

CANTATA

United Church preparing Easter Cantata

The story of the last few days of Jesus' life leading up to the resurrection will be told with music and lyrics as the United Church of Sun City gets ready to present its Easter Cantata with members of the Phoenix Symphony Orchestra.

The performance will be held at 10 a.m. on Sunday, April 9, at the church located at 11250 N. 107th Street.

For the past several years, the church has showcased the talents of the Phoenix Symphony Orchestra with its Christmas and Easter Cantatas.

The Rev. Brady Abel talked about the power of music and how people can learn from it. "In this year of 2017, the story of the resurrection

is needed as much as ever and if we can reach a different audience with a musical version of the resurrection, then so be it."

The Easter Cantata has been a part of the church for the past three years. The church's Christmas Cantata has been going on for more than a decade. Minister of Music Ginni Summers said that she and church Organist Beverly Fletcher each year review several cantata's before making a selection. This year they selected, "What Love is This?"

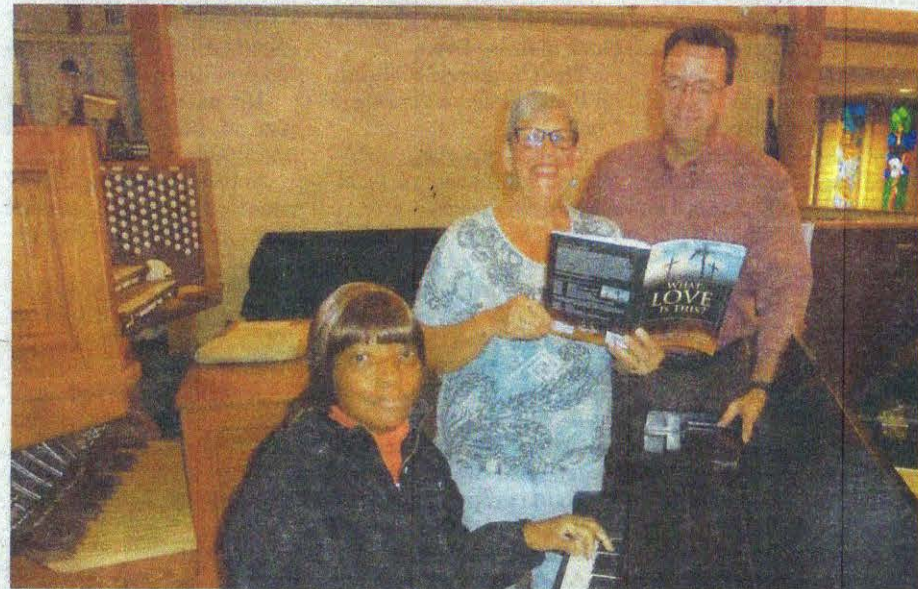
"To me it is so dramatic, It starts at Palm Sunday and it goes through the resurrection," she said. "The music is gripping."

One of her favorite pieces

is titled "Hiding in the Shadows." "It is just so powerful, you can see the people in the streets, you can see the anger and politics of the time," she said. "We are blessed to have members of the Phoenix Symphony accompany us with this very dramatic piece."

Ms. Fletcher, who has worked for the Phoenix Symphony for the past 35 years, explained how the symphony became part of the churches Christmas and Easter Cantata. "They love Ginni, they love the choir and they love to play. It is going to be inspiring," she said.

Ms. Summers will conduct both the 35 member choir along with the symphony. This year's narrator



is David Dunbar: The cantata will also

showcase the solo talents of Ron Cammel, who will be

Jesus, and Nick Pullin, who will be Judas.



