

BELIEFS Values

New pastor to focus faith on education

BY RENA FULKA
SPECIAL WRITER

The Rev. Ronald Moritz left his 19-year pastorate in the Chicago suburbs for new challenges and opportunities in Oakland County.

He's now pastor of St. John Lutheran Church in Rochester, heading a parish of 3,100 baptized members and overseeing the largest parochial grammar school nationwide within the Missouri Synod church body.

For Moritz, who had grown quite comfortable with his thriving ministry in Munster, Ind., the move out of state was not planned. "I've had dozens of calls in the last 10 years from churches all over the country," said the minister of 24 years. "But this call captured my attention. I was convinced this is where God wanted me to be."

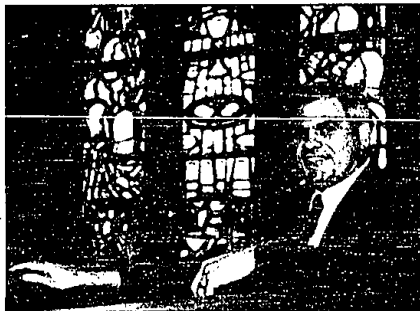
On June 23, the rite of installation was officiated by Dr. John

Heins, president of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod/Michigan District. The main participant was Dr. Richard Schleht, the district's former president.

Mariam Misch has been a member of the Rochester church for 25 years. "The main reason we came here, at first, was because of the excellent school reputation," said the Rochester Hills resident. "We had five young, educable children."

Today, the church secretary seems more drawn by a sense of spirituality. It's a quality she is quick to find in Moritz. "He's a fine charismatic leader and I think it will be a positive acceptance," she said. "The people are very open, anxious and ready to follow a new man."

A native of Chicago's west side, Moritz was educated in his home state. He pursued a bache-



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL HANSEN

lor's degree in education from Concordia University with the intention of becoming a teacher. But when a sense of divine called led him to consider pastoral ministry, he completed a Master's of Divinity degree from Concordia Theological Seminary. Later, he earned a master's degree in gerontology from Concordia university.

"We place a tremendous emphasis on having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through the message of the Gospel," said Moritz, who began his ministry in Frankmunth. "We educate all ages in the Gospel and Word of God."

Since coming to Rochester on June 1, Moritz has already

begun to focus on balancing the church ministry with the strong educational program of the school. "My role, especially as a senior administrative pastor," he said, "is to create a climate in the congregation that allows all the many talented and dedicated people who are here to serve God in a positive, supportive atmosphere."

St. John Lutheran School was established in 1942, some two decades after the church was founded. Today, 625 students are enrolled in pre-school through grade eight. As pastor, Moritz will provide vision and leadership for the entire parish, including the school.

"He is a very strong adminis-

"Very caring person":
The Rev. Ronald Moritz, a Chicago native and long-time suburban Chicago pastor, brings his spiritual message to Oakland County.

trative leader and a very caring person," said principal Bill Hinz of Rochester Hills. "He really listens to the people and he has a very good ability to help organizations plan for the future."

Members of the growing St. John parish are planning a mission - Living Word Lutheran Church - at Rochester and Gunn Roads in Rochester Hills. Ground has already been broken for this "daughter church," which will also house grades K-3 of St. John Lutheran School beginning in September 1997. Grades 4-8 will remain in the Rochester location.

Moritz is a member of the American Association of Gerontologists and the American Association of Counselors. He and his wife, Lorelle, have three grown children: Jeremy, Joel and Bethany.

"St. John is blessed with an ideal, high-profile location," he added. "We want to enhance our complex to be a very obvious symbol of Christian faith in the Rochester area, and enhance the way we present ourselves in convictions and values."

Reach out to good of neighbors in conflict

FOCUS ON THEOLOGY



RONALD P. BYARS

The recent flare-up of violence in Northern Ireland is disturbing. It appears that, in this instance, the Protestants are responsible. Every July, the Protestant "Orange Order" stages a march to commemorate a battle fought some 300 years ago. Led by William of Orange, a Protestant force won a victory over Roman Catholics at the Battle of the Boyne.

The Orange Order insisted on marching through Catholic neighborhoods in celebration of that ancient triumph. This parade, in those particular streets, is more or less the equivalent of one party giving the raspberry to the other. It is not only offensive, but calculated to be offensive.

How can Christian people be so ugly in their lack of respect for each other? It doesn't take much experience observing the human race to know that people frequently fail to live up to their own ideals.

However, I think the conflict in Northern Ireland is a bit more complicated than simple hypocrisy.

The fact is that many of the "Protestants" and "Catholics" of Northern Ireland more nearly resemble ethnic groups than religious groups.

It used to be that even in our own country, if you asked someone their reli-

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STUDENT SEARCH
Openings are available for the 1996-97 school year in grades preschool through eighth grade

at St. Matthew Lutheran School, 2020 S. Commerce, Walled Lake. Scholarships are available. Call (810) 624-7676.

OUTDOOR WORSHIP
First United Methodist Church, 1589 W. Maple Rd., Birmingham, holds summer outdoor worship services at 7:30 p.m. each Wednesday through Aug. 14 in the Chambliss Outdoor Worship Center. In the event of inclement weather, the half-hour

services are moved indoors. Refreshments follow. For more information, call (810) 646-1200. Temple Israel, 5725 Walnut Lake Road, West Bloomfield, invites the community to celebrate Sabbath services under the stars. The services will begin at 8 p.m. every Friday, from July 5 through Aug. 16, weather permitting. Casual dress, no jeans, is suggested. For more information,

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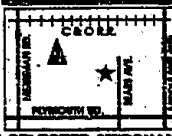
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