy Eucharist I  
9:15 a.m., Advent Lessons and Carols,  
Holy Eucharist Rite II  
11:15 a.m., Holy Eucharist Rite II

### December 22, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent

8:00 a.m., Holy Eucharist I  
9:15 a.m., Holy Eucharist II  
11:15 a.m., Holy Eucharist II

### December 24, Christmas Eve

5:00 p.m., Christmas Pageant, Holy Eucharist II,  
Calloway Chapel, Episcopal High School

### 10:00 p.m., Choral Preludes

*The music prelude for the late Christmas Eve service will begin at 10 p.m., a little earlier than usual. There will be solos, choral pieces, and a small orchestra and handbell music. Don't miss a chance to hear some of the beautiful music of the season.*

### 11:00 p.m., Festival Eucharist-II

### December 25, Christmas Day

11:00 a.m., The Holy Eucharist for Christmas Day, Rite II

### December 29, The First Sunday after Christmas Day

8:00 a.m., Holy Eucharist I  
10:00 a.m., Lessons and Carols for Congregation, Holy Eucharist II

The office will be closed from Dec. 24-January 1.



**PASTORAL CARE CORNER: Please remember these parishioners in your prayers:** Duncan MacDonald, Morgan, Janet Siegrist, Catherine, Mary, Natalie Doyle-Hennin, Bill Frye, Yvonne Pover, Arlo and Katie Lloyd, Judy Bednar, Barbara Fornoff, Mei Lung DeVight, Betty Wanamaker, Chris Stanek, Warren Phillips, Pierre Shostal, Mable Randolph, Eve Anderson, Bill Kilpatrick.

**Please also remember in your prayers** members of our extended Parish family: Dean and Charlotte Kellogg, Chris Rarick, Eleanor Boothe Smith, Sam Faeth, Anthony Christino, Jr., Jane Burton, Keith Green, Lois, Percy Hays, Alex, Marian, and Bob Love, Tom Hewson, Sr., Danny Christoffersen, Ross Dickerson, Jim Clear, Lindsey Rose, Cathy and Stewart Hoskins, Laura Hudson, Ann and Larry Kaplan, Aubree Bowling, Marjorie Glassco, Paul, Kathryn, Carol Brown, Scott, Bob Weeks, Sharon Laboditz, Doratheia E. Peters, Howard Sutherland, Mary Jean Anderson.

**Those serving in the U.S. and overseas:** . Todd Bates, Ian Phillips, John Patrick Miller; Jon and Nicole Anderson, Noah Barker, Ryan, Will Murtha, Allen Kellogg.

## Music Notes

### FROM OUR MUSIC

**DIRECTOR:** On December 7, at 8:15 p.m., the Singer's Theatre of Washington will have a gala fund-raising concert

in Zabriskie Chapel. Music director Jane Tavernier will be among those performing. Come and hear some of the great arias from operas! Also, the choir will again present **A Service of Advent Lessons and Carols** on December 15, at the 9:15 service. Included will be works of Benjamin Britten, Edvard Grieg, and Herbert Howells among others and glorious Advent hymns to sing.

**THE ALIVE! FOOD COLLECTION** advertised last week as being our responsibility in December is not ours until January. We apologize for any confusion and hope you'll be generous next month.

**LEARN TO SAVE A LIFE -- FOR FREE!**

Online CPR/ AED classes are being offered at no cost to Immanuel parishioners. After taking the class (takes approximately 1-1 1/2 hours to complete, at your leisure), several skills sessions will be offered this winter to ask questions and demonstrate your CPR/AED skills. You will then receive a certification card good for 2 years. It would be wonderful if a few folks from each Immanuel subgroup (ushers, Sunday School teachers, vestry, clergy, office staff....) would get certified! Call Lisa Clausen (703-684-3936) or email at [Lisa.Clausen@Verizon.net](mailto:Lisa.Clausen@Verizon.net) to let her know of your interest.

### THANK YOU TO THE YARD WORKERS!

Saturday, Nov 30th after Thanksgiving our church gardens benefitted by a brave and talented group of parishioners who expertly removed most of our high volume of leaf blessings and other tasks. Phyllis Ginger-Sims, Michael Reinemer, Bruce Morton, George Currie, David Tinkle, Baldemar, and Tom Kerns. In addition, members of the Benedictine Group, in thanks for Sam Faeth's grace and gratitude in helping to establish their group, came to help to say thank you: Andy Biache, Christopher Stanek and Everett Post. We were grateful to the kitchen staff, Cynthia Morton and Barbara Currie and Warren Phillips, who helped to create our special Immanuel Garden Soup. *Chris von Schoening*



**A beacon to the world: the steeple gets a new look as part of the Capital Campaign.**

**ARE YOU CALLED TO VESTRY SERVICE in 2014?** Then our four departing members — **Doug John, Brooke Roberts, John von Senden** and **Senior Warden Connie Kurz** — would love to hear from you.

