

# Spirituality from page 18A

basically, there was only one possibility of staying," explained the Detroit native. "I would have to be willing to take a life-long view of celibacy. The Lutheran church does not require heterosexuals to take a vow of celibacy, so I thought it was a hypocrisy."

Roberts left the church and moved to the north side of Chicago, where he lives for two years among a population that is 70-percent gay.

"I felt comfortable with who I am as a gay person, but lonely about not fulfilling the call to parish ministry," Roberts recalled of the experience.

So Roberts returned to Oakland County, making his spiritual home at Calvary Lutheran Church as a lay member and choir director. The Southfield church is one of only three churches in Michigan that are "reconciled in Christ," or on record as a church that's welcoming to gays, lesbians and bi-sexuals.

The Rev. C. William Pearson, pastor of Calvary Lutheran Church, met Roberts 12 years ago when he was still on the clerical roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

"I think God really put us together. Our congregation was already a reconciled in Christ congregation," said Pearson, who knew his home in Southfield. "When John came to worship with us, we didn't even have a choir, and he started one. He came and jumped right into the activities of the congregation."

Timothy W. Spannaus and his wife, Collette Parisau, co-chair Calvary's Ministry Development Task Force, which began 18 months ago as a way to reach outside the congregation and into surrounding neighborhoods. It was with the support of this task force that Roberts initiated the church founding.

"Basically, one of the stated missions of Calvary Church is to bring God's Good News to all people," said Spannaus, a Lathrup Village resident who owns a consulting firm in Bingham Farms. "John pointed out to us that this group was missing, and the congregation has been very positive and very supportive."

Opening church doors to groups in need of worship space is not a new concept for Calvary's 60-member congregation. The Church of Saint Sergius and Saint Bacchus is the fifth group to make its home in the building at Evergreen and 1 1/4 Mile Road.

Roberts said he named The Church of Saint Sergius and Saint Bacchus after two saints who have been forgotten in the recent history of Christianity.

Sergius, a nobleman, and Bacchus, a peasant, were Christian lovers who lived in the late third century, said Roberts. They served in the military in the Roman Empire and were put to death, individually, because they refused to worship Roman gods.

"I was so impressed with their lives that I thought it was about time for the church to honor them again," said Roberts, whose church sign bears an icon of the pair. "That's why I chose them."

Roberts, who now resides in Southfield, says his return to pastoral life is motivated by a call from God. He adapted the new church's liturgy from the Roman Catholic Mass, the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer and the Lutheran Book of Worship. He is also bringing Orthodox elements to the church setting, like iconography and pieces of liturgy taken from the Liturgy of St. John.

Chrysothom.

"People raised in those four churches in particular," explained Roberts, "are people who can't put their faith and their gayness together. This is an attempt to provide a safe church home for gay people raised in liturgical backgrounds."

"The Catholic Church does not comment on the affairs or operations of other churches. That's always been our policy," said Ned McGrath, director of communica-

tions for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit.

"The Catholic Church is always willing to accept people as they are. Church members are expected to follow church teaching in all areas as outlined in the 'Catechism of the Catholic Church,' from sexuality to social teachings to the actions of everyday life."

A Lutheran all his life, Roberts says his call to become a pastor came at the tender age of 8. He earned a bachelor's degree in

education with a major in vocal music from Concordia College in Nebraska, and a master's of divinity degree from Christ Seminary-Seminex in Chicago. Ordained in 1976, Roberts served congregations in California and Pennsylvania before coming to Michigan to head churches in Ypsilanti and Madison Heights.

Though he maintains a full-time job at a religious supply store, Roberts has made a strong commitment to the new church.

He hopes to eventually cut his hours in secular employment when the church begins to grow.

Members of the new church represent all ages and economic classes and are expected to come from all over the metro Detroit area.

"Everyone who wants to worship at The Church of Saint Sergius and Saint Bacchus is welcome, whether gay or not," said Roberts. "But they need to know that the liturgy will be focused

through the needs of the gay community. When I preach, I'll take what God has to say and focus the lessons through the eyes of the gay person."

The first liturgy of The Church of Saint Sergius and Saint Bacchus will begin at 6 p.m. on Sunday, April 14, at Calvary Lutheran Church, 28801 Evergreen at 1 1/4 Mile Road, Southfield. For more information, call (810) 647-9865.



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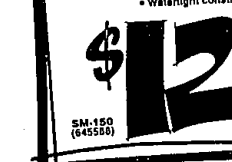
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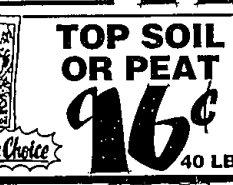
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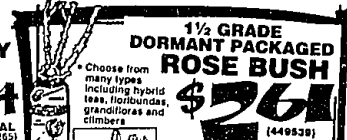
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## Church hosts rummage sale

The Episcopal Church Women of Christ Church Cranbrook will hold their spring rummage fashion show on Tuesday, April 16.

The preview mini sale begins at 11 a.m. The luncheon starts at 12:15 p.m., followed by the fashion show at 1 p.m., featuring fashions from the rummage sale. For reservations, call (810) 644-5210. Cost for the luncheon and fashion show is \$10.

The 51st annual rummage show opens to the public from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday, April 25. The show boasts 250 volunteers. Fashioners and community residents take part in a year-round tradition of dropping off a variety of used items — from designer and sports clothing and children's wear to jewelry, linens, china, housewares, books, toys and sports equipment. Sale proceeds are distributed to 50 human service agencies. Refreshments and parcel checking are available. Shoppers should bring their own shopping bag.

The church is at Cranbrook and Lone Pine, one block west of Woodward, in Bloomfield Hills.

Prices may vary after April 11, 1996 if there are market variations.