

## Christians Ought to Work Toward Unity For Which Jesus Prayed

By REV. PAUL KRITSCH

For many years the week of January 18-25 has been designated as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Extending from the Confession of St. Peter through the Conversion of St. Paul, both dates on the church year calendar, this week is a special opportunity for Christians to seek the unity for which Jesus prayed in John's gospel. "May they (Christians) be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you (God the father) sent me," Jesus interceded for the church in chapter 17, verse 23.

As it turns out, it wasn't too long before that prayer was put to the test. Early in the history of the Christian church, Peter and Paul found themselves arguing over the direction the church was to take. They debated the requirements people needed to meet in order for them to be truly Christians.

If two of the greatest leaders in the history of the Christian church had strong disagreements, is it any wonder that the modern church often finds itself in similar debates?

Our non-Christian neighbors must wonder about us at times. If we can't argue about something important, then we pick out the mundane. Even the color of the church's front door sometimes becomes a reason for church members to part company. And just witness all the debates that go on between Christian denominations. Some are very important; others are just plain silly. Does the church need intercession? You bet!

The good news is that Christians believe that they have someone who intercedes for us. We believe that Jesus continues to pray that his church may be one. Focused on him as our savior, Christians find the reason and the power for the true unity we desperately need.

As we work as one, our neighbors are blessed. Not picking unnecessary fights with one another, we have the energy to make a difference in our communities. Having the wisdom to know which are the important issues that divide us, we have the ability to debate, so that even in disagreement, we can affirm our unity in Christ.

Those are the possibilities and the ideals. Sadly, over my 32 years as a pastor, I have seen good people ignore the fact that Jesus fervently desires his followers to be one. Brothers and sisters, once friends, refuse to even say good morning. Valued members of the flock go out of their way not to shake hands with their pastor. Fellow Christians from different denominations keep each other at arm's length.

We are in constant need of our Lord's intercession. Hopefully, our disagreements will not be the reason why our neighbors discount the Christian church. Just a week of prayer for Christian unity? How about a lifetime?

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*Reverend Kritsch has begun his 17th year as Senior Pastor of the Redeemer Lutheran Church and School, 229 Cowperthwaite Place in Westfield.*

## Registration Now Underway For YMCA Spring Session

SCOTCH PLAINS - The Fanwood-Scotch Plains YMCA, located at 1340 Martine Avenue in Scotch Plains, currently is conducting registration for the Early Spring Session that will begin Monday, February 7, and end Sunday, April 17.

A variety of membership plans are available for adults, senior adults and children to participate in programs and classes.

The YMCA offers a Wellness Center with cardio and strength training machines, plus day and evening adult fitness classes for all levels, with some programs specifically designed for senior adults.

Adult aquatics classes offer participants the chance to improve fitness levels while reducing stress on joints.

Youth classes include Tae Kwon Do; Pee Wee and Youth Roller Hockey; Pee Wee and Youth All Sports; Yoga, and Dance. Cheerleading classes are open to girls in kindergarten through grade 5. For teenagers, there is Cycle Reebok, Wellness Center weight training, and Tae Kwon Do.

Parent/Toddler Gymnastics classes are designed for parents and their children who are walking through three years old.

The Progressive Preschool Program is a gymnastics program for

three- to five-year-olds. KinderGirls introduces kindergarten girls to gymnastics, while KinderBoys helps boys develop the strength, balance and coordination demanded by all sports.

For girls in grades one through 12, the Progressive Skills Program teaches skills in all four Olympic events of Women's Gymnastics.

Preschool and youth swim lessons for ages three to 14 feature a progressive skills format, with an emphasis on stroke development and personal safety. Parent/child lessons for ages six months to three years, as well as adult lessons, are also offered.

For information on membership or programs, or to request a schedule of classes, please call the Fanwood-Scotch Plains YMCA at (908) 889-8880 or visit [www.fanwoodscotchplainsymca.org](http://www.fanwoodscotchplainsymca.org).

### African Violet Group Plans Meeting Today

SCOTCH PLAINS - The Union County Chapter of the African Violet Society will hold its monthly meeting today, Thursday, January 20, at 1 p.m. at the Scotch Plains Public Library, located at 1927 Bartle Avenue.

The program, entitled "Tucson Convention Show," will feature a slide presentation by Chris Brenner and Jan Riemer. Anyone interested in African Violets is invited to attend.



WARMTH FOR THE NEEDY... Julia Nelson, an 11th grader at Westfield High School, recently took advantage of post-holiday sales by purchasing 50 warm winter hats from the local Gap and then asking friends, family and neighbors to sponsor these hats. Each sponsor was asked to select a hat and write a greeting on the tag. The hats were donated to a homeless shelter through St. Helen's Roman Catholic Church in Westfield.

## Professor to Give Lecture Sunday on Jews of China

SCOTCH PLAINS - On Sunday, January 23, at 10:30 a.m., Professor Xu Xin of Nanjing University in China will return to Temple Sholom to present a lecture entitled "The Kaifeng Jews of China."

Sunday morning lectures take place from 10:30 a.m. to noon at Union Catholic High School, located at 1600 Martine Avenue in Scotch Plains.

The professor's talk will deal with the Jewish existence in China before modern times, with a focus on the history and life of the Jewish community of Kaifeng in the last 800 years after the community was established in China.

Professor Xu Xin is President of the China Judaic Studies Association



Professor Xu Xin

and Editor-in-Chief of the Chinese edition of *Encyclopedia Judaica*.

He also has written "Legends of the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng" and "Anti-Semitism: How and Why," plus articles on Judaic topics and surveys of Jewish communities in Shanghai, Tianjin, Harbin, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

For more information about Dr. Xu Xin and the China-Judaic Studies Association, please visit [servercc.oakton.edu/~friend/chinajews.html](http://servercc.oakton.edu/~friend/chinajews.html). Temple Sholom is a Reform congregation located in Fanwood-Scotch Plains.

