

History-making event

The ordination of South Dakota's first woman Episcopal priest was celebrated in Madison Sunday, an event that will long be remembered in local church history.

Just 10 years ago, the Episcopal church in the U.S. authorized women priests, subject to the discretion of local bishops. It wasn't until this year that a new South Dakota bishop, the Rt. Rev. Craig B. Anderson, took advantage of that authority.

Although the tradition of male clergy dates back centuries, some Christian churches have recently admitted women to clerical orders (with the notable exception of the Roman Catholic Church).

Despite gains made by women, biblical scholars still disagree on interpreting passages in scripture which refer to the gender of ministers. In fact, Bishop Anderson cautioned that some people in the Episcopal church are still opposed to women as priests.

Despite these reservations, Sunday's ordination was a significant step forward for women in the Christian church. It was also an important ecumenical event — a step toward Christian unity — since it was an Episcopal ordination in a Lutheran church, St. John Lutheran.

As the Catholic bishop of the Sioux Falls diocese, Bishop Paul Dudley, is quoted as having said recently, Christians should spend more time discussing the 95 percent of their beliefs in which they agree and less time talking about the five percent about which they disagree.

Certainly, important strides in that direction have been made in recent years, particularly between Episcopal, Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches.

Thus, many people who attended Sunday's ordination here of the Rev. Karen Hall found the service to be a doubly uplifting event, advancing the status of women and the ecumenical movement as well.

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It was only a week ago, on Nov. 8, when Mrs. Christoffersen, the mother of two preschool-age boys, first learned that she had heart problems after collapsing with myocarditis, an acute inflammation of the heart tissue. She received the mini-Jarvik 7 last Tuesday as a temporary measure until a donor could be found.

However, Pritzker said Mrs. Christoffersen's recovery will be greatly aided by the state of her health before her hospitalization.

"She was in good physical condition, played after the two kids a lot and I think she does some aerobics," he said.

een's organs

However, that Mrs. Christoffersen received the heart of a 16-year-old Nebraska male who died in a car accident.

A Nebraska State Patrol spokesman said Adrian is the only known 16-year-old male who died in a Nebraska traffic accident during the weekend.

Jordeth said his family made the decision to donate Adrian's organs after being approached by an official of Nebraska Organ Retrieval System.

"We were told of the possibility of six

two children, 2 and 4, that she wants to get home to."

Still, chances of a homecoming by Thanksgiving are doubtful.

"I would expect that she would be in the hospital for two to four weeks," Pritzker said. "We would hope that she would be home for Christmas."

Mrs. Christoffersen's surgery came less than a month after the death of Mary Lund, the first woman to receive an artificial heart and later a human heart transplant.

Like Mrs. Lund and two other women, Mrs. Christoffersen received a Jarvik 70 artificial heart, a miniature version of the Jarvik 7 used in male patients. One of the two other women recipients, who was not identified, died Oct. 9 in Pittsburgh, and Bernadette Chayrez died Oct. 11 in Phoenix, Ariz. In all four cases, the mechanical pump was used until a human heart was found.

"I realize the situation invites comparison, but the situation is not really the same. Mrs. Lund was sicker" than Mrs. Christoffersen, Pritzker said. "We're delighted with her progress."

Lund, of Kensington, died Oct. 14 as an apparent result of the viral infection that had caused her own heart to fail, doctors said. The 40-year-old woman received the Jarvik 70 on Dec. 18, one day after she was hospitalized with her own heart severely damaged by a