

Connecticut Rite Shows Change Religion Faces

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WILTON, Conn., April 14 — The 370 members of the Wilton Presbyterian Church here celebrated Easter today in much the same way they always do, with joy and awe at the miracle of Christ's resurrection.

Of course, they haven't always celebrated the holiest days in the Christian year with the music of an electronic synthesizer, and they haven't always donated their Easter lilies to the patients of a nearby mental hospital and they haven't always celebrated in a church shared with Episcopalians.

But then this congregation, like thousands of others across the country, has been profoundly affected by the currents sweeping through religion in America today.

Hymns and Sacred Music

The service, despite its unusual aspects, was actually more traditional than most at the church, where slides and movies and sermons written by youth committees often highlight Sunday services. "We don't do much innovation on Easter," said the Rev. Stewart MacColl, "it's powerful enough as it is." There were hymns and sacred music and a short sermon and then the service was over.

But the Easter service took place in a new cubist-modern church built and owned jointly with the St. Matthews Episcopal Church of Walton, a signpost of how far ecumenism has come in recent years.

Despite the strong ecumenical influence in the church and in the Good Friday services conducted jointly with the Episcopalians, it was decided by Mr. MacColl and the church's worship committee—one of a series of committees that decides everything from the choice of the electronic synthesizer to the topic of the sermon—to have a separate Easter Sunday service.

"Easter is sort of a special and personal time," said Mrs. Joan Channell, a member of the church. "Even the people who want to do a lot of ecumenical things felt they wanted

to be with their own denomination on Easter."

"This church has a sense about it of being a family," Mr. MacColl said, and the high point of communal life for that "family" is the Holy Thursday supper, which has eclipsed Good Friday as a major holiday in the Wilton church. "It's a family night, a time for people to meet together and eat together," Mr. MacColl said.

More than 300 members of the congregation went to eat and take communion, commemorating and re-enacting Christ's Last Supper. "It was such a fantastic feeling to see all those people and know almost all of them," recalled Mrs. Ruth Heinz, one of those who attended the supper in the gymnasium of the school where the church used to meet before the new building was constructed.