Submitted Photo

Members mobilize on map

A professional photographer stood on a 12-foot ladder to get this shot of members, former members and friends standing on the map at United Church of Sun City, where the painted map has been located for 50 years. The church celebrated its golden anniversary Oct. 10 with more than 300 people attending the service and the various activities. Helen Neumann, usher for 38 years, rang the steeple bell asking everyone to come and stand on their home state, to get acquainted and reminisce. Afterward, the members went to Banner Olive Branch Senior Center for a luncheon and anniversary cake, gifts and fellowship.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

United Church of Sun City 50th anniversary committee members, from left, Pat Dilmore, Pastor Jim Fredette, Ginni Summers, Nancy Bain, Grace Havlik (general chair of the celebration), Susan Aurich, Ruth Engelman and Mel Ruskin are dressed in what church goers might wear at Sunday services in 1960. The community is invited to celebrate the church's 50th anniversary beginning at 10 a.m. Oct. 10. All are asked to wear 1960s church attire (hats, gloves, dresses), if possible. Antique cars from the 1950s and 1960s will be on display. There will be more than 40 scrapbooks of newspaper articles, pictures, bulletins and memorabilia on display in the Beehive, as well. Everyone will pose for a picture on their state of origin on the Famous United States Map on the patio, as they did more than 50 years ago. The only surviving charter member, Harold Hunt, 99, will be in attendance.

Sun City's 1st church celebrates 50th anniversary

STAFF REPORT

United Church of Sun City, the first church established in Sun City, will celebrate its 50th anniversary Oct. 10.

In September 1960, founder Dr. Walter Witt had his first Sunday morning services in the Oakmont Center. On Nov. 13, 1960, 101 people signed the charter as members of the new church. They bought the land where the church currently stands. The original building, Witt Hall, is where Banner Olive Branch Senior Center is located. As the congregation grew, plans were made for the present sanctuary, which stands just north of Witt Hall.

The land, buildings and equipment is estimated at \$575,000, of which \$360,000 represents the cost of the new sanctuary with its furnishings and equipment.

In 1965, members placed a cornerstone containing a bulletin, newsletter, Bible, pictorial directory and brochure of the Prayer Garden, and the 50th anniversary committee has asked the community for items to place in a time capsule to be opened in 2060 at the new Fairway Center.

The Oct. 10 service will follow the original bulletin from 1960, with the United Church Conference Minister Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer preaching. All former pastors have been invited. The ushers will be dressed in suits.

Following the service there will be guided tours of the buildings to show the remodeling, which includes a new sound system, light fixtures and two new wooden altars.

The church is at 11250 N. 107th Ave. Suite 105, Sun City. For information, call 623-933-0058.



United Church of Sun City celebrated its silver anniversary in 1985. Sun City's first church will mark its 50th anniversary this October. *Photo courtesy Sun City Independent.*

Sun City's first house of worship

United Church of Sun City celebrates its golden anniversary

There were only 30 families living in the new retirement community in the desert when Pastor Dr. Walter Witt and his wife, Gladys, began inviting people to punch and cookies (made by Gladys) at the Highway House.

He conducted the first worship service in the auditorium of the Community Center (now called Oakmont) in October, 1960 after only six months of house completions. By November more than 100, representing 61 denominations, had joined the United Church of Sun City as charter members, and Dr. Witt took an option on the land at the corner of 107th Avenue

and Sun City Boulevard.

Sun City's first church building was ready by June, 1961. It was built from plans of the Fairway Rec Center donated by Del Webb. The 20,200 square foot building cost \$8,500. Worship services were held there until 1965 when the present sanctuary was built.

Members met new people from their home states while standing on a giant U.S. map painted in the courtyard, and early potlucks were set on the patio. The social hall, now named Witt Hall, hosted many activities until two years ago when the church leased it to the Banner Olive Branch Senior Center.

Today church social events are held in the Friendship Center at the back of the sanctuary; food is kept warm or cold in the Beehive, a state of the art potluck serving area carved from the Narthex where there is also a library nook, room for meetings and screen for movies or videos.

United Church members are accustomed to change and innovation. In keeping with their purpose of community outreach they:

- * Helped establish Sun Valley Lodge, the area's first retirement home
- * Started Dysart Community Center in El Mirage
- * Helped establish Interfaith Ser-

Support Your Sun Cities Museum!

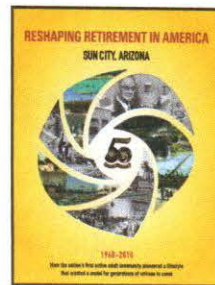
Join the Sun Cities Area Historical Society and help us preserve, protect and showcase the history of Sun City and Sun City West!