On January 26th at the parish annual meeting, we again will elect four fellow parishioners to three-year terms. This 12-member group, working with our clergy, makes decisions about the life of this parish, its worship and programs, its staffing and the well-being of the physical plant on behalf of us all.

The "Class of 2014" will see Immanuel on the Hill through exciting times, as we work with our new Rector — the Rev. Randy Alexander — to imagine an enriched worship life here and at the seminary's new Immanuel Chapel in 2015.

Serving on Vestry can be a richly rewarding experience. It offers a chance to "go deeper" — to think about worship and issues affecting the church, to connect with new friends in the pews, and to use leadership muscles in God's service in our parish home. Doug, Brooke, John and I are happy to share our experiences and to answer your questions about this commitment of time and talents to God in this beloved place.

— Connie Kurz



**SAMARITAN MINISTRY DONATIONS:** Yes, you have noticed something different in the parking lot and it is a clothing bin placed on behalf of Samaritan Ministry of Greater Washington (SMGW), one of the organizations the parish supports. This bin, located towards the back of the parking lot, is part of a newly implemented fundraising project that SMGW has begun with MetroAid, LLC. MetroAid will sort through the bin and will distribute clothing for which SMGW participants have an immediate need and those for which they do not. The donations which cannot immediately benefit participants will be sold and part of the proceeds will be given to SMGW to support those who are homeless, unemployed, or otherwise in need.

I heard a participant once tell their story and journey with SMGW and he highlighted the fact that the organization provided him appropriate interview clothes for his first ever job interview and that he was wearing them to present to us at that moment. The suit provided the appearance and confidence necessary to get the job! This is one of many testimonies you may hear about how these donations make an impact.

Following the model provided to us in the parable of the Good Samaritan, SMGW helps to improve the lives of the homeless or otherwise in need through their *Next Step* program. Let's continue in that message and spread the Good News about this donation bin throughout the community.

A **BIG** thanks to the Outreach Committee, the Rev. Patty Alexander, and the entire parish community for making this happen!

If you have questions about the bin or Samaritan Ministry, please do not hesitate to contact me, Will Packard, [wlpackard@gmail.com](mailto:wlpackard@gmail.com).

## Christmas Greens and Flowers and Special Christmas Music

This Christmas season you are invited to make a donation for Christmas greens and flowers or special Christmas Music at the Christmas Eve Services. If you wish to remember a loved one or make a donation in thanksgiving for a loved one, please complete and send this form along with your check to the Parish Office or place it in the alms basin. **Names will be printed in the Christmas leaflets for all donations received by 9 a.m. on Friday, December 20. Please print all names very clearly!**

Greens/Flowers: \$ \_\_\_\_\_



Given by: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

In Thanksgiving for: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Christmas Music: \$ \_\_\_\_\_



