

Church celebrates 35 years of love

TIM GALLEN
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Lakeview United Methodist Church celebrated a "Harvest of Love" Saturday when more than 400 people attended an open house for food, music and to learn about the congregation.

Music sounded throughout the courtyard of the church at 10298 W. Thunderbird Blvd. for the anniversary celebration.

A trombonist played "When the Saints Go Marching In" as the audience clapped and sang.

"Thirty-five years of God's love is what we (are celebrating)," said MaryAnn Lemley, chairwoman of the church's event planning team.

"The reason I feel this



MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Silly Lucy the Clown, also known as Lucille Dick, takes a break for lunch with "Baby" at the Sun City Lakeview United Methodist Church Saturday. The church celebrated its 35th anniversary.

church is important is ... mean, it's not so structured. You don't have to be Methodist. We're open."

The 35-year-old church has more than 1,000 members, Lemley said. In addition to celebrating the church's presence in the Sun City community, Saturday's event was meant to open the church's doors to those who don't attend Lakeview.

"We'd love to have more (people at the church)," Lemley said.

Free beans, bratwursts and soda were provided by Metho Travelers, a group which plans trips for people at the church, Lemley said.

Saturday was part of a weekend-long celebration. Rev. Dr. Fred Smoot, son of the founding pastor Leonard Smoot, preached the two church services on Sunday, and historical memorabilia

from the church was on display.

Dorothy Wyant of Sun City said she has been attending church services and events for 2½ years.

"I love (the church)," she said. "It's very warm, they keep you happy, and they have a great sense of humor."

Beulah McKinney, a Lakeview member for 30 years, said loyalty and the church members have kept her coming back each week.

She said she enjoys the events the church sponsors including Amazing Grace, an event that occurs every Wednesday, and TNT, or Thursday Nights Together.

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Health role for church

Services expanded to meet community needs

By Kelly Ettenborough
The Arizona Republic

Ginna Mitch lives with fibromyalgia, a chronic condition marked by muscle pain and fatigue.

For her, spiritual and health support from Lakeview United Methodist Church in Sun City is invaluable. And she isn't even a member.

She and her husband, Rich, live in Peoria and belong to St. Helen's Catholic Church in Glendale.

At Lakeview, they have found help for Ginna Mitch's fibromyalgia through a class and a support group coordinated by the parish nurse, Virginia Nelson. Many of the people in the support group aren't members of the church.

At a recent session, a guest speaker talked about various nutritional products. Nelson listened to the group members to answer their questions and to offer advice. In addition to her nursing training, she is certified by the Arthritis Foundation as a fibromyalgia self-help course leader.

The support group has helped Mitch cope with her illness and has helped her husband understand her condition.

"How often will someone in her position give you her business card that has her office and her home number?" asked Rich Mitch, a retired plant and production manager.

Peter Olegar, a retired manager of engineering administration and construction, also attends the support group.

"The church for too long has abrogated its duty to be a church," said Olegar, a member of All Saints of the Desert Episcopal Church in Sun City. "I think it's time, without being preachy, that the church assumes more of a role in health, marriage counseling, premarital counseling, family relationships and wellness programs."

To meet the changing needs of its congregation and the community, church leaders officially added Nelson's part-time position two months ago. Her task is to work with the church's

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Retiree

Caring Committee and its associate pastor, who has a background in social work.

"Wellness is the key," said the Rev. Roland Brammeier, senior pastor at Lakeview. "If we can prevent illness, we want to do that so people can have longer and healthier lives. The role of the church has always been that we should be there."

Lakeview has 1,600 members and with its senior population, there are many roles to fill, from patient advocate for members whose families live out of state to connecting members with social ser-

vices and home health care.

Members are glad to see the expansion of their church's role.

"This is a wonderful thing, a needed service," said Betty Wally, a retired nurse and member of Lakeview since 1987. "We serve one another. We love one another. We need one another."

Nelson, whose long nursing career ranged from critical care to administration, had been a parish nurse in Sun Lakes before retiring last year and moving across town to be closer to her daughter and

grandchildren. She was one of the first parish nurses in the Valley.

"I honestly feel that everything I did jelled together with this job," Nelson said. "I really get a lot of enjoyment out of interacting with people. When people are in trouble, they turn to the church. With health care the way that it is, there has to be a gap that is filled there, and the church can fill it."

