

First Baptist's Living Christmas Tree is long-standing Somerset holiday tradition

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COMMONWEALTH JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

When it comes to holiday season events, we're lucky to have several such as Christmas Island, the living nativity scene at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, and our Christmas Parade, to name a few, but the one event the Christmas season just wouldn't be the same without would have to be First Baptist Church's Living Christmas Tree.

Christmas Island may get more publicity and Pleasant Hill may take in a bigger audience with their drive-through nativity scene, but the members of First Baptist Church have been putting on their Living Christmas Tree since 1977, and it is already rich in tradition.

As many as 75 members of the church's choir climb to their perches for the program's ten-piece performance.

This year, Bill Adcock, First Baptist's Minister of Music, said the choir is working on a couple new numbers.

"The Southern Gospel piece 'Beautiful Star of Bethlehem' will be new to the tree this year," said Adcock.

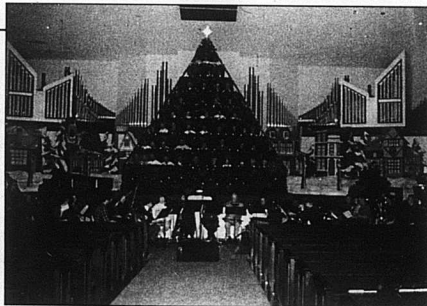
"We're also adding a section of spirituals."

Adcock said the choir will be accompanied by an orchestra made up of musicians from Nashville and Lexington. He said a few Somerset residents also contribute their musical talents to the program year after year as well.

Danny Harris has played string bass, Beth Mosdy the piano, and Judy Ledford the organ for the past several seasons. Adcock said Ledford will also perform a handbell solo during the program.

Adcock said this year's program will include two pieces from

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In a scene from last year's production, choir members and orchestra rehearse the program which has become a Pulaski County institution.

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TREE —

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the orchestra and selections from Victorian Carols prior to the program.

One thing that makes the Living Christmas Tree a little more taxing for choir members, aside from the fact that they must stand throughout the performance, is that they must memorize every song — there is no place to put sheet music.

"We've tried to think of ways to hold our music, but there's no way," Adcock said.

For the first few years, when Jim Cordell was the church's Minister of Music, the tree was built out of wood and chicken wire, covered with cedar boughs.

First Baptist's nine-tier tree is now made of steel

and stands more than 25 feet tall.

Adcock said Tim Washam's Men's Sunday School class always puts the tree together.

"The whole church decorates the tree," he said. Adcock said the tree was decorated with more than 5,000 computer controlled lights.

The tree will get a new background for the 2000 season. Adcock said Kenny Wesley has designed a Dickens village scene, to be painted on plywood.

"The last one was on cardboard," Adcock said.

"Last year took a pretty big lick out of it."

As many as 75 church members have filled the tree in past years. Adcock said there were no troyats for the choir.

"Anybody that has a song in their heart can come and sing," Adcock said.

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program, but most of the church's members become involved in the production, from the music to the lights, sound and videotaping of the show.

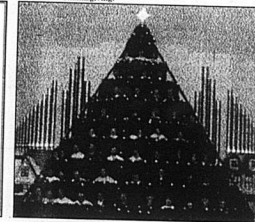
The Living Christmas Tree is a Christmas gift to the community from First Baptist Church," Adcock said.

Three performances of the Living Christmas Tree have been scheduled, on Saturday, Dec. 16 at 7:30 p.m. and two on Sunday, Dec. 17 at 5 and 7:30 p.m.

Adcock said large groups may want to call the church at 678-5106 to order tickets for the free program. He said free tickets would be available after Thanksgiving.

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