

# BELIEFS Values

## Even a blizzard is good when you look at lessons it provides

### FOCUS ON THEOLOGY



REV. ALLAN EICKELMANN

**W**hat good is a blizzard? Answer: it teaches us patience. OK, I don't really know if it teaches us patience or not, but it sounds good. After all, a blizzard has to be good for something.

I'm sure that a blizzard is good for snow blower manufacturers, and their employees, have to make a living like everybody else.

In a similar way, a blizzard is good for those who make snowplows, melting compounds, and ice-scrappers. A blizzard has a real economic advantage for some people, even if it depresses car sales.

If you plan well, a blizzard can be good for a cozy, romantic evening by the fireside. It has been said that you can trace the occurrence of a major blizzard by the number of babies that are born nine months later.

A blizzard tests our endurance at airports and on superhighways during rush hour. Many a prayer is said during a blizzard, and so I suppose it can even be said that a blizzard is good for our spiritual life. If we have any sense at all, a blizzard teaches us to slow down and not try to force the situation to bend to our control.

A blizzard makes us aware of how little we are in control of things, and how our well-thought plans can be subject to radical change. If we learn that lesson well, we learn to place things in the hands of God.

A blizzard reveals a great deal about how we respond in difficult situations. Do we see ourselves as victims who are suffering some tremendous indignity, so that our problem is greater than everyone else's problem, or

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do we see ourselves as a community of people who are pulling together under a set of very trying circumstances.

On Jan. 3, my wife, my father-in-law and I were stuck at Metro Airport for 11 hours in the middle of a blizzard. Like everybody else, we were wondering if we were ever going to get out. We had it better than many people, who either found themselves stranded in a city far away from home, or who were sitting for 10 hours or more on a plane waiting for an open gate.

A sense of community started to develop among our group of travelers. People started to help one another, and started to share jokes and life stories. We even rallied to show our support for the beleaguered gate agent, who was doing the best for us that he could, under the worst possible conditions, with virtually no support from his company. My wife, along with several other passengers, offered to get him coffee and sandwiches; and when someone became irate, the rest of us gave this overworked, under appreciated gate agent a standing ovation. He was, after all, in as much distress as the rest of us. So I suppose, a blizzard can teach us a great deal about humanity and the nature of community life.

I'm still not really convinced that a blizzard is good for very much, but it can be said that just about every situation is good for something when we become open to lessons that it has to teach us. Spiritual development consists almost entirely of being open to those lessons.

The Rev. Dr. Allan W. Eickelmann is senior minister of the Congregational Church of Birmingham.



Performing: Steve Bell will appear at Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church.

## Gospel album award winner Bell to perform

Steve Bell, one of Canada's most successful independent musicians, will perform at Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, 5531 North Adams Road, Bloomfield Hills, at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 30.

Bell is the 1998 winner of a Juno Award for Best Gospel Album for his latest release, *Romantics & Mystics*.

His previous recordings have sold over 90,000 copies in Canada. Tickets are \$8 in advance or \$10 at the door. Call the toll-free ticket reservation line at 1-800-854-3499 for tickets.

### COMMUNITY MESSENGER

Community Messenger features announcements from Oakland County religious institutions. Write: Community Messenger, c/o Beliefs and Values Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspaper, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham.

#### EILU V EILU

Eilu v Eilu Adult Jewish Learning Project, sponsored by the conservative movement of metro Detroit, hosts the following programs:

■ A free, drop-in study session, "Messianism and Jews," is at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 27, with Rabbi Leonard Bitran, in the Beit Midrash at the Laker Education Complex, 2075 Walnut Lake Road, West Bloomfield. Students will pair up to read aloud and discuss classical texts and commentaries. The program is co-sponsored by Eilu v Eilu and Congregation Shaarey Zedek.

■ "Dear Rabbi - The Role of Responsa Literature in the Evolution of Jewish Law," is the theme of the current Latte and Learning series with Rabbi Aaron Bergman, from 10-11 a.m. Mondays through March 1 at Borders Books and Music, 30995 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills. Each session may be attended independently. Advance registration is not required.

The cost per session for members of sponsoring organizations is \$5, others pay \$7.

The theme of the next Latte & Learning series beginning March 8 will be: "It Could be Verse: Jewish Poetry from the Bible to Today."

