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Ministry as a second career

Many retirees seek full- or part-time work in the church

Dave Lippert and Deacon George Welch have quite a bit in common: Both are in their 50s, recent retirees from the education field and have been highly involved in their Catholic communities over the years.

They're also among a number of Catholics in the Diocese of Rochester who have begun ministerial positions after retiring from full-time work elsewhere. Retirement may well be the perfect time to pursue this avenue, said Barbara Pedeville, diocesan director of management and staff services.

"It's a chance to go into a values-based profession that perhaps they weren't in before," said Pedeville, who screens applicants for parish positions and makes recommendations to parish administrators.

"It may have been something they've always thought about. But it's pretty difficult to raise a family, send children to college and maintain a certain lifestyle based on the salaries that have been given in the church," said Pedeville, noting that the diocese has in recent years sought to raise the income level of ministerial positions.

In many cases, Pedeville observed, entering ministry as a retiree marks the realization of a longtime calling. "People with a great deal of experience can clearly see (ministry) as a part of their lives that they didn't see as clearly before," she said.

Such is the case with Lip-



After his retirement, Deacon George Welch became a chaplain at St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira. Above, he pays a visit March 17 to Dolores LeMark, a resident of the hospital's skilled nursing facility.

pert, 56, a longtime parishioner at All Saints Parish in Lansing, Tompkins County. Lippert became more involved in day-to-day parish operations after All Saints' pastoral administrator, Sister Mary Wintish, became ill. Sister Wintish died in March of 2002 — just months before Lippert was to retire from the Lansing Central School District, where he was a high-school history teacher. To help fill the void created by Sister Wintish's death, Lippert took a part-time position as parish administrative assistant beginning last September. And now, he's in the process of becoming certified as a pastoral associate.

Through the diocesan diaconate program, Deacon Welch, 57, gained several years of volunteer health-care experience in Chemung County, much of it at St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira. He recalled that on Easter Sunday 2002 he told Sister of St. Joseph Marie Castagnaro, the hospital's president, that he might consider a position at the hospital following his impending retirement from the Elmira City School District, where he had been an elementary-school principal the previous 25 years.

That opportunity arose within weeks. Father Joseph Brodnick, a priest of the Diocese of Cleveland, left his

chaplaincy at St. Joseph's on April 9 at the request of his bishop due to an allegation that he had an inappropriate relationship with a teenaged girl during the 1970s. Sister of Sister Joseph Margot Mann, the hospital's other full-time chaplain, subsequently resigned as well.

"They left a void and, fortunately, I was around and had already voiced my interest and sense of call," said Deacon Welch, who assumed full-time chaplaincy last July 1.

QUALIFICATIONS

Though it's more common for retirees to become more involved in the church as vol-

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