



DECK THE HALLS...Lee Kline of Mountainside strings lights on one of the Christmas trees at the First Baptist Church, 170 Elm Street in Westfield. She and her brother, Bud Nadler of Scotch Plains, were two of 40 church members who decorated the church for the holidays. First Baptist will host the Choral Arts Society's Messiah Sing tomorrow, Friday, December 10, at 8 p.m. and a reading of "A Christmas Carol" next Friday, December 17, also at 8 p.m. On Friday, December 24, the church will hold its Christmas Eve Children's Service at 4 p.m. and a Candlelight Service of Readings and Carols at 7:30 p.m. The decorations may be viewed at the church from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Friday. For more information, please call (908) 233-2278.

Presbyterian Church Holds Annual Tree Lighting Event

WESTFIELD — A tree lighting ceremony accompanied by the singing of familiar carols on December 5 marked the beginning of the Christmas holiday programs at The Presby-

terian Church in Westfield.

Traditionally a church family participates in lighting a tree on the front lawn of the historic church. For the fourth annual event this year, George and Deborah Himmel of Westfield watched as their seven-year-old daughter, Anneliese, flipped a switch to turn on the all-white lights.

The Reverend Dr. William Ross Forbes, Senior Pastor, welcomed the several hundred townspeople who attended the ceremony.

James A. Simms, Director of Music, introduced the singing of such classic carols as "Joy to the World," "The First Noel," and "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

A brass quartet, comprised of Joe Loreti of North Plainfield and David De Rienzo of Summit on trumpet and James Penkula of Newtown, Pa., and Andy Juhl of Summit on trombone, accompanied the carol singing.

The church's worship and fellowship commissions arranged the evening's program, which concluded with refreshments in the Assembly Hall.

First United Methodist Sets Workshop on Divorce Issues

WESTFIELD — The First United Methodist Church in Westfield will present "Starting Again: Divorce Recovery Workshop" for seven consecutive Tuesdays beginning on January 18 from 7 to 9 p.m. The sessions will be held at the church, located at 1 East Broad Street.

Dr. Dan Bottorff, a licensed marriage and family therapist with over 15 years of clinical experience, will facilitate the workshop.

"Although recovering after a divorce is a unique experience for each person, we find that there are common elements that must be dealt with to accomplish a healthy outcome," stated Dr. Bottorff.

"This workshop provides a safe setting, under professional guidance, for the exploration of these issues," he continued. "Participants can offer each other much-needed support and understanding in the process of moving toward recovery."

The seminar will be offered to area residents who are currently involved or have been involved in a divorce. A contribution of \$35 is suggested for the complete series of seven sessions. Financial assistance is available.

Child care will be available upon request. Pre-registration is encouraged. To register, please call the church office at (908) 233-4211.

Religious News

Scotch Plains Baptist Lists Services for the Holidays

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Scotch Plains Baptist Church, 333 Park Avenue in Scotch Plains, has announced two upcoming services which will be held at the church during the holiday season.

A Christmas Classic Celebration will take place on Christmas Eve, December 24, at 7:45 p.m. The

candlelight service, covering the announcement to the birth of Jesus, will feature such popular Christmas songs as "Silver Bells," "I'll Be Home for Christmas" and "Do You Hear What I Hear?"

The service will include selections by the church choir, with all the children present, and singing by the congregation.

On Friday, December 31, New Year's Eve, the church will hold a "Light the Night" Millennium Watch Night Service beginning at 11 p.m.

The service, with hope as its theme, will feature nine American preachers appearing via videotape, including Dr. A. R. Bernard, David Bryant, Henry Blackaby, Dr. Tony Evans, Pastor Jack Hayford, Dr. Billy Kim, Dr. John Maxwell, Bill McCartney and Ed Silvano.

The public is invited to attend both celebrations at the church. For more information, please call (908) 322-5487.

Faith Lutheran Slates Christmas Services

NEW PROVIDENCE — The Faith Lutheran Church, 524 South Street in New Providence, will hold several special services in celebration of Christmas.

On Christmas Eve, Friday, December 24, there will be a Children's Service of Lessons and Carols at 5 p.m. This service, which will be approximately 45 minutes in length, is intended for families with younger children and will feature three of Faith Lutheran's children's vocal choirs, as well as the children's handbell choir.

At 8 p.m. and again at 10:30 p.m. that evening, Faith Lutheran will offer a Candlelight Eucharist. These services will feature Faith's festival choir, as well as its adult handbell choirs and soloists on violin, flute and cello. Pre-service music will begin at 7:30 p.m. and at 10 p.m., respectively.

