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## Annual Christmas Prism: “Emmanuel, God with Us”

VICTORIA HOCK '23

Tonight and tomorrow, Houghton University's annual Christmas Prism Concert will take place. While tonight's performance will occur at 7:30 p.m. at Victory Highway Wesleyan Church in Painted Post, NY, tomorrow's performance will take place on campus at 8:00 p.m. in the John & Charles Wesley Chapel.

The performance on campus offered attendees the opportunity to purchase tickets for dinner ahead of time, though for both concert performances, it was necessary for attendees to purchase tickets in advance.

The theme of this year's concert is “Emmanuel, God with Us”.



Christmas Prism 2016.

COURTESY OF KIM DOELL

Director of Choral Activities and Interim Visiting Assistant Professor of Music Dr. Kevin Dibble elaborated on this, explaining “This year's Prism is centered around God's love for us, evidenced in His desire to

be not God from afar, but God with us, here on earth”.

Junior Josey Ikker is looking forward to participating in her very first Christmas Prisms Concert, reflecting on what the tradition means

to her.

“Even though I'm in my junior year of college, this will be my first time I'll get to experience Prism. It's a wonderful tradition that Houghton carries and holds a beautiful mes-

sage about Christ's birth.”

Similar to Ikker, Senior Marith Anderson has not had the opportunity to participate in many Christmas Prism Concerts at Houghton either, but is looking forward to this year's performance.

“Being able to be a part of the concert was one of my favorite activities in my freshman and sophomore years,” Anderson says, “and is something I look back on very fondly. I haven't been able to participate in a Prism concert in a few years because of COVID concerns, and so I am absolutely thrilled to have this opportunity to share God's love with the community in such a manner once more be-

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## Slam Dunk Season

MEGAN BROWN '22

Houghton University's basketball teams have started their seasons. At 7 p.m. tonight in the Nielsen Physical Education Center, the men's team faces off with Mount Aloysius, and the women's team will play at 2 p.m. Saturday in Buffalo, New York against Medaille University.

As of Wednesday morning with five games under their belt, the women's basketball team is undefeated. Head Women's Basketball Coach Phil Pellegrino sees this as a valuable confidence boost



2022-2023 Women's Basketball team.

COURTESY OF HOUGHTON ATHLETICS

and, in response, has provided playing time for the younger members of the team.

“We have so many young kids on our roster that need to get valuable minutes before [conference play] ... and I think we've gotten better each game,” Pellegrino said.

Pellegrino accepted his position as head

coach in May 2020 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020-2021 season consisted mostly of practices, with the team itself being quite small.

“The first year was geared toward recruiting, practicing, and developing a sustainable culture,” Pellegrino said.

The team continues to be very young, but both Pellegrino and Assistant Women's Basketball Coach Erica Balman notice the rewards of focusing on team culture.

“I think we're starting to see the fruits of all the hard work that all the kids have put in,” Pellegrino said. “... And it's

kind of all led to this point.”

While the women's team works to keep flourishing, the men's team is just beginning to sprout under the new coaching duo of Head Men's Basketball Coach Jeremy Bialek and Men's Basketball Assistant Coach Henry Johnson III.

Last year, the men's basketball team went 4-12 in their conference games, and so far this season, they have lost all four games they have played. However, this hardly scares Bialek away.

“Taking over programs that have historically lost and turning them around is enjoyable for me,” Bialek said. “The programs that

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## Dr. Francesca Silano: The Newest London Honors Professor

SOPHIA VERNON '26

"What is the craziest stupid thing you have ever done?"

"Getting a PhD"

"But that's useful..."

"It's absolutely not useful but it's beautiful. Learning for the pure love of it is beautiful."

When asked why she became a professor, Silano replied, "I didn't want to stop studying. You don't think in your mind 'I'm going to be a professor.' You become a professor because of the PhD."

Dr. Francesca Silano is a newer assistant professor of history at Houghton University. She is also a walking encyclopedia of anything and everything to do with Russian history, and a fresh addition to the team of professors that take turns teaching the London

Honors program.

Silano applied for an open position at Houghton and began teaching at the university in 2020 as a professor in the history and political science department. As a devout Catholic, she was eager to experience serious and deep teachings of history through the lens of a Christian university, alongside colleagues who were just as enlivened as she was in these subjects.

Silano earned her PhD in history through the University of Toronto in 2017, specializing in late-imperial and Soviet Russian history and the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, specifically during the early years of the Bolshevik regime. She has spent her career doing extensive research and numerous publications on the Rus-

sian Orthodox Church. She brings her passion for Russian history and the church into her research and teaching.

A significant part of being a history and humanities professor at Houghton is the requirement to teach and travel for the London Honors program every three years. This upcoming spring will mark Professor Silano's first spring semester in London. When asked what her favorite part of this program is so far, she elucidated the main factor of always being able to build and teach the program with another colleague as the best aspect of being a part of the program.

Silano will be teaching this upcoming spring semester in London with Dr. Jonathan Case, and has been teaching this fall semester's pro-

seminar alongside Professor Lipscomb. She expressed excitement for the pass-fail structure of the program, along with the ability to "dive into the texts and discuss them" and to "just learn together." She is eager to "spend a year with students thinking about the most important questions of life."

In an interview with Dr. Benjamin Lipscomb, he described Dr. Silano as the "ideal recruit" for the London Honors program. He stated, "I don't know if there is anyone who has been more well-prepared and well-disposed in starting this program."

Professor Lipscomb has led the fall semester of London Honors proseminar for many years, and has embarked on numerous spring semesters in London

with Honors cohorts.

