

# **New Year's Eve interfaith service set**

Christians, Jews and Muslims will come together at St. Ignatius, Baltimore, for its 16th annual New Year's Eve interfaith service.

Jesuit Father William J. Watters, St. Ignatius pastor, will preside at the Interfaith Prayer Celebration, to be led by Rabbi Jon Konheim, of Beth Am Synagogue, Baltimore. Other clergy scheduled to participate include Rev. James Taylor, pastor of Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church, and Imam Earl El-Amin, resident imam of the Muslim Community Cultural Center of Baltimore.

"We try to be as diverse in our celebrants and participants as we can, and the church is filled with people from every walk of life and every religion," said Donna Guba Price, a St. Ignatius parishioner who is coordinator of the service.

"It's a wonderful way to bring people together in a holy setting where all the partitions fall apart and all the walls are broken down and we pray as one for the city and the world."

The service will focus on thanksgiving for blessings of 2008 and prayers for God's favor in 2009.

Among those scheduled to offer prayers are Mayor Sheila Dixon; Sister of Mercy Helen Amos, executive chair of the Board of Trustees at Mercy Medical Center; City Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake; Ralph E. Moore Jr., director of the community center at St. Frances Academy; and Rebecca Hoffberger, founder and director of the American Visionary Art Museum.

Music begins at 8 p.m., followed by the one-hour service at 8:30. The service is expected to draw 500 people. Tickets are free, but must be ordered by calling 410-727-3848 or e-mailing [parish@st-ignatius.net](mailto:parish@st-ignatius.net).

Father Watters, who introduced the interfaith service in 1993, officially returned to his role as pastor when Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien and Auxiliary Bishop Denis J.

Madden installed him on Dec. 21.

Father Watters had served as pastor for 14 years and is widely credited with transforming St. Ignatius into a thriving downtown church with more than 600 registered families.

Father Watters had been executive assistant to the Maryland Jesuit Provincial from July 2006 to July 2008.