

# Unitarian Universalist flock awaits opening of new church

**INDEPENDENT**  
September 15, 1999

## Church has known many homes since inception

After meeting in various locations since 1975, including a Mexican restaurant, mortuary, bank, and an obliging Jewish temple, members of the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Sun Cities will soon observe a milestone — they will be able to worship in their own church.

On Oct. 3, the Rev. Walter F. Wieder will celebrate the first service at the new church, located at 17540 Avenue of the Arts, Surprise, adjacent to the West Valley Art Museum.

It is the 100th church to be designed by Dean Glasco, of the Phoenix architectural firm of Glasco-Bedrin, who he will retire following its completion.

The contemporary Southwest building is graceful yet functional. Its oblong steeple is distinctive for its stylized chalice which was hand sculpted by Sun City resident Mordecai Roth, a former dentist who took up sculpting since moving to the west Valley from Los Angeles.

Services are being held at Temple Beth Shalom, 12202 N. 101st Ave. in Sun City until the new church is

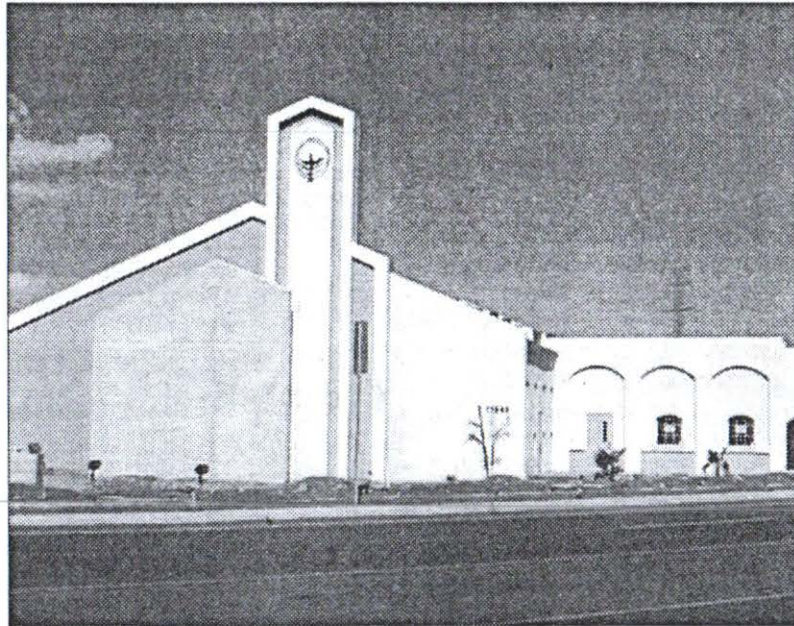


Photo by TOM BARRY/Independent Newspapers

Members of the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Sun Cities will celebrate completion of their new church at 17540 Avenue of the Arts in Surprise with their first service on Oct. 3.

completed. Because of its long-standing relationship, the congregation will host a gratitude gala for their Jewish friends. An open house is slated for Nov. 14, and a church dedication will be held Jan. 16.

It has been a long and circuitous road for the Sun City members, who first attended services in Phoenix. With the blessings of the national Unitarian Universalist Association, they organized their own fellowship in 1975 and held their first official meeting in a mortuary chapel.

Although membership grew

steadily, a place to meet was always a problem. The back room of a Mexican restaurant served for a while. They met for three years in a funeral home, and by 1980 moved to the Masonic Fellowship Center.

But in the intervening years the congregation lacked a minister, and relied almost exclusively on lay members. In 1982, Dr. Glen Bomstad, a professor of religious education at Arizona State University, was named part-time minister and the fellowship was formally recognized as a church. A church building fund drive was begun.

Dr. Nathaniel Lauriat became the church's first full-time minister in 1985. He retired in 1995 after 50 years in the ministry. During his tenure membership grew to nearly 200.

In 1989, the members purchased and converted a 12-year-old bank building at 99th Avenue and Union Hills Drive.

An interim minister, Rev. Oren Peterson, served until the arrival of the current minister, Rev. Wieder, in 1996.

A native of Watertown, N.Y., he has served in the ministry for 25 years and has a master of divinity degree from Colgate/Rochester and is currently completing work on a doctorate of ministry at Southern Methodist University. Rev. Wieder and his wife, Janet, a chemical engineer and computer expert, live in Glendale.

