# Orthodox congregation chooses English for its services

By MARILYN RILEY

The majority of Orthodox Christian churches in the U.S. stand as symbols of tradition. Their members are immigrants or sons and daughters raised to believe in the sanctity of cultural heritage.

However, with assimilation comes change and now the Orthodox Church is in the same position as the Catholic Church Membership is falling off and the Orthodox Church is in need of workable options to slow the loss.

One option being pursued by the Rev. John Dresko is to build a con-gregation of Orthodox Christians worshiping entirely in English.

Formed in February, St. Mark American Orthodox Church now has 34 families as members. The group worships in the chapel of Avondale Convalescent Home in Avon Town-ship but hopes eventually to have its own church.

"In general, the history (of the church) in Detroit has been an eth-

nic tradition," Dresko said. "We're the only parish in the Detroit area that uses exclusively English."

The idea is to "avoid all stum bling blocks to the growth of the church" and boost participation by young people.

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"In the Orthodox Church in the last 10 years, we've seen a decline in the young members. If you don't understand a word that's going on in the church, when you reach the age of 18 you're not going to stay there," he said.

THE CHURCH also hopes to appeal to other Orthodox people disillusioned with the ethnic tradition or who married outside the church and stopped attending, he added.

Members of the Rochester area congregation are third or fourth generation Americans, many of Russian stock.

Most worshiped at a church on the east side of Detroit before joining the northern Oakland County group. Dresko wants to build member-

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ship to 50 or 60 families next year, with an eventual goal of 100 fami-lies. After the parish is established, he wants to spend more time reach-ing out to the non-Orthodox.

In trying to gain converts, "we would try to stress that the Orthodox church is the oldest Christian church established by Christ himself," Dresko said.

The church, which split with Rome in 1054, does not recognize papal supremacy. In this country,

the church counts among its members Greek, Bulgarians, Romanians, Russians and Syrians.

Nussians and syrians.
Vespers and the Holy Liturgy are said each weekend in the convalescent home, 1470 Walton Blvd.
Vespers begin at 6.30 pm. Saturday and Holy Liturgy at 10 a.m. Sundays. Adult education and catechism for children begin at 9 a.m. Sundays.

The Christmas vigil begins at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday and Christmas Day services start at 9:30 a.m.

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