On Christmas Day, Saturday, December 25, a quiet candlelight liturgy with carols and Holy Communion will be offered at 10 a.m. The following day, December 26, there will also be a single service of Holy Communion at 10 a.m., featuring Christmas lessons and carols.

For more information about any of the services, please call the church at (908) 464-5177 or send an e-mail to: famfaith@bellatlantic.net.

Saint Paul's to Present Lessons and Carols At Sunday Service

WESTFIELD — Saint Paul's Episcopal Church, 414 East Broad Street in Westfield, will present its annual service of Advent Lessons and Carols this Sunday, December 19, at 10 a.m.

The service will include carols and hymns, as well as anthems sung by the Parish Choir. In addition to harpsichord and organ, the Parish Choir will be joined by members of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra and the Elements String Quartet.

Included in the service will be Zelenka's *Magnificat*, with soprano soloists Susan Brady and Jennifer Paulino. Also included will be excerpts from Bach's *Canata 140* (Wachet auf), with tenor soloist Al Morasso, and Handel's *Messiah* (And the glory of the Lord.)

The special prelude beginning at 9:50 a.m. will be "Winter" from *The Seasons* by Antonio Vivaldi. The concerto soloist will be Ming Yang of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra.

The public is invited to attend the service. For more information, please call Charles Banks at (908) 232-8506, extension no. 17.

Mr. Anderson to Speak On Book of Isaiah At Church on Sunday

WESTFIELD — The Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1100 Boulevard in Westfield, will hold an evening program entitled "Ministry from Isaiah" this Sunday, December 19, at 6 p.m.

Guest speaker Richard Anderson will explore the Biblical Book of Isaiah from his perspective as a Messianic Jew and an Evangelical Christian.

For directions to the church, please call (908) 232-4403 or visit <http://www.westfieldnj.com/gopc>.

Fanwood Presbyterian Church Martine & LaGrande Avenues, Fanwood (908) 889-8891

Senior Pastor - The Reverend Robert T. Snell

Invitation to Public Sunday Worship at 10:00 a.m.

Festival of Lessons and Carols

4pm on Sunday, December 19th

Christmas Eve

5:00 pm - Family Service of Worship

10:40 pm - Special pre-service music

11:00 pm - Traditional Candlelight Worship & Communion



Do Not Be Distracted During Holiday Season

A Weekly Column From Members of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Ministerial Association

By REV. ROBERT T. SNELL

Christmas is coming! The resounding surrounding chorus echoes in signs and symbols both visual and vocal. A ubiquitous multi-media message, the chorus urges us not toward passive, but active anticipation.

Active anticipation is urged this year by an almost equally ubiquitous multi-media message: the millennium is coming! Long-standing and last minute, modest and extravagant, many are the plans and preparations to celebrate the dawn of the third millennium and the 21st century. As many as two million people may jam Times Square.

But no matter how many the people, or how loud the cheer, or how hard the party, when the Times Square ball hits bottom, neither the third millennium nor the 21st century will dawn.

On January 1, 2000, we will remain firmly fixed in the second millennium and the 20th century, there to stay until the first day of 2001. This year's fervid and feverish active anticipation of the New Year is misdirected. We are led astray.

I myself know of no great harm that will come from this false celebration. I am convinced that over the coming year, confusion will be clarified in preparation for yet a second millennial and centennial spree.

Some cynic might identify the doubling of millennial-centennial observance as a stroke of marketing genius, taking advantage of the human propensity for misdirection.

Great harm does come from our propensity for misdirection. Misdirected, our active anticipation of the coming millennium leads us astray. Might the

same be said for Christmas?

Christmas is coming and the resounding surrounding chorus urges us to active anticipation. The chorus sounds a ubiquitous multi-media mixed message. Does the mixture misdirect? Are we directed to stores and resorts, to food and drink, to baubles, bangles and beads for the fruits of the season? Are we driven to distraction by busyness and bone-weariness by hopelessly clogged and cluttered calendars? Misdirected, does our active anticipation of Christmas lead us astray?

The issue here is not good and evil. The issue is misdirection and distraction. For the fruit of the season is salvation. But this salvation does not come from time off, or vacations, or parties, or mountains of gifts, or even from family and friends.

Salvation comes from the redemptive love of God. At Christmas we remember the redemptive love of God made known in Jesus Christ. Remembering that love, we experience it ever anew. Experiencing it ever anew, we proclaim it in word and deed. That is the active anticipation to which we are called and urged when we say, Christmas is coming. That is the active anticipation through which the season's salvation is received.