Your generous donation goes a long way:

- Supports the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum -- the "official" headquarters of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society, housed in one of the first five model homes built in Sun City!
- Funds educational programs that share the history of the world's best-known active-adult retirement communities.
- Underwrites a number of special activities planned in 2010 to celebrate Sun City's 50th anniversary!
- Continues the effort to collect, archive and preserve Sun Cities artifacts.



Join today and receive a FREE gift!!



While supplies last. New members can pick up their gift at the museum.

Join the Sun Cities Area Historical Society, and we'll send you this special 50th anniversary commemorative publication: *Reshaping Retirement in America*, absolutely free as our show of appreciation for your support.

Return the application below!

Sun Cities Area Historical Society Annual Membership



Yes, please accept my membership application! My annual contribution is enclosed!

Check one:

- Individual (\$10)
- Family (\$15)
- Supporting (\$25)
- Clubs/
- Organizations (\$25)
- Business (\$50)
- Patron (\$50)
- Other _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Apt. #: _____ City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone Number: _____

email: _____

New Renewal

**Return check, payable to:
Sun Cities Area Historical Society (SCAHS)
10801 Oakmont Drive, Sun City, AZ 85351**

United Church of Sun City: Sun City's first church

vices

- * Share their campus with the Banner Olive Branch Senior Center

- * Support the Valley View Community Food Bank

Grace Havlik, a second generation resident who retired as a primary school principal in Oak Forest, Ill and moved to the family home in 1987, keeps busy at the church and volunteering as a literacy teacher or at the Sun Cities Area Historical Society.

As chair of the United Church Diaconate, she is active with household duties, memorial services, setting up for Communion and as Care Minister. She is also chairman of the 2010 Committee and planning the church's 10-

10-10 celebration as the first church founded in Sun City.

"After 50 years we still see our place in the community as proclaiming that God is still speaking to each of us..." she says describing the programs listed above and the Salute to Vets program which began in 2008 and includes a wall of photos of members then and now who served in WWII, Korea and Vietnam.

To accommodate the needs of the senior center, the church restructured the Narthex and sanctuary, adding two beautiful and moveable altars and a new sound and light system. Restrooms were updated and redecorated.

The library was moved to the Friend-

ship Center so the old space could become the new chapel. Seniors from the Banner Olive Branch Center attend a Monday morning service there.

"Finding new ways to be in service to the community has always been the focus of this church," says Susan Aurich, director of Care Ministries.

Recently the church featured a WWII movie series followed by discussions. Currently the contemporary series is titled "Faith and Films."

And hand cleaner is available in each pew in the Sanctuary as well as to those who do the meeting and greeting at services.



Grace Havlik explains the Veteran's Wall of United Church of Sun City members of WWII, Korea and Vietnam wars. Only a portion is shown here; others are included on the back side.



Director of Care Ministries Susan Aurich shows off The Beehive, the potluck serving area carved from the Narthex. Diners then carry their plates into the Friendship Center at the back of the Sanctuary, only a few yards away.



Seniors enter the Banner Olive Branch Senior Center through the main entrance on the south side of the building, the former Witt Hall of the United Church of Sun City. The original entrance on 107th Avenue is now the back door to the kitchen. The church rents the building to the BOBSC and has remodeled the main church building to accommodate the social events of church members.