Everyone is welcome to attend programs, regardless of affiliation, background or Jewish study. For information on Eilu v Eilu programs, call (248)737-1931.

#### B'NAI MOSHE

The B'nai Moshe Sisterhood and the Rekindling Shabbat Committee of Congregation B'nai Moshe will host a three-part Lunch 'n Learn series open

to the community. The first session is Jan. 23, immediately following Shabbat Kiddush. The topic is Parshat Bo, led by Daphna Feldman. Other dates are Feb. 20, "Trigger Vignettes"; March 27, a book review of "As a Driven Leaf" by Milton Steinberg, led by Debra Darvick. Cost is \$6 per session. Reservations are required and baby-sitting is available on request. For more information, call Susan Leibowitz at (248)788-7772.

■ On Feb. 1, the second of a three-part learning series for adults will feature the topic, the Tu B'Shvat Seder. The last session on March 8 is "The Rabbi Tells a Story or Two."

All sessions begin at 11:30 a.m. at the synagogue, 6800 Drake, West Bloomfield. Teachers are Rabbi Elliott Pachter and Cantor Earl Borris. Cost is \$6 per session. Reservations are required. Call Pearlina Bodzin at (248)357-1157 for more information.

#### COMIC MINISTRY

Life's dramas can be a laughing matter with Jim Custer and Bob Hoose, a premiere music, comedy and drama team who have entertained together for 20 years at churches, universities and conferences across the nation. Their unique ministry has been used by Focus on the Family, Promise Keepers and the Billy Graham Evangelical Association. Their repertoire includes pieces called "Best of Friends," "Fathers Anonymous" and "Remote Control."

The team will perform on at 4 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 24, at Faith Lutheran Church, 37635 Dequindre Road, Troy, north of Big Beaver Road. Tickets are \$10 for gold seating, \$8 for general admission, and \$6 for groups of 10 or more. Call (248)859-4664 for tickets and information.

#### JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

Starting on Jan. 26, Seminars

for Adult Jewish Enrichment will offer 57 courses at the Jewish Community Centers in West Bloomfield and Oak Park.

Conservative, Humanistic, Orthodox, Reform, Secular and the unaffiliated will come together for these courses. The Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit and the Agency for Jewish Education are presenting SAJE, with co-sponsorship from the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit and the Detroit Jewish News.

Courses will be held Tuesdays and Thursdays at the D. Dan and Betty Kahn JCC in West Bloomfield. Both 7:30 and 8:30 p.m. classes will be offered.

For more information, call (248)661-7649.

#### CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

Christ Church Cranbrook, in cooperation with Hospice of Southeastern Michigan, will conduct a six-week grief recovery series, from 7-8:30 p.m. Mondays, Feb. 1 to March 8.

Dolphine Tessmar, grief counselor, will describe the phases of grieving and teach ways to help participants move through the grieving process and make a new beginning in life. Anyone who has experienced the loss of a loved one is welcome. For more information or to sign up, call Kappy Pennington at (248)644-5210, ext. 14.

#### TEMPLE KOL AMI

Temple Kol Ami in West Bloomfield will offer two courses for adults. "Navigating your Way Through the Prayerbook" will be at 7:30 p.m. on Thursdays, Jan. 28, Feb. 4 and 11, taught by Rabbi Amy Brodsky. "Introduction to Judaism" will be at 7 p.m. Tuesdays, Feb. 2 to April 20. There is a fee for the courses.

To register, contact the temple at (248)661-0040.

#### BIRTHS



#### Madison Cecile Minch

Mr. and Mrs. Phil Minch of Oakland Twp. announce the birth of their daughter, Madison Cecile Minch, Nov. 28, at William Beaumont Hospital, Troy.

Grandparents are Paul and Linda Toupin of Seattle, Wash., Diane and Richard Grey of Ft. Wayne, Ind. and John and Norma Minch of Madison Heights.



#### Francesca M. Aiello

Mr. and Mrs. James Aiello of Rochester Hills announce the birth of their daughter, Francesca Maria Aiello, on Oct. 13, at Crittenton Hospital, Rochester.

Francesca has two older sisters, Rachel and Marisa. Grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Aiello Jr. of Bloomfield Hills and Mr. and Mrs. Jack Schodowski of Rochester Hills.

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We look forward to First Night Birmingham 2000!