One part-time person, though, cannot meet the needs in such a large congregation, she said. She and the associate minister will be training volunteers through the national Stephen Ministry.

The training teaches church volunteers to give help, one on one, to people facing different situations - bereavement, terminal illness, divorce, unemployment, hospitalization, spiritual struggles or loneliness.

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Parish nurse Virginia Nelson (left) laughs with Betty Wally, a retired nurse, at the church's weekly "Amazing Grays" luncheon for congregation members.

(over)



Virginia Nelson, wellness director at Lakeview United Methodist Church in Sun City, makes announcements at the church's weekly "Amazing Grays" luncheon for congregation members.

Photos by The Arizona Republic

'God had this planned for me'

Retiring pastor reflects on 45 years of ministry

By GINGER SCOTT-EIDEN
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Retirement won't keep the Rev. Dennis Ramsey from being in church every Sunday.

He'll just be sitting in the pews at Lakeview United Methodist Church in Sun City rather than standing in front of the congregation.

"It's been a great life," said Ramsey, who will deliver his final sermon Sunday at Lakeview. He has been senior pastor at Lakeview for 14 years.

"When you reach 70 in our church district, you are forced to retire," he said. "And I'm 70 and a few months."

His final sermon is titled, "I Believe." Ramsey will recount his past, present and future.

Ramsey, who was born in Illinois, earned a bachelor's degree in 1951 from McKendree College in Lebanon, Ill. He received his Masters of Divinity degree in 1954 from Garrett

Preaching and working one-on-one with people are experiences he said he will miss the most.

Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill.

His first pastorate was at Asbury Methodist Church in Mt. Vernon, Ill. 45 years ago. He moved to Arizona in 1964 with his wife, Martha, and was appointed the Pastor of Brooks Memorial/Christ United Methodist Church in Phoenix where he ministered from 1966 to 1985.

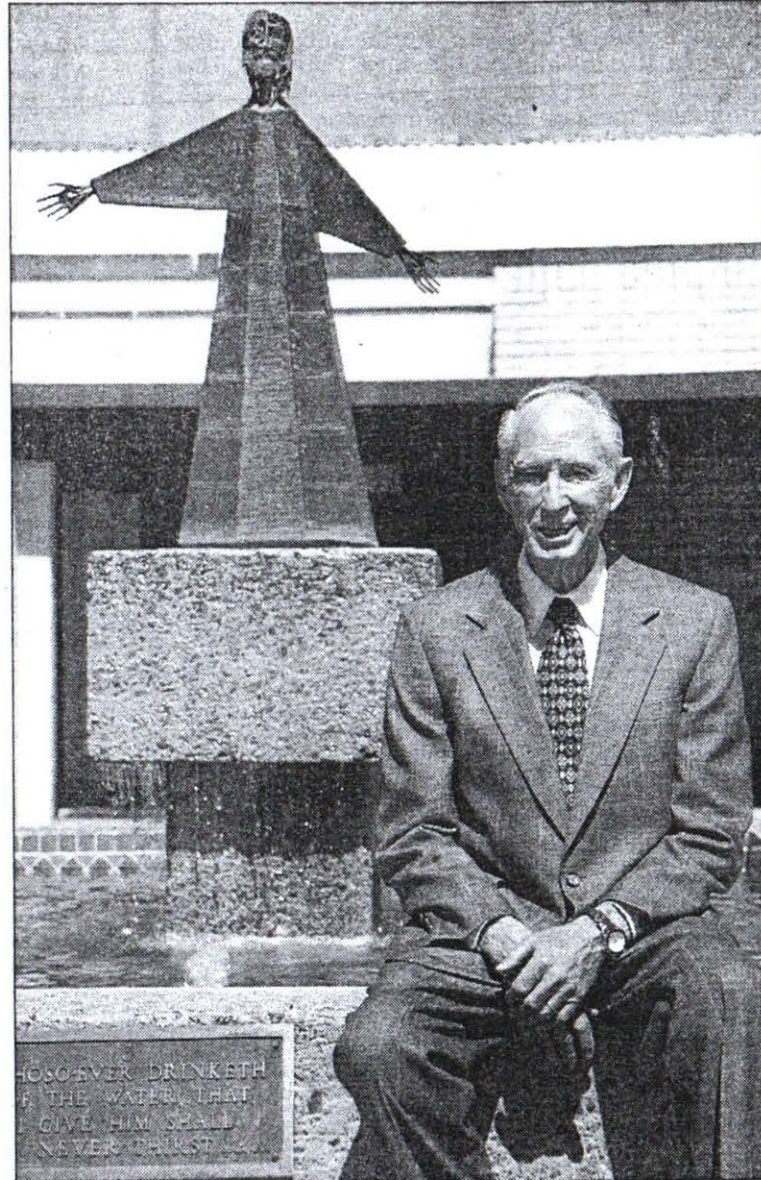
He gave his first sermon at the Lakeview United Methodist Church in Sun City in 1985.

