

SACRED HEART DEDICATES NEW TAPESTRY

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Members of the Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths came together Sunday at Sacred Heart Co-Cathedral to celebrate a story of hospitality common to all three religions.

Sacred Heart held a special Mass on Sunday, and invited members of the Jewish and Islamic faiths to dedicate a new tapestry in the church's addition.

The four-paneled tapestry depicts Abraham showing hospitality to three mysterious visitors. Abraham's son Isaac was the founder of the Jewish faith, and his son Ishmael was an ancestor of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad, according to traditional stories.

The Rev. Edward Sadie, Sacred Heart's rector, said he had the idea several years ago to create a tapestry depicting Abraham's story. He had the tapestry designed by a Canadian company, and placed it in Sacred Heart's new addition.

Sadie also wanted the tapestry to include the word "hospitality" in Greek, Latin, Arabic and Hebrew. The tapestry makers sent back a sketch with several words for "hospitality" in Arabic and Hebrew, and Sadie said he had to ask Rabbi Victor Urecki of B'Nai Jacob Synagogue and Imam Mohammad Jamal Daoudi of the Islamic Association of West Virginia to choose the appropriate form.

Urecki and Daoudi were invited to Sunday's Mass, and offered Jewish and Muslim prayers before the Most Rev. Michael Fitzgerald blessed the tapestry. Both noted the importance of Abraham's story to their religions.

"If the goal of our religions is to bring glory to the name of God, then how blessed is his name today," Urecki said before reciting a prayer Jewish people reserve for joyous occasions.

Sadie invited Fitzgerald, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, to Sunday's service. Fitzgerald regularly sends letters to followers of different faiths that note the common links between Christian and non-Christian religions. He usually distributes the letters around important dates in the other faiths' religious calendars.

Sadie considers Sacred Heart's new addition a hospitality room for visitors.

"Most Catholic churches have a gathering space, and prior to the new addition, we only had the small vestibule. ... This gives people the opportunity to mill around," he said. "It's working the way we envisioned."