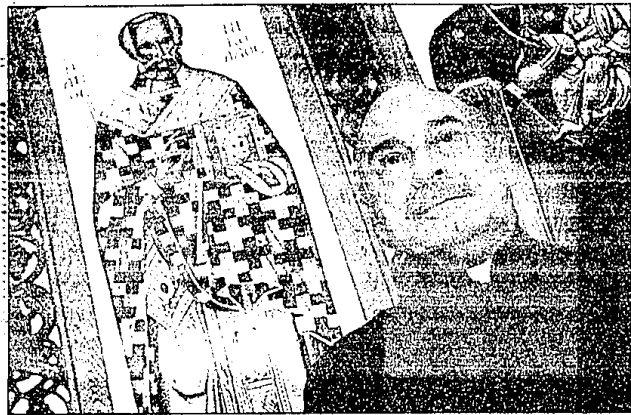


## St. Nick from page B10



STAFF PHOTO BY TOM HOPKINSON

**Saintly namesake:** The Rev. Nicholas Harbatis poses near the icon of Asia Minor's third-century Bishop of Myra, the patron of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Troy.

going into a life of prostitution," said Harbatis. "In those days, a woman needed a dowry to marry. He provided a dowry so that all three girls could marry and raise their families faithfully."

Other legends tell of miracles, leading to the popular title of Wonderworker.

When St. Nicholas Church was dedicated in Troy 18 months ago, the congregation ran into difficulty in trying to procure a relic, or particle of saint's bone or vestment, for entombment in the altar. All hope seemed lost, until a Catholic priest in Florida heard of the plight and volunteered his own certified relics of the saint.

"For us, it was a miracle to be able to procure these relics," said Harbatis.

The veneration of St. Nicholas began centuries ago in Europe and spread across the globe. Before the year 1600, 3,000 churches had been dedicated in his memory. For cen-

**"St. Nicholas is considered one of the major saints in the church ... He holds a very important place in the church as an example of someone who follows the will of Christ and combines that faith with action."**

*The Very Rev. Joseph Antypas*  
St. George Antioch Orthodox Church

turies, the saintly bishop was depicted as a long-robed, bearded figure on a horse. As the legends persisted, the spirit of St. Nicholas was adopted in different ways throughout the world. In France, he is Pere Noel. In England, Father Christmas. In Germany, Kris Kringle.

After being introduced to the United States in the early 1800s through a book by Washington Irving, St. Nicholas began running the gamut of American invention with the help of Episcopal clergymen Clement C. Moore's poem, "The Night Before Christmas." The American version of the gift

giving Santa Claus comes complete with a red, elfin costume, a magic sleigh and eight tiny, flying reindeer.

"The figure of St. Nicholas has been so transformed and commercialized that it's not recognized any more," said Harbatis, who shares a feast day with the saint.

The third-century bishop may have undergone a mythical metamorphosis, but his legacy certainly has been preserved. "I think the present day example is the same idea of paying attention to the children and people who are overlooked in society," added Antypas.

## Messenger from page B11

Performances for an outdoor reenactment of the birth of Jesus Christ are scheduled on church grounds every half hour from 6 to 8 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 18, and Sunday, Dec. 21, and from 6 to 8:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 19. The "Living Nativity" is free and open to the public. Everyone is invited inside after each performance to warm up with seasonal refreshments and enjoy special children's activities. The church will hold a dramatic Christmas worship service entitled, "The Majesty of Christmas-Celebrating the Night of Miracles," at 11 a.m. on Dec. 21. The unique musical program captures the beauty and power of traditional carols, woven together with inspiring original music. Both adults and children will perform this Christmas collection of classical and contemporary arrangements. The church also offers services on Christmas Eve at 6 p.m. and on Epiphany-Twelfth Night, Jan. 6, at 7:30 p.m. For information, call (248) 879-9240.