*Story and photos by
by P. Atwood Fenner*

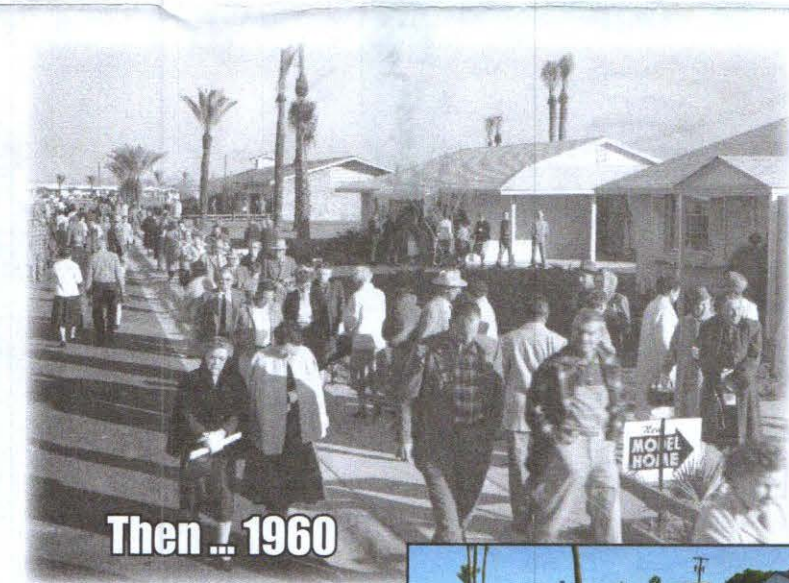
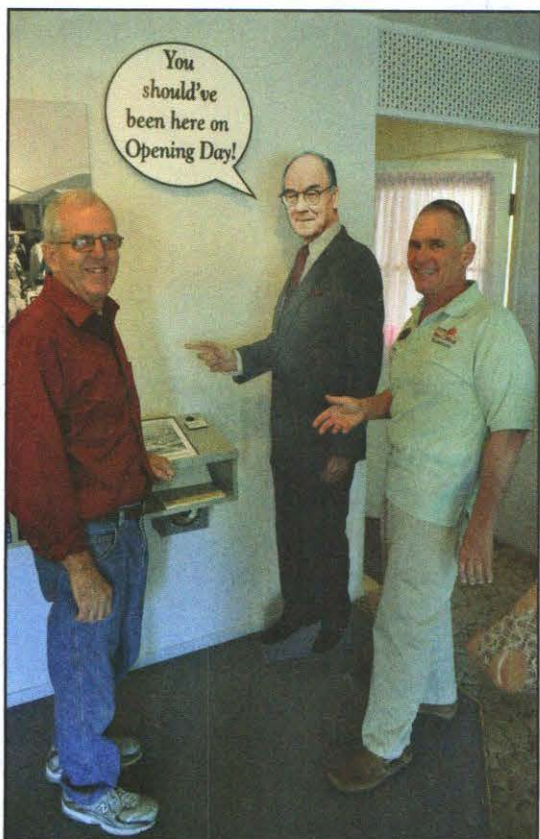
Happy Birthday Sun City!

Crowds visit museum to mark community's 50th anniversary

The Del Webb Sun Cities Museum open house on Jan. 1, 2010 attracted the largest crowd ever to visit the facility in one day. Visitors were treated to music, refreshments and new exhibits (including a new display of personal artifacts once owned by Sun City founder Del E. Webb). The museum is located in one of the first five model homes built in Sun City -- and one of the first homes viewed by curious visitors the day Sun City first opened to the public, Jan. 1, 1960.



Fifty years to the day after it first opened, the home that now houses the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum once again drew a crowd of curious onlookers. The month of January saw the most visitors ever to the museum -- over 610!



