

8 Lutheran churches go at auction

BY MARY HOULIHAN-SKILTON
STAFF REPORTER

God clearly came out the winner on Friday.

In what was labeled "the largest one-day sale of churches in the city's history," seven of eight Lutheran churches on the Northwest Side were purchased by other religious denominations—small churches that had been renting and are moving up. Only one was bought by a developer.

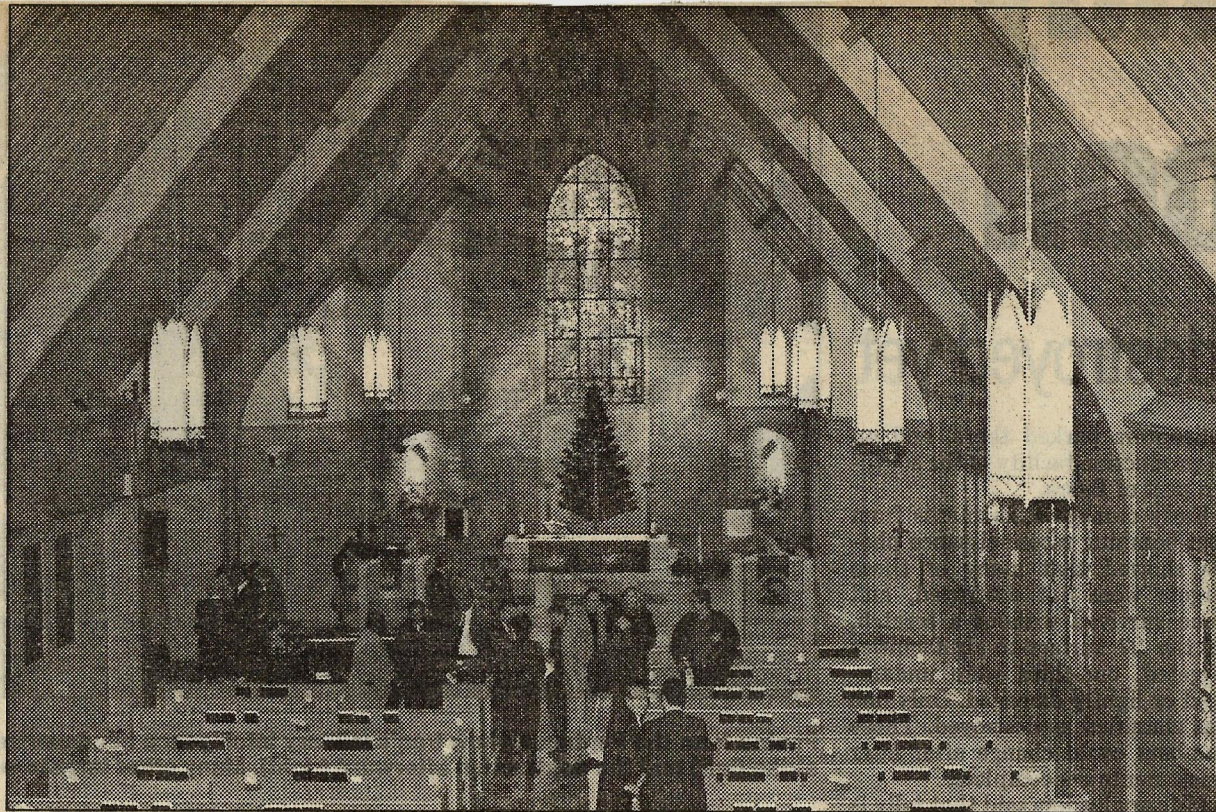
"Deep down, we really wanted the churches to be bought by other churches," said Dorothy Goos, council president of United in Faith Lutheran Church, the combined congregation behind the silent auction. "It makes our tough decision to consolidate into one church much easier."

What amazed Goos even more was that the new buyers represented a virtual cross-section of world religions.

