



# BEYOND REASONABLE DOUBT

Higher Things Conferences 2023

**Southern Illinois University**  
**Carbondale, Illinois**  
**July 18-21, 2023**

**Trinity University**  
**San Antonio, Texas**  
**July 25-28, 2023**

## FAQs

[www.higherthings.org](http://www.higherthings.org)

# Frequently Asked Questions

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### General

#### Why Higher Things conferences?

The mission of Higher Things is to make known the Gifts of Christ Jesus to youth and young adults. The most direct way we do this is through our annual youth conferences. Since 2000, Higher Things has held a total of 53 Lutheran youth conferences and one virtual conference! In 2023, we will add two more to that list. We hold multiple conferences each year in different areas of the country. While the HT conferences are essentially the same in schedule, programming, and worship services, each has its own unique “personality” and dynamics.

We do all this because we are convinced that youth need solid teaching and experiences that will nurture a lasting Christian faith. Rather than treating youth as an adolescent subculture and confusing them with once-in-a-lifetime “mountaintop” experiences that cannot be replicated outside of the conference events, Higher Things believes in challenging youth to learn the pure doctrine of the Christian faith. By teaching them the same message that they already hear at home and at church, youth grow in the fullness of the Christian faith as they come to appreciate historic liturgical practice and its unique focus on God’s Gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation for us delivered in Word and Sacrament.

#### What does the 2023 conference theme, “Beyond Reasonable Doubt,” mean?

Doubt. We confess to being poor, miserable sinners every week, but it can be hard to confess to wondering if there’s even a God who exists to listen at all. Doubt crept into the apostles’ hearts, but we’re afraid of what it means if we find it in our own. The devil sets a trap to leave you feeling alone, cut off from the Christians around you who don’t seem to struggle like you. What if it’s not real?

Jesus isn’t just some guy. He died and then didn’t stay dead. That’s our hope. You can even prove it. God gives us verifiable Scripture that can be traced and upheld through history. You just can’t by your own reason or strength believe it. So He speaks to us, doubting hearts and minds that can’t quite help but question.

The same thing is the core of our hope and our worldview: the resurrection. Because it’s real. The gospel proclaimed by the Spirit to our hearts is something God dares us to question with our minds. If Christ has not been raised from the dead, we are above all to be pitied. So test it. There is evidence. This is the defense of the faith that defends you. It’s called “apologetics.” Your hope is rooted in a historical event, not in your own reason and strength.

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O Ye of little faith, why did you doubt? It isn't a challenge. It's a call to be the one Jesus pulls from sinking waters. Like Peter. This is where you start to find your identity and belonging. You're not cut off from Christ in this doubt...If you must doubt, doubt boldly.

We'll tackle a faith that isn't a fairytale, and we'll prove it. Beyond reasonable doubt.

## What should I expect at a Higher Things conference?

You should expect to spend four days immersed in the Gospel. You'll hear about Jesus and what He's done for you. A lot. You'll do this by participating in the many worship services during which we join our voices with those of the historic Christian Church through liturgy and hymns and hear the Gospel preached in its purity.

In much greater depth, you'll learn about our faith, not just what we believe but why we believe it and why it's essential. All this will equip you to talk about your faith to others. And you'll do plenty of that as you get to know hundreds of other Lutheran youth just like you throughout the worship and catechesis sessions, and especially during the free time activities each evening. Higher Things conferences are held every summer, so you'll have an opportunity to build life-long friendships as you worship, learn, and have fun together, especially if you can attend year after year!

## What age restrictions are there?

Higher Things is very flexible about who may attend the conferences. Our conferences are generally planned for high school-aged youth, but we recommend that registrants be confirmed before the conference date. That recommendation is not to set strict age limits but because the catechesis at HT conferences presumes that the audience has a basic familiarity with Lutheran doctrine and practice, which most people receive in confirmation instruction.

We recognize that ages for confirmation may vary from congregation to congregation. So we simply ask that if a group brings youth not yet in high school, the group's chaperones be prepared to provide the additional supervision that younger youth require. College-aged young adults and other adults are welcome to attend independently or with a group.

