

# Parish gospel choir sells hope-filled recording

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Come down to St. Bridget's Church, 14 Mark St., any Sunday morning for 10:30 Mass, and you'll be treated to a rousing, hand-clapping, soul-moving performance of gospel music from the parish's choir.

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

"It just gives you an uplifting feeling," said 14-year-old choir member Tyrik McKeiver, of gospel music. "It's made me more comfortable in church singing in a gospel choir. It's just more fun. You really get into the music."

Twenty-five to 30 parishioners regularly sing with the choir each week, directed by Priscilla Young. And it was a year ago this month that the group recorded a six-song album titled "I'm A Believer." The choir sells the recording — available in tape and CD format — after Sunday Masses, as well as after performances at other churches in the diocese.

All of the songs on "I'm A Believer" were written by Young, who also sings lead on two numbers. The recording features various lead vocalists singing on different numbers as the choir responds.

Young said the group recorded the tape in February 1997, at Dajhlon Recording Institute on East Avenue. Profit from the \$3,000 project was initially supposed to finance building improvements at the parish's old church, located at 175 St. Bridget's Dr., Young said. However, the parish nixed the renovation plans when costs became prohibitive, and instead moved last September to the buildings that formerly



Greg Francis/Staff photographer  
Barbara Sims, right front, and Kandis Johnson, center, sing with the St. Bridget's Gospel Choir Feb. 1.

housed the now-defunct St. Theresa's Parish on Mark Street. Now, profit from sales of the recording will simply go to St. Bridget Parish general funds, Young said.

Young said the St. Bridget's community has undergone a lot of difficulty in the past few years, struggling with financial problems and having to uproot itself to a new location. She wrote the songs on "I'm A Believer" to give people at the parish hope through rough times, she said.

"It was just a motivational thing to let people know to keep going and keep the faith," she said.

Keeping the faith is a family affair for Young, whose sister, Della Williams, and

sister-in-law, Priscilla Graham, also belong to the choir. Meanwhile, another of Young's sisters, Betty Humphrey, serves as the choir's president, and Young's other sister, Myra Humphrey, sang "Restore the Joy" on "I'm A Believer." Myra serves as hospitality minister at Corpus Christi Church in Rochester.

Williams noted that she and her sisters grew up in a musical family, and share a deep love for gospel singing.

"Singing is probably my first love," Williams said. "I think I get very absorbed in the songs and the words."

Betty Humphrey added that she and her sisters have always enjoyed singing gospel

music in a choir because of what it embodies:

"It's the commitment to the church, the commitment to the Lord and to the choir members that are part of the group," Humphrey said. "I enjoy the group. We've been through a lot together."

The choir practices every Wednesday evening, according to Telana Stokes, St. Bridget's evangelism coordinator, who also belongs to the choir. Stokes noted that the choir prays both before and after its practices, asking the Lord to intercede in the members' personal lives and in the lives of their neighbors.

"I think it's important that we are always here to praise God," she said. "It's not about showing off. By praying, it really gets you focused."

Graham said she joined St. Bridget's more than 10 years ago in great part because she loved the choir.

"I always had religion, but I didn't know where I was going to church until I found St. Bridget's," she said. "I come from a singing family and I just love gospel. Old-time gospel brings back a lot of memories."

Stokes said she hoped the "I'm A Believer" recording would create some new memories for St. Bridget's Choir audiences throughout the diocese.

"With the recording, we can leave a little piece of St. Bridget's behind," she said.

For information on how to obtain "I'm A Believer," call 716/454-4236. Tapes may be mail-ordered for \$10, or CDs for \$15, by writing a check to "St. Bridget's Church," and sending it to the St. Bridget's Church Rectory, 8 Mark St., Rochester, N.Y. 14621.

## Father Mulligan stepping down as moderator

By Kathleen Schwar  
Staff Writer

Father John M. Mulligan remembers being named the first moderator of the diocesan Pastoral Office 10 years ago and telling Bishop Matthew H. Clark, "Wow, I've got to go out and find out what's going on around the diocese."

