

Church declares itself a nuclear-free zone

By Diane Gale
staff writer

In an effort to dramatize their opposition to the nuclear arms race, members of Northwest Unitarian Universalist Church in Southfield have declared their premises a nuclear free zone.

Although a global movement, this is only the second recorded zone in Michigan.

The church's building and property are off-limits to any type of support, design, testing, production and development of nuclear weapons, according to the nuclear free zone proclamation.

"The major idea is to keep alive a hope of peace," said Jerry Charbonneau, who initiated the congregation's action.

"These kinds of actions help me and others psychologically, so we feel involved and don't feel alienated," he

said. "Rather than stay passive, it makes a statement."

The anti-nuclear announcement, which was opposed by some of the congregation's approximately 180 members, was highlighted at a peace vigil on Sunday.

About 65 church members showed for a meditation period and launching of 70 helium-filled balloons. The balloons, with messages written by the children of the congregation, and were released to carry anti-nuclear declarations to other cities.

"Stop war," "make love not peace," and "keep up the nuclear freeze," were among the pleas.

"One scary note was, 'Why should I do my homework?'" said Charbonneau, a social-work instructor at Madonna College.

"Even though it's said sarcastically, it also reflects that some kids think

they only have five or 10 years left," he said.

CITIES HAVE been declared nuclear free in England, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Japan. All of Wales is nuclear free.

These cities are important global links, bringing the peace movement together, according to a Nuclear Free America brochure.

Local governments in 25 United States cities have written resolutions or ordinances declaring their areas nuclear free.

"Proclamations made by resolutions are a symbolic message. However, ordinances carry legal restrictions on supporting, researching or producing nuclear arms in the area, according to Max Obuszewski, assistant director of Nuclear Free America, a national organization based in Maryland.

"The fact that people in other countries are doing the same is hopeful, because it says that we aren't isolated people blowing off steam, but a part of a larger movement," Charbonneau said.

The nuclear arms race is a major issue in Europe with an outpouring of demonstrations protesting the planned deployment of U.S. Pershing II and cruise missiles on the continent.

"The people in Europe know what it's like to be devastated by war, and I think here in America we tend to close our eyes," said Jan Decker, Northwest Unitarian Universalist Church affairs committee chairman.

"Moving toward a nuclear war is insanity, and I think we have a government that is working in that direction," she said.

A NON-VIOLENT attitude is a pri-

mary standard in the church, Decker said.

Unitarian Universalists do not follow one particular creed, but rather promote freedom of thought and a continuous searching for answers, she said. The people in the congregation are from many different structural religions, including Christian, Jewish, humanist, deist and agnostic.

"We believe in the goodness of each individual and the interdependence of people with our total environment," Decker said. "We tend to be non-violent, because we want to allow each individual's uniqueness to come through."

The Unitarian Universalist Church in Detroit on Cass also is declared a nuclear free zone. It is the only other recorded nuclear free area in Michigan.

The nuclear free zone concept has more teeth than the nuclear freeze

movement, because it terminates research and production of weapons, according to Vic Schumacher, co-chairman of the Unitarian Universalist Church social action.

Schumacher spearheaded the nuclear free zone concept at the Detroit location, which served as a guide for the Southfield congregation.

"CAMBRIDGE, Massachusetts, the home of Harvard (University) and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is considering declaring itself nuclear free," Schumacher said. "Can you imagine the effect of research coming to a halt there?"

The nuclear free zone movement is effective because it allows people in the communities to become involved in the national political issue of nuclear arms, Obuszewski said.

"The situation today reminds me of Germany and Hitler moving toward

World War II, and the fact that people didn't speak up then," Decker said. "Unless we speak up against this madness, we will indeed get to where we're headed."

Members in the Northwest Unitarian Universalist Church will work to have the Magnolia subdivision, of which they are a part, to also become a nuclear free zone, Charbonneau said.

"Their next goal is to convince members of the Southfield City Council to declare the city a free zone.

Church members, and people from all parts of the state, plan to participate in a protest of the U.S. deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles in Europe. The demonstration is starting at 11 a.m. on Saturday at Clark Park in Detroit. Participants plan to walk to the Ambassador Bridge. "World Shop Euro-missiles" will be the theme of gatherings around the world this weekend.

Hint on publishing given at workshop

"Writing for Publication" will be the topic of a workshop offered this fall at Madonna College, Livonia.

The workshop will instruct students on how to prepare and submit manuscripts, lighten and polish articles and judge and handle rejection slips. Fiction writing, interviewing, children's books and many other aspects of writing will be explored.

Anabelle McInay, a former columnist and published author of four books,

will instruct the course. Optional textbooks, written by the instructor, will be available for purchase at the workshop.

The class will meet Saturdays, Oct. 22, 29 and Nov. 5 from 10 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. The fee for the workshop is \$40. Continuing Education Units are available.

Madonna College is located at I-96 and Levan Road in Livonia. For information, call 591-5188.

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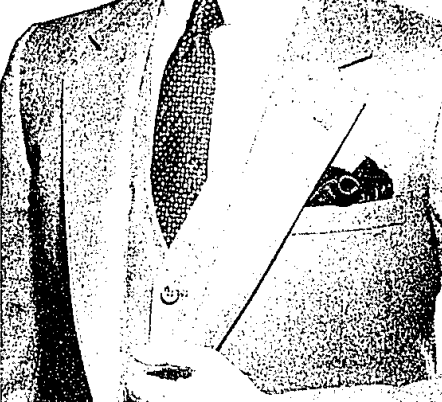
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