Please see the Registration Policies for details regarding costs and requirements of specific age groups.

## May I bring a non-Lutheran friend?

Of course! Non-LCMS youth and adults may register for a conference with the approval of your group's pastor and group leader. Spouses, personal assistants, care providers, interpreters, and other adults cannot be accommodated as unregistered conference participants.

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## What if I have special needs?

Higher Things will do our best to make our conferences inclusive events, developing support for those with disabilities as needed. Additional fees may need to be assessed for equipment rental, interpretive staff, on-campus transportation assistance, parking, etc.

We also provide a sensory-friendly room at all conferences for registrants who may suffer from sensory overload, anxiety, or just need a quiet place to rest and regroup.

## Registration

### When does registration open?

Registration opens on November 1, 2022, and closes as conference locations reach capacity. Registration will remain open as long as there is room at a conference site! However, the cost of registering increases as the conference dates get closer.

### Can I register online?

Actually, that's the only way you can register for a Higher Things conference! Visit the link on our website at <https://www.beyondreasonable Doubt.org>.

### What does registration cost?

We work very diligently to keep costs as low as possible while providing the best conferences we can each and every summer.

	Early Bird Rate November 1, 2022 - January 31, 2023	Regular Rate February 1 - April 30, 2023	Late Registration On or after May 1, 2023
Southern Illinois University Carbondale, IL July 18-21, 2023	\$450.00	\$475.00	\$525.00
Trinity University San Antonio, TX July 25-28, 2023			

A non-refundable deposit of \$150.00 only guarantees that an individual has been accepted as a registrant for a conference if the location reaches capacity and creating a waitlist becomes necessary.

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Payment of non-refundable deposits does not lock-in a group's registration rate. Included in each individual's non-refundable deposit is one year's membership to myHT Gold.

Deposits will only be refunded for a cancellation if there is a waitlist for that conference at the time of the cancellation, and someone from the waitlist can fill the spot forfeited by the cancellation. A deposit may not be transferred out of the space that it saves. In other words, it MAY NOT be transferred toward a group's remaining balance if a cancellation occurs and there is no substitution to fill the space.

Non-refundable deposit policies do not apply to infant, toddler, and child registrations, as those are flat fees.

### What does the registration fee include?

Your registration fee covers:

- Conference programming
  - Planning and preparations
  - Catechesis (4 plenary sessions; 6 breakaway sessions; panel; fireside chats )
  - Worship (2 Divine Services, 11 Prayer Offices)
  - Entertainment activities
- Three (3) nights of on-campus housing, including linens
- Nine (9) meals (Tuesday dinner through Friday lunch)
- Printed conference handbook
- Printed worship booklet
- Conference T-shirt
- An annual membership to myHT Gold

### What is myHT Gold?

Available all year, myHT Gold is the online space where Higher Things is hard at work to make the same great teachings that you experience at conferences. Here are a few of the highlights:

#### *Bible Studies*

Take a deep dive into our faith with High School Group Bible Studies rooted in great HT teachings. Your favorite Higher Things videos are met with questions and answers, activities, slides, and everything you'd need to teach a high school Bible study as a pastor or a layperson.

#### *Firesides*

Join us for monthly online fireside chats hosted by Higher Things. Here's your chance to ask questions, learn more, and have fun with staff and contributors. From the catechism to mental health to games to play at youth group, we're here to help you answer the tough questions and share in a time of fellowship with you.

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## *Confirmation 2.0*

Confirmation is a critical time of learning for our church's youth. We have designed our program based on the stages of learning set out by a classical education model following the stages of learning—grammar, logic, and rhetoric. In this way, we as teachers can reach and teach all of our students no matter what grade they are in when starting confirmation or where they are in learning the catechism.

## *And more,*

Come hang out with us. We're inviting myHT Gold members to join us in fellowship on a regular basis. We'll be having monthly Minecraft nights and other fun activities to come. We'll be there to answer your questions and chat about anything on your mind.

