

Two Beaverton catholic communities:

Mission of the At-one-ment

by L. A. Jake Jacobson

"Given the years of conflict and distrust between the Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches, we like to say to all who come, 'Welcome to a miracle.'" That statement sums up a recent self-evaluation by Mission of the Atonement, a bold adventure of Lutherans and Roman Catholics in Beaverton, Oregon.

If necessity is the mother of invention, then Mission of the Atonement is a unique example of ecumenism necessitated by two realities that exist in virtually all ELCA and Roman Catholic relationships: Lutheran-Roman Catholic marriages in which each partner is a practicing member of his or her faith community, and the need to overcome historic misunderstandings between the two separated expressions of the one faith. In this case—for the Lutherans—there was a third necessity: a pressing financial problem that led to a unique solution.

In 1985, the future seemed bleak for Beaverton's Atonement Lutheran Church. They had struggled in an attempt to become self-supporting, but with a heavy debt and lack of growth, it appeared they could no longer survive as a viable congregation.

Options and support

One of the options presented at a congregational meeting was to intentionally search for another Christian congregation that would be willing to provide some income in exchange for sharing Atonement's very adequate facilities. This was the option taken and became the way the membership chose to avoid what seemed the inevitable path of disbanding.

At the same time, St. Anthony, a large neighboring Roman Catholic parish in Tigard, Oregon, was interested in expanding its outreach mission. The Roman Catho-

First communion class.

Of the nine children in the first Communion preparation class, seven were Roman Catholic and two were Lutheran.

Father Mathias Tumulty and I conducted a joint service of the Word. The children were recognized with certificates and then we enacted what they had come to understand. There is one loaf and one cup and one Christ, but there are differing traditions. We cut one loaf and poured two cups from one. Then the children carrying the elements led the procession to our separate locations for the eucharistic service.

At the same time we celebrate our oneness in Christ, we express our sorrow that so much divides our churches in spirit and action.

Pastor Dale Jamtgaard,
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lics who would be affected by a Beaverton mission were now part of a well-established parish. Many of those members were very comfortable in Tigard, and the

The proposal was that the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic people of the two congregations consider forming a community of the two groups. In the plan, each congregation would maintain its separate identity and traditions. So it was that in July, 1986, a Lutheran congregation and a Roman Catholic mission outreach in this Portland suburb formed a relationship that for many would have seemed impossible, if not unthinkable. For their judicatories, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Portland and the North Pacific District (NPD) of the former American Lutheran Church (ALC), this was a journey without-a road map.

Credit must be given to four church leaders who courageously participated in both the exploration of and bringing that community—the new Mission of the Atonement—into being. Two of them had established a friendship that would serve this experiment well. They were Atonement's pastor, Bill Morrissey, and Auxiliary Bishop Claude Steiner of the Archdiocese of Portland. The other two were the late Clifford Lunde, bishop of the ALC North Pacific District, and Archbishop Cornelius Power of the Archdiocese of Portland, whose pioneering spirit provided encour-

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idea of joining up with a group of Lutherans was certainly unexpected. However, "There was in those days an intense and very real sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit upon us all," according to one of their planning documents. They felt they had been called to consider this new venture.

agement, though not without some hesitancy.

With the approval of the Atonement Lutheran congregation and, according to the new Mission of the Atonement's self-study, the "cautious" blessing of "the respective church bodies," the new community was formed. Fr. Jim Parker, di-