By mid-1997, the burgeoning congregation outgrew its home, which was purchased by neighboring Wooddale Village. Services have since been held at Temple Beth Shalom while the members await completion of their new church. Temporary church offices are at 9720 W. Peoria Ave., Peoria.

# Unitarian Universalists focus on cooperation

By DAVID MILLER  
Staff writer

**E**ven for an international conference, it was a pretty eclectic cast.

Rubbing elbows at the Unitarian Universalist Association's General Assembly were U.S. Sen. John McCain and Bishop Laszlo Tokes, an acknowledged hero of the Romanian revolution that overthrew dictator Nicolae Ceausescu.

And taking the podium were Rabbi David Saperstein of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and Bishop Barbara Harris, the Episcopal Church's first female, African-American bishop.

But that interfaith sense of unity perfectly suited the confab, said a local woman who attended the fest.

"It was pretty typical," said Sun City West's Vivian Wood, who handles public relations for the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Sun Cities. "Our style is more free-form than most."

That style was also evident in the conference's list of topics, which ranged from the general theme of "Building Interfaith Cooperation" to McCain's pitch for campaign finance reform.

The church's General Assembly met

last month at the Phoenix Civic Center.

Members also entered the controversy surrounding the Disney Corp.

Instead of condemning Disney for its "gay-friendly" policies, however — as U.S. Southern Baptists have done — the Unitarian Universalists threw their support to Disney, lauding its "non-discriminatory corporate policies."

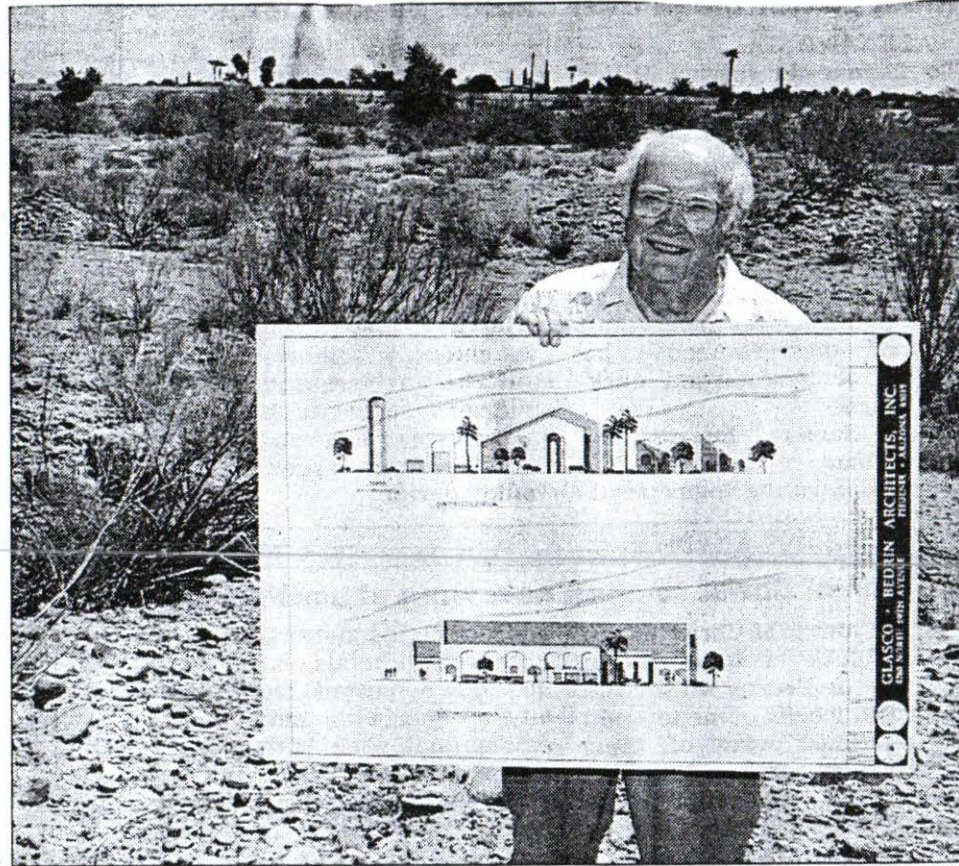
The church association issued an "Action of Immediate Witness," aimed at "supporting the Disney Corp. and all others who uphold family-friendly employment practices which do not discriminate against individuals from the gay, lesbian and bisexual communities."