But spending his life serving God wasn't always Ramsey's plan.

"I first decided (to become a minister) during college," he said. "I was headed in the direction of teaching. I was going to be an English teacher. I would have been happy doing that, but I think God had this planned for me."

Ramsey said he looks back at his 45 years with fond memories, and

See Pastor plans, B5



Lisa Goettsche/Daily News-Sun

Pastor plans to occupy pew

From B1

there are many things about ministry he will miss.

Preaching and working one-on-one with people are experiences he said he will miss the most.

"I loved preaching year-round," he said. "Sure, Christmas and Easter were highlights. But I love all of the seasons, even when it's 122 degrees."

And as for his replacement, Ramsey said he couldn't have chosen a better candidate. Rev. Roland Brammier, formerly the pastor of Christ United Methodist Church in Phoenix, was appointed to Ramsey's position at Lakeview.

"He's very wonderful, very passionate and very spirited," Ramsey said of Brammier.

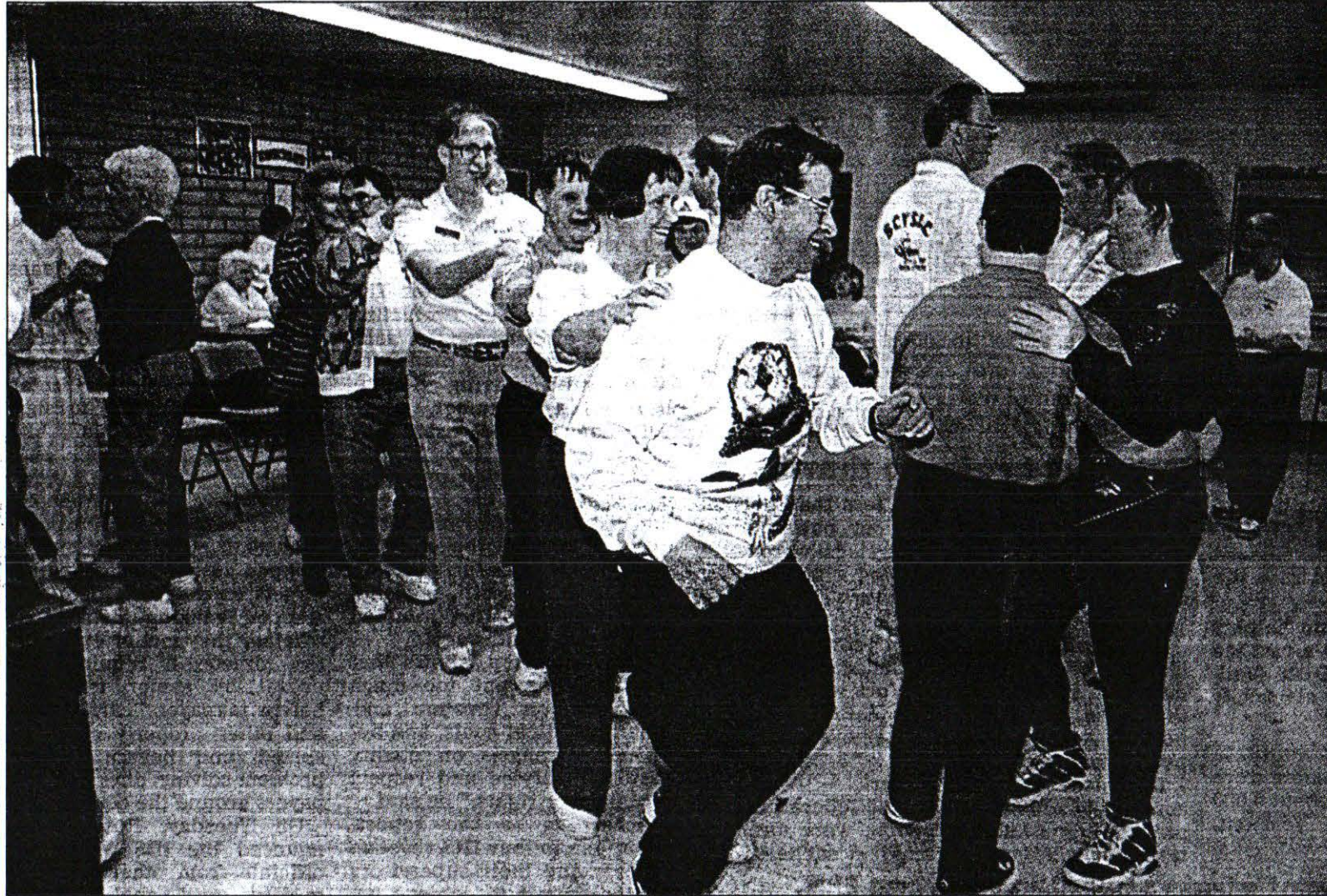
Sunday's sermon may not be Ramsey's last. He said he hopes to make guest visitations somewhere on a part-time basis.

