

Intercultural marriage is topic of Center seminars

By Sharon Dargatz
Staff writer

Most rabbis won't sanction interfaith marriage.
Devout Jews discourage it.
Non-Jewish spouses often feel pressured to convert.
("Counseling interfaith marriages") is so new," Jeffrey Kotler said. "Not many people know much about it."

Nurses course offers degree

Registered nurses interested in completing a bachelor of science degree in nursing may attend information sessions explaining Mercy College of Detroit's Nursing Degree Completion program.
The sessions will be 4-5 p.m. in the college's Conference Center Monday, April 9, and Monday, May 7.
Mercy's Nursing Degree Completion program offers the diploma and associate degree registered nurse the opportunity to earn the BSN degree. The program includes a credit-by-examination component for 55 of 80 credits in the nursing major. These instructor-provided examinations enable participants to translate previous experience

into nursing credits. Advanced standing may be earned through transfer credits and College Level Examination Program credit. At least 30 credit hours must be earned through registration at Mercy College.
The program is accredited through the National League for Nursing.
"It offers the student greater opportunities for advancement in the nursing profession," program coordinator Sister M. Bernice Pohl said.
All information sessions will be held in the Mercy College Conference Center. Group meetings at agencies will be arranged upon request.
For more information, call Sister Bernice at 592-6131.

The program costs \$10 per session or \$15 for all three sessions. The first workshop, "Crises and Conflicts Facing Interfaith Couples," will be 6:30-9:30 p.m. Sunday, April 1, at the center, Maple at Drake, West Bloomfield.
"Family Relationships in Interfaith Marriage" is scheduled for Sunday, April 8, and "Conflicting Cultures and Customs" for Sunday, April 15. Each session will include a panel discussion by representatives of the Jewish faith, mental health, spouses who have converted to Judaism and persons married to non-Jews.
TYPICALLY, premarriage counseling consists of converting the non-Jewish spouse, Kotler said. Interfaith marriage is viewed as a threat to Judaism because the religion doesn't encourage proselytizing or conversion as a means of building dwindling congregations.

"It's a conflict of basic beliefs," said Rabbi David Nelson, Congregation Beth Shalom, Oak Park. "Traditionally, that negative view is shared by all faiths that want to survive."
Conservative, orthodox and some reform rabbis refuse to officiate marriages between Jewish and non-Jewish people, based on ideology and conviction, Nelson said. Reform rabbis believe they are "leaving the door open" for a potential convert to the Jewish faith, Nelson explained.
Although he doesn't marry couples of differing religions, Nelson counsels couples involved in interfaith marriages. Couples who maintain the same level of religious commitment to their respective faiths avoid conflict better than those with differing levels of commitment, he said.

OFTEN, COUPLES make religion a low priority in their lives. Problems may begin to develop when one partner in the marriage becomes more zealous about his faith.
"How do you know that two years after they're married one of them won't be touched and want to deepen their religious faith? If they're of the same faith that's good."
"But if it's an interfaith marriage, they'd better stay on the same level as they entered into the marriage."
Encouraging couples to stifle spiritual growth conflicts with most religious ideologies, Nelson said.
"Marriage, at best, between couples of the same faith tradition can be rough. Not being of the same faith is an added factor that impedes the success of the marriage."
Response to the program has ranged from relief to outrage, with opponents threatening to resign membership in the community center, Kotler said.
"THEY FEEL" that by sponsoring

the program, they're endorsing the idea that interfaith marriages are good. The center is just trying to do outreach," Kotler has counseled a handful of families with problems related to interfaith marriage. Couples generally seek help for other reasons, but discover that religious and cultural differences underlie and aggravate their problems.
"The reason a kid may be acting out is because parents are playing tug-of-war, and the kid is so confused he doesn't know what to do. Or in-laws may be disapproving of the wife and undermine her position in the family because she is from another culture or religious background," Kotler said.
Celebrating religious holidays and teaching children about their different faiths typically complicates family relationships in interfaith marriages. Often, the alternative to conversion is divorce.



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