Lectures are open to the general public.

Anyone with questions may call the temple office at (908) 889-4900 or email [aded@sholomnj.org](mailto:aded@sholomnj.org).

## Workshop Slated For Parents Of Special Needs Children

MOUNTAINSIDE - S.N.A.P. (Special Needs Advocate for Parents), a national, non-profit public benefit corporation, will host a workshop on "Planning for the Future of Your Child or Dependent with Special Needs."

The workshop will be held on Wednesday, February 9, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the auditorium of Children's Specialized Hospital, 150 New Providence Road in Mountainside.

This workshop is designed to educate both families and professionals on the many faceted legal and financial issues regarding planning for the future of a disabled person.

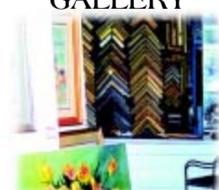
Topics will include Estate Planning, Guardianship, Letters of Intent, Will versus Special Needs Trust, Funding Issues and Changing Laws.

This free workshop is open to all parents and caregivers of children and dependents of all ages and disabilities.

For additional information or to

register, please call Sue Driscoll at (908) 301-5478 or 888-CHILDREN, extension no. 5478.

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## First Baptist Series to Continue With Guidelines For Marriage

WESTFIELD - On Sunday, January 23, the First Baptist Church of Westfield will continue its "Extreme Living: Amazing Relationships" sermon series during the 10:20 a.m. worship service with a discussion of marriage.

The Reverend Lou Ruprecht, Minister of Adult Education, will offer guidelines on the husband/wife relationship.

Marriage also will be the theme that day at the church's Adult Forum, to be held from 9:15 to 10:15 a.m. in

the church lounge. Reverend Ruprecht will moderate a discussion on building strong marriages and dealing with broken marriages.

Visitors are welcome to either or both events. Childcare for infants and toddlers is always provided, and grade school children may attend their own Sunday school classes and Children's Church.

The church is located at 170 Elm Street. For more information, please call (908) 233-2278 or email [firstbaptist.westfield@verizon.net](mailto:firstbaptist.westfield@verizon.net).

## Discussion to Address Travel With Special Needs Children

SCOTCH PLAINS - The Scotch Plains Public Library and the Learning Disability Association of Scotch Plains and Fanwood will present "Traveling with a Special Needs Child" on Thursday, January 27, at 6:30 p.m. Claudette Bardwil, a travel management expert and the mother of a special needs child, will be the guest speaker.

This program is free and pre-registration is optional. Light refreshments will be available. The library is located at 1927 Bartle Avenue. For fur-

ther information or directions, please call (908) 322-5007.

### FSO Slated to Spotlight Intervention Program

WESTFIELD - The Family Support Organization (FSO) of Union County will present a discussion on Thursday, January 27, regarding an intervention program to assist Union County parents and caregivers when they face a crisis with their children.

Dr. Anthony DiFabio will explain the program, called Children's Mobile Response and Stabilization Services, between 6:30 and 8:30 p.m. at the FSO's offices, located at 137 Elmer Street in Westfield. He is the Director of the program, through which parents can arrange for assistance to come to their location.

FSOs are private, non-profit organizations funded by the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Child Behavioral Health Services, to provide support, education and advocacy for parents and caregivers of children with special emotional and behavioral needs.

To reserve a seat for the program, or for directions and information, please call Gail or Kathy at (908) 789-7625.

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**TREE TIPS: The Mighty Oak Tree Has Problems Too**

By: Martin Schmiede, President of Schmiede Tree Expert Company  
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Most Oak trees are provided with tap roots which grow straight down as deep as 12 feet to keep the trees from falling over in strong winds and to get water in dry spells. A full grown Oak tree can weigh as much as 20 tons and can absorb up to 25 gallons of water per day. A typical drought episode in the late fifties had caused the Oak trees to fall into despair and by showing drought symptoms, attracted destructive scale insects. Scale insects like golden Oak scale, Oystershell scale and obscure scale suck sap out of small branches and inject a toxic substance back into the sap-stream. This causes the branches to become weak and eventually die due to poor circulation and fungus infections. The deteriorating symptoms subsided after 2 rainy seasons in the early sixties and the scale insects disappeared. Severe droughts are like poison to Oak trees and ample rainfall is like a blessing. Recently a few Oak trees toppled over in high winds. The examination of the root system revealed that the center roots and tap roots were rotted away and the up-rooted trees were simply relying on superficial developed roots further out from the stem.

We can help to minimize the drought symptoms of our Oak trees by soaking the parched ground with soaking hoses unless restrictions are preventing us to do

ing and removal of dead branches can help slightly infected trees to recuperate.

The infected trees can be chipped, made into mulch or used as firewood because the Oak leaf scorch infection is not persistent in the wood, soil or water.

Another fungus infection is causing a lot more concern. In Nassau County, N.Y. a red Oak has tested positive to the sudden Oak death fungus phytophthora ramorum. Trees that are afflicted with this fungus will have to be quarantined by the Department of Agriculture. There is no way to help the infected trees. All parts of the positive tested trees have to be incinerated because the fungus is persistent in the wood, soil and water for decades.

In spite of droughts, Oak leaf scorch and sudden Oak death, we have Oak trees in our area that are 600 years old and have become a symbol of strength. The red Oak tree is the State tree of New Jersey. The Oak trees are not just known for their strength, but also for their beauty. The Charter Oak, the Kilmer Oak and the Village Oak have made Oak trees a national treasure and a symbol of strength, but also for their beauty.



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