

8 old churches reborn into one

BY ERNEST TUCKER
STAFF REPORTER

When worshippers gathered Easter morning in the Taft High School auditorium on the Far Northwest Side, most wore blue "Hello" name tags like the ones used at conventions.

But as the 500 former members of eight defunct Lutheran churches marched into the sunlight to the "Hallelujah Chorus," their smiles showed they had been reborn as a single new church, United in Faith Lutheran Church.

"There was a tremendous amount of spirit here," said Bishop Kenneth R. Olsen of the 240-church Metropolitan Chicago Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in Cook, Lake, Kane and DuPage counties. "I believe this church will become a leader in urban ministries."

The congregations formally voted in January to merge after years of dwindling attendance because their core membership of Germans and Scandinavians had moved to the suburbs. Once the old churches are sold, a new 5-acre campus will be developed, complete with a high-rise

residence for the elderly, Olsen said during his sermon.

The resurrection message played well among the new congregation, whose churches closed on Good Friday.

"I was a little worried about the weather and about holding a service for the first time in a place that wasn't sacred, but it worked out beautifully," said Dorothy Goos, president of the new church council and a longtime member of St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, 5447 W. Addison.

Inside the auditorium, 6545 W. Hurlbut, handmade banners commemorated the closed churches: Holy Communion, 3010 N. Lavergne; Nebo, 3914 N. Menard; Our Saviour's, 4159 N. Laramie; Medill Avenue, 4917 W. Medill; Gladstone Park, 6200 W. Foster; Peace Lutheran Church, 5944 W. Cullom; Our Lord's, 6224 W. Gunnison; and St. Andrew's.

The markers will be hung in the future United in Faith Church when it is eventually built at an undetermined site.

"This was really special. It feels like a church already," said Deanne Molter, whose former parish, St. Andrew's, will continue to hold services on an interim basis.



ROBERT A. DAVIS/SUN-TIMES

The Rev. Jeffrey King blesses a child on Easter Sunday at the first gathering of the United in Faith Lutheran Church. The new congregation replaces eight churches that have closed.