But that move, too, was typical of the church, which in its hundreds of years of history has shied away from judging those of different faiths or practices.

"Interfaith cooperation has special meaning for us," said the Rev. Walt Weider of the Sun City chapter.

According to church literature, the Unitarian movement dates back to several hundred years after the death of Christ.

Doctrine is based on the idea of a united God, rather than a creator as part of a "Holy Trinity." In 1638 the first church using the Unitarian title was established in Transylvania, and the



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Allen Powell of Sun City West holds an artist rendering of what will be the Unitarian Universalist Church. The church which will face Bell Road, will be built east of the Sun Cities Museum of Art in Surprise.

movement steadily grew, though believers often were persecuted.

Churchgoers generally follow a phi-

losophy of "religious tolerance and questioning." Participants interpret

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# Church seeks interfaith unity

■ From B1

beliefs in their own fashion, and bring their varied views to religious gatherings.

Members joined in Phoenix to discuss the importance of cooperation, and toasted the idea by saluting speakers debating everything from totalitarian regimes to racial troubles.

Among the notables was the rev. Jack Mendelsohn, a Universalist minister and associate of the Rev. Jesse Jackson who heads the Civil Rights Project Inc.

The Rev. Dr. William F. Schulz, executive director of Amnesty International, USA, and former assembly president, delivered a sermon titled "Too Swift to Stop, Too Sweet to Lose," affirming the value of life.

And while cooperation took an international stage, church members are reaping the local benefits of working together.

While the church's new center is being built near the corner of Bell Road and 114th Avenue in Surprise, members are sharing space with Temple Beth Shalom, on 101st Avenue in Sun City.

The church is slated for completion next year, but in the meantime the congregation's 200-plus members will have to make do with shared facilities.

But it's an inconvenience that Wood says she doesn't mind. In fact, she enjoys the idea of coming together with Temple members. "It seemed to come at a good time for us."

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## Religion News

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### Church relocating near art museum

A new church home for Unitarian Universalist Church of the Sun Cities is in the planning stage, according to the church's board of directors and its minister, the Rev. Walter F. Wieder.

Acquisition of a four-acre site adjacent to the Sun Cities Museum of Art, 17425 N. 115th Ave., Surprise, has been approved by the church membership for location of the new building.

The decision to move followed a membership vote to accept an offer by Woodale Village, 18616 N. 99th Ave., Sun City, to purchase the present church property, 18602 N. 99th Ave., Sun City.

Board President Allen S. Powell said, "The decision to relocate was prompted by the extraordinary opportunity presented as the Woodale offer coincided with the availability of an exciting location more centrally located for our growing congregation."

Until the new church building is completed, services are being held at Temple Beth Shalom, 12202 101st Ave., Sun City.

A temporary church office will be located at 9720 W. Peoria Ave., Suite 1075, Peoria.

The office can be reached by calling 972-7800.

The Unitarian Universalist Church's membership has grown to more than 200 since it was formed as a fellowship in 1975. The present facility was acquired in 1990.

*Unitarian Universalist Church*

Oct. 28, 1990

VF - CHURCHES - UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

**ORDER OF SERVICE**

for the

**CELEBRATION AND DEDICATION**

of the

**CHURCH HOME**

of the

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH**

**OF THE SUN CITIES**

18602 North 99th Avenue

Sun City, Arizona

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28th, 1990**

## Order of Service

<b>PRELUDE</b> .....	"When the Saints Go Marching In"
<b>PROCESSIONAL</b>	
<b>HYMN</b> .....	No. 62 -- "We Are the Earth Upright and Proud"
<b>OPENING WORDS</b> .....	President Allen Powell
<b>GREETINGS</b> .....	JoAnne Smith, Trustee Unitarian Universalist Pacific Southwest District
<b>FOUNDING OF OUR FELLOWSHIP</b> .....	Emma Patterson
<b>RECOGNITION OF GIFTS</b> .....	Theodore Clifford Co-Chairman, Building Fund Committee
<b>HYMN</b> .....	No. 248 -- "Light of Ages and of Nations"
<b>SERMON</b> .....	"The Courage to Be Liberal" by Reverend Dr. David Pohl Director, Department of Ministry Unitarian Universalist Association
<b>THE QUARTET</b> .....	"God of Our Fathers"
<b>PRESENTATION OF THE KEYS</b> .....	Robert Frankeberger, Architect Robert E. Porter, Contractor Emily Muller and William Anderson Co-Chairpersons Architecture & Design Committee
<b>ACT OF DEDICATION</b> .....	To be read responsively

The things of the spirit are invisible and must be shown forth in the character of our lives, the quality of our fellowship and the physical means we provide for their achievement.

