

# Pastor works to save 'doomed' churches

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provide a source of strength for each other.

It was to fight Cardinal Edmund Szoka's proposal to close 42 Detroit church buildings and one River Rouge church building, disband 46 parishes and reduce six churches to missions or shrines in the wake of dwindling numbers of Catholics in the city, a shortage of priests and rising costs in poor parishes. The cardinal's plan represents the widest sweep of Catholic church closings in U.S. history.

"WHERE THERE'S a will, there's

a way," said Wright, who joined the pastoral alliance four years ago because he "felt a community of interest with these people — in prayer and with the things they're concerned about."

"These churches are still an important, active and vital part of community life," reads a passage from an alliance protest message. "These churches continue to welcome the unchurched of the city into their communities for worship and belonging."

Wright cited the \$10 million the

1.5-million-member Archdiocese of Detroit raised during its annual spring Catholic Services Appeal as an example of the archdiocese's fund-raising prowess.

"I really believe Cardinal Szoka wants to have a vibrant church in the city. But I don't think he knows how," Wright said.

"If we're not where the poor are, where are we?" he asked. "If we're not providing food, transportation and clothing, what are we doing?"

Wright stressed that he's not talking just about Roman Catholics.

"I think the ministry is real," he said. "I'm talking about people in need. People are people. If we're not there to minister, whatever (religious) they are, it seems to me the church isn't doing its job."

"The Catholic church has not been successful in evangelizing black people, who are loyal to their Baptist faith. But that's not the issue. It's people in need that's the issue."

ON SHIAWASSEE in southeast Farmington Hills, St. Alexander boasts a parish of 640 families.

"My job is to be a leader, to make

people aware," said Wright, parish pastor for 16 years.

Parishioners have lent more than moral support to fellow Catholics in Detroit.

Two years ago, St. Alexander donated a van for use by Montessori students at the Brooklyn Youth Center near Tiger Stadium.

St. Alexander's sister parish is St. Leo, at 14th and Grand River, which is to be merged with other parishes.

"We support them in any way we can," Wright said. "We've taken them food, supported them financially to the extent we're able, we're on

call if they need us in whatever way."

Meanwhile, archdiocese law requires each parish to contribute about 5 percent of its annual income to the archdiocese. The archdiocese also sets a yearly Catholic Services Appeal contribution for each parish. For St. Alexander, the two assessments total about \$35,000. St. Alexander's total contribution, like those of all solvent parishes, not only help fund Archdiocese of Detroit programs, but also help subsidize inner-city and other parishes too poor to contribute anything.

## Voters to face new bond vote

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"The longer we wait, the more expensive it will be," added trustee Helen Prutow. "We need these renovations. I don't want to minimize the need."

Also supporting the motion was Helen Ditzhary.

ABOUT 70 residents appeared before the board last week, giving their support and asking the board to propose another bond issue for the new school. Tuesday night, Patrick Anderson, Farmington Hills resident and critic of the failed bond issue, said he would support an attempt to bond the new school. "I think the citizens would support funds for a new elementary school," he said. "I'm in support of it."

Tuesday's decision was an attempt by the board to aim for a fall 1990 school opening on the west side. If voters approve the measure, Architectural Consultants told the board even a January election would cut the timetable close.

And attorney J. Kingsley Cotten, representing the district, said a legal question still remains about whether such an election can be held less than six months after the defeated measure. He said courts have upheld cases where dollar amounts or ballot wording on bond issues are "substantially different."

School administrators are expected to return to the board soon with a proposal for an election date, after obtaining approval for a new election from the state Board of Education.

## Tighter gas-oil drilling laws eyed

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"WE ARE concerned, as are residents," Costick said.

The resolution will take at least a couple weeks to draft because city officials want to include examples and specific provisions for drilling. It is an area we're all learning about. I want to do it right," Costick added.

But city officials are not taking an official position as far as residents' signing mineral leases for their property. "The city cannot counsel you relative to signing these leases," Costick said. Obviously, if residents are opposed to any drilling, they should not encourage companies by

signing the leases, he added.

At least two companies are seeking leases in southwest Farmington Hills. Energy Quest Inc., Lansing, is seeking leases in Meadowbrook Hills and Woods, north of Eight Mile, between Halsted and I-275. The Marine City-based M.J. O'Connor & Associates, Inc., is seeking leases in Farmington Square and other subdivisions in the Nine Mile-Halsted area. Grand View Acres subdivision on Seven Mile, west of I-275 in Northville Township also is targeted by a company for mineral rights leases. And according to the Novi city clerk's office, drilling is taking place on the city's western edge. Two

years ago, Novi adopted an ordinance regulating natural gas and oil drilling.

"We have to look at an ordinance. If we do, we do have to do a good ordinance," Costick said, adding that Novi's ordinance is "very regulatory" but still permits drilling.

FARMINGTON HILLS residents in neighborhoods targeted for mineral rights lease acquisition probably won't follow Northville residents' lead in requesting a moratorium on drilling. Township trustees adopted a resolution calling for a moratorium on drilling until new legislation could be passed giving local governments more control.

"I don't think we're in a position to do that right now," said Farmington Square resident Peggy DuPont, who has spearheaded an informational drive about gas and oil exploration and drilling. "The city council isn't prepared to do that."

In the letter to certain Farmington Hills residents, city officials document information gathered about gas and oil exploration and drilling. Under the city's BOCA fire prevention code, for example, companies must obtain a permit for drilling, which cannot be done closer than 300 feet to a building or residence. No permits have been applied for or issued, Costick said.

The city's zoning ordinances allow drilling in a light industrial district after the planning commission grants a special approval following a public hearing. Drilling would have to be a minimum 300 feet from a residential district, where drilling is not permitted.

Costick said city staff will continue to research the issue and work with the state Department of Natural Resources, which regulates gas and oil drilling.

"I have a gnawing feeling despite the bravado, there seems to be a question whether we could stop large-scale drilling," councilman Aldo Vagnozzi said.

## Observer is cited for general excellence

The Farmington Observer was named the state's third best weekly for general excellence. It competed in the 1988 Michigan Press Association 1988 Better Newspaper Contest. Announcing winners at the National Newspaper Week Oct. 2-8, the judges said the Observer "could easily have been No. 1."

A general excellence rating is the highest professional honor a Michigan weekly newspaper can earn. The Farmington Observer competes among weekly newspapers over 10,000 circulation.

Last year, the Farmington Observer finished runner-up to the Birmingham-Bloomfield Eccentric in the general excellence category. This year, the Birmingham-Bloomfield Eccentric finished runner-up to the Woodhaven News-Herald.

The Observer & Eccentric's coverage of the crash of Northwest Flight 255, which ran in all 12 papers, topped the local news reporting category. "Excellent coverage of a tragedy that gripped the hearts of not only a city but the entire nation," said the judges.

The Observer & Eccentric's child care series, which the Farmington Observer took part in, finished second in the local news reporting category. The MPA called it "an in-depth study of a problem that affects

many communities and receives less attention than it deserves."

The Farmington Observer took a third place in the category that rated editorial page quality. "Good editorial display," said the judges. "Bob Sklar does a good job with his column."

THE OBSERVER'S four awards were among 16 received by the Observer & Eccentric chain of 12 community newspapers.

The Birmingham-Bloomfield Eccentric was second and the West Bloomfield Eccentric took an honorable mention in the general excellence category.

In local news reporting the O&E nearly swept the awards, winning first for the Flight 255 coverage, second for the child care series and an honorable mention for the Rochester Eccentric's hotel series, which showed how a single development could have an impact on a community.

The Southfield Eccentric took third place in feature writing for a series on the city's 30th birthday celebration.

Other awards included:  
• Livonia Observer — first place for feature photographs, first place for picture stories and third place

for sports photographs to Steve Fecht.

• O&E chain — first place for sports writing to Tom Henderson for his "Wanna Bet" feature and side stories.

• Rochester Eccentric — third place for its lifestyle section.

THE NOVI News, part of the Silver-Livingston Division of Livonia-based Suburban Communications Corp., parent company of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, finished second for general excellence among newspapers in a smaller circulation class.

Members of the Georgia Press As-

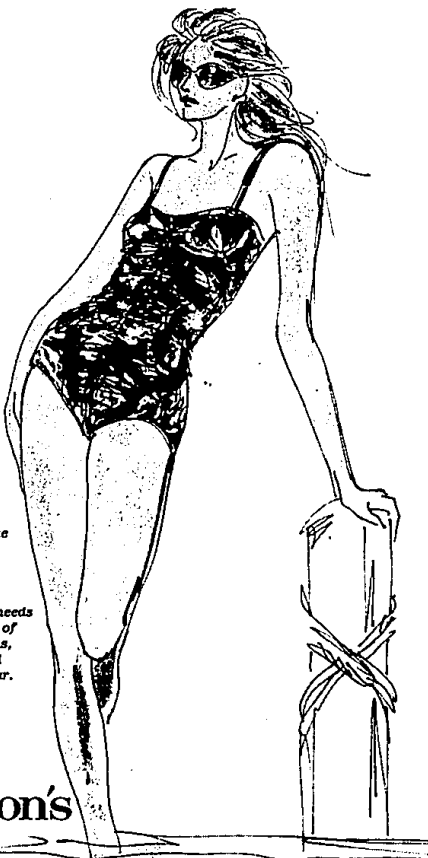
sociation judged the 1988 contest, which included 1,725 entries from 81 weekly newspapers and 46 daily newspapers. Winning entries earned certificates of excellence.

This year's National Newspaper Week theme is, "Newspapers: Freedom in Our Hands."

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