

COMMUNITY MESSENGER

Community Messenger features spiritual announcements from Oakland County religious institutions. Ten days before the desired publication date, please write: Community Messenger, c/o Beliefs & Values Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Our fax number is (810) 644-1314.

CHRISTMAS AWAKENING
Victory Theater Company, 19421 W. 10 Mile, Southfield, presents "Stouge: A Christmas Awakening," Dec. 18 to 21. The full-scale theatrical production brings to the stage a moving Christmas drama focusing on social issues of the '90s and one man's life-changing encounter with truth. During the premier evening, Family Victory Fellowship will honor two civic leaders who have demonstrated profound caring and concern for the families of the Metro-Detroit area. On Thursday, the community service awards reception begins at 6:30 p.m. with the performance following at 7:30 p.m. Performances begin at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, 1 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, and 7 p.m. on Sunday. Doors open 15 minutes prior to show time. For ticket information, call (248) 354-1990.

HANUKKAH DINNER
Temple Shir Shalom, 3999 Walnut Lake Road, West Bloomfield, hosts its annual Hanukkah family dinner at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 19. Shabbat services follow at 7:30 p.m. with performances by the youth choir. All are welcome to join the Hanukkah festivities. Dinner is \$9.27 per adult and \$5.67 per child age 5 to 12. Children under 5 are free. For reservations, call (248) 737-8700.

CHRISTMAS BELLS
Christ Church, Cranbrook, 470 Church Road, Bloomfield Hills, is holding a festival of seasonal favorites performed on the bells of the Wallace Carillon and by the Classical Bells of Metropolitan Detroit, a group of professional handbell ringers and directors. The event begins at 4 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 21. On Dec. 24, from 7:00 to 10:30 p.m., the Christ Church Choir accompanied by organ and other instruments will sing preludes to the Christmas Eve liturgies celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. For information on either event, call (248) 644-5210.

YULE FEST
A festive celebration of Christ's birth will happen on Christmas Sunday, Dec. 21, at Nardin Park Church in Farmington Hills. The singing of Christmas carols, families lighting the Advent wreath, and Christmas prayers will focus the hour upon the true meaning of the season. Combined Chancel and Sanctuary Choirs, under the direction of Michael C. Rousos, will perform "Angels' Carol" and "Noel, We Sing," closing the service with Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus." A dramatic reading of the messenger Micah will precede the sermon, as the pastor of the church, the Rev. Benjamin Bohnsack, preaches "Live Secure!" Christmas is only Christmas when our observance includes the message of Christ, says Pastor Bohnsack. "We encourage anyone looking for that Christmas spirit to join us." Nardin Park United Methodist Church is at 29887 W. 11 Mile in Farmington Hills, just west of Middlebelt.

INFORMAL SERVICE
Temple Shir Shalom, 3999 Walnut Lake Road, West Bloomfield, is holding a come-as-you-are service at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 26. Temple Shir Shalom Shabbat Camp will be held during the service for children ages 3 to 8. Children under 3 are welcome with a parent. Children over 8 are welcome at the service. For information, call (248) 737-8700.

LIVING NATIVITY
Evanwood Church of God, 2601 E. Square Lake Road, between John R and Dequindre, Troy, is offering a full slate of Advent activities every Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. to Dec. 21. 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.

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 \$50, to Judson Center for the holidays. To make a difference to those less fortunate this Christmas season by calling (248) 837-1217.

GLOBAL GIFTS
The First Baptist Church at Willits and Bates in Birmingham is holding a Global Gifts and Crafts Shop through Dec. 20. The non-profit partnership of Justice and Hope supports developing world artisans. Gift selections include baskets, brass items, crochets, games, jewelry, Third World crafts, tree ornaments, toys and UNICEF Christmas cards. Volunteers staff the shop and all profits are returned to the craftspeople. Hours are 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. On Thursdays, the shop is open until 6 p.m. The church is located between the Jacobson's Stores. Free two-hour parking is available in the adjacent city lot.

PARENTING CLASS
Glen Oaks Alliance Church, 5700 Rochester Road, Troy, is holding classes on "Growing Kids God's Way." The program is designed to equip parents with children ages 15 months to preteen to apply biblical principles in raising responsible children with strong moral character. The class will meet once a week beginning in Nov. The day and time is yet to be determined. For information and registration, call (810) 731-4661.

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"And I suspect there'll be parents who are trying to read directions and put together toys who will flip it on," said Rimbo.

The Christmas service opens in the church narthex, with the children gathered around a 12-foot tree of angels, which symbolizes the announcement of the birth of Jesus Christ. Dr. James Kellis of Christ Lutheran, a professional storyteller, describes how all three congregations came together at 33360 W. 13 Mile for this special event.

The children then process into the sanctuary to the hymn, "Children Go As I Send Thee."

The liturgy follows the tradition of the Western Christian Church and includes the random ringing of hand bells. Antioch Lutheran's Cantor Amy Studt of Hartland provides the organ accompaniment and directs the musical selections. A liturgical dance team of seven children presents the offering.

Though some hymns are sung in unison, each congregation represented in the 60-voice adult choir sings a hymn of its own to add to the diversity of the celebration.

The service also features a 40-voice children's choir. Musical selections include performances by Tympani on the kettledrums and the Liberty Brass Quartet, both based in Ann Arbor.

Leading the festival service is Rimbo, Kreiss and the Rev. Christine Thompson of Christ Lutheran, who also offer a trio

of short homilies. Truth Lutheran is currently without a full time pastor. Bishop J. Philip Wahl of the ELCA Southeast Michigan Synod is in attendance.

The worship experience ends by candlelight with the singing of Silent Night, the reading of Scripture and the benediction.

On the night of the televized service, Antioch Lutheran Church will be holding a Christmas Eve service for children and families at 5 p.m., a more formal liturgy at 7 p.m. and high church at 10 p.m.

Participating members of the 49-year-old congregation will probably either tune in or tape the blended service to relive the spiritual experience via national television.

"Martin Luther said that what Christmas really celebrates is God with a human face," said Rimbo.

"What he really means is that Jesus, who is God, is coming to us as a human being. And that truth is unique to the Christian faith, that God's son did not seem to be masquerading as a human, but was human."

Whether the viewers are fellow church members, local shut-ins or interested individuals watching from another part of the country, Studt added, "I hope they get the true sense of the reason for Christmas, and that the Good News of Christ's birth was meant for everybody."

"Welcome in the Child" will be broadcast at 12:05 a.m. on Dec. 25 on WXYZ/Channel 7.

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