Given by: \_\_\_\_\_



Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

In Thanksgiving for: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

DECEMBER 2013

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> <b>8:00 AM</b> HE-I, Chapel <b>9:10 AM</b> Godly Play, Godly Play Room <b>9:15 AM</b> HE-II, Chapel <b>10:15 AM</b> Education Hour <b>10:30 AM</b> Circle of Quiet, Upper Room <b>10:30 AM</b> Clay Class, Clay Room <b>11:15 AM</b> HE-I, Chapel <b>6:20 PM -</b> <b>9:00 PM</b> Prayer Group, Fairchild Room	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> <b>5:00 PM</b> Early Christians, VTS 1823 Cafe <b>7:00 PM - 8:00 PM</b> Benedictine Community, Upper Room <b>7:30 PM</b> Outreach Committee, Fairchild Room	<b>4</b> Hunting Creek Garden Club, Parish Hall, Fairchild <b>6:30 AM</b> Early Christians <b>6:30 PM</b> Holy Eucharist-II <b>7:30 PM - 8:45 PM</b> Candlelight Yoga	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> <b>12:30 PM</b> Muslim Worship, Parish Hall <b>3:00 PM -</b> <b>4:30 PM</b> WARD-SD, Fairchild Room <b>5:00 PM</b> Cookies, Crafts and Carols, Parish Hall <b>8:30 PM</b> AA, Fairchild	<b>7</b> Parish Clean-up Day <b>6:00 PM -</b> <b>8:00 PM</b> Dignity, Zabriskie <b>8:30 PM</b> Opera Benefit Concert, Chapel
<b>8</b> <b>8:00 AM</b> HE-I, Chapel <b>9:10 AM</b> Godly Play, Godly Play Room <b>9:15 AM</b> HE-II, Chapel <b>10:15 AM</b> Education Hour <b>10:30 AM</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> Jane Tavernier Opera training, Zabriskie <b>6:30 PM</b> Vestry Meeting, Upper Room	<b>11</b> <b>6:30 AM</b> Early Christians <b>6:30 PM</b> Holy Eucharist-II <b>7:30 PM - 8:30 PM</b> Bibles on Tap, Cafe 1823 VTS <b>7:30 PM - 8:45 PM</b> Candlelight Yoga	<b>12</b> <b>11:00 AM -</b> <b>2:30 PM</b> WARD-SD, Fairchild Room <b>12:00 PM</b> Goodwin House luncheon <b>7:00 PM</b> Choir, Choir Room <b>7:30 PM</b>	<b>13</b> TAT deadline <b>12:30 PM</b> Muslim Worship, Parish Hall <b>4:00 PM -</b> <b>5:30 PM</b> Jr. Girl Scouts, Parish Hall <b>8:30 PM</b> AA, Fairchild	<b>14</b> <b>11:00 AM</b> Sally Vermilye funeral <b>6:00 PM -</b> <b>8:00 PM</b> Dignity, Zabriskie

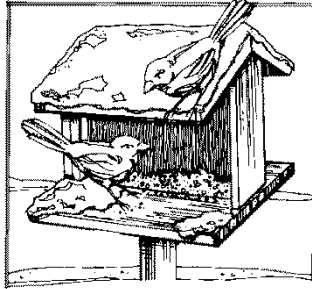
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Circle of Quiet, Upper Room <b>10:30 AM</b> Clay Class, Clay Room <b>11:15 AM</b> HE-II, Chapel				Seminary Hill Assoc., Fairchild Room		
<b>15</b> Christmas families wrapping, Parish Hall, Fairchild Room <b>8:00 AM</b> HE-I, Chapel <b>9:10 AM</b> Godly Play, Godly Play Room <b>9:15 AM</b> Lessons and Carols with HE-II, Chapel <b>10:30 AM</b> Circle of Quiet, Upper Room <b>11:15 AM</b> HE-I, Chapel	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> Jane Tavernier Opera training, Zabriskie <b>1:00 PM - 3:30 PM</b> WARD-SD, Fairchild Room <b>3:00 PM - 4:30 PM</b> Steffensen/Hadler SD Upper Room <b>7:00 PM - 8:00 PM</b> Benedictine Community, Upper Room	<b>18</b> TAT mailing <b>6:30 AM</b> Early Christians <b>6:30 PM</b> Holy Eucharist-II <b>7:30 PM - 8:45 PM</b> Candlelight Yoga	<b>19</b> <b>7:00 PM</b> Choir, Choir Room	<b>20</b> <b>12:30 PM</b> Muslim Worship, Parish Hall <b>8:30 PM</b> AA, Fairchild	<b>21</b> <b>6:00 PM - 8:00 PM</b> Dignity, Zabriskie
<b>22</b> <b>8:00 AM</b> HE-I, Chapel <b>9:10 AM</b> Godly Play, Godly Play Room <b>9:15 AM</b> HE-II, Chapel <b>10:00 AM</b>	<b>23</b> <b>6:30 PM</b> Knitting Group, 1823 Pub/VTS <b>7:00 PM</b> Choir Rehearsal	<b>24</b>  <b>CHRISTMAS EVE, OFFICE CLOSED</b> <b>4:30 PM</b> Dignity, Zabriskie Chapel <b>5:00 PM</b> Christmas Eve Pageant, HEII, Calloway Chapel	<b>25</b>  <b>CHRISTMAS DAY, OFFICE CLOSED</b> <b>11:00 AM</b> Holy Eucharist-II	<b>26</b> Office closed	<b>27</b> Office closed <b>12:30 PM</b> Muslim Worship, Parish Hall <b>8:30 PM</b> AA, Fairchild	<b>28</b> <b>6:00 PM - 8:00 PM</b> Dignity, Zabriskie



<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>
HE-II, Chapel <b>10:30 AM</b> Circle of Quiet, Upper Room <b>11:15 AM</b> HE-II, Chapel		<b>10:00 PM</b> Choral Preludes <b>11:00 PM</b> Holy Eucharist II				
<b>29</b> <b>8:00 AM</b> HE-I, Chapel <b>9:10 AM</b> Godly Play, Godly Play Room <b>9:20 AM</b> Circle of Quiet, Upper Room <b>10:00 AM</b> HE-II, Chapel	<b>30</b> Office closed	<b>31</b> New Year's Eve, Office Closed	<b>1</b> Office Closed <b>6:30 AM</b> Early Christians	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> Almond Tree deadline <b>12:30 PM</b> Muslim Worship, Parish Hall <b>4:00 PM -</b> <b>5:30 PM</b> Jr. Girl Scouts, Parish Hall <b>8:30 PM</b> AA, Fairchild	<b>4</b> <b>6:00 PM -</b> <b>8:00 PM</b> Dignity, Zabriskie

12/01 Mercedes Burgess  
 12/01 Lisa Frye  
 12/01 Adam Donahue  
 12/02 Lisa Clausen  
 12/02 Catherine Eklund  
 12/02 Lawrence Wilkes  
 12/02 Morgan Knight  
 12/03 Shannon Gehrs  
 12/04 Ellen Gehrs  
 12/04 Auggie Koch  
 12/05 Gerry Anderson  
 12/05 Manuel Ridao  
 12/05 Martha Manson  
 12/05 Bryan Phillips  
 12/05 Preston Brown  
 12/06 Timothy Sedgwick  
 12/08 Marcia MacDonald  
 12/08 Sarah Glassco  
 12/08 John von Senden  
 12/09 Jim Evans  
 12/09 Joy McLaughlin  
 12/09 William Albritton  
 12/10 Annie Goldsmith  
 12/10 Liam Kirby  
 12/10 Julia Eklund  
 12/11 Betty Wanamaker  
 12/11 Rhys Shallbetter  
 12/12 Rick Glassco  
 12/12 Christine Hall  
 12/12 Anthony Burke  
 12/13 Susan Guillory  
 12/13 Jamie Conrad  
 12/14 Jim Snow  
 12/14 Christopher DeMulder  
 12/14 Katherine Warlick  
 12/14 Sydney Onley  
 12/15 Candy Levin  
 12/15 Elizabeth Paulsen  
 12/16 David Donlon  
 12/16 Susan Stockton  
 12/18 Judy Bednar  
 12/18 David Peabody  
 12/18 Kameran Onley  
 12/18 Kendra Smyth  
 12/18 Joan Cummins  
 12/18 Owen Malone  
 12/18 Mike Michaelis  
 12/19 Eve Anderson  
 12/19 Martha Byron  
 12/20 Mary Brinn  
 12/20 Jo Ann Toledo

## December



## Birthdays

12/20 James Henry  
 12/21 David Phillips  
 12/22 Gertrude Mitchell  
 12/22 Toni Meenach  
 12/23 Margaret Fogarty  
 12/23 Bill McLaughlin  
 12/23 Katydeans Price  
 12/23 Holly Morton  
 12/24 Candace Quinlan  
 12/24 Debbie Hewson  
 12/24 Tim Gildersleeve  
 12/24 Jason Donahue  
 12/25 Susan Johnson  
 12/25 Carol Crossmire  
 12/26 Amy Parks  
 12/26 Anne Wagner  
 12/27 Ismael Arciniegas  
 12/27 Drew Parks  
 12/28 Marda Robillard  
 12/29 Norma Taliaferro  
 12/30 Ken McDonald  
 12/30 Jan Maas  
 12/30 Patricia Brown  
 12/30 Mae Hunt  
 12/31 Honor Fede  
 12/31 Charlotte Gehrs

*O God, our times are in your hand: Look with favor, we pray, on your servants as they begin another year. Grant that they may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen their trust in your goodness all the days of their lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

We hope never to miss a birthday – but there are some we don't know about. Forgive us when we do miss your birthday, and let us know so we don't do it again. Happy birthday to all!

Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill  
3606 Seminary Road  
Alexandria, VA 22304  
703-370-6555  
office@icoh.net  
http://www.icoh.net

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

Lectionary Readings and  
Schedule of Services



**December 8, The Second Sunday of Advent**

Isaiah 11:1-10, Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19; Romans 15:4-14; Matthew 3:1-12  
8:00 a.m., HEI; 9:15 a.m., HEII; 11:15 a.m., HEII

**December 15, The Third Sunday of Advent**

Isaiah 35:1-10, Canticle 3 or 15; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11  
8 a.m., HEI, 9:15 a.m., Lessons and Carols and HEII; 11:15 a.m., HEI

**December 22, The Fourth Sunday of Advent**

Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25  
8:00 a.m., HEI; 9:15 a.m., HEII, 11:15 a.m., HEII