### HANUKKAH THEME

"Eilu v' Eilu," the joint adult Jewish learning project sponsored by Cong. Beth Abraham, Hillel Moses (West Bloomfield), Beth Shalom (Oak Park) and B'nai Moshe (West Bloomfield), Hillel Day School (Farmington Hills) and the Women's League for Conservative Judaism-Michigan Branch, is offering a Rosh Hodesh study session in honor of the new month of Kislev. The free program begins at 7 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 7, at Borders Books and Music, 30995 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills. Community educator Aviva Silverman will discuss, "The Hanukkah Songs We Sing: What Do They Really Mean?" Advance registration is not required and no knowledge of Hebrew is necessary. For information, call Nancy Kaplan or Rita Abramson at (248) 788-3600, or e-mail rita@bnaimeshe.org.

### HEALING SERVICE

Cong. Shir Tikvah invites the public to attend a healing service at 7:30 p.m., Monday, Dec. 8. In

recognition that this is a difficult time of year for many, Shir Tikvah has scheduled a healing service in an attempt to meet the needs of anyone who may feel a need or desire to participate. The service will consist of many prayers, meditations, songs and exercises invoking God's help in healing the body, mind, and soul. It is intended to be an emotional and nurturing service which is open to anyone dealing with spiritual or physical healing, loss of a loved one or simply in need of emotional support. The Healing Service will be held at Northminster Presbyterian Church, 3633 Big Beaver (on the south side of the street between Coolidge and Adams) in Troy. Call the Temple: (248) 619-9669.

### VOLUNTEER EXTRAVAGANZA

Individuals, families, children and grandparents are invited to comfort the elderly, fix up a shelter, serve food to the hungry or perform other tasks at the annual Volunteer Extravaganza on Thursday, Dec. 25. Starting from the Max M. Fisher Building, 6735 Telegraph, Bloomfield Township, groups will head out to various locations in the Metro Detroit area to lend a hand or to relieve workers who wish to spend the holiday with their families. Chairing the event are Lisa Barson, Jeff Busch and Randi Sakwa. The volunteer network is a cooperative venture of the Jewish Federation's Community Outreach and Education Department, Young Adult Division, Women's Campaign and Education Department and Business and Professional Women. NADIV, a group of teens and young adults who have had an Israel experience and want to volunteer in the community, also participates in the program. Space is limited. Register by Monday, Dec. 8, by calling Joanie Berger at (248) 203-1470.

### YULE GIFTS NEEDED

The children in Judson Center's programs have suffered abuse or neglect and usually have one wish — to have a happy and whole family. In some cases this

can be achieved. In others, the best way to give a child hope is to grant a special wish for Christmas. With the help of 200 plus participants each year, the Royal Oak-based Judson Center has distributed one desired gift to each child in the agency's care. Contributors are needed to purchase, wrap and send the highly treasured gifts, valued at \$30, to Judson Center for the holidays. To make a difference to those less fortunate this Christmas season by calling (248) 837-1217.

### JEWISH LEARNING

Community educator Aviva Silverman continues her Wednesday night adult Jewish learning series, "Sacred Connections: Finding the Link Between the Weekly Torah Portion and Haftarah," from 7:30 to 9 p.m. on Dec. 10 and 17, in Room 125 of Hillel Day School, 32200 Middlebelt, Farmington Hills. Knowledge of Hebrew is not required. The series is part of Eilu v' Eilu, the cooperative adult Jewish learning project co-sponsored by Cong. Beth Abraham Hillel Moses, Beth Shalom and B'nai Moshe, Hillel Day School and Women's League for Conservative Judaism-Michigan Branch. Tuition is \$8 per session for members and \$10 for non-members. For information, call Rabbi Michele Faudem at (248) 851-3220.

### WORLD MISSIONS

Cong. of Christ Lutheran Church, 1100 Lons Pine, Bloomfield Hills, announces the guest appearance of Dr. Arthur Vincent, a teacher and evangelist, for a seminar on world missions on Saturday, Dec. 6. Vincent has spent 51 years in various ministries in the L. C. M. S. and is the founder of a privately funded mission group called, "Advancing Renewal Ministries." Registration begins at 9 a.m. Sessions run from 9:30 a.m. to noon and from 1 to 3:30 p.m. The \$7 per person fee includes lunch. For reservations, call (248) 646-5886.

— Compiled by special writer  
Rena Fulka

GET READY FOR THE HOLIDAYS

## Gift Ideas

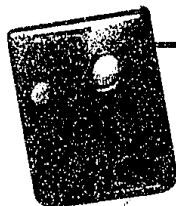
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