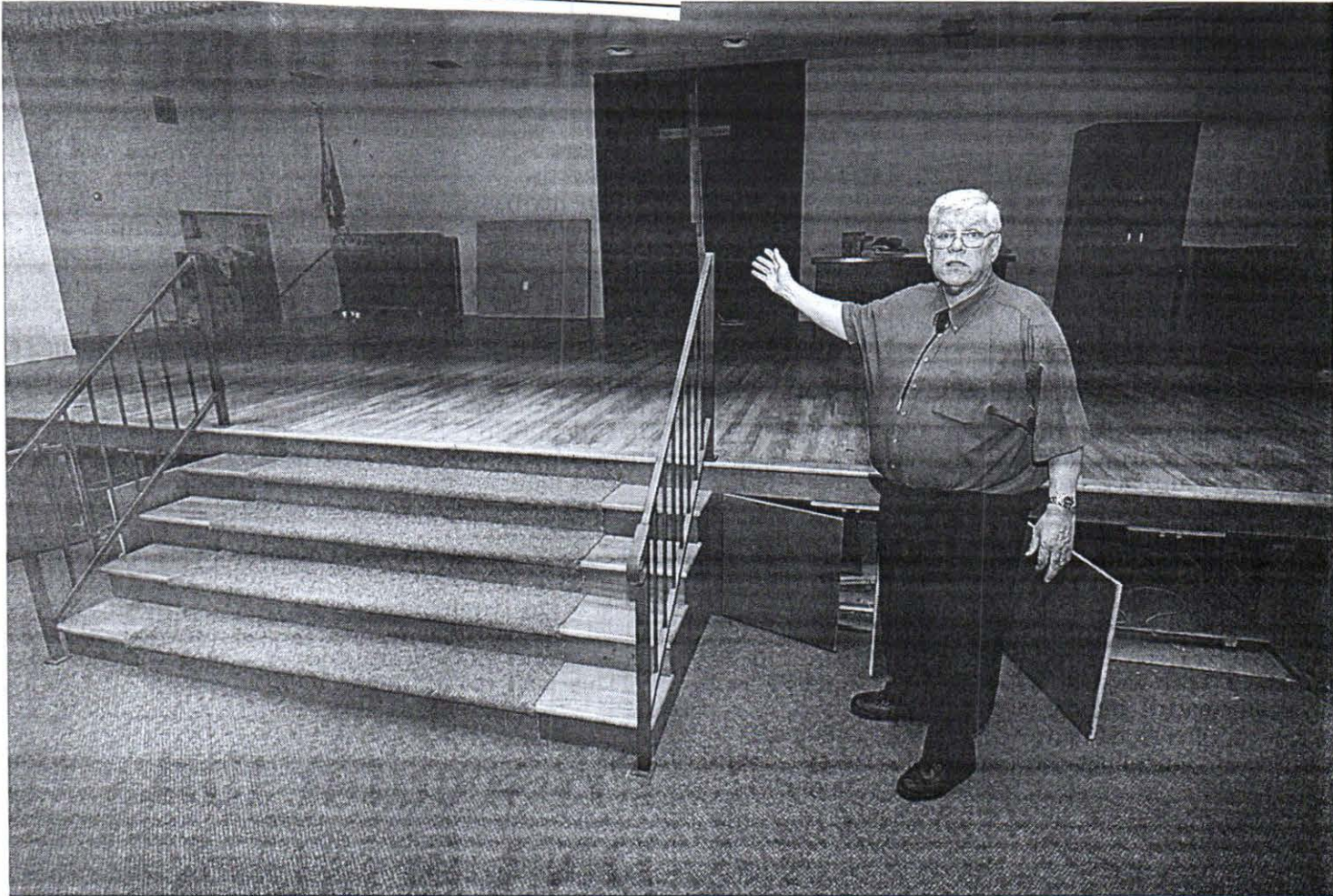
Then ... 1960



Now ... 2010

Bill Pearson, right, president of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society, welcomes a guest to the open house and points out a special exhibit featuring the voice of Sun City Founder Del Webb.

Oakmont Avenue as it appeared Jan. 1, 1960 (top photo), and as it appeared Jan. 1, 2010 (bottom).



PHOTOS BY PETE PALLAGI/DAILY NEWS-SUN

James E. Fredette, senior pastor at the United Church of Sun City, above photo, shows a space that will be renovated to accommodate the Sun Health Olive Branch Senior Center, which is expected to move next year from its home in Sun Bowl Plaza at Peoria and 107th avenues to Witt Ha at 107th Avenue and Sun City Boulevard. Below, a dining area also will be renovated to accommodate large numbers of visitors who use the senior center.

Sun City's 1st church extends 'olive branch'

STAFF REPORT

United Church of Sun City and Sun Health have entered into a long-term lease agreement that makes it possible for Sun Health Olive Branch Senior Center to relocate next year to United Church's Witt Hall at 11250 N. 107th Ave., Sun City.

Witt Hall is a few blocks north of the center's space in Sun Bowl Plaza at 107th and Peoria avenues, so it remains convenient for the seniors who benefit from the center's services.

It also will allow more people to be served because of enhanced access, parking availability and enlarged space at the location.

"Our hope is that we'll do some joint programming with them so we can expand the vision of both the Olive Branch and our church," said James Fredette, the church's senior pastor. "They really serve some of the most needy seniors in Sun City."

United Church is the first church established in Sun City.

