

Forum speakers on religion, peace come to common conclusion

By Richard A. Kiley

A common conclusion was reached by representatives of four different religious groups who participated in a recent panel discussion on religion's role in achieving world peace: the quest to attain peace and stability in today's troubled world should be shared by all people, regardless of the faith or theology they live by.

The "Religion and Peace" forum at Rochester Institute of Technology on Wednesday, March 25, was the last of four discussions of world peace by experts from the clergy, the military and the peace movement. The panel discussions were part of a two-day "Conference on Behalf of Peace" which marked the inauguration of RIT's new concentration in peace studies.

Panel members at the forum represented Zen Buddhism, Presbyterianism, Catholicism and Judaism.

Sunyana Graef, a Zen Buddhist priest who has been studying at the Zen Center in Rochester for the last 14 years, emphasized that all individuals, regardless of their roles in society, can work to achieve world peace.

"Once we expose ourselves to the inevitable despair of truth, we do indeed have the power to make a difference. The path to peace takes determination, energy ... it is not necessary to become a Buddhist or a saint," Graef said. "We have to do the best as we are."

The Zen Buddhist priest also said that peace won't be achieved until the nations of the world begin to look upon each other as "one big universe."

"We need to show kindness, compassion, and identify with others. We must rejoice in the talents of others, not look at talents in a competitive way," Graef said. She added that equanimity — an evenness of mind or temperament — is also necessary.

"What harms one harms all ... what is good for one saves all. We must attempt to work in an integrated way," she said, adding that we create the danger in the world, but at the same time we have the capacity to free ourselves from that danger.

"We recognize that all people have the same goal (to attain peace); we just differ in how we

want to go about it," said the Rev. Robert Kaiser, pastor of Gates Presbyterian Church in Rochester. The Rev. Kaiser, who is active in Rochester's Peace and Justice Education Center, said that the main problem in achieving peace is getting people to overcome what have become traditional fears and stereotypes in the United States and abroad.

"We all have fears, but we have to overcome those fears," observed Kaiser. "I was brought up to fear Russia." He said that his trepidation about the Soviet Union changed when his son, who recently sang in the Peace Child Chorus with a chorus from the USSR, helped him alter his outlook toward the super-power rival.

"He told me not to use the word Russian anymore," said Kaiser, referring to his son's belief that the word has negative connotations here in the United States. "He has helped me overcome my fear."

For Rabbi Judea Miller, leader of the congregation Temple B'rith Kodesh, this fear takes the face of the neighbor.

During a recent trip to Jerusalem, Rabbi Miller attended the trial of John Demjanjuk, who has been accused of being the sadistic guard "Ivan the Terrible" at the Treblinka death camp in Nazi-occupied Poland.

"An intense fear overcame me when I saw how much they (those who do evil) look like you and me," Rabbi Miller said. "Those who do evil don't have horns ... They look just like you and me. I find that most upsetting."

The rabbi likened current disbelief in the possibility of nuclear war to society's failure to realize that the Nazis could commit atrocities.

"In 1935, people thought it (genocide) was unthinkable ... but yet it was possible. Humanity is on the verge of annihilation ... The unthinkable is thinkable."

Thus, Rabbi Miller added, everyone should feel compelled to work for world peace. "We must actively pursue it. If good people can permit themselves to be destroyed, then goodness is destroyed with them."

Through his ministry, the Rev. Kaiser hopes he can begin to relieve fears so that nothing similar to the horrors of Hitler's Germany will happen again.

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Zen Buddhist priest

He said he often deals with members of his congregation who fear that the United States must build up its military defenses so as not to be vulnerable to an attack by other countries.

Yet, the minister asserted, defense build-up is counterproductive to the peace movement. In order for the world to live in peace, weapons must be eliminated, he said, noting, however, that the mere elimination of weapons won't ensure world peace.

In addition to disarmament, global economic reform and a change in the national politi-

cal structure must take place, the Rev. Kaiser concluded.

Dr. Nathan Kollar, a professor of Religious Studies at St. John Fisher College, said Catholicism aids in the quest for peace by its offering of traditional symbols.

Kollar, who holds a doctorate in religious studies from Catholic University, said that Catholicism allows those who are working to achieve peace to reflect on past events. "It (Roman Catholicism) offers symbols and images like the cross," Kollar said. "We need symbols and prophecies."

Hornell's St. James Mercy Hospital to begin \$23-million construction, renovation project

Faced with a rapid increase in its patient load following the closing of nearby Bethesda Community Hospital, St. James Mercy Hospital in Hornell has begun planning the most extensive renovation and modernization project in its history.

During the next two years, the \$23 million construction project will modernize the hospital's Canisteo Street facility and the Mercycare center in North Hornell, providing efficient facilities, new technologies and increased services.

St. James Mercy Hospital serves 60,000 residents in Steuben, Allegany and Livingston counties. The medical staff comprises 50 physicians and dentists who provide medical, surgical, obstetric and gynecologic, pediatric and psychiatric care to more than 5,000 inpatients each year.

Since Bethesda's closing, St. James Mercy experienced a 25-percent increase in admissions, a 50-percent increase in inpatient surgery, a 100-percent increase in outpatient surgery and a 36-percent increase in emergency-room visits.

The project depends upon a federally insured loan to finance 90 percent of the

costs. Approval of the loan is contingent upon the hospital's ability to raise 10 percent of the project cost, or \$2.3 million. Already, \$1.3 million has been set aside, and the hospital's board of directors has initiated a capital campaign to raise the remaining \$1 million.

Steuben County Sheriff Jack Lisi is serving as chairman of the fund drive. He will be assisted by Helen Burke, Thomas Turner, Joseph Damrath, Richard Church, Joyce Kelly, and Betty and Peter Arcangeli.

The project includes the purchase of the old Bethesda facility, which has been renamed Mercycare. When renovations there are completed, the Mercycare center will house a 55-bed skilled-nursing area, a 20-bed alcohol-rehabilitation unit, 16 beds in a psychiatric-care unit, a four-station hemodialysis unit and various outpatient programs.

Construction and renovation will provide space for a new emergency service, critical-care unit, surgical suite, admitting area, entrance and lobby. In addition, the project will create quarters for 130 medical/surgical beds.

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Rabbi Judea Miller
Temple B'rith Kodesh

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