



ALC pastor William Morrissey (right): 'Holding a family reunion' after four and one-half centuries

ALC, Roman Catholic parishes link

Two suburban congregations in Portland, Ore., one Roman Catholic and the other a member of the American Lutheran Church, formed a new ecumenical experiment at the end of May.

St. Anthony's Roman Catholic Church in Tigard, Ore., and Atonement Lutheran Church in Beaverton, Ore., share facilities, fellowship, worship, and a number of programs. About 50 of St. Anthony's 1300 families joined the 50 families of Atonement Church to become members of "Mission of the Atonement: A Catholic†Lutheran Community."

The idea for the mission was conceived last November when Atonement's pastor, the Rev. William Morrissey, asked Catholic officials: "Do you have any churches willing to share facilities?" Inadequate financial resources and a lack of church growth motivated Atonement Church to reconsider its mission. After considering 10 options, members of the congregation narrowed the choices: dissolution or the joint parish.

The first simultaneous yet separate worship services began July 6 at 9:00 A.M. A joint worship—without the Eucharist—is scheduled for the last Sunday of each month, using the new Lutheran-Catholic Service of the Word. A joint Sunday school—every Sunday and for all ages—begins in the fall.

Although much will be shared, the congregations will not lose their identities. Bishop Clifford R. Lunde of the ALC's North Pacific District described the venture as "unity in reconciled diversity." Said Lunde: "We don't have to give up what we are to work together."

Other ministries to be shared include: hospital and nursing home visitation, family counseling, outreach to the unchurched, and service to the needy. Morrissey and Father Michael Dallmeier serve as co-pastors.

Material for this story was supplied by Paul Gerhards, a staff writer of The Catholic Sentinel, Portland; Jed Doty, photo director for the Oregon Catholic Press, Portland; and Rae Carey, art director of RFD Publications, Tigard.