"After almost 50 years of community service, including establishing Sun Valley Lodge in 1965, sponsoring a home for Habitat for Humanity of the West Valley in 1999, coordinating semi-annual food drives for Westside Food Bank and church members volunteering at Dysart Unified School District, the church's congregants are expanding their efforts to help ensure the welfare of area residents 55 years and older," Fredette said.

Sun Health Olive Branch Senior Center has been providing programs, services and nutritious meals for thousands of seniors each year for more than 20 years. These services



include health and wellness education, senior employment placement counseling, mental health counseling, legal assistance, computer classes for the visually impaired and blind, a variety of recreational and personal enrichment programs and several different food programs, including home meal delivery.

Because of recent changes in building safety codes, significant modifications to United Church's Witt Hall are required to make the space usable to serve seniors each weekday. Renovation costs are estimated at \$600,000 because a sprinkler system must be added along with kitchen updates, storage space and activity rooms.

Up to \$450,000 of the renovation costs will be paid for by the United Church, so the church is seeking donations. Contributions may be directed to the United Church of Sun City, 11250 N. 107th Ave., Sun City, AZ 85351, and made payable to "Partners in Caring," a fund established for the Olive Branch Senior Center project. No administration costs will be charged on donations to the fund. The church will issue a gift receipt for tax-deduction purposes.

Information is available at www.uccsc.com or by calling 933-0058.

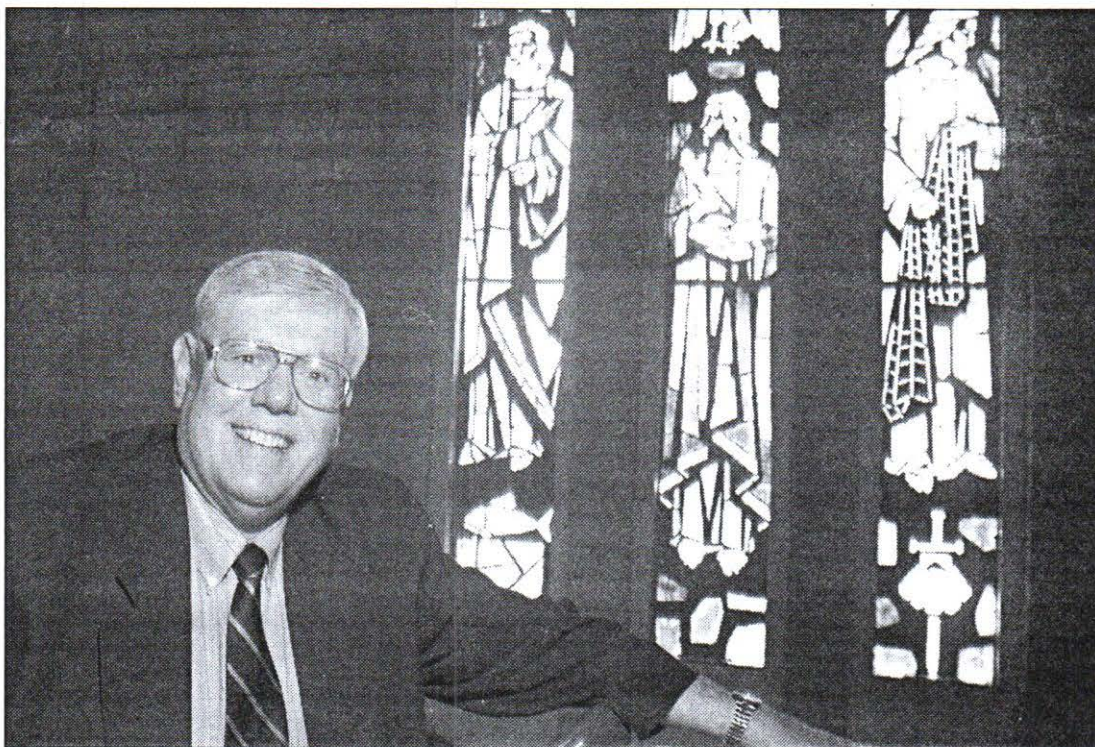
In addition to paying a monthly

rental fee for use of the space, Sun Health has agreed to pay \$150,000 for improvements to meet the senior center's specifications. Therefore, the nonprofit Sun Health Foundation also is conducting a fund-raising effort to generate community contributions for the project. Tax-deductible donations may be sent to the Sun Health Foundation at P.O. Box 2015, Sun City, AZ 85372, or made online at www.sunhealth.org/found. For information about the capital campaign, call the foundation at 876-5330.