Writing many centuries ago, Augustine rightly confessed to God, "You have made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you."

Christmas is coming! May your hearts find peace.

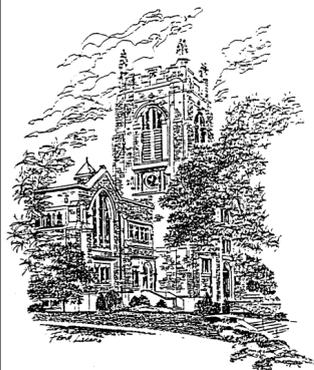
Reverend Robert T. Snell serves at the Fanwood Presbyterian Church.



DELICATE CREATURES...Renate Bieber of Westfield, the Life Membership Chairwoman of the Northern New Jersey Region of Hadassah, is pictured visiting the pet therapy center of Ramat Hadassah Szold, a youth village for disadvantaged Israeli children supported by Hadassah. She is among 26 American women who were chosen for Hadassah's Young Women's Mission. Selected for her leadership skills, she participated in an intensive program of seminars, study and sightseeing that examined social, cultural and political issues.

First United Methodist Church of Westfield

Christmas Eve Worship Services
One East Broad Street
(across from monument, parking lot accessible from Ferris Place off of Prospect St.)



Service Times

Children's Service
5:00 p.m.
Candlelight Services
8:00 p.m.
11:00 p.m.

Christmas is for remembering, sharing and discovering deeper resources for hope and joy in the company of family and friends.

First Baptist to Present 'A Christmas Carol'

With Music Tomorrow

WESTFIELD — Westfield High School English teacher Peter J. Horn will read an abridged version of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" in the sanctuary of the First Baptist Church, 170 Elm Street in Westfield, beginning at 8 p.m. tomorrow, Friday, December 17.

The reading will be accompanied by musical numbers performed by the Westfield Chorale, a group of high school students and graduates directed by William R. Mathews, Minister of Music at First Baptist.

The Chorale was organized by Mr. Mathews, who is also a music teacher at Westfield High School. Members have performed "Carols in the Round" the first weekend in December for the past 13 years. They offered the reading of "A Christmas Carol" and songs for the first time last year.

The performance is open to the public. It is free, but those who wish may make a donation in support of a high school activity. For additional information, please call the church office at (908) 233-2278.

Good News
*Blessed are they who mourn,
for they shall be comforted,
Blessed are the meek,
for they shall inherit the earth.*
The Gospel
Mathew 5:4,5



Cordially invites our friends and neighbors to join us in celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ

Christmas Eve
6:00 p.m. Family Holy Communion
10:40 p.m. Carol Sing
11:00 p.m. Candlelight Communion
Christmas Day - 10:00 a.m. Worship

Redeemer Lutheran Church & School

Clark at Cowperthwaite (across from Roosevelt School) Westfield

St. Bartholomew The Apostle Church

Scotch Plains, New Jersey

Christmas - "that time of year when the world falls in love." Fall in love with the Child who came down to Earth to share our humanity and through His death gave us all the gift of eternal life.

Hear the music of this blessed season with renewed joy. From the angels' first "Glory to God in the Highest" to a young child's first attempt at "Silent Night," let the world resound with songs of praise.

Reach out to those in need - physical, financial or spiritual. May every stocking be filled with gifts of Christ's mercy, peace, health and love.

Invite a friend to come to Mass on Christmas. Welcome all those who have been estranged from the Church with open arms and the certainty that they have "come home."

Seek the comfort of Christ's love in the Eucharist and share a quiet moment of reflection in thanksgiving for all His many gifts.

Take this opportunity to make Christ and His undying love for us the center of this holy season and every day of the New Year to come.

Merry Christmas!
Fr. Merlucci & the Priests, Sisters and Staff of St. Bartholomew the Apostle Church

Christmas Schedule 1999

CONFESSIONS

Saturday December 18 at 1:00pm

Special Adult Penance Service

Sunday, December 19 at 6:00pm
Hymns, Scripture Readings & an opportunity of private confessions
NO CONFESSIONS ON CHRISTMAS EVE

MASS SCHEDULE

Christmas Eve

Family Liturgy - 4:00pm
Midnight Mass - 12 Midnight
Preceded by Choral Arrangements

Christmas Day

7:30am, 9:00am, 10:30am and 12 Noon

New Year's Eve

5:00pm Mass
11:00pm Millennium Prayer Vigil
12 Midnight Mass

New Year's Day

9:00am, 10:30am and 12 Noon

