

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.

INFORMAL SERVICE
Temple Shir Shalom, 3999 Walnut Lake Road, West Bloomfield, is holding a candle-light 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
Evangelical Church of God, 2601 E. Square Lake, 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 re-enactment of the birth of Jesus Christ are scheduled on church grounds

every half hour from 6 to 8 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 21. 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 \$30, to Judson Center for the holidays. To make a difference to those less fortunate this Christmas season by calling (248) 837-1217.

WORSHIP SERVICES

New Life Christian Fellowship announces the beginning of regular worship services on Sundays at Adler Elementary School, 19100 Filmore in Southfield, north of 10 Mile and east of Evergreen — 5 p.m. soup supper and 6:30 p.m. worship with praise band. The church office is (248) 356-1120. Nancy Kruger is

mission developer.

STUDY AND PLAY GROUP

Cong. B'nai Moshe will offer two adult study groups to teach more about Hanukkah on Saturday, Dec. 27. Cong. B'nai Moshe will host Shabbat Shalom (Our Shabbat), a morning play group for children ages 2 1/2 through 4. The complimentary drop-in program allows parents to participate in worship services while their young children enjoy Shabbat-appropriate games and play activities under the supervision of Paula Schane-Kosick. Shabbat Shalom runs from 10 to 11:30 a.m., at which time the children are brought into the main sanctuary to join the congregation for the last few minutes of service, including Kiddush and closing songs. The synagogue is at 6800 Drake, West Bloomfield. For information, call Rita Abramson at (248) 788-3900 or e-mail ritaa@bnaimoshe.org.

Christmas from page B5

and gain eternal life."

While the manger scene actually portrays the story of Jesus' humble birth in a stable, the tradition of the decorated tree, which originated in Germany, is more symbolic. "It's evergreen and it lives all year long," said Kauchek, who heads a parish of 3,000 families. "It represents Christ who is always alive. And the lights signify that Christ is the light of the world."

Parishioners of the 28-year-old congregation celebrated the feast of the birth of Christ by attending one of six different Christmas Masses — three were scheduled on the eve of the holy day and three were held today. "We're celebrating the historical birth of Christ, who was born in Bethlehem 1,997 years ago. We're also celebrating that he's born again in our own lives," said Kauchek. "We're celebrating why he was born, which was to fulfill God's promise to send us a savior, a Messiah, who would save us and bring us eternal life. That's why Christmas is so important. It's the beginning of the moment of Easter. Christ came so that he could be raised from the dead to gain eternal life."

Parishioners observed the Advent season by praying, fasting, and preparing for the Christ child to be born spiritually in their hearts and homes. Others went a step further by offering donations for the Trees of Memory (the \$20,000 collected went to Focus:HOPE in Detroit) and/or adopting a less fortunate family in Detroit to share the spirit of the holiday.

Catholics experiencing a "good Christmas" spiritually, said Kauchek, "would come away with love and warmth knowing how much God cares for them. They'd be at peace. They'd know they're for-



STAFF PHOTO BY LAWRENCE R. MCKEE

Divine meeting: "The one whom we meet at Christmas is the one we apprehend with our whole being...body, soul and mind," added Byars. "The mood is rejoicing in the Lord always. The Lord is near," said the Rev. Dr. Ronald P. Byars of First Presbyterian Church.

given and cherished. They'd know Jesus came to save them."

For Catholics, the Christmas celebration culminates on the feast of the Epiphany, the manifestation of Jesus Christ, liturgically celebrated on Jan. 6.

Though they celebrate in different ways, Christians around the world commemorate the birth of their savior with a spirit of joy, hope, love, peace and charity.

Kwanzaa from page B5

lit in alteration each day from right to left, with the black one reserved for the last day.

The display can also include carvings, African artifacts and pictures of deceased loved ones.

"There's an Akan philosophy that states that a man is never dead until he's forgotten," said Dudley. "This is a way to keep the memory alive."

The celebration of Kwanzaa culminates with a gift exchange and a festive celebration of foods and music in tune with the African culture. The Zawadi is a meaningful gift connected

to the culture that is given to the children as a representation of the fruits of their parents' labor. Examples include Afro centric clothing, artwork, books of African history or heirlooms passed from one generation to the next.

"The merits of the movement are to make a contribution to the country and the nation by raising a family the way a family should be raised. That's something everyone can do. That's the spirit of this whole thing of Kwanzaa, the strengthening of the African American

family," said Stewart, a Detroit native. "I would like people to understand that the African American experience is a win-down through which other people can look at themselves."

Families celebrating Kwanzaa, added Stewart, "hopefully will gain a greater sense of the strength of the individual. And how the strength of the individual contributes to the strength of the community. And how the strength of the community can add to the strength of the nation."

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