

# Church celebrates 150th anniversary

By Michael W. Curley Jr.  
Staff Writer

More than 150 people attended Christ Church in Bloomfield on Saturday to help celebrate the church's 150 year anniversary.

The evening service, held in the Anglican tradition, began at 6 p.m. Rev. Anne Koehler, the interim rector, said it was an "Evensong" service, which means it was conducted primarily through song.

Among the special guests attending were Leslie Smith, a former rector at the church; Glen Ridge Mayor Peter Hughes and his wife; and Jack Salmon, a former priest of Church of the Advent, a church which closed in 1996, resulting in many of its members becoming congregants of Christ Church in Bloomfield.

The service, the liturgy of which dealt with the end of the day, was led by Bishop Mark Beckwith of the Diocese of Newark. During the service, members the New Jersey Reading Orchestra helped provide the music. The orchestra rehearses in the church, and often pitches in on special occasions and major services. Laura Paparatto, a member of the church, conducted the Reading Orchestra and performed a flute solo during the service.

"It was a wonderful service," Koehler said.

After the service, there was a reception which included food and drinks in the church's Parish Hall, accompanied by music from an ensemble choir from Clifton High School, which included church member Katelyn King of Clifton.

The church's current building was built beginning in 1892, after the original building burned down. The church was first founded in

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1858, when several English families living in Bloomfield were brought together to worship in the tradition of the Anglican Church.

The cornerstone for the first church building was laid down in 1860, and the church struggled in the first few decades before the original building on Liberty Street burned down in 1892. The new building was erected with locally quarried stone, in its current location to better serve those members of the congregation who lived in the newly formed Glen Ridge.

Despite its own difficulties, the church helped establish four missions between 1860 and 1902, including St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Montclair. More recently, the church absorbed members of the now closed Church of the Advent and Trinity Church in Montclair.

The church changed its name from Christ Episcopal Church to Christ Church-Bloomfield/Glen Ridge, and the congregation grew. The church has had a tradition of music, especially during the tenure of W. M. "Buck" Coursen, who directed the 75-member men and boys choir, and the 50-member girls choir between 1936 and 1980.

"We hoped to celebrate the past, and be energized for the future," Koehler said of the service, adding she hoped this would only be the beginning of the celebrations for the church's anniversary.