Only by uniting in voluntary commitment can we show forth in fullness what we stand for.

For us the first word is freedom and our faith is not confined by blind tradition or rigid creed.

We welcome all earnest seekers after truth and goodness and want to share the findings of their and our experience.

## About the Preacher

David Pohl comes from Watertown, New York, and took both his undergraduate and theological training at St. Lawrence University at Canton, also in upstate New York.

After ordination in 1954, he served our churches in Bedford, Massachusetts, and Cleveland, Ohio, before having a distinguished ten-year ministry at the First Unitarian Church of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

In 1971 he was called to Boston to serve as Ministerial Settlement Director and in 1979 he was named Director of the Department of Ministry.

In that capacity he heads a staff of twelve that is responsible for ministerial recruitment, training, credentialing, settlement, professional development, personal and professional counseling, church staff finances, and resources for worship.

He undertakes research and writing on a variety of professional issues, consults on conflict resolution with our ministers and churches, and serves as Executive Secretary of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, the body responsible for granting ministerial credentials and maintaining professional standards for the Association's nearly twelve hundred ministers.

David and his wife, Martha (whom we met at his ordination in 1954), live in Chelmsford, twenty-five miles northwest of Boston, on land that has been in her family for nearly three hundred years. They have a daughter, Betsy, a son, Eric, and two granddaughters, Miriam and Erica.

## Our Warm Thanks Go To

### The Brass Quartet:

Robert M. Boat, trumpet  
George A. Meek, euphonium and trombone

Carl W. Teig, trumpet  
Mack Boelling, bass tuba

### The Dedication Service Committee:

Charlotte Hoppe, Chairperson  
Ruth Guidotti  
Bernice Lieber

Evelyn Meeks  
Doris Melleney  
Edith Wheeler

### The Architecture and Design Committee:

Emily Muller and William Anderson, Co-Chairpersons  
Nancy Bechtolt  
Virginia Frogge  
Marilyn Kluge

George Meeks  
Art Wichmann

### The Housing and Property Committee:

Ken Mindrup, Chairperson

**And to:** The many who helped by contributing refreshments, decorations, ushering, and many other services.

Respectful of the past we honor all who have sought and fought for light and liberty.

We are grateful for the freedom, knowledge and institutions our predecessors in faith have given us.

Active in the present we intend in our personal and public lives to assist all whom our power can reach.

May we help build a world of freedom, peace, and justice for all.

Concerned for the future after our own journey is complete,

We would conserve and hand on the Unitarian Universalist tradition to be liberation and inspiration, strength and solace to those who shall come after us.

Therefore, we have formed this Congregation and given it our effort, resources, and devotion. Now we rejoice in this latest achievement, the establishment of our own place for our worship, fellowship, growth, and service.

We dedicate this house to:

- The primacy of conscience in determining the acts of free men and women.
- Fellowship where mutual respect flowers into trust and love.
- Truth so far as we can get it by reason and insight.
- Integrity as a goal for ourselves and sensitivity to others as the beginning of responsibility.
- Faith as our understanding of and response to the Creative Life which has produced us, sustained us, and sets the conditions for our fulfillment.

To the end that the human spirit shall be liberated, enabled, and fulfilled and that thereby this place shall be made holy, now and forever.

<b>SPOKEN MEDITATION</b> .....	Rev. Nathaniel Lauriat
<b>HYMN</b> .....	No. 159 -- "May Nothing Evil Cross this Door"
<b>CLOSING WORDS</b> .....	
<b>HYMN OF VALOR</b> .....	
<b>RECESSIONAL</b> .....	"Morning has Broken"

All present are invited to a Reception in Fellowship Hall immediately following the Service.