Dr. Lipscomb expanded on the value of Silano's ability to be "unapologetic in sharing her expertise and simultaneously be extremely eager to learn and expand on what she does not know." Lipscomb recounts Silano as a nurturing role model for students and he applauded her scholarly expertise, which is paired with humility and vulnerability.

Dr. Silano has the ability to connect with people and inspire them to learn through her own passion for the pursuit of knowledge. Her love of both students and learning shows throughout her teaching and adds to the long list of reasons why she was selected as a new asset to the London Honors program.★

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fore I graduate."

With preparations for this year's performances well underway, those attending can expect to see Houghton University musicians showcasing their god-given gifts.

Dibble noted the performance will also be filled with reminders of the hope God provides, saying "We invite you to join us as we explore the one true Light, breaking through our darkness, and providing us with everlasting hope."★

### BASKETBALL from page #1

I've had in the past, where we did have success, every single one of them was not good when we got there."

Bialek comes to Houghton after coaching at the assistant level for

Trinity Christian College. During the three seasons he was there, Trinity's team experienced the best three-year cumulative winning percentage that they'd had within their last nine seasons. The team also went to a National Tournament, something they hadn't accomplished in over ten years.

But Bialek would hardly say that winning is all of his own accord.

"There's no way a head coach can turn a program by himself," he said. "I have been blessed to have incredible assistant coaches and to work under good head coaches."

It also comes down to the players, too, and Bialek is confident in the coachability and the attitudes of Houghton's team.

"I think we saw in our first game that we're just

not deep enough and not experienced enough yet. We have some skill gaps to make up with our opponents," Bialek said. "But if you had told me that we were going to be skilled enough and I could put everyone in the correct position and yet they weren't going to have a good attitude or be coachable or wouldn't believe that we could get to where we needed to go, we'd be in a much worse spot."

Assistant Coach Johnson is also happy with the strengths emerging on the team.

"One thing [we have] is team collaboration. Guys are always hanging out with each other," he noted, sharing how he always sees the players sitting together at the first round table in the dining hall.

Ultimately, both teams are embracing

growth this season. Even though the women's team has had a more winning season thus far, Pellegrino and Balman still want to focus on growth on and off the court.

"We're not even looking at wins and losses," Pellegrino said. "We're looking at how we're going to grow every single day in practice and how we're going to grow in every single game and how we're going to grow as Christians."

Pellegrino and Balman encourage players to focus on each game or practice as if it is the most important one of the season.

"I'm just really excited for the program and the culture it has in general. The wins and losses, that's what everyone likes to look at, but as weird as it sounds, that's the littlest concern of mine," Pellegrino said. "I'm just thankful for the school, and I'm thankful for the group that we have."★



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JEREMY BIALEK



# Reclaiming the Spirit of Christmas



Victoria Arndt '25

Picture this: you're coming back to your dorm room after a long day of classes. You're tired, mentally checked out, and ready to kick off your shoes and relax. But as you start to put your key in the lock, you hear it: Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas is You" blasting down the hallway from the showers with the added bonus of the sound of that one obnoxious roommate singing along

out loud and off key.

With Thanksgiving over and the Christmas season starting soon, it's easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the holiday season. You're running around finishing finals, thinking about presents, hanging out with friends one last time before winter break, and a thousand other things are going on at the same time. Christmas is also the

*"It's easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the holiday season."*

searching for the perfect Christmas gift. In the minds of many, Christmas is a time for gifts and decorations, festive parties

shopping behavior goes out the window in the mad rush for last-minute gifts. It's a time when the holiday spirit is capitalized on by many brands and used to attract as many customers as possible to buy their products.

In today's culture, the spirit of Christmas has been reduced to a cheap and easy way to gain money or a competition to see who can buy the most expensive gift for their children. Everywhere we look is doused in Christmas decorations and twinkling lights. But among the hustle and bustle of all the activity, have we stopped to consider what the true meaning of Christmas is? How it's not just a national holiday, but also the birthday of the Son of God, the man who

would eventually give His life to save the world? Have we taken a moment to remember the celebration that took place in a little stable all those centuries ago, where a little baby was born and crowned the King of the Jews, changing the Christian world forever? That's a pretty powerful thing to think about, and among the overwhelming amount of things that you and your friends have to do, it can get buried beneath the rush of life.

As the holiday season kicks off, take a moment to remember the true meaning of Christmas. As you go about the few final weeks of school and eagerly await returning home for Christmas, don't forget to celebrate not only the holiday season, but the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. ★

*Victoria Arndt is a current sophomore studying Communications at Houghton University. She is the upcoming Opinions Editor for the Houghton STAR.*

*"have we stopped to consider what the true meaning of Christmas is?"*

time for stores and brands to make an influx of money due to sales and purchases made by people

and frantic shopping, visiting families, and hailing in the new year. It's also a time when most normal

Have an opinion  
you want to share?

CONTACT  
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## SPEAK OUT!

Letters to the editor  
should be less than 600 words

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The mission of the Houghton STAR is to preserve and promote the values of dialogue, transparency and integrity that have been the ideals of Houghton University since its inception. This is done by serving as a medium for the expression of student thought and as a quality publication of significant campus news, Houghton area news, and events.

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## Merry Christmas from the STAR family!

Thank you so much for reading the STAR this semester! In the spring, Victoria Arndt and Caleb Tiedemann will join the staff as the new Opinions Editor and Columns Editor, respectively. Christian Welker will step up to become a co-editor-in-chief alongside Victoria Hock, as current co-editor-in-chief Megan Brown graduates this December. We also want to say thank you to Photo and Media Editor Rylee Archambault for her work this past year as she steps down from her position.

We're excited to see what the new team will do, and we appreciate your continued support. Have a merry Christmas and a happy new year!

With love,  
The Houghton STAR

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editorial team this spring?**

Scan the QR code on the right to apply.

