

**CHURCH OF THE
PALMS:** Centro
Adelante
Campesino in
Surprise partners
with congregation
to help struggling
students

MONICA ALONZO-DUNSMOOR
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Ruby Gonzales taps the tips of her fingers on the table, one at a time. She knows six times five equals 30, so six times six? Add six more and then she answers, "36."

The 11-year-old Surprise girl is part of a tutoring program sponsored by Church of the Palms in Sun City and Centro Adelante Campesino in Surprise. Centro, a social-service organization, provides the children, and the church is ready with tutors.

Every Wednesday, the children are driven in a van to the church and partnered with a volunteer like Judy Riedel. Riedel has been working with Ruby on contractions, nouns, verbs and multiplication.

"I've taught school for many years," Riedel said. "This is just a continuance of what I've always done, and I love children. This gives me a chance to work with them. Ruby's been working very hard on her times tables."

Lisa Miranda Lintz, Centro's director, said the children were a little hesitant at first, but once they started getting to know their mentors, they were very comfortable.

Falba Martin, minister of parish care at Church of the Palms, said Centro has been part of the church's mission giving.

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Sun City church provides tutors

"We help in different ways, and when Lisa asked about working with tutors, I asked the congregation," she said. "We were hoping to get eight volunteers, and that first Sunday we had 18."

Jim Pehle, the program's coordinator at the church, said the children were "so sweet, no rough stuff. We help them with anything they need — reading, spelling, arithmetic, English. We help them with their basic needs."

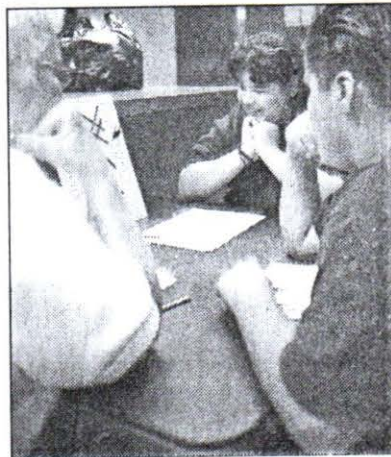
Martin said the students were quite reserved the first day.

"When they left, they felt the love and care the tutors felt for them — you could see it on their faces," she said.

Miranda Lintz, who initiated the program, will be resigning as Centro's director because she wants to serve on the organization's board of directors. That move, however, won't mean any of Centro's programs or services will change.

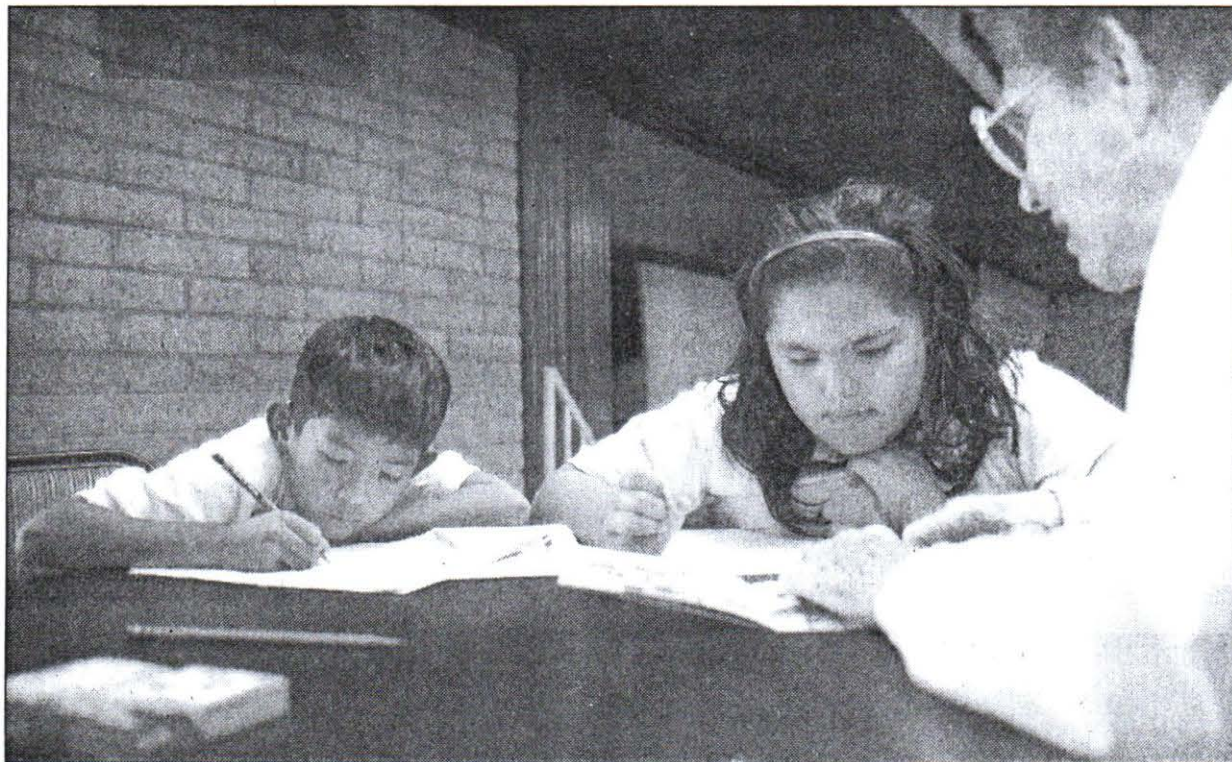
"Rest assured, nothing is going to change," she said. "I want to continue grant writing and take a more active role on the board."

