By ROGERS OLVERSON

Four loud booms announced the start of the Fourth of July fireworks display in Lake Charles. Immediately 30 teenagers hit the ground in fright.

These young people were visitors from Northern Ireland, where such noises warn of fire bombs and shootings instead of gala festivities.

"They are so surprised at the freedom of movement here in America," explains the Rev. Kerry Waterstone, the Anglican priest who has worked to allow some 50 Irish youths to visit in the United States and gain a new vision of religious harmony.

Waterstone was in Lafayette at the Episcopal Church of the Ascension yesterday to talk about the Ulster Project and the possibility of establishing such a program in Lafayette. Representatives of several local churches and other interested persons met with him and his wife Edie to learn about this cultural exchange.

Currently some 30 Irish teens, both Catholic and Protestant, are living with families in Lake Charles for three and a half weeks. The young people and their American hosts were also in Lafayette yesterday for a tour of Acadiana and a barbecue sponsored by the Ascension Men's Club.

Waterstone, a slight, gray-haired man with an infectious grin, describes the project as a peace effort, an attempt to change the age-old prejudices that plague the Emerald Isle. "We try to get these kids to look at themselves and others in a fresh light, to see how Americans have overcome ancient prejudices and to bring that vision back to Ireland with them," Waterstone says.

His speech, already brisk and lightly accented, surges with enthusiasm as he talks about the project.

"We want to so change them by this experience that they will never grow up as bigoted, as prejudiced as the generations before them," he says.

The project was born five years ago when two churches, Episcopal and Catholic, in Connecticut contacted Waterstone to ask how they might help ease tensions in Northern Ireland. The Anglican priest decided that if young

(Continued On Page 5, Col. 1)
Irish Youths Get Vision Of Harmony

(Continued From Page 1)

people could see the way Americans have learned to live together in their "melting pot" society, their attitudes about their fellow Irishmen might begin to change.

"The Irish kids can't believe that the American kids may not even know what religion some of their friends are, that they can stay out late without fear of violence. It's like going to the moon," says Waterstone.

While Northern Ireland has not been in American headlines for some time, Waterstone reports that the level of violence has, if anything, increased. He speaks of a recent campaign of violence against government workers during which two women were shot and bombed, and also of a fresh outbreak of hotel bombings. Children must be careful not to walk into areas dominated by persons of the other faith, and every car must be regarded as a potential bomb. Over a thousand young people have been shot through the knee cap for refusing to join one of the underground terrorist factions.

Because the Ulster Project is designed to change attitudes, it is difficult to evaluate, but Waterstone says he can already see benefits, both to the Irish children and their families and to the Americans. He now sees both Catholic and Protestant parents working more closely in planning each visit, and the teenagers have maintained the friendships established during the visit, he says. The American host families have also made visits to the families in Ireland.

The American hosts, Waterstone adds, have also been broadened by the contact with the Irish youths. "The American kids begin to realize how lucky they are; they get a world view," he says.

While the achievements of the project may sound small, many lives are touched in a positive way, Waterstone contends. The Ulster Project, together with the many other efforts being made, may someday bring Ireland closer to peace. "Ours is only one thread in a rope God is weaving to bring peace to our country," Waterstone says.

Marshall Mugnier, who is spearheading the investigation of the Ulster Project for Lafayette, says that anyone who would like to know more about the project or help with the planning should contact the office of Ascension Church at 232-2732. Local churches are now considering hosting the Irish teens next summer, and are looking to the fund-raising and selection of host families that would be the first steps.