Witt Hall renovations are to begin as soon as all the necessary permits are obtained. Construction is expected to take about four months.

"Sun Health Olive Branch Senior Center participants, volunteers and staff are grateful to the United Church of Sun City for working with Sun Health to make this new location possible, and thereby helping to ensure the senior center's ability to continue meeting the socialization, recreation and nutrition needs of an increasing number of area residents who rely on the senior center's community services to remain healthy, active and independent," said Pamela Meyerhoffer, CEO of Sun Health Foundation.

Daily News-Sun • Saturday, Feb. 24, and Sunday, Feb. 25, 2001



STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN

James Fredette is the new pastor at the United Church of Sun City. Fredette sits in front of stained glass windows that depict, from left to right, the Disciples James the Lesser, John and James the Greater.

Sun City's oldest church installs 5th minister

UNITED CHURCH: Ceremony planned for Sunday

JOHN SOKOLICH
DAILY NEWS-SUN

It was a long and winding road that led James Fredette to Sun City, but now that he's here, he says he wants to stay.

On Sunday, United Church of Sun City, the oldest church in the community, will install Fredette as its fifth senior minister. Fredette has been preaching at the church since November, but will be installed officially at Sunday's ceremony.

"To install a new minister in a congregational church such as this, it's a three-way covenant," he said. "It's between the local church, the denomination and the pastor."

Fredette started his work in the church in 1971 in a small town in New Hampshire. From there he moved to churches in Texas and California before finding a home in this community.

At a church he started in

El Paso, Fredette said he walked throughout the city, knocking on doors to build his congregation.

"That was a lot of work, but in the end we ended up with about 250 members," he said. "But every church I have been at has its series of challenges and rewards."

At a church in California, Fredette helped the congregation get out of debt, double its membership and build anew.

In Sun City, he is facing other challenges and rewards.

"Unlike the church in California, which was multi-generational, this congregation is primarily of retirement age," he said. "The church here in Sun City just has a different flavor to it, with different needs. There are issues in all states of life, but here many people are dealing with their retirement years and closure."

Another challenge Fredette is looking to undertake is building a larger congregation.

United Church of Sun City celebrated its 40th anniversary last November and has a membership of about 500

people. That number is a far cry from the 3,000 it had when it first opened.

"We welcome everyone at this church," Fredette said. "And before there were all the other denominations of churches in the area, many people attended this one. But we would like that to continue today."

Fredette said he considers the role of churches revolutionary in recent years, and he thinks he can attract more members by catering to the many different needs in the community.

"I think the role of church is changing from religion to spirituality," he said. "We are open and inclusive to all individuals, and we want people to go to a church where they feel comfortable."

Although he admits the road to his goals might be bumpy and uphill at times, he said he is open and ready for the challenges.

The public is invited to his installation Sunday. The ceremony will start at 3 p.m. in the United Church of Sun City, 11250 N. 107th Ave., Sun City.

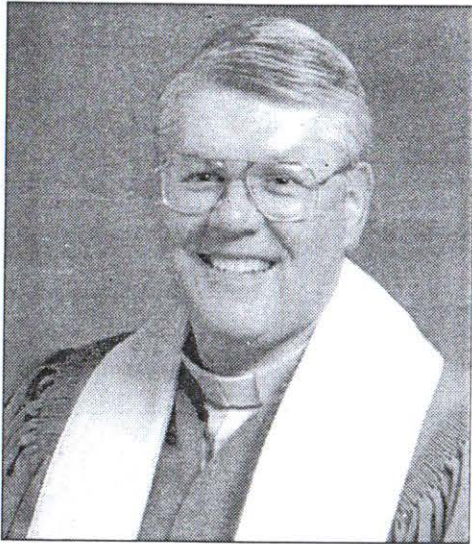
John Sokolich can be reached at jsokolich@aztrib.com or at 876-2526.

