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Daily News-Sun photo by Frances Guarino

WARM ATMOSPHERE — The Congregational Church of Sun City welcomes young members.

A special place to worship

By CANDACE S. HUGHES
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Sometimes church membership can be based on something that seems as insignificant as remembering that a fellow member has had the flu for three weeks.

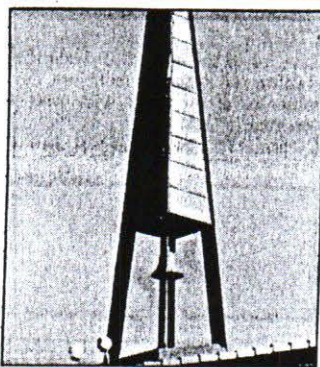
That special human touch brought Karen Kasun, 25, of Peoria, to the Congregational Church of Sun City, and she brings her 19-month-old son, Ethan, to nursery school at the church.

The church is at 18401 N. 99th Ave., just south of Union Hills Drive, and Sunday services are at 8:45 and 10:30 a.m. through April, and at 9:30 a.m. only from May through September.

"You're not a number as in most bigger churches where you're just greeted with a 'Hi, how are you?' They ask how you're feeling with the cold," said Kasun, who has had the flu for three weeks.

The church also has a practice of calling members on their birthdays, and Kasun found five messages on her answering machine wishing her a happy birthday when she came home from her job as an accountant in Peoria doctors' office.

"When we first moved out here we lived in Surprise and the Congregational Church was the only Sun City church that would marry us," Kasun said. Kasun found the church staff members to be supportive, particularly during the Persian Gulf war when she was concerned that her husband's reserve unit might be a part of Operation Desert Storm.



'I feel comfortable at the church. If I ever have a problem, I know I can call. Rev. White told me to call him Ed and said he wants me to feel at home. He told me that I should treat him as my second dad.'

Karen Kasun

Bryan Kasun served in the Army seven years and joined the Army reserves because he wanted to go to Saudi Arabia to support his friends.

When Karen became concerned about the situation, she found that the minister, choir director and church members were willing to listen.

"I feel comfortable at the church. If I ever have a problem, I know I can call. Rev. White told me to call him Ed and said he wants me to feel at home.

"He told me that I should treat him as my second dad," Kasun said.

"When I told him about my husband being in the reserves, he was there to give me that support if I wanted to talk about it or wanted to read something in Scripture," she said.

When the church's minister, the Rev. Ed White, was unavailable, Kasun found that the church's choir director, Rhonda Swan, was willing to come to

the Kasun home to talk.

"Rhonda's daughter is just a few days older than my son and she came and talked to me," Kasun said.

Bryan Kasun's reserve unit was not activated and that crisis has passed, but Karen said she will continue to stay active in the Congregational Church where she enjoys the warmth and concern of members.

Alice Osgood, 98, is the church's oldest member, and since the membership's average age is 70, Kasun is out of the ordinary.

Membership has been steadily increasing, and although children's Sunday School classes are not offered, as the church expands Sunday School may be added, White said.

The Congregational Church of Sun City began with a worship service on Maundy Thursday, April 15, 1976, in the home of John and Donna Alexander. The Rev. John Alexander was the founding pastor and is the

church's minister emeritus.

The church was founded May 2, 1976, and the building was constructed in 1981.

An extensive list of activities is offered to serve a variety of needs.

Special events in April include a concert by the Scottsdale Symphonette and organist Dorothy Cordwell at 3 p.m. April 21 in the church sanctuary. Those attending will be asked to contribute to a freewill offering.

Also during April is a free piano recital by Robert Swan, the husband of the church organist, at 2 p.m. Saturday in Alexander Hall adjacent to the church.

In addition, there will be a potluck dinner honoring the 15th anniversary of the church at 6 p.m. Tuesday in the church. The dinner also will welcome new members.

The concluding party for this year's bridge marathon will be April 22 at 2 p.m. The Flying Solos, the church's singles group, also meets monthly.

Church members meet at noon Sundays for brunch at Nancy's Country Cupboard in the Greenway Terrace shopping center at 99th Avenue and Greenway Road.

Members also gather for breakfast at 10 Saturdays in Bobbie's Cafe in the Promenade shopping center at Bell Road and 99th Avenue and for Wednesday-night suppers at 5 in several different restaurants.

Other activities of the church include mini-golf at Sun City recreation centers at 3:30 p.m.

See Congregation, C2

over

Congregation creates personal atmosphere

—From C1

Wednesdays, bridge, bowling and the Men's Club, which meets the last Tuesday of the month at 8 a.m. in the church.