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JOY LAMBERT/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Betty Torsney, left, uses a multiplication chart to tutor Angel Gutierrez, 8, and Manuel Mauricio, 9, at Sun City's Church of the Palms during Wednesday's weekly session.



JOY LAMBERT/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Victor Mendoza, 9, left, and Andrea Mauricio, 10, work on their reading and spelling with Betty Brown, who volunteers in the weekly tutoring program at Church of the Palms in Sun City.

Religion

Palms minister retires Sept. 28

Dr. Arthur Ellersieck has announced plans to retire at the end of this month as senior minister of Church of the Palms, 14808 Boswell Blvd., Sun City.



■ Dr. Ellersieck

Dr. Ellersieck has served the ministry for 41 years. In addition to Arizona, he has served congregations in Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin.

His final service will be 9:30 a.m. Sept. 28. A reception will follow at 10:30 a.m.

Dr. Ellersieck has served Church of the Palms for six years. He was an officer in the Sun Cities Ministerial Association for three years and is a former president of the organization.

In 1995 he was the keynote

speaker at the community's Holocaust Remembrance Service at Temple Beth Shalom.

He and his wife, Grace, plan to live in Sun City.

Church of the Palms

B4 NEWS-SUN SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1986

Church of Palms is united and uniting

By CAROL ANNE GAINER
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Church of the Palms, named for the palm trees on its front lawn, is as appropriately named as is its denomination: United Church of Christ.

That's because "in our constitution, we are a united and uniting church," said Rev. Robert H. Jacobson, its senior minister for the past five years.

What was united were the Congregational Christian Church and the Evangelical and Reform Church. What they unite are Christians who "have a commitment to Jesus Christ and to the freedom of the individual and the local church to follow the dictates of our conscience," said Jacobson.

"We have no creed; no set of classes — just our orientation. We expect, encourage people to differ with each other."

The local congregation, founded in 1969 by Dr. Albert King, also is

autonomous and runs itself. It chose the church's name as it did Jacobson, who did his prior ministry in Michigan. He, in turn, was free to accept or decline the position, because "the freedom goes both ways — from minister to congregation and from congregation to minister," said Jacobsen.

"We are all serving Christ equally; we just all have different functions — and I get paid for talking."

His purpose, he said, is "to proclaim the lordship of Jesus Christ over our lives and bring people closer to God, so they may serve God in the world."

"Studies show the greatest problem in western society is the absence of meaning to life; because God has become more removed in this scientific society of higher-educated people."

Jacobson and Gene W. Laramy, the church's associate minister, also urge the congregation to talk

among themselves, to acknowledge and appreciate their fellow man.

"Prior to the service, people are talking in church. We encourage them, because we think fellowship is important. We even laugh in church ... and we don't hesitate to use humor."

Nor does the church hesitate to actively interact with other churches and the community. "We're not an island unto ourselves," said Jacobson.

