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## The Church Lady helps holy houses find new homes

By Martin Van Der Werf

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It's not just the Catholic Archdiocese that's selling off churches. South County Church of the Nazarene, on a prosperous stretch of Telegraph Road, is on the market for \$3.25 million. Though it was built just 5 years ago, the church might be torn down to make way for a shopping center or houses.

"I would think it would go commercial," said Cheryl Meglio, the listing agent.

The 6.65 acres are more land than the church needs, she says. The church likely will look for a larger building on a smaller piece of property.

Church officials didn't return a message seeking comment.

In the ebb and flow of real estate, Meglio has carved out a specialty - buying and selling churches. With apologies to Dana Carvey, she calls herself "the Church Lady."

"The church market is new starts, or churches that are move-ups - they're getting larger," Meglio said. "Occasionally, you have downsizing. I won't say they are not making it, but they are not as large in their neighborhoods as they used to be."

For example, Maplewood Christian Church has sold its property and is looking for a smaller building. It soon will be replaced by Crossroads Presbyterian, which has been meeting in a high school cafeteria.

Meglio has been peddling churches since 1993, when she began looking for a new home for the congregation she belonged to at the time. She realized there was no central listing place for churches or property that would be appropriate to become a church.

"It was just kind of a God thing," she said. "I said, 'Well, you're opening the doors. I'm walking through them.'"

That's become a common theme in her life. Meglio recently located a new church for her current congregation, the Living Word Church. It will be moving to Affton from Arnold.

RAW DEALER: Ford Motor Co. forced Cavalier Ford in Maplewood to shut down at the end of July, citing a lack of sales. A new franchise, Auto Plaza Ford, opened on the same property the next day.

"They kicked us out of the club, even though we were one of only three profitable Ford dealerships in the St. Louis area last year," said Daniel Lesseg, who had been general manager of Cavalier Ford. It was owned by his mother, Elsie Lesseg.

He argued that when fleet sales were included, Cavalier was meeting its quota. But Ford disagreed.

"We didn't put up that much of a fight," Lesseg said. "I was getting kind of irritated dealing with Ford Motor Co., and I didn't see any new models in the pipeline that were going to turn this thing around. This is a great way to get out of our little situation without having to liquidate and have everyone lose their jobs."

New owner Nadir Djavaherian also owns West County Auto Plaza in Manchester and South County Auto Plaza on Lindbergh Boulevard, which sell late-model used cars.