The new owners ranged from St. John of Rila Bulgarian Orthodox Church to the African-American Living Witness Apostolic Church to Marantha Romanian Church to the Bangkok, Thailand-based Dhammakaya International Meditation Center of Chicago.

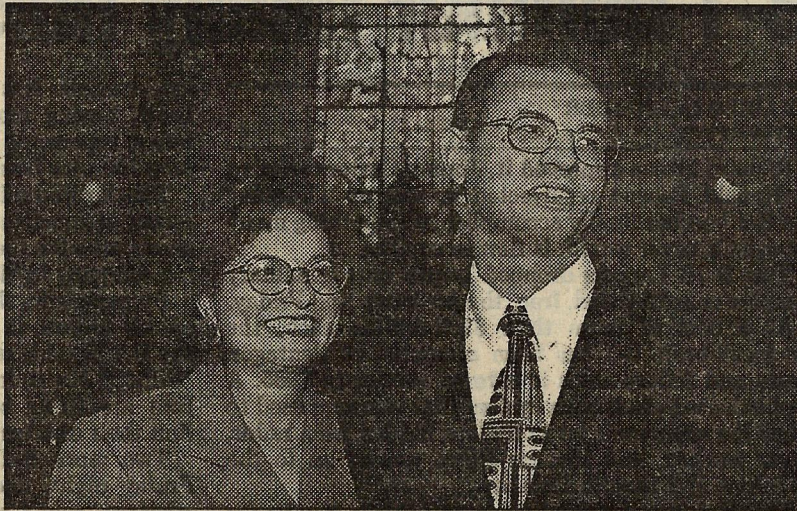
More than 300 inquiries about the properties were received and 54 sealed bids were submitted, said Steve Good of Sheldon Good & Co., Auctions.

William Vazquez, pastor of Liberty Christian Center, said he was thrilled that his bid won. His young Hispanic congregation will take over United in Faith Lutheran Church. Plans are to use it as a



JOHN H. WHITE/SUN-TIMES

ABOVE: United in Faith Lutheran Church, 5447 W. Addison, was purchased by Liberty Christian Center. LEFT: Liberty Pastor William Vazquez and his wife, Emilia, will use it as a community center.



training and community center.

"We are happy that we will be able to expand our ministry. We are not church-oriented but rather community-oriented," he said.

"We offer support where it is needed."

For 20 years, Bishop David Jackson's Living Witness Apostolic Church has been at 3520 W.

Ogden. Soon it will move to Our Saviour's English Lutheran Church in the Portage Park neighborhood.

"This is a great Christmas present," Jackson said. "With the help of God, we plan on doing great things. We want the neighborhood to be uplifted by our presence."

The combined Lutheran congregation will stay on the Northwest Side and build a new church with proceeds from the auction. For now, the congregation will lease the church at 5447 W. Addison from the new owner until its new quarters are completed.

Saying goodbye to the memories

Sacred spots, new owners

■ Gladstone Park Lutheran Church, 6200 W. Foster, bought by the International Pentecostal Assembly.

■ Peace Lutheran Church, 5944 W. Cullom, bought by St. John of Rila Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

■ Our Saviour's English Lutheran Church, 4149 N. Laramie, bought by Living Witness Apostolic Church.

■ United in Faith Lutheran Church, 5447 W. Addison, bought by Liberty Christian Center.

■ Medill Avenue Lutheran Church, 4917 W. Medill, bought by Abundant Life Christian Center.

■ Our Lord's Lutheran Church, 6224 W. Gunnison, bought by Dhammakaya International Meditation Center of Chicago.

■ Holy Communion Church, 3010 N. Lavergne, bought by Marantha Romanian Church.

■ Nebo Evangelical Lutheran Church and parsonage, 3914 N. Menard, bought by Pater Construction and Development Co.

the buildings held was hard, Goos said.

"But the memories will always be in our hearts," she said. "My hope is that at some point members of our congregation will stop by their old churches and see how things are going for the new owners. Our dream is coming true. We hope theirs will, too."