Facing the truth is something this church encounters regularly. "Here we openly accept the fact that we don't know the truth — and answers to — a lot of things."

While the Bible is used as the basis for preaching, Jacobson said, "we have a free and liberal interpretation."

His task as minister is to take the "pre-scientific and pre-modern text of the Bible and translate it into 20th century terms."

Simply put, "If something's

wrong, don't do it," said Jacobson. "We believe in the next world and in immortality — that God's got doped out. Whatever God wants to do is fine with me.

"But we don't have a literal heaven and hell. They're just symbols. Probably there's a certain ultimate justice in the world, but not hell."

The church also doesn't believe in confession, and there is no abstinence during Lent (Easter) or Advent (Christmas). But communion is given five specific times a year.

And though there is little need for it in this retirement community, when the case arises, baptism is also performed.

One need that is applicable for Jacobson's congregation is that of bereavement counseling. Along with personally ministering to church members, he holds a course every fall called "Suddenly Alone."



REV. ROBERT JACOBSEN

April 1974.

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Dr. Albert King, Minister Telephone: 977-2452

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Wesley Matthews, Construction Administration Coordinator

ENGINEERS

Caruso-Parke, Structural; Drain-Snyder, Mechanical; James Evans, Electrical

CONTRACTORS

Sam Williams Construction Company, General; Del Webb Corporation, Landscape

MISCELLANEOUS

Landscape Design: Par 3 Studio; Seating: The Marshall Company; Sound System: Bruce's World of Sound; Communion Table: George Nakashima; Ceramic Pots: Al Pace; Seating in Pews: 350; Size: 6,900 square feet; Construction Cost: \$250,000; Building Completed: March 1973; Landscape Completed: August 1973.

The Church of the Palms is located on a prominent corner in Sun City, Arizona. The symbolically important parts of the building — entrance, sanctuary and chancel — are placed toward the major streets to emphasize their importance. The landscaped parking area is placed along the curved rear property line to minimize its impact while providing convenient access from the major streets. Pedestrian access to the church is equally convenient from the street and the parking area. The predominantly desert landscape was designed by the architect to intensify near the building to give the appearance of an oasis, this done to conserve water and reduce maintenance over the large site and hopefully to emphasize the "life giving" quality of the church.

The major pedestrian entrance to the church from the street is on the west side. It features a generous entrance walk which is landscaped and covered near the building. The carved wood entrance doors are intended to convey a feeling of easy access to anyone who may wish to enter. A landscaped garden surrounds the building within a protective low garden wall. This helps to provide the feeling of a fertile oasis near the church and provides a very pleasant place to stroll and sit before and after services.

The view of the church from the parking lot to the south and east is terminated by the high east chancel window with its white cross and palm trees. Closer in toward the church on the east side are a landscaped courtyard and fountain. They are immediately east of the parlor and accessible through three sets of French doors. Eventually all of the walks around the fountain court will be covered to provide a more enclosing effect reminiscent of the atrium courts of early Christian churches. The existing covered walkway to the south extends approximately fifty feet from the east face of the narthex to a wide pedestrian drop-off/pick-up area adjacent to the parking lot. It was considered essential to provide the elderly members of the congregation with an entrance approach to the building protected from the hot summer sun and occasional violent rainstorms. This extensive covered area also serves as a pleasant place to congregate before and after services near the cheerful sounds of the fountain pool. Four carved wood entrance doors to the narthex are intended to convey the attitude of friendliness and welcome desired by the congregation.

The church is entered from major walks on the east and west sides of the narthex. The narthex is quite large in order to encourage interaction of members and guests before and after services, to accommodate overflow seating and temporarily to serve as a meeting room for fellowship dinners and the like. The Pastor's office, secretary's office, kitchenette and toilet rooms are south of the narthex. The sanctuary seating focuses inward and slopes toward the communion table located on the main floor level. Choir seating is included as part of the congregation at the southwest corner of the sanctuary. The pulpit and lectern project outward toward the congregation from a narrow raised chancel. The church parlor projects into the sanctuary and serves as overflow seating when necessary. A small sacristy and storage room is located off an exit vestibule on the west side of the sanctuary.

