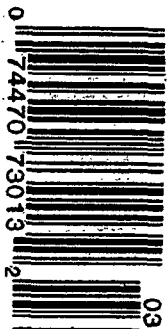


Look for our new Young Adult Feature on Page 12



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Christians strive to restore unity

By Lee Strong
Associate editor

The Rev. Gordon Webster recently faced a situation that, in the not-too-distant past, could have posed problems.

The mother of one of his parishioners at Ogden Presbyterian Church had died. But the mother was a Roman Catholic — as were several other members of the family — and the funeral service was going to be held at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Spencerport.

Thirty years ago, he would have been uncertain how to minister to the pastoral needs of the family as a whole because of a long history of division among Christian churches. Family members then might have had their needs addressed only by their respective pastors.

But such was not the case in this situation.

Rev. Webster and Father William Michatek, St. John the Evangelist's pastor, both ministered to the family.

"In a sense, we really are at a very essential level cooperating in pastoring families," Rev. Webster said. "I don't believe that the Spencerport situation is that unusual. It is something that has come to be seen as an advance in the way the Christian family is relating to itself."

Indeed, across the world, ecumenical efforts are underway, ranging from cooperative pastoral and social ministry to ongoing dialogues among national and international church bodies and even to a papal encyclical devoted to the subject.

But local Catholics need only look to efforts in the Diocese of Rochester to see signs of greater ecumenism.

The diocese has had a covenant relationship with the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester since 1988. As part of the covenant, the two dioceses agree "to foster the maturing relationship between our two Traditions"

*There is an
increased
awareness that
we all belong
to Christ.*

Pope John Paul II
"That All May Be One"

The diocese and several parishes are members of the Greater Rochester Community of Churches, of which Webster is president. That body — and its predecessor, Genesee Ecumenical Ministries — has promoted dialogue, joint worship and cooperative social ministry in the Rochester area since the early 1970s.

Many communities across the diocese also have interfaith councils or ministers' groups that meet regularly, schedule joint worship services and plan cooperative social ministry projects.

Diocesan officials will also take part in a GRCC-sponsored service at 3:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 21, at the Community Baptist Church, 345 Parsells Ave. in Rochester to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity — an eight-day event begun by an Episcopal — later, Catholic — priest, Father Paul Wattson in 1908 in Peekskill, N.Y. The international week of prayer, which stretches from Jan. 18 to 25, now involves many Christian churches.

As part of the week of prayer, churches in Irondequoit have scheduled a "laity exchange of churches" which will involve lay people from the participating churches traveling to other churches for worship services to share greetings and prayers with the other congregations. The week will also include a 7:30 p.m. ecumenical service Jan. 25 at St. Josaphat's Ukrainian Catholic Church, 940 Ridge Road East.

And as part of the week's observances, 17 congregations in Yates County will join together to hold an "Ecumenical Celebration of the Word of God" at 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 18, at Penn Yan's St. Michael's Church, 312 Liberty St.

Regular joint holiday services are held as well by churches around the diocese. They also swap pastors, sponsor summer Bible camps and hold joint adult education programs.

Catholic parishes and Christian congregations also cooperate re-

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