## **Are scholarships available?**

Yes, we have limited funding available for full or partial individual or group scholarships. Please contact Patrick Sturdivant, development executive ([development@higherthings.org](mailto:development@higherthings.org)), for more information on applying for conference scholarships. You can also find the application on the conference website, <https://www.beyondreasonabledoubt.org>.

## **How many chaperones are allowed per youth?**

Higher Things requires that each group must provide at least one (1) male adult for every seven (7) male youth (11-17 years of age at the time of the conference) and/or at least one (1) female adult for every seven (7) female youth (11-17 years of age at the time of the conference) in the group. Chaperones must be at least 21 years old at the time of the conference and approved by the group's pastor for their role. All chaperones and any other adults attending the conference must also complete the registration and any required background check process. See Registration Policies for additional information about chaperones and other adult registrants.

## **What if I can't find enough chaperones from my church?**

Suppose you are unable to recruit the necessary number of chaperones for your group to attend a conference. In that case, Higher Things will be happy to help you contact groups who might be willing to share their chaperones with you. Please contact the conference registrar ([registrar@higherthings.org](mailto:registrar@higherthings.org)) for assistance.

## **My church doesn't sponsor youth to go to HT conferences.**

You can still come! Because you will be coming from one congregation, that'll be your group, even if your group is only a single youth with a parent.

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## When should we plan to arrive and depart?

The opening Divine Service starts at 2:00 pm on Tuesday of the conference week (registration check-in will run from 9:00 am to 1:30 pm), and the closing Divine Service will end at about 2:30 pm on Friday. Please schedule your travel, so your group doesn't miss the opening or closing Divine Services!

Groups may also stay on campus for one extra night before and/or after the conference for an additional fee of \$50 per person per night (additional meals not included). Check-in on the day before the conference will be between 5:00 and 10:00 pm, and those staying an extra day after the conference should plan to check out by 10:00 am the day after the conference closes.

## What is the capacity of each conference?

SIU-Carbondale can hold 1100, and Trinity in San Antonio will max out at 1000.

## Transportation

### How do we get to the conference?

Groups are responsible for obtaining their own transportation to and from the conference sites. If traveling by airplane, bus, or train, groups will also need to make arrangements for ground transportation to and from the campus and for your group's private use during the week if you want to go sightseeing on your own.

### How much walking is involved?

A lot. Seriously. A LOT. We try our best to keep all conference activities as close together on the sites as possible. But, because of the nature of college campuses, you will get your exercise! If someone attending with your group cannot walk long distances or will need assistance getting around at the conference, please note this as a special need with their registration and contact the conference registrar ([registrar@higherthings.org](mailto:registrar@higherthings.org)). We are happy to accommodate anyone with special needs to the best of our ability but we need your help to plan in advance. Additional fees may be assessed.

### How do I get to area attractions during the conference?

Any off-site transportation for scheduled conference activities will be provided by Higher Things and is included in your registration fee. If groups choose to take their own vehicles to scheduled off-site activities, they will be responsible for additional charges (parking, tolls, etc.). Groups are responsible for arranging their own transportation for any sightseeing not included as part of the conference.

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## Is parking available on campus?

If applicable, group leaders will provide detailed information regarding parking (including fees and obtaining parking passes) before the conference.

## Housing

### What kind of housing can we expect?

Since Higher Things conferences are held on college campuses, all registrants will stay in residence halls. Sometimes this means a suite of two double-capacity rooms with a shared bathroom between the rooms. Or some residence halls will have standard double rooms with common (single-sex) lavatories with private toilets and shower stalls. Not all residence halls on campuses have air conditioning. If you are assigned to buildings without air conditioning, we will do our best to notify you in advance so you may bring small fans. You can follow up with us close to the conference date to check on your group's dorm air conditioning status.

### How many people will be assigned per room?

Groups should plan for two occupants per room. You may request roommates from within your own group. Private rooms are available by request for an additional fee of \$50 per room per night (\$150 total for three nights). If your group does not fully occupy the available rooms or suites, roommates and/or suite-mates (of the same sex and age category) may be assigned from another group. Please see the Housing Policy for details about roommate assignments.