The narthex was purposely made quite large in order to accommodate a before-service coffee hour very well attended by members and guests and felt to be an important aspect of the mission of the church. It is designed to seat an overflow of approximately 150 people for services. It will seat 120 people at tables for banquets as a temporary measure until the fellowship hall is constructed. It is related to the sanctuary by two sets of double doors and glazed openings extending to the ceiling above chair storage cabinets, the form and lines of the redwood ceiling actually leading one's eyes toward the sanctuary. The material treatments, sight-lines and acoustics are such that persons seated in the narthex can actually feel themselves to be a part of the worshipping congregation. The floor is carpeted, piers are of slump block and the ceiling of untreated resawn redwood siding.

The sanctuary seats a congregation of approximately 350 people in the permanent pews. Thirty degree angle placement of walls and pews allows the congregation to look inward toward one another, the communion table and the chancel area. The chancel is brightly illuminated with natural light from the high east window to contrast with the sanctuary which is softly illuminated by the colored glass clerestory window. Artificial lighting is used to reinforce these effects on overcast days and for evening services.

The chancel is bathed in cool natural light from the high east window, the light changing during each service and throughout the year. It is especially oriented so there is full sunlight across the wall during the 11:00 Palm Sunday and Easter Services, gradually building toward this condition throughout the year. The high wall extends beyond the sight of the congregation in an attempt to illustrate the infinite light and power of God. Palms outside the high east window cast shadows of their fronds across the chancel wall to symbolize the events of Palm Sunday. The twelve redwood candle holders and candles located on the chancel wall are intended to symbolize the twelve disciples (or all Christians). Their flickering and occasionally failing light is contrasted with the magnificent pure light of God as evidenced by the sunlight across the chancel wall. The lectern is placed on the east side of the chancel and carries always the open Bible to symbolize God's Word to man. It is often silhouetted by the sunlight which helps reinforce the feeling that in its reading one utters again God's words. Live plants are in the chancel both for their beauty and as evidence of God's living creation. They also serve to integrate the interior of the building with extensive landscaping on the exterior. The ceramic pots were created especially for the church by artist Al Pace.

The communion table of a single slab of American Walnut designed and built by famed carpenter/architect George Nakashima, is the focal point of the congregation. It stands without covering or ornament on the main floor of the sanctuary with the congregation seated on three sides. Even the clergy sit on the main floor of the sanctuary facing inward toward the communion table when not speaking from the pulpit or reading from the lectern. An important part of the program was to achieve a church in which all members including the minister would feel as one body gathered together around the Lord's Table. The pulpit is located on the west side of the chancel so as to be clear of the direct sunlight during services. It projects out into the sanctuary to emphasize that the minister is a part of the congregation. When not speaking he actually leaves the chancel to sit facing the communion table as a member of the congregation.

The choir, which seats 35 people, is included as part of the worshipping congregation by its placement on the main floor at the rear of the regular seating. The recessed organ, stepped rows and reflecting wall behind the choir combine to reinforce the music program. The location has proved extremely desirable because the stronger voices of the choir members help reinforce the singing of the congregation and avoids special music as performance rather than part of worship.

The materials and colors in the sanctuary were chosen to reinforce the feelings of warmth and friendliness desired by the congregation. The floors are carpeted in a red-rust tone and the ceiling made of natural redwood tongue and groove siding. The white slump block walls and columns are complemented by soft fabric drapes and light buff upholstery on the pews. The pews are upholstered on both seat and back to recognize the special needs for comfort of the elderly. The lighting of the sanctuary is accomplished not only by the clerestory window but also by numerous flood lights recessed into the redwood ceiling. Speakers for the sound system (using Sauna tube boxes) are also recessed into the ceiling to achieve a sound distance from the speaker not exceeding eight feet — a condition felt essential for an elderly congregation. Supply air is through four black linear diffusers in the ceiling. They run the full length of the sanctuary and are designed to stratify the air above and to provide a gentle, quiet heating or cooling effect for the seated congregation. The return air is pulled back over the congregation to the mechanical area over the narthex. This distribution system avoids any adverse draft conditions. The return plenums are placed behind rough-sawn wood grilles on the back wall of the church. These grilles and similar ones at the front of the church also are designed to accommodate the speaker chamber for the organ. The church parlor projects into the sanctuary on the east side and is separated from it only by masonry columns, glazing and drapes. These are all designed so as to be easily removed if additional space for seating is required.