The president of the Dorcas Women's Circle is Frances Laubly, and she may be reached for more information by calling 977-5110. Contact Nancy Geist at 974-6936 for facts on the Martha Circle.

June Woodrum is the president of the Women's Fellowship, which meets monthly in the church. The fellowship sponsors a rummage sale each November.

Some of the outreach activities of the church include the taping of worship services for shut-ins or members who miss a service.

The Handicrafter Helping

Hands group meets at 10 a.m. Tuesdays in the activities room to assist church members unable to do their own sewing or home repairs.

The church's staff includes Dorothy Cordwell, organist, and Rhonda Swan, choir director. The church has the largest Allen electric organ in Sun City, White said.

Choir rehearsal is at 3:30 p.m. Thursdays in the church.

For more information on church activities, call the church office at 977-4241.

Christ's personality and teachings will be the focus of a spring retreat in the Congregational Church of Sun City. The retreat is only one of the offerings of the church that serves almost 400 members.

Emphasis

C1

Daily News-Sun Friday, Sept. 7, 1990

Church designs reflect influence of congregation

By P. ATWOOD WILLIAMS
Daily News-Sun staff

Emil Fischer believes that the interior of a church conveys a sense of relaxed meditation and must be indicative of the liturgical mood it attempts to create.

"And the congregation must feel this sense of worship as it enters the sanctuary," says the author and illustrator of "Churches of the Sun Cities."

He says that one congregation may be comforted by the rich hues of light streaming through stained-glass windows, statues of saints and votive candles glowing in colorful glass containers; another prefers starkly simple dignity with paneled pews and graceful colonial chandeliers reminiscent of their New England ancestors.

The first architectural plan for the Congregational Church of Sun City, 18401 N. 99th Ave., was turned down by Del E. Webb Corp. executives who insisted that all churches in the Sun Cities be designed with southwestern mission elements,

right down to the red-tiled roofing.

Architect Francis Schultz first submitted samples of red bricks, which were rejected. The exterior of brown split-faced block was a compromise; the roof is a reddish-brown flat concrete tile.

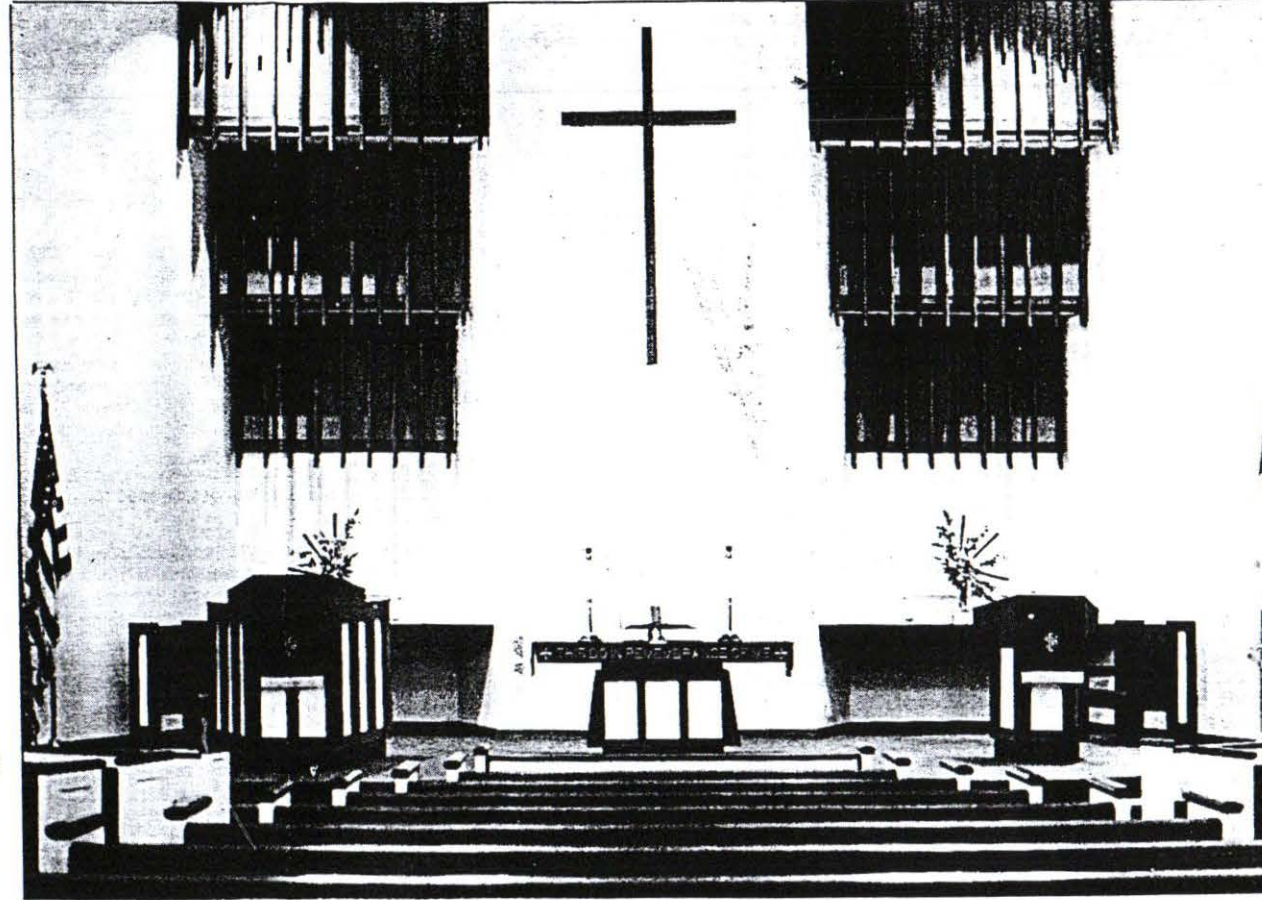
"I had to explain that the congregation was largely from New England and wanted a colonial building," he said. "My modern design reflected the faith of the congregation and was conducive to worship of their liturgy."