### Will groups be housed together?

Sort of. Wherever possible, male and female rooms will be separated by floor, wing, or building. We will do our best to assign group members' rooms near one another. Adults will not be housed in the same room as a youth unless there is a direct familial relationship AND both adults and youth are of the same sex. Please see the Housing Policy for details.

### Can spouses be housed together?

Unfortunately, no. We assign rooms with male and female rooms appropriately separated by floor, wing, or building. Chaperones must be housed with the youth from their groups.

### Are linens provided?

Yes, pillows, bed linens (including blankets), and towels are usually provided for each registrant. However, most campuses do not provide mattress pads or fitted sheets.

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If any of the above linens are not provided by the campus, group leaders will be notified well in advance to bring them. Registrants may bring additional linens of their own.

## **Do we have to stay on campus?**

No, but Higher Things cannot reimburse or discount your registration fee if you choose to stay off campus. Besides, staying in dorms allows youth to get a glimpse of college life and to get to know other youth at the conference, potentially forming lasting friendships.

## **Can we stay on campus before and/or after the conference?**

Yes! You may spend one additional night on campus before and/or after the conference—in the same room(s) you'll use for the rest of the week—for just \$50/person/night. Meals are not provided. Groups must notify the registrar that they will need an extra night no later than May 15. Those arriving early may check in on campus between 5:00-10:00 pm the evening before the conference begins and must check out by 10:00 am the day following the conference.

## **Worship**

### **How many services can we attend each day?**

At least three, often four. It sounds daunting, but each year most youth report that worship is the best part of the conference week and that they miss it once they return home. Every day, youth and adults start their day with the service of Matins, followed by Vespers in the mid-afternoon, and end the day together with Evening Prayer. Time for Individual Confession and Absolution is also offered following Evening Prayer, and small groups are encouraged to gather for Compline before lights-out.

We know that a lot of this will be new to groups unfamiliar with the services. Feel free to make the schedule work for you and your group! If that means staying back for a prayer office to destress or talk about the day's teachings as a group, go for it!

### **Thirteen services in four days? Why so many?**

At Higher Things, our mission is to make the Gifts of Christ Jesus known to youth and young adults. At HT Conferences, this happens intensively through catechesis and frequent (though brief) worship services. Most services only last about 30 minutes, but they form a daily rhythm that reinforces and puts into practice what is being learned in plenary and breakaway sessions. We will open and close with the Divine Service and the Lord's Supper.

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## I've never heard of most of those services! Are they even Lutheran?

Yes! And they're all taken from the *Lutheran Service Book*, which most of you use in your own churches. It is a long-standing tradition in the Christian Church to conduct brief prayer services throughout the day. These services provide a great way to keep our days focused on Christ and His Gifts for us.

At Higher Things conferences, we want to teach youth about the richness of our confession and introduce them to some of the ways Lutherans have historically practiced their faith. Information will be provided following the close of registration to help youth leaders teach their groups about these services and the traditions that are often practiced (chanting, kneeling, crossing oneself, incense, etc.) so that youth are prepared to encounter them at the conference.

## Is there a conference hymn again this year?

The conference hymn for the Beyond Reasonable Doubt 2023 conferences is "Christ Be My Leader" (LSB 861). Please use this hymn in your congregations in the weeks and months leading up to the conference. It's a beautiful hymn that we're sure everyone will enjoy singing together!

## How are the preachers chosen for the conference worship services?

There are minimal spots for preaching but more for assisting in the services. Priority is given to the pastors attending the conference who volunteer in the leadership of Higher Things. Other preachers and assistants are selected from LCMS pastors registered to attend the conferences. If you would like to be considered to preach or assist, please contact the events executive ([events@higherthings.org](mailto:events@higherthings.org)).

## Music

### Can I sing in the choir?

YES! Participating in the conference choir is one of the best ways for youth (and adults) from all over the country to get to know each other. Everyone is welcome to sing in the choir, regardless of experience! The choir usually rehearses Tuesday at 1:00 pm before the Opening Diving Service, and then Wednesday-Friday at 8:00 am before the morning services, and possibly at other times during the week as well. Rehearsal times will be included in the week's schedule.