Daily News-Sun 972-1121 - Oct. 20, 2000

Sun City United Church of Christ to welcome pastor

PATRICK O'GRADY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Jim Fredette is not a revivalist, although he's done a bit of that in the past. Fredette, who takes over the ministerial reigns at the Sun City United



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Jim Fredette will take over the ministerial reigns at the Sun City United Church of Christ beginning with services Nov. 4. Church officials have spent the past 15 months looking for someone to lead the congregation following the departure of the Rev. Robert Carlson.

Church of Christ beginning with services Nov. 4, has spent his career bringing people of his faith together and lending a hand with parishes, and as the congregation ages he is charged with bringing in newer voices.

"The reason I'm coming to United is they are trying to figure out how to bring in the 50-, 60- and 70-year-olds (to the church)," Fredette said.

Church officials have spent the past 15 months looking for someone to lead the congregation following the departure of Rev. Robert Carlson. Fredette's ascension to the position was through 41 potential candidates church officials interviewed and hoped to talk to before he was unanimously selected.

Building communities is what Fredette has spent most of his career doing. During the past 25 years, he has built communities for the United Church of Christ throughout the United States. After graduating from the Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Center, Mass., he worked in associate positions until 1975, when he took over a small congregation in Camillus, N.Y.

After three years — and causing the congregation to flourish — Fredette left for El Paso, Texas, to start a church. Five years later, and after another success at building a congregation, he was brought to Escondido, Calif., where he said he experienced his biggest challenge.

"That was a dying downtown church,

and we took on the challenge of building a new facility and moving the congregation," Fredette said.

Those challenges, starting a church and bringing another back from the brink of destruction, are a bit more difficult than what Fredette said he anticipates with his new post in Sun City, but the challenge still exists to bring people to his congregation.

"I thought it was a challenge, and definitely something different," he said.

His new post has about 622 members, significantly larger than his current congregation of close to 370. But the church faces challenges, nonetheless, and as the community demographics change, Fredette said he will have to figure out a way to bring younger people into the community.

The issue is not unique to the Sun City United Church of Christ. As areas grow, church community's often change and it is in the best interest to be active in keeping up its members, Fredette said.

"Unless they are very intentional about reaching people who are unchurched, they are going to become a very closed community," he said.

He also has another challenge, that of being what he believes is a more liberal denomination than some other churches and how that will be in drawing people from a traditionally conservative area such as Sun City.

Fredette said he still believes in his religion and its ability to draw.

"It's been my opinion that we are the best kept secret in town," he said.

Ed Hambrick, a member of the United Church of Christ who once was responsible for placing ministers at various congregations, is one who believes in what Fredette brings to a congregation.

"He's done a fine job wherever he's been," said Hambrick, a Sun City resident who was responsible for helping Hambrick get placed in El Paso for the start of the congregation.

Hambrick was not responsible for Fredette coming in, but he was asked by church officials for recommendations. When he mentioned Fredette's name, church officials responded it was already on the list, Hambrick said.

"I'm glad he's coming," he said. "They don't come any better. He'll be my pastor, and I think he'll do a good job. He's got a tremendous sense of humor. He's a good preacher and a good pastor."

Part of the reputation following Fredette is that of a "healer," someone who can work with a congregation and bring different sides together, Hambrick said.

Fredette and his wife of 32 years, Nancy, arrive in the community Nov. 1. The couple has three children, Andrew, 26, Michael, 24, and Noelle, 18. They also have an Australian shepherd, Sarah, and a Himalayan cat, Peek-A-Boo.

End of an era

By JANICE TARLETON
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Everyone who knows Pastor Bob Carlson, knows he believes in clowning around.

So when his congregation at United Church of Sun City threw him a retirement party last weekend, the place turned into a real circus.

"The theme was a circus tent," explained Carlson who pastored Sun City's first church for the past 11 years. "I wasn't allowed to go in there for three days while they decorated."

For Carlson, whose study is filled with more than 200 clowns, laughter has been a hallmark of his ministry. "I always look for the funny things in life," said Carlson. "We take life way too seriously. We're not going to get out of it alive so we may as well enjoy it while we're here."

Carlson's retirