

Ceremony caps a year of extremes

By JEFF OWENS
Staff writer

For the Rev. Frank Clark, 1997 has certainly been a year of going from one extreme to the other.

Clark arrived in Arizona July 1 to assume the post of third Rector of the Congregation at Sun City's All Saints of the Desert Episcopal Church, smack in the middle of a long run of daily three-digit temperatures with little rainfall.

Up until that July, he had been Dean of Gethsemane Cathedral in Fargo, N.D., a city that records some of the nation's most arctic temperatures. It is also a city that had barely dried off in the wake of disastrous spring flooding along the swollen Red River.

"I thought, 'If I can deal with the extremes of North Dakota, I can deal with the extremes of Arizona,'" Clark said, grinning.

Despite the long move from a northern border state to a southern one, Clark doesn't feel like a stranger in a strange land. In fact, many familiar faces will greet him at his formal induction ceremony at 4 p.m. Saturday at the church, including the man who presents him to the congregation.

It just so happens that Archbishop Walter Jones, All Saints' interim rector since December, and Clark know each other from when they were both working in the Diocese of South Dakota.

Jones, a retired archbishop from Winnipeg, Canada, winters in Mesa, and was asked by the Bishop of Arizona, Robert Shahan, to present Clark at the ceremony, formally titled "Celebration of a New Ministry."

Clark and Shahan go back to their seminary days when they were class-



Steve Chernek/Daily News-Sun

The Rev. Frank Clark will be installed as the rector at All Saints of the Desert Episcopal Church in Sun City Saturday. He comes to Sun City from North Dakota.

mates at Nashotah House, just outside Milwaukee.

Jones had suggested Clark to the parish and Shahan as a replacement for the church's previous rector, Irvin Mitchell,

who retired in December.

Normally, Shahan would preside over Saturday's ceremony, but he is on sabbatical and was hence unavailable.

"And we have parishioners from the

congregation I served in Fargo who come down here during the winter time," Clark said. "I know that there are going to be people here from parishes I served in both North Dakota and South Dakota. There are a lot of familiar faces."

Clark accepted the leading position at the 25-year-old parish, which serves about 450 households, in May. Technically, he assumed the duties of his office upon arriving in July, but the ceremony was delayed while winter visitors returned to the parish.

"It's a public celebration of what, in fact, has already taken place," Clark said.

Also, church officials thought it a good idea to have the ceremony on Nov. 1 — All Saints Day — since the church is named All Saints of the Desert.

"It's going to be pretty big," said Graden Weinland, a church senior warden. "We present him with the keys to the church. We don't know how lucky we can be to have him; we're walking on air."

Clark, originally from Michigan, earned a degree in electrical engineering from Michigan State University before enrolling in seminary. He first served congregations in Platteville and Mineral Point, both in Wisconsin, and Pierre, S.D. before his stint in Fargo. He had only visited Arizona briefly on a couple of occasions before moving here with his wife, daughter, and mother-in-law.

He said that despite all the ceremony, the emphasis does not belong solely on his shoulders.

"This isn't just my ministry," he said. "It's the congregation's, together."

All Saints marks 20th anniversary

Members take time to honor saints, church's founding

Staff report

All Saints of the Desert Episcopal Church could have celebrated its anniversary back in March, 20 years from the time members worshiped in their new church for the first time.

Instead, the congregation will observe the milestone next Friday, Nov. 1 — a day after the 20-year anniversary of the church's formal dedication.

All Saints of the Desert was dedicated on Oct. 31, 1976, by Bishop Joseph M. Harte of the Diocese of Arizona. Subsequent additions to the church, a parish hall in 1978, and a chapel in 1979, were dedicated on All Saints Day, Nov. 1.

The church's name is derived from the fact that the first worship service for what began as a satellite church of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church of Sun City was held in Sundial Recreation Center on Nov. 4, 1973, three days after All Saints Day.

All Saints Day is not only the church's namesake, it is a day for Episcopalians worldwide to honor the saints. This year and every year All Saints Day has special significance for members of All Saints of the Desert because of the name and because of the building mile-

stones at the Sun City church.

To mark the 20th anniversary of the church dedication this year, the congregation will gather for an anniversary service at 4 p.m. Friday. A catered dinner will follow the service in the parish hall.

The Right Rev. Robert R. Shehan will preside over the service, celebrating with a Eucharist, installing liturgical workers and blessing memorials and gifts.

All Saints of the Desert began as a satellite mission church of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church in Phase 1 of Sun City in 1992. Early worship services for 200-plus satellite congregants were held in Sundial Recreation Center.

Ground was broken for the new church at 9502 Hutton Drive in August 1975. The Rev. James Reeves was installed as the first Rector in June 1977. He retired 11 years later and was succeeded by the current Rector, the Rev. Dr. Irvin S. Mitchell.

All Saints of the Desert church is the home of one of the largest rummage sales annually in the West Valley. The sale on the church grounds known as the "Marketplace" started in 1978. The event raises more than \$20,000 annually for church outreach programs. The now two-day sale is set for Nov. 14 and Nov. 15 this fall.

For information about the anniversary celebration, or the Marketplace event, call the church, 974-8404.



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

The Rev. Irvin Mitchell and his congregation at All Saints of the Desert Episcopal Church will celebrate the church's 20th anniversary.

Minister proves value of one person's efforts

By TIFFANY M. ENGELMANN
Independent Newspapers

He could be described as an "ambulance chaser" but this individual acts out of compassion, not self-interest.

The Rev. Irvin S. Mitchell, pastor of All Saints of the Desert Episcopal Church in Sun City and chaplain of the Sun City Fire District, has earned a reputation for being there for victims of auto accidents and fires and their families.

The holder of two pagers – one a personal pager and the other acting similar to a police scanner – the Rev. Mitchell, 62, is on call around the clock for the Sun City Fire Department and occasionally the Phoenix Fire Department, if its chaplain is unavailable. He travels to about two or three accident scenes each week.

The most difficult aspect of his duties, he explains, is "trying to do the right thing at the right time."

"One thing in the fire service, you've got to be flexible," says the Rev. Mitchell, whose father and grandfather were volunteer firefighters. "I don't know what I'm

going to do until I get there."

He comes to the aid of every individual or family, regardless of their religious affiliation.

"I am not doing this as an Episcopalian or even necessarily as a Christian," he says. "I do what they need and want."

In one instance, that meant baptizing a baby who was the victim of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. The child's mother feared for the baby's soul, because the child had yet to be baptized.

As the fire department's chaplain, the Rev. Mitchell witnesses many horrific scenes.

"Sometimes it is completely draining," he admits. "Sometimes, though, I feel I've done a good job and helped someone out."

Others agree.

According to Sun City Fire Chief James A. Sebert, the Rev. Mitchell, who also serves as treasurer of the fire board, has brought a new dimension to the support offered to those involved in serious accidents and traumas. Prior to Rev. Mitchell's arrival, the department lacked an intensive support system.

"Quite frankly, I had no idea the value of one man's effort," Chief Sebert says. "Rev. Mitchell provides an important element that was missing in the fire department."

It comes naturally. With the exception of his years in seminary, the Rev. Mitchell has been involved with fire departments since he turned 21.

He believes his specialty in life is his ability to perform this unique form of ministry. He hopes to continue to be a crisis minister, working in conjunction with fire departments, after he retires.

"This is where my heart and interest are," he says.

The Rev. Mitchell's greatest contribution to the fire department is his "caring concern for our neighbors and the community," the chief says.

That interest is needed, says the pastor, who has been a resident of Sun City for about 10 years. The situations of some of the people here sadden him.

"What I find here in Sun City is there are so many people that don't have family or

From Page 1

other people around, so they think nobody cares for them," he says. "I would like the people of Sun City to know there are people out there who care about them."

The Rev. Mitchell encourages people to "look out for each other and help each other."

"It's so simple and so easy to do," he says.

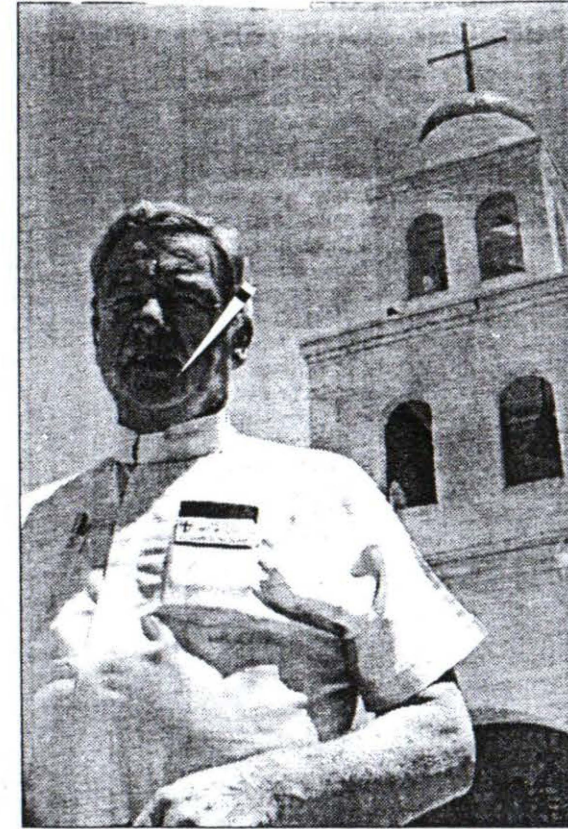


Photo by Tyson Kuhrt/Independent Newspapers

The Rev. Irvin Mitchell practices what could be called a "crisis ministry" by offering support to victims of accidents and other emergencies.



Eleven years into their marriage, the Rev. Irvin S. Mitchell told his wife, Loretta Mitchell, he wanted to become an Episcopal priest. Today he is rector at All Saints of the Desert Episcopal Church in Sun City, a member of the Sun City Fire Board and chaplain of the Sun City Fire Department. Loretta said her ministry is to "minister to the minister."

Rick D'Elia/Daily News-Sun

Pastor's wife didn't want job

Years ago, a minister's wife was expected to be dedicated to church business and helping the less fortunate. Although some ministers' wives have continued in the tradition, others live a different life. Some may pursue careers of their own. Others may take liberal positions on issues their husbands' congregations do not support. The following article is the third in a series that explores the lives of ministers' wives today.

By **KIMBERLY HICKS**
Daily News-Sun staff

Loretta Mitchell said she had no intention of being a minister's wife when she exchanged vows with her husband, Irvin, 40 years ago.

But 11 years into their marriage, the Rev. Irvin S. Mitchell told his wife he

'It just wasn't part of the plan I had. ... Then things began to fall into place. I began to realize I wasn't the one who was calling the shots.'

Loretta Mitchell, pastor's wife

wanted to quit his job and become an Episcopal priest.

"I didn't have any intention of marrying a priest. I didn't know he had that in the back of his mind," she said. "My image of a minister's wife was that I would have to be somewhat pious, and people would be asking me all kinds of theological questions.

"People would put me on a pedestal and I'd have to be perfect, which I wasn't."

Loretta said she fought the notion at first.

Irvin's career always had been in the business world, first as a bank teller,

and proof clerk, then as an assistant manager, manager and executive vice president of the American Automobile Association. In 1966, when he confided his plan to enter the seminary, he was running a successful insurance business.

The couple had two children, and Loretta was involved in volunteer work. She said she knew if Irvin entered the seminary, she would become the family's primary breadwinner.

"It just wasn't part of the plan I had. ... Then things began to fall into place. I began to realize I wasn't the one who was calling the shots."

The couple attended classes for prospective seminary students, and Loretta learned that her greatest fears were unfounded.

She said she learned she could just be herself.

"I'm not a typical minister's wife. I'm more in the background than many, many wives are. But that's the way we work best," she said. "The Episcopal church pretty much lets you be yourself."

Irvin entered the Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, Va., and Loretta went to work as a church secretary.

"That was a tough role reversal," Irvin said. "I was suddenly 'Loretta's husband,' where she had always been 'my wife.'"

The family eked out three lean-but-happy years, Irvin said, and "learned all the free things to do in the Washington D.C. area."

See Preacher's call, B2

Preacher's call challenges wife

—From B1

In 1969 he completed his training, achieving the goal he'd set many years earlier.

"I had always wanted to be a priest," he said. "But I was very much in love with Loretta through high school, so I kept it in the back of my mind."

Loretta and Irvin met when they were in the seventh grade in Kittanning, Penn., but said it was not love at first sight.

"He was the new boy in town," Loretta said. "He came from the other end of the state and he talked funny. He just didn't seem to fit in. I kind of forgot about him until our junior year in high school."

Their junior year, Loretta and Irvin appeared together in the school play.

She was captain of the cheerleading squad and he was the star of the basketball team. They began dating, and have been a couple since.

For the past seven years, Irvin has been rector at All Saints of the Desert Episcopal Church in Sun City. He also is treasurer of the Sun City Fire Board, and chaplain of the Sun City Fire Department.

Loretta said she has gradually become used to his busy schedule and "strange hours."

"But it's easy for me to understand when he's with a family or at the hospital. I don't count that as being hard on the wife. He's needed, and that's where he should be."

For the past 15 years, the Mitchells have been adjusting to Loretta's failing eyesight, which has forced her to relinquish her career and much of her volunteer work.

In 1978, Loretta learned she had a disease of the cornea; she is legally blind today, although she has some light perception.

Irvin said people are intimidated more by his wife's blindness than by the fact she is married to an Episcopal priest.

Loretta, who once volunteered for Scottsdale Baptist Hospital, the Westside Food Bank and several nursing homes, said she now tries to maintain a good home atmosphere so Irvin can concentrate on his ministry.

"I believe my ministry is to minister to the minister," she said.

Irvin said he gives Loretta credit for learning to support his decision to enter the ministry when others laughed or told him he was crazy.

Today, he is still giving her credit for being a sounding board and source of inspiration, and for dedicating herself to helping him be a better minister.

"Because she is my best friend, I like to get away with her. I like to get her out of the house," he said. "We need to get away from the phones some times."

He said he turns to Loretta for insight, which he values.

"She pretty much has her thumb on the pulse of the community. She tells me when I'm getting too deep, when I'm not calling enough or when I'm getting bogged down by administration."

Loretta said although she had a religious upbringing, her husband has strengthened and nurtured her Christian beliefs in countless ways.

"I can't remember not knowing that Jesus loves me," she said. "The church has always been a part of my life. ... But Irv has a definite calling, I have no doubt about that. He has studied long and hard, and he believes what he says."

DAILY NEWS-SUN • FRIDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2003



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Reverend James Reaves, Vicar at All Saints of the Desert Episcopal Church, Sun City greets departing parishoners in 1976 at the first service at the newly constructed church at 9502 W. Hutton Drive. The congregation of All Saints of the Desert Episcopal Church, is celebrating the 30-year anniversary of the formation of the church. The first service was Nov. 3, 1973, at the Sundial Recreation Center auditorium, with 223 in attendance. Groundbreaking ceremonies for the church was Aug. 29, 1975, and on May 23, 1976, the congregation gathered in the parking lot of the new church to sing hymns, accompanied by the Salvation Army Band. A procession was formed with a color guard, and marched into the church to the strains of "When the Saints Go Marching In." There will be with a catered dinner and entertainment for the congregation its founders at 11:30 a.m. Sunday at the church. For reservations, call 974-8404.

DAILY NEWS SUN SEPT. 19, 1981

New Sun City priest didn't come to retire

By DENNIS BERTOLI
Staff Writer

Although he lives in the largest retirement community in the world, Rev. Jim Barton says retirement is not part of his plans.

Father Barton, 9219 Newport Dr., is the new assistant rector of All Saints of the Desert Episcopal Church and says, "I'm a long way from being retired."

Father Barton, ordained in 1959 in Charleston, W.Va., has been rector of many parishes, starting with St. Paul's Church in Weston, W.Va. He was most recently with an Episcopal church in Belle Fourche, S.D., where he served for four years.

ACTING ON A TIP from his bishop in Belle Fourche, Father Barton applied for and received an interview with All Saints in June.

Shortly after, he was informed that he had received the position of assistant rector.

An outgoing personality is most likely the one feature among any others that won Father Barton a position at the church. Sun City's new priest is easy to talk to and has many refreshing views.

FATHER BARTON said his choice to become a priest was not from inspiration as much as a deep conviction.

No angels sang in his ear, he did not find any God-sent scriptures, and not a single heavenly messenger went to him in his sleep. Father Barton just described it as a strong desire.

"I don't know why I became a priest. I really can't answer that," he said. "Clergy start out with a career they want to pursue just like everyone else."



REV. JIM BARTON

Father Barton said adjusting to Sun City might take a little time because of the drastic change of moving from a sparsely populated area of South Dakota to the dense Sun City area.

Father Barton did say, however, that he likes the community and added, "I'm happy to be in Sun City."