The bishop responded, "That's my job. You stay here and mind the store."

Father Mulligan will soon no longer be minding the store, as he plans to step down by June 30.

He will remain a vicar general, however, a position that he's also held since 1988. In that post, he assists in governing the entire diocese, representing the bishop at various functions and in working with priests. Retired Aux. Bishop Dennis W. Hickey is the diocese's other vicar general.

As moderator, Father Mulligan has been serving as the diocesan administration's chief operating officer, overseeing the bishop's staff at the pastoral center, 1150 Buffalo Road, Gates.

"The two positions (vicar general and moderator) are linked right now. We're in the process of pulling them apart," Father Mulligan said.

Father Mulligan said that as moderator his job has been "to keep the bishop out among his people, and I feel good about that." Noting that the bishop has had duties outside the diocese, he added with a laugh, "I hope I gave him a certain feeling that somebody was paying attention to what was going on back here."

Father Mulligan, 59, however, had asked to return at least part-time to pastoral ministry this year.

"It's not so much a desire on my part to stop doing anything here," he said, "as it is a desire to get more into pastoral ministry."

"I think what I missed most was when people came to you and wanted to engage you as a priest, you almost had to refer them to someone else because you didn't have time to do that. It's really an opportunity to be able to sit and talk with people about issues in their lives. And maybe have the time to plan a wedding with somebody or a funeral with somebody."

Bishop Clark commented in a diocesan statement, "I am deeply grateful to John for all that he has accomplished in his 10 years as moderator of the Curia (the Pastoral Office). As the first to hold that position in our diocese, he has laid a solid foundation upon which we can continue to build."

Father Mulligan has helped develop and lead such initiatives as the Stewardship Council, the Synod, and Pastoral Planning for the New Millennium — the diocesan-wide strategic planning process.

He noted a team has been reevaluating Pastoral Office operations, and stated that "a moderator with fresh vision" will help implement its recommendations.

"I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to have collaborated with Bishop Clark in his ministry to our Church of Rochester," he said. He added that losing such frequent contact with the bishop will be difficult for him, and that he will miss the diocesan ministry directors as well.

The search for a new moderator will not be limited to priests and religious, Father Mulligan said. Although Canon 473 states that a moderator ought to be a priest, he noted other dioceses have moderators — or people with similar titles — who are not priests.

Bishop Clark has asked various groups for recommendations regarding changes in the moderator's role, as well as desirable characteristics and potential candidates. Anyone interested in making suggestions should do so by Feb. 24, in care of Father Tim Brown, the bishop's priest secretary.

The bishop expects to complete the consultation next month and name a new moderator in May, to allow time for transition.

As for Father Mulligan's next assignment, the priest said, "What I'd like to do is take on a pastoral role where we are trying to create something new, or my presence may help get some of the strategic planning accomplished at the local level. I would really like to do something to be helping us get to the future we are trying to get to right now."

Father Mulligan said he doesn't expect to move directly into a parish pastor position. The priest, who has served parishes in Auburn, Ithaca, Corning, Geneva and Rochester, also headed the Division of Urban Ministry, formed in 1983.

He serves as sacramental minister at St. Joseph Church, Rush, and remarked that recently he heard someone tell Sister Alice Cooney, SSJ, the church's pastoral administrator, that the sinks were plugged.

"I don't think I'm ready for that yet," he joked.

## College names new president

The Nazareth College Board of Trustees has selected Robert A. Miller, vice president for academic affairs at Queens College, N.C., as Nazareth College's eighth president, effective Aug. 1. Miller will replace Rose Marie Boston, president of the Rochester-area college since 1984. She will retire July 31.

A Bronx native, the 55-year-old Miller earned degrees from Alfred University, SUNY Albany and Syracuse University. Among his academic assignments, he served as associate director of the division of community services and continuing education at Onondaga Community College in Syracuse, and chair of the political science department at Syracuse's LeMoyne College.

At Queens College, he was credited with developing an internship program that linked students with companies to gain experience in their majors.

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