However, Sun City will continue to be his home.

"We love Sun City, we love the people and we love the area," Ramsey said. "My, how time flies."

The Reverend Dennis Ramsey of Lakeview United Methodist Church in Sun City says he has mixed feelings about retiring after 14 years as the church's pastor.

LAKE VIEW



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Getting into the swing of things during a social at Lakeview United Methodist Church in Sun City are members of the Sun Cities and Youngtown Special Activities Center.

Who will care for their children?

over

Sun Citians unite to meet offsprings' special needs

By TINA SCHADE

Staff writer

A small yet growing number of Sun Citians are finding themselves in an unusual situation.

Not only are they dealing with the trials that often accompany aging, but they are also dealing with the changing needs of their aging developmentally disabled children as well.

The Southwest Journal on Aging defines developmentally disabled as someone having a severe, chronic disability that limits a person's participation in three or more of the following life activities: self-care, self-direction, learning, language, mobility, independent living and economic self-sufficiency.

These parents are also facing the realization that their children may not have caretakers in the future, so most are turning to Northwest Valley agencies for help.

One organization, known as the Sun Cities and Youngtown Special Activities Center, turned to Sun Health Corp. to help address some of its concerns.

SCYSAC is a coalition made up of developmentally disabled adults, their parents and members of the Civitan Club. They meet twice a week for activities, socialization and support groups.

"The group of developmentally disabled ages run from mid-30s to just under 70 ... and they're all children of Sun City parents and Sun City parents aren't young anymore," said Roy Natvig, a member of SCYSAC and the Civitan Club.

Members of the organization approached Sun Health last year requesting a residence for older developmentally disabled adults.

After consideration, Sun Health ac-

cepted the challenge.

Pamela Meyerhoffer, vice president of public affairs for Sun Health, said the non-profit company has always responded to the needs of the community and this situation wasn't any different.

"For many of these parents, their dependents are into their 40s, 50s and one in the 60s," Meyerhoffer said. "Of course, parents are becoming concerned about how their child, their adult child, will be cared for when the parents are no longer able to care for them."

By the end of the summer or early fall of this year, Sun Health plans to open a 5,500-square-foot residence in Peoria. The cost of the project will total an estimated \$500,000 and be funded through donations. The residence will house 10 people, with the capability for more rooms in the future, which is likely.

In 1986, the Arizona Department of Economic Security reported that 137 developmentally disabled adults older than 55 were living in Arizona. In 1996, the number rose to 179 people in Maricopa County alone. Another 2,400 people may qualify, but haven't yet registered with DES.

Membership in SCYSAC has also grown — from six members in 1979 to nearly 40 today, Natvig said.

Aware of the potential for increase, Sun Health has allotted a large enough parcel of land to build a second or third residence on the lot if necessary, Meyerhoffer said. Rooms would cost between \$1,200 and \$1,500 a month.

Fred Hulse of Wickenburg has taken a different approach in caring for his developmentally disabled twin daughters.

