

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## New occupants settle in at vacant Tier churches

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

Two former Catholic church buildings in Elmira have recently become occupied by other Christian groups — one on a permanent basis, and one temporarily.

New Life Assembly of God, an evangelical church, has purchased the former St. John the Baptist Church, 325 Lake St., from Eastside Catholic Parish. The sale was completed Aug. 24 and New Life began holding services Sept. 5.

Meanwhile, North Presbyterian Church began services Sept. 1 at the former St. Cecilia's Church, 950 Lake St., after agreeing to a six-month lease with Eastside Catholic Parish. North Presbyterian's church, located at 921 College Ave., was severely damaged by fire June 13.

Both St. John the Baptist and St. Cecilia's had been vacant since their final Masses were held in September 1998. Those churches were suppressed after membership in the Eastside Catholic cluster — comprising St. John the Baptist, St. Cecilia's and Ss. Peter and Paul — had fallen to below 1,000 families. The Eastside name has been retained but Ss. Peter and Paul, located at the corner of High and Market streets, is the only building to remain open.

St. John the Baptist was sold for \$150,000 to New Life Assembly of God. According to Father Patrick Connor, pastor of Eastside Catholic Parish, the net profit of \$135,000 will be put toward construction of a new parish center across from Ss. Peter and Paul.

Paul Mather, pastor of New Life Assembly of God, said his church had been holding services in a house on West Water Street, and was seeking a larger worship space to accommodate its growing congregation. New Life was founded about eight years ago and has a current membership of approximately 100.

Mather said that St. Cecilia's location will also help New Life carry out its mission of urban community service.

"We do feel very called to downtown Elmira. We just believe it's a miracle of God that this place was available," Mather said.

Father Connor said that New Life, though not Catholic, will continue a tradition of Christian worship in the former St. Cecilia's.

"We're very glad the building will remain as a church," he said.

As for North Presbyterian, that church has been without a permanent home since its June fire. Curt Ripley, chair of North Presbyterian's board of trustees, said that St. Cecilia's will be an ideal temporary facility because it includes a school building to accommodate the church's religious-education program, which began Sept. 12. Approximately 100 of North Presbyterian's 500 members are enrolled in the program.

"We're pretty excited. It's a beautiful sanctuary and we needed the classrooms," Ripley said.

North Presbyterian is paying Eastside Catholic Parish \$1,000 per month, which is the estimated amount needed to cover utilities and maintenance.

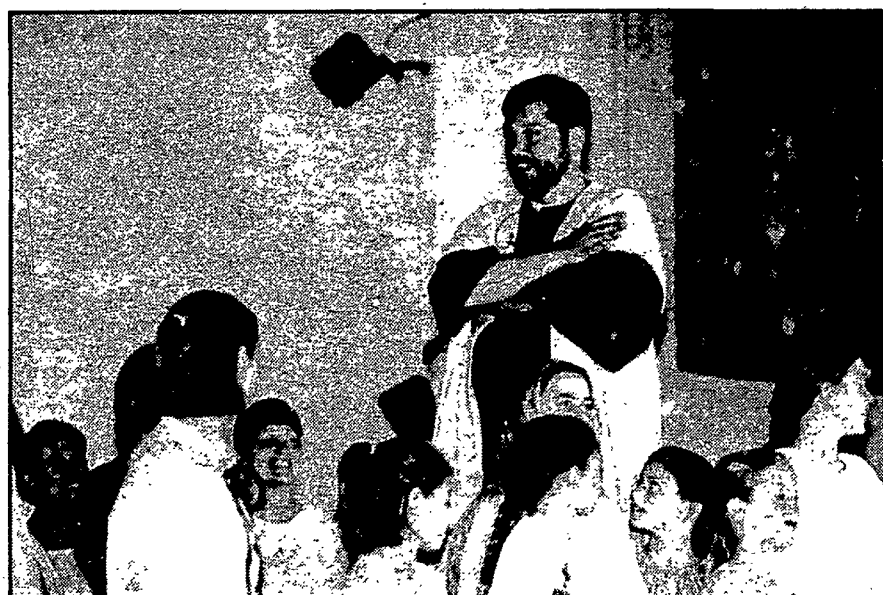
"We're not trying to make a profit off this tragedy," Father Connor said.

Father Connor noted that St. Cecilia's is still up for sale. Under terms of the lease, Eastside is required to give North Presbyterian 90 days' notice if it secures a buyer. In turn, North Presbyterian must give Eastside 60 days' notice if it vacates St. Cecilia's before the six months expire.

Ripley said that North Presbyterian will need at least a year's worth of repairs before services can be held there again. If nobody buys St. Cecilia's before March 1, 2000, Father Connor said that another six-month lease is possible.

Prior to its move to St. Cecilia's, North Presbyterian had held its services at St. Anthony's Church, 911 N. Main St. The services took place on Sunday afternoons, after St. Anthony's weekend Mass schedule had been completed.

Ripley lauded the support North Presbyterian has received from St. Anthony's, located across the street from his church. He noted that Father Joseph McCaffrey, pastor of the St. Anthony/St. Patrick cluster, offered the space at St. Anthony's within hours after the fire. Consequently, he said, North Presbyterian has been able to hold all its regularly scheduled services.



Mike Mergen/Photo Intern

## Sing a Song of Mark

Approximately 800 people attended the diocesan Office of Liturgy's Sept. 19 presentation of Marty Haugen's *The Song of Mark* at Corpus Christi Church, Rochester. Corpus Christi's pastor, Father Daniel McMullin, played Jesus. The musical involved 59 performers drawn from across the diocese. It had earlier been performed in August at Leadership Days in Seneca Falls.

## Recognizing

★ **Sister Susan Nowak, SSJ**, of Nazareth College, studied at a summer institute at the International School for Holocaust Studies in Jerusalem, June 24-July 22, along with **Patrick E. Connelly**, a parishioner at Sacred Heart Cathedral, who went as an alumnus of St. Bernard's Institute; **Mary C. Palamar** of St. Rita's Parish, Webster, for Nazareth College; **Jane Rushefsky** for the Jewish Community Federation and **Estella Norwood Evans** of Nazareth's social work department, for the Greater Rochester Community of Churches. The five plan to speak in the community to help raise awareness about the Holocaust.

★ **Mary Grace Crerand**, a parishioner at St. Louis Church, Pittsford, recently received the STAR Award from Monroe Community Hospital for performing "above and beyond the call of duty." She has dedicated more than 5,200 hours as a hospital volunteer since 1976. **Fred Miller**, a parishioner of St. Mary's Church, Rochester, received the hospital's Helen A. Murphy Peer Award, for outstanding service by a volunteer. A volunteer since 1994, he has logged more than 3,300 hours of service.

★ **Art Schuth** received the Webster Knight of the Year award from Trinity Council 4618 this summer.

★ **John Cichello**, whose home parish is St. Joseph Church, the Northern Cayuga Cluster, professed his final oath Aug. 17 to the Glenmary Home Missioners in Nazareth, Ky. The society of priests and religious brothers work in rural areas and small towns throughout Appalachia and the South. Cichello was ordained a transitional deacon Sept. 4 in Washington, D.C., and planned to minister at St. Martin's Church in Washington, D.C.

## BRAVE asks court to reverse abortion office ruling

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

Brighton Residents Against Violence to Children Inc. (BRAVE), a pro-life group, has petitioned the New York State Supreme Court to reverse a Brighton Zoning Board of Appeals' decision that allowed Dr. Morris Wortman, a physician and abortion provider, to open his new office at 2020 S. Clinton Ave.

The Center for Menstrual Disorders and Reproductive Choice moved to its new location in August. Approximately 40 percent of its patients come there for abortions, according to Rebecca P. Wortman, the physician's wife and the center's chief operating officer.

BRAVE consists of both Brighton residents as well as nonresidents who work, worship or send children to school near the clinic in Brighton. The group filed its petition Sept. 17, according to Alan J. Knauf, a Rochester attorney representing BRAVE.

The petition was filed because the zoning board Sept. 1 denied BRAVE's request that it require Wortman to reapply for site plan approval, said Carol Crossed, a Catholic consistent life activist and one of the BRAVE's directors.

At that time, BRAVE contended that a berm built outside the physician's office had never been included in the orig-

inal site plan. The berm is designed to deflect any debris that would fly from the clinic should it ever be bombed, according to Wortman.

When contacted for comment on the site plan, Gary Cassara of Cassara Development Corp., the contractor for the new office, declined to be quoted.

In a Sept. 17 press release, BRAVE also contended that Brighton's planning board was never informed that the office was an "abortion clinic." However, Wortman said that "clinic" has specific legal connotations that do not apply to her office, which she said is legally designated a private physician's office.

The *Catholic Courier* was unable to reach Brighton Town Planner Ramsey Boehner for comment.

Dr. Wortman said that he believes BRAVE is simply Crossed's public front to veil her personal agenda, and he dismissed the new lawsuit as "foolishness."

"It's a waste of time and a waste of money, and apparently Carol Crossed has a lot of both on her hands," he said.

Crossed, who has fought against the establishment of Dr. Wortman's new office for several months now, acknowledged that the petition was another stage in a larger battle.

"This could create the need to revisit the whole issue of whether to have an abortion clinic there or not," she said of

the petition.

Dr. Wortman's previous office in Brighton has drawn pro-life protests for years, and his new office has seen the same pattern. Several local Catholic churches as well as neighboring McQuaid Jesuit High School have also publicly expressed opposition to Wortman's new office.

### Correction

On Page 3 of the Sept. 9 edition of the *Catholic Courier*, a story headlined "Dobson to leave black ministries directorship" incorrectly stated that Jacquelyn Dobson was the first woman in the United States to head a diocesan black ministries office.

The *Courier* regrets the error.

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