There are no stained-glass windows in the rectangular nave building, rather a few vertical clear glass windows permitting light.

Schulz designed white paneled sections for the ends of the pews, two brown and white pulpits and altar to match the commercially-made sanctuary benches.

The gently sloping floor is carpeting in a traditional dark red. The antique brass colonial light fixtures are on dimmers.

See Congregations, C4



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH — The Sun City church was designed by Francis Schulz and combines traditional elements in a modern setting. Descending panels of grill work descend from the ceiling on either side of cross to conceal the organ pipes. Traditional elements the red carpeting and white paneled ends of the pews.

Daily News-Sun photo by Frances G

OVER

—From C1

The most striking elements of the sanctuary are two panels of brown grillwork on either side of the wall behind the altar.

They descend from the ceiling to conceal the banks of organ pipes.

The 800-seat sanctuary was completed in 1981; Alexander Fellowship Hall and other additions were made in 1985.

Congregational Church meets needs

By GEOFF GORVIN
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — The Congregational Church of Sun City could be considered a haven for religious orphans in search of a small, down-home place to worship.

Fewer than 15 percent of the 330 members were Congregationalists when they joined the church, the Rev. John Alexander said.

The reason most members joined was not for the church's religious beliefs or affiliation, but for the personalized feeling they enjoy from a small church.

"We prefer to remain a relatively small church so that everyone knows each other and it's reasonably easy for me to minister them at times of need," Alexander said.

"The larger a church gets, the more institutional it gets. A church will grow to the size it's programmed. Our church has stabilized now."

Alexander said the membership doesn't discourage new members — it just isn't aggressive in recruiting.

"We've done the things we could to help

people find a religious home," he said. "People should be attracted by the fellowship and worship we offer. We've been relatively casual about putting pressure on them to join the church."

The low membership is also due in part to the lack of Congregationalists who move to the Sun City area, Alexander said.

In fact, there are not many Congregationalists at all.

In the 1950s, a push to form one Protestant denomination resulted in the formation of the United Church of Christ. Alexander said about 80 percent of the Congregationalists joined the new denomination, leaving about 500 churches nationwide to affiliate with the Association of Congregational Churches.

"We believe in a cooperative but we have different needs. We need different churches to meet those needs," Alexander said. "We maintained the traditional Congregational way."

The church's most basic tradition lies in the way the church is governed. Contrary to most denominations that are guided by a national

governing body, Congregational authority lies within the local church and with the church's members.

The church is governed mainly by three boards, which are overseen by a church moderator.

The Board of Trustees manages the church's property, the Board of Deacons manages the church's worship and fellowship functions, and the Board of Benevolence is responsible for the church's mission.

Alexander has been the church's only pastor since its founding in 1976. What began as a membership of 10 tripled within the first month and gradually grew to the current membership.

Much of the growth came with the dedication of the church's building in 1982. For the first six years, the membership worshipped in a variety of locations throughout Sun City.

Then in 1982, most of the church, at 99th Avenue and Union Hills Drive, was dedicated. The fellowship hall dedication followed in 1985.