Sharon and Sheryl Hulse, 32, were diagnosed with phenylketonuria, or PKU, as infants. PKU is a disease caused by the faulty metabolism of protein and results in mental retardation.

For three years, Hulse has been driv-

ing his daughters to Sun City West, where they participate in the Interfaith Services Adult Day Care Center.

He said what his daughters gain from the program is worth the time and money spent in gasoline. Hulse said the program has helped his daughters develop mentally and socially.

"Being sisters, there's always been sibling rivalry. They get along together much better now, maybe because there's other distractions," Hulse said.

"Distractions" at the center may include singalongs, games or arts and crafts. Even if his daughters are distracted, Hulse said the staff at Interfaith is not and is very sensitive to Sharon and Sheryl's physical needs.

"Anything we don't notice, like colds or flus, they alert us to, and I would say the health situation has been enhanced also," he said.

Although Hulse is satisfied with the care his daughters are receiving now, he is a little worried about their future.

Hulse has arranged for younger family members to care for his daughters, but understands commitments may change.

"We have some younger people that are somewhat related to us that have made a commitment to take over any obligations if that would be necessary. But as with anything — and I'm not saying it would happen — those commitments could change. It's a sure bet, but there's always holes in any program," the 52-year old Hulse said.

Administrators at Interfaith also recognize and are responding to the aging developmentally disabled in the community. This spring, IFS intends to expand its Peoria Adult Day Care Center by designing activities which apply to particular age groups.

Interfaith Services will play a supportive role in the Sun Health residence by tapping into its experience working with the developmentally disabled community.

Celestial surroundings

2/4/97



On hand for the dedication Sunday of Lakeview Methodist Church's new administration wing are from left, the Rev. Larry Gerber, district supervisor; Bill Powers, chairman of building committee; the Rev. Dennis Ramsey and Francis Schulz, architect. The church is located at 103rd Avenue and Thunderbird Boulevard in Sun City.

Heather Kadar/Daily News-Sun



Steve Cherek/Daily News-Sun

The Rev. Leonard J. Smoot, left, Bob Harris and Ellie Smith stand outside Lakeview United Methodist Church, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. Harris is helping coordinate a series of commemorative presentations and Smith is chairman of the church's Vision 2000 committee, which is planning for the future.

60-second speeches mark 25 years of faith

By MICHAEL P. HEGARTY
Daily News-Sun staff

Lakeview United Methodist Church in Sun City will be celebrating its 25th anniversary "60 Seconds" at a time for the next three months.

Beginning Sunday, different members of the congregation will take turns playing a song and giving a personal testament on the church's meaning in their lives. Their speeches will be limited to one minute.

"They'll comment on what the church means to them and their life," said Bob Harris, a member of the church who is helping coordinate the presentations, which will be a combination of the church's celebration of its quarter-century anniversary and an attendance-boosting campaign. Lakeview hopes to exceed last February's attendance total of 4,000 people.

The church's first service was Palm Sunday 1970 in the social hall of Lakeview Recreation Center. The

Rev. Leonard Smoot, the founding pastor of the church, doesn't remember everything about the first service, but the musical entertainment rings clear.

"It was thrilling," he said, recalling the March 22, 1970, service that 240 people attended. "The First Phoenix church youth choir helped.

"They brought their organist who had a big organ in Phoenix. We had a little one, about this big," he said, holding his hands about a foot apart. "He had a lot of fun trying to get some music out of it. I'll never forget that."

On Nov. 1, 1970, there were 159 charter members and in 1973 it completed its sanctuary at 103rd Avenue and Thunderbird Boulevard. Today there are 1,600 members and it has reached as high as 2,000 people in 1980.

The church's four-acre property includes a sanctuary, chapel, Smoot Hall (with an elevator to the base-

See Methodists plan, C2

Methodists plan for millennium

—From C1

ment), office building, fountain and courtyard, columbarium and a self-standing tower.

The church gained new members through the dedication and perseverance of Smoot and other members of the church.

"They accuse me of following the moving vans into their homes," Smoot said with a laugh. "As soon as I'd get their name I'd call to welcome them into the church. Then I'd send them a 'love letter,' presenting the church and the reason for it and inviting them to get a new member's evening."

