

Churches facing division

United Press International
As Christians prepare to mark the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, efforts to heal the divisions that have separated Christians for centuries face an uncertain future. Events in the past year have given rise to both hope and hesitation among ecumenists as they seek to make concrete the unity of the church for which nearly all Christians profess to pray and seek. This year's observance, which began Friday, Jan. 18, is centered on the theme "Your Kingdom Come," selected jointly by the Roman Catho-

lic Graymoor Ecumenical Institute and the Commission on Faith and Order of the National Council of Churches.

"To pray for the coming of God's kingdom is to pray for Christian unity," said Dr. Robert Huston, ecumenical staff officer for the United Methodist Church.

"When all persons live in love with one another and regard God's will as supreme, could Christians still be separated by attitudes, behavior and self-serving structural barriers?" Huston asked.

Begun in 1908 by Father Paul Wattson, founder of the Atonement Friars and the Graymoor Institute, the week of prayer is widely marked around the world and has in the past been used as a time to announce significant ecumenical events.

This year, hopes generated by the prayers for unity will be focused on Cincinnati, Ohio, and the specially reconvened plenary session of the

Consultation on Church Union Jan. 22-24.

COCU is a 20-year-old effort by 10 Protestant denominations to achieve organic union.

At the Cincinnati meeting, the delegates will be asked to approve a document describing the roles and functions of the ordained clergy in the proposed new church body — a major obstacle in past unity discussions.

If the document is approved — as expected — it will be sent to the 10-member communions for their consideration and approval and could well end one of the major log-jams in Protestant unity efforts.

At the same time, however, both Roman Catholic and Protestant ecumenists are casting a wary eye at Rome and the recent actions of the Vatican in cracking down on theological dissent within Catholicism.

In particular, the Vatican's action in stripping the Rev. Hans Kung of his official status as a Roman Catholic

theologian has ecumenists concerned.

Kung was stripped of his official status for views on papal infallibility — a key issue that is at the heart of ecumenical discussions between Roman Catholics and both Protestant and Orthodox communions.

The Kung action raises the question of just how committed to ecumenical endeavors the Vatican will be under Pope John Paul II.

But the Rev. Charles LaFontaine, co-director of the Graymoor Ecumenical Institute, says he believes the Roman Catholic church in the United States "will remain firmly committed to ecumenism and the ecumenical movement."

LaFontaine says that ecumenism is indeed a papal priority and "not just one more policy out of many."

"How the pope understands ecumenism and its practice is a different matter, of course, but that Roman Catholics must be involved ecumenically at every level of the church is absolutely clear," he said.

December jobless up

United Press International
WASHINGTON — The nation's unemployment rate rose slightly in December to 5.9 percent of the American workforce to finish 1979 at exactly the same level as a year earlier, the Labor Department reported Friday.

The new jobless statistics supported administration forecasts that the economy showed unexpected strength during 1979's final quarter,

delaying the onset of the anticipated recession until this year.

The December unemployment rate was a notch above November's 5.8 percent, the Labor Department said. The percentage of jobless Americans has moved in the narrow band of 5.7 percent to 5.9 percent for the past 17 months.

Total employment moved up by 300,000 persons last month to 97.9 million. The total U.S. civilian workforce was 104 million.

The ratio of persons holding jobs to the total U.S. population returned to its record high of 59.4 percent, first reached last July, the Labor Department said.

Over the past 12 months, 2.1 million persons found work, with increases for both whites and blacks about proportionate to their share of the population.

During much of last year, the White House was braced for a significant increase in unemployment. Last July government forecasters said the jobless rate would hit 6.6 percent by December — a projection that fell short of the mark.

Labor Secretary Ray Marshall told reporters earlier this week that he now expects unemployment to increase to more than 6.5 percent by this summer.

Disease passed on by dogs

United Press International
ATLANTA — There may be as many as 80 million dogs in the United States, half of them family pets, and therein lies a potential health problem, says a parasitic disease expert at the National Center for Disease Control.

The problem is described in one word — toxocarasis — according to Dr. Peter Schantz of the parasitic diseases division of the CDC.

Toxocarasis is caused by the common roundworm of dogs. It readily infects people who ingest the infective eggs. The eggs hatch in the small intestine and spread to the liver, from there they enter the blood stream and are transported to other parts of the body.

"This early phase of migration is often accompanied by abdominal pain, diarrhea and vomiting," said Schantz.

The larvae sometimes infect the eye, brain and the heart muscle and severe cases can cause blindness and death. In people, the disease has two forms, visceral larvae migrans and ocular larvae migrans.

Physicians once raised the question of whether roundworm infection was a significant cause of neurologic disease in children, such as epilepsy, Schantz said that although this has not been proved, "it is apparent that toxocarasis can and does enter the central nervous system of some children during ingestion of infective eggs, and that the consequences can be serious."

Schantz says toxocarasis is generally a benign, self-limiting disease, subsiding within weeks if reinfection is prevented.

"Of continuing concern, however, even after all other systemic manifestations have subsided, is the possibility of larval invasion of the eye with subsequent visual impairment."

Schantz said toxocarasis in man is a new disease, simply one about which the public and the medical profession are becoming more aware.



Would this face give you roundworms?

Battalion photo by Lee Roy Leschper

This new awareness of an infection spread to humans through contact with infective eggs of the parasitic nematode in dog feces has led to passage of dog wastes "scoop" laws in a number of major cities, including New York.

Schantz, who has written extensively in professional publications about the dangers of toxocarasis, said it is not too surprising that the disease may be highly prevalent in humans "when we consider how commonly dogs and human beings share the same environment."

"There may be more than 41 million dogs distributed in from one-third to one-half of all American households," he said.

"Estimates which include unowned as well as owned dogs, reach 60-80 million."

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