Please register by June 1st so we know how many music packets to have available.

### May I play my instrument at the conference?

Because it is so difficult to accommodate and select music pieces for the variety of instruments people volunteer to play at the conference, instrumentalists will be selected by the worship and music staff from those registered for each site. Depending on the number of volunteers and the space available

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for an orchestra, this process may include an audition. If you'd like to volunteer to play during the conference, notify your group leader to indicate so on your registration and/or contact the conference registrar ([registrar@higherthings.org](mailto:registrar@higherthings.org)).

## Catechesis

### Who will be the plenary teachers?

We are very excited about our plenary speakers this year! They will be announced on our website and social media before registration opens. Watch for more information then!

### When can we get a list of breakaways?

Not until June 2023. Breakaways are taught by pastors and other adults attending the conference with their youth groups, so we won't even begin to plan those until around April 2023.

### Do we need to sign up for breakaways in advance?

No. Breakaway seating is on a first-come, first-seated basis. While we try to make sure everyone will have chairs, it's impossible to predict how many people will attend any one breakaway.

### Are we expected to attend a certain number of sessions?

Yes. You may attend at least one breakaway during each breakaway session! Breakaway topics are chosen with youth in mind, and they cover a wide variety of topics to help you learn more about your faith. You should have no problem finding at least one breakaway in each session that interests you. Most of the time, attendees have trouble choosing between multiple breakaways!

### How are breakaway teachers selected?

First, they must be registered to attend the conference. We believe that the best people to teach youth are the very pastors, parents, and other adults the Lord has put in their lives to do just that. Breakaway teachers are chosen from the pastors and lay members of LCMS congregations in good standing who are already registered for that conference. All teachers must also be comfortable communicating with youth, and they should try to prepare their sessions in such a way that will help teenagers faithfully live out the vocations unique to their stations in life.

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## Free Time/Entertainment

### How much free time will there be?

We always plan for a few hours of scheduled entertainment events and/or free time each evening of the conference week. However, if your group wants to do some more extensive sightseeing around the conference cities, you should probably plan for an extra day in town to do that.

For your convenience, groups can reserve an extra night (Monday and/or Friday) in their rooms on campus at the time of registration for \$50/person/night.

### What will we be doing for fun?

We're working on planning some really great activities that we'll be able to tell you about very soon! In the meantime, Google the conference cities to see if you can guess what some of the options might be! You can also check out photos of past conferences to see what's been done before.

## College Conference Volunteers

### What are College Conference Volunteers (CCVs)?

College Conference Volunteers play an integral role in the conference staff. They are college-aged young adults who volunteer to help manage the conferences on the ground. They work hard and play even harder. They are often seasoned Higher Things conference-goers, but some newbies get their first HT experience as a CCV. Application to be a CCV is a very competitive process, as we often receive two to three times more applicants than needed.

What kinds of things do CCVs do at the conferences?

- Registration: Directing groups through the registration check-in, helping to prepare and distribute materials, directing people to dorms and parking areas, helping to break down the information table after the end of the conference, etc.
- Speaker Care: CCVs are assigned to a breakaway speaker to hand out materials in the breakaways, make sure speakers have any needed food and/or beverages, run AV, remind attendees to text in evaluations, etc.
- Worship: Help setup and breakdown the conference chapel, assist with crowd control and altar guild duties.
- Merchandise: Help set up and break down as needed.
- General: Help supervise activities, give directions, run errands, answer questions, put up signs, etc.

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- Photography: Take pictures of everyone having a great time.
- AV: Assist our media staff with audio/video recording.

## How much is my registration if I am selected as a CCV?

CCV registration is FREE! The offerings collected during the opening and closing Divine Services directly offset the CCV program's expenses. You'll just need to get yourself to the conference and back home again.

## Would I have to arrive early and/or stay late at the conference?

Yes, CCVs must arrive by noon the day before the conference begins for orientation/set-up and should not plan to leave before 5:00 pm on the last day so they can help pack up after the conference.

## Will I have special privileges as a volunteer?

Yes, CCVs will have staff (i.e., "backstage") access to all conference areas and a special staff T-shirt. You will receive multiple T-shirts because CCVs need to be easily identifiable throughout the week!