"The Monday after the first service I attended, there he was, knocking on my door," said Ellie Smith, chairman of the church's Vision 2000 committee. "I was really pleased."

Smoot began traveling to people's homes in 1934 trying to attract new members. And he's still doing it today. Last weekend, he brought 17 new members to Lakeview church. He figures he's attracted more than 3,000 people into the Sun City over the years.

"My wife (Miriam) walked miles and miles with me," Smoot said.

While the church is hoping to attract new members, it hasn't forgotten about the people that have been with them over the years. The congregation plays a vital part in the church. "They are the church," Smoot said.

To show Lakeview's concern for the future, it is actively participating in the Methodist church's Vision 2000 program, "a strategic plan to carry us to the year 2000 and beyond," Smith said.

"We remain an umbilical chord to the community services available," said Roy Natvig, a member of the church since 1971. "As the members age, it will become more and more important to keep people in their homes. That's where they feel the most comfortable. We want them to know the church still cares for them."

Church's founding pastor conquered list of hazards

By SUSAN HEROLD
Staff Writer

When the Rev. Leonard Smoot arrived in Sun City 15 years ago with orders to start a new Methodist church, he had just a few problems to contend with.

He couldn't ignore them—no place to live, no congregation and no funds for building a church usually are not regarded lightly.

But to Rev. Smoot, those were small problems.

"The thought of starting a new church was so exciting that I just began working. I didn't have time to worry," said the retired pastor of Lakeview Methodist Church.

Smoot was sent to Sun City after service as a district superintendent for the church in Missouri.

His job was to develop a new church in growing Sun City.

"At that time (1970) the population here was only about 11,000 and there already was one Methodist church in the area, (First United Methodist). I knew I had my work cut out for me," Smoot said.

With the help of Rev. Don Locher, Phoenix district superintendent, a site for the church was established at 10298 Thunderbird Blvd.

With a loan from the Methodist National Conference, the land was bought from Del E. Webb Development Co. (Devco) for \$37,000.

In the meantime, he and his wife, Miriam, found a temporary home with Gordon and Lulu Thompson, former members of their Missouri church. The four

began planning to build a congregation.

With the help of Rev. McIlroy, pastor of First United Methodist, Smoot gave his first sermon to the community.

"After I spoke at the service, one person came to me and said he wanted to be a member of the church," Smoot said. "Although it wasn't a large response, it was a start."

Lee Loden was the person who expressed an interest. The first meeting of the church was held in his house. The 10 people who showed up were dubbed the steering committee, and positions were doled out.

Then 32 Methodist ministers from the Valley surveyed Sun City residents to see how many would be interested in being members of a new church.

At first, more than 100 people expressed an interest, but when they were contacted again, only 20 responses panned out.

Smoot was not deterred.

He set out to find a temporary home for his Sunday services in Lakeview Center.

"We had a heck of time getting in, because a Protestant preacher was already holding services there," Smoot said. "His services were at 11 a.m., so I had decided to have mine at 9 a.m. It was hot at the time and people began coming to church earlier, so he announced he would add a 9 a.m. service too."

That setback didn't stop Smoot from proceeding with his plans. He found another room in the rec center, and on March 22, 1970, the first service for the yet-unnamed Lakeview Methodist

Church was held.

During the next eight months Smoot and volunteers were busy and by November, 159 charter members had joined the church.

Then a building committee was formed to get construction started on a church.

"When we did finally decide on the plans, we borrowed the money from the congregation to pay for the church," Smoot said.

Smoot's congregation loaned \$700,000 at 7½ percent interest to cover the cost of construction.

"But we paid them back within four years," Smoot said.

Construction began in the summer of 1972 and on a sunny July 22, 1973, the Lakeview Methodist Church opened its doors to an overflowing crowd of 800.

Smoot continued to recruit new members and the church thrived.

After 10 years at Lakeview Methodist, Smoot was forced to give up his pastoral duties because of the Methodist Church's mandatory retirement age—70.

To keep his mind off his retirement, Smoot worked at a bowling alley and preached at Central United Methodist Church. However, problems arose and forced him to leave.

"Jealousies sometimes break out between pastors—so its best to leave at times," Smoot said.

Recently, the minister returned to Lakeview Methodist to give a sermon to his old congregation and look upon the \$1 million church hall dedicated in his name.