

Parish brings back Mass

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

ROCHESTER — For the past several years, when the clock struck midnight on Dec. 24, St. Michael's Church had been dark and deserted. That unfortunate setting will disappear next week, when music fills the air as the church's midnight Christmas Mass returns.

The Christmas hymns will likely sound better than ever, thanks to extensive work done on the church's 100-year-old organ. The restoration effort has resulted in a sound that's "much brighter, clearer, cleaner," according to John Woolfolk, the parish organist.

"We've had people say 'Oh, I can hear the difference.' That was a real treat when they said that," added

Paul Law, one of many volunteers to assist with the refurbishing project.

Re-establishment of the midnight Mass, along with the organ upgrades, are examples of recent efforts made by St. Michael's to bring in more worshippers. In addition, musical recitals have taken place and a weekly 7 p.m. Mass has been established. And, the last two Septembers, liturgies honoring emergency workers have been held in conjunction with the anniversary of Sept. 11, 2001.

Woolfolk further noted that repairs have been done on the church roof and stained-glass windows. With all these attractions, Woolfolk hopes that visitors will overcome their concerns about the inner city and see what St. Michael's — located on North Clinton Avenue near the corner of Clifford

Avenue — has to offer.

"We've got the church, we've got the organ, we've got the windows. We've got to use it," Woolfolk said.

Woolfolk led the organ restoration project that took place over a six-week period in the summer. Volunteers removed and cleaned all 2,200 pipes, while the organ was painted, varnished and shellacked.

St. Michael's organ was manufactured by J.W. Steere and Son Organ Co. in Springfield, Mass. Woolfolk commends the parish's late pastor, Father Benedict Ehmann, for prioritizing upkeep of the organ — unlike several pipe organs in the Rochester Diocese that have been dismantled rather than receive pricey repairs.

Also deserving credit is Woolfolk, the fifth-year St. Michael's organist who served in the same capacity for two other city parishes, Holy Redeemer and Holy Rosary. According to Law, Woolfolk has often figured out solutions when organ parts have broken down.

"If John had not been around for this, the organ would have been sitting there quiet," Law said.

Woolfolk's know-how on this latest project, combined with the volunteers' sweat and toil, enabled the



Mike Crupi/Catholic Courier

Ed Ruble, a parishioner and volunteer at St. Michael's Church in Rochester, assists Dec. 3 in tuning the church's recently refurbished organ.

church to save an estimated \$100,000 that professionals would have charged. "The material is not expensive, it's the labor," Woolfolk explained.

Woolfolk also noted the astronomical expense of buying an organ of comparable quality, saying St. Michael's organ cost \$4,000 in 1903 but "the replacement value is easily \$500,000."

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MONTHLY MEMORIAL MASS
Open to the Public - 8:30 am - Third Saturday Each Month
November through April - All Souls Chapel
May through October - All Saints Mausoleum Chapel

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP FOLLOWING MASS
9:30 am - 11:30 am - Cemetery Office Building

Holy Sepulchre Cemetery
2461 Lake Avenue Rochester, NY • 585-458-4110 • www.holysepulchre.org

Help offered to those grieving

Jennifer Burke/Catholic Courier

While the holiday season is a joyous time for many, for some it is a season filled with painful memories or a deep sense of loss.

Brook Noel, author of several books about grief and bereavement, recently published *Surviving Holidays, Birthdays and Anniversaries: A Guide to Grieving During Special Occasions*. Although holidays are painful for those grieving the loss of a loved one, Noel said there are a few things they can do to make the season pass more smoothly.

One of the most important things, Noel said, is to expect moments of deep pain. Although hurtful, these feelings are a necessary part of the grieving process. Noel added that talking to others is one of the best ways to move through the process, because it releases pent-up feelings.

Starting new traditions and creating a support group are two more ways to move through the grieving process, Noel said. She reminds those who are grieving that other friends or family members are probably facing similar emotions, and suggests forming a group to support each other in difficult times.

The Downtown Community Fo-

rum, a community service of St. Mary's Parish in Rochester, offers a Surviving the Holidays program each December to help people find peace and happiness during what may be a dark time in their lives. The series evolved out of a bereavement group, and is aimed at helping people cope with grief and the holidays. The speaker for this year's installment is the Rev. Iris Banister, associate minister at St. Luke Tabernacle Community Church, who will talk about the insecurity many people feel due to war, terrorist attacks, personal obstacles and threatening information that catapults some people into depression.

"People experience loss in so many different ways. The holiday season is really a magnifying glass for all of our wants, needs and losses," said Kera Neylan, executive director of DCF. "There aren't any easy answers, but being in a community can help. Being together is sometimes just something positive that you can do."

The 2003 Surviving the Holidays series will be held at noon on Thursday, Dec. 18, at the Dugan Center, St. Mary's Church, 15 St. Mary's Place, Rochester.