## How old do I have to be to be a CCV?

You must be at least 18 years old and have completed your high school studies at the time of the conference.

## How do I apply to be a CCV?

You can apply online at <https://www.beyondreasonabledoubt.org> between November 1, 2022, and February 28, 2023. Look for the link on the conference website. Applicants will be notified by March 15, 2023, if they have been selected to serve as a CCV.

## Should I still register with my church's group?

If your church is sending a group to the conference, you should register with your group and complete the CCV application so that you are sure to get into the conference, should it fill. If you are selected as a CCV, your registration will then be processed separately from your group. You will also be assigned housing in a separate staff area.

Those who are accepted as CCVs but are not registered with a group for a conference should register as an individual and pay any corresponding registration fees. If selected, Higher Things will reimburse the balance paid as of March 15, 2023.

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## How many CCVs will be accepted at each of the conferences?

The number of CCVs is determined by the number of registrants attending each conference. The events executive reserves the right to adjust these numbers if we determine that fewer or more CCVs are actually needed to help with the conference.

## Other Conference Support

### How else can I support the conferences?

We have several specific conference expenses that may be supported by one or multiple donors:

- CCV scholarships: CCV registrations are paid as a conference expense so that these volunteers don't have to pay registration fees. These young adults work very hard at the conferences and provide invaluable help for the staff and participants. All contributions received in the offerings during the opening and closing Divine Services will go toward this expense.
- Registrant scholarships: Full and partial conference registration scholarships are now available to registrants and groups with financial needs.
- Conference T-shirts: These shirts are an excellent way for participants to take home a souvenir of their week and provide unique opportunities for them to confess their faith and what they learned when they wear them at home! Contact [exhibitors@higherthings.org](mailto:exhibitors@higherthings.org) for more information about sponsorship opportunities. We will be happy to include your company or organization's logo on the shirts for a donation of \$5,000 or more.
- Regular gifts to Higher Things: The larger organization's yearly operations are supported by conference revenues. Donations to Higher Things will reduce the need to rely on conference income!

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## SAMPLE CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

### Day 1

1:00 pm Leaders' Meetings  
2:00 pm Opening Divine Service  
3:45 pm Plenary Session 1  
5:00 pm Dinner  
7:00 pm Evening Prayer  
7:30 pm Indiv. Confession & Absolution  
8:00 pm Breakaway Session A  
9:00 pm Free Time/Entertainment  
11:00 pm Compline  
12:00 am Lights Out

### Day 2

7:00 am Breakfast  
8:00 am Leaders' Meeting  
8:00 am Choir Rehearsal  
9:00 am Matins  
9:45 am Plenary Session 2  
11:00 am Lunch  
1:00 pm Vespers  
1:45 pm Breakaway Session B  
2:45 pm Panel  
4:00 pm Breakaway Session C  
5:00 pm Dinner  
7:00 pm Evening Prayer  
7:30 pm Indiv. Confession & Absolution  
8:00 pm Breakaway Session D  
9:00 pm Free Time/Entertainment  
11:00 pm Compline  
12:00 am Lights Out

### Day 3

7:00 am Breakfast  
8:00 am Leaders' Meeting  
8:00 am Choir Rehearsal  
9:00 am Matins  
9:45 am Announcements  
10:15 am Plenary Session 3  
11:00 am Lunch  
1:00 pm Vespers  
1:45 pm Breakaway Session E  
2:45 pm Free Time/Reception  
4:00 pm Breakaway Session F  
5:00 pm Dinner  
7:00 pm Evening Prayer  
7:30 pm Indiv. Confession & Absolution  
8:00 pm Fireside Chats  
8:00 pm Free Time/Entertainment  
11:00 pm Compline  
12:00 am Lights Out

### Day 4

7:00 am Breakfast  
8:00 am Leaders' Meeting  
8:00 am Choir Rehearsal  
9:00 am Matins  
9:45 am Plenary Session 4  
11:00 am Lunch  
1:00 pm Closing Divine Service

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