

# City church closings rip suburbs, too

**T**HE DEATH of a religious community affects us all. When churches or synagogues are closed, a part of the important fabric of life is torn.

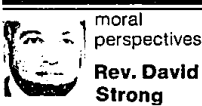
Back in the early 1980s, I was one of a group of clergy and laity who opposed the closing and sale of Narden Park United Methodist Church. The church was sold, and the people relocated out of Detroit into the suburbs. It is now a thriving church.

We who opposed the sale and move were both right and wrong. We were wrong because a new and thriving church was born. We were right because a part of the city was abandoned as far as the denomination was concerned.

I BELIEVE that we should be involved in the struggles of our Catholic brothers and sisters in the city of Detroit.

I know of Protestants, who grew up in the city and now live in Seattle, who are following the issues regarding these church closings.

The great separation between the denominations, which existed in the 1950s, is no longer relevant. We face common problems. We feel more drawn into a common destiny. The rivalries and distinctions are no longer there. If 30 or more Roman



**Rev. David Strong**

Catholic churches close, it affects us all.

**WHAT IF** the Catholic archdiocese had announced the closings and mergers and at the same time initiated a church growth and outreach program?

What if there were new strategies for cooperative ministry proposed? More than anything else, the Roman Catholic church in this metro area needs a symbol of resurrection. There is death in the plan proposed. Where is the life?

The United Methodist Church has closed many churches over the past three decades. This was done gradually and quietly. Yet, I believe the period we are entering is far different from the 1960s. New strategies and new hope need to be found in a world coming closer together.

Back in the late 1960s, I served a congregation in Troy which shared its building with a new Roman Catholic mission. We experienced new life in this cooperative arrangement.

The powers that be were not pleased. The experiment was ended. Our time calls for a different response.

We are all affected by such decisions. We can longer protect our turf without connecting together.

Rev. David T. Strong is pastor of St. Matthew United Methodist Church in Livonia.

# Many join St. Pat's parade

Shamrocks will be blooming Sunday on Michigan Avenue in Detroit when the 31st annual St. Patrick's Day Parade kicks off at 2 p.m.

Rain, snow or shine, 100 award-winning bands, marching units and floats will step off at Michigan and Third Street, proceeding one mile to 14th Street.

The Birmingham Chrysler Celtic Pipes and Drums will join the Irish Setter Club of Michigan, Irish step dancers, the Ballet Folklorique of Corktown, Great Lakes White German Shepherd Club of Redford Township, O'Hare School of Irish Dance of Plymouth, Clowns Around Redford, Domino's Pizza ponies, Irish wolfhounds from three states and a host of others on Sunday.

**MARCHING BANDS** from Troy and Redford Union High schools will be featured.

So will marching units from Dunleavy's Pub & Grub of Farmington, Monaghan Knights of Columbus in Livonia, the McCusker Family marchers and float of Westland and Donovan's Country Store of Farmington.

Chairing his 14th parade will be Michael Sullivan, of Farmington Hills. Owner and president of Waterville Construction in Farmington, Sullivan is affectionately known among the Irish community as "West Side Red."

The Rev. Thomas Duffey and Sister Mary Watson of St. Patrick's Senior Center in the Cass Corridor, are this year's grand marshals. Along with Maid of Erin Anne Marie Cullen, Duffey and Watson will lead the parade, expected to draw more than 150,000 spectators.

Joining Cullen on the Maid of Erin

court are Katherine Maye of Livonia, a student at Madonna College, and Anne Marie Staunton of Dearborn, a student at Fordson High School.

**HEADING UP** the Court of St. Brigid is Margaret Mary Cleary of Brighton. Court members are Ann Marie Houlihan of St. Clair Shores and Jennifer Prater of Milford.

"Celebrating the Heart of the Irish in the Heart of Detroit" is this year's parade theme.

"The purpose of the parade is to honor the patron saint of Ireland and to emphasize the contributions made by the Irish people to our nation and to our community," said Eileen Finn, parade organizer.

Duffey and Sister Watson epitomize the theme of this year's parade said Finn.

Their work at St. Patrick's in Detroit includes a shelter, soup kitchen, senior center and numerous commu-

nity outreach programs.

**WITH HELP** from suburban parishes, Duffey and Sister Watson care for the elderly and poor at St. Patrick's Senior Center.

"No question, Father Duffey and Sister Mary Watson personally the heart of the Irish," said Michael Sullivan, parade chairman. "Their lives are dedicated to giving to the poor, the unfortunate and the underdogs."

Duffey, ordained in 1949, has worked in Wayne County for 39 years. For the past 11 years, he has been the pastor of St. Patrick's Church.

Sister Watson, a Highland Park native, entered the Racine Dominican Order in 1950. A dietician, she worked with senior citizens in Wisconsin and Nebraska before coming to Detroit. She transformed an abandoned, rundown high school into the thriving center that today assists hundreds of senior citizens.

She also refurbished a dilapidated motel in the Cass Corridor and to 25 homeless men who live there, "she is like the Mother Teresa of Detroit," said Finn.

State Rep. Michael Bennane, D-Detroit, and state Sen. John Kelly, D-Detroit, are honorary chairmen of this year's parade.

St. Patrick's Week activities officially get under way at noon Friday when Maid of Erin Anne Marie Cullen and the grand marshals paint shamrocks on Michigan Avenue at Rosa Parks Boulevard near Reedy's Place.

Sponsoring the parade is the United Irish Society, an umbrella group of 19 Irish-American organizations.

Pre-parade activities include the Corktown races, a 4-mile run, 1-mile walk and 1 1/2-mile run/walk to be held at 12:30 p.m. All three races begin at Tiger Stadium and finish at the parade reviewing stand.

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Make checks payable to: SHS-Rebuild the Library Fund. Tickets are tax-deductible.

Additional donations are gratefully appreciated and can be mailed to the SHS-Rebuild the Library Fund, c/o The Southfield Eccentric, P.O. Box 187, Southfield, Michigan 48037.

For more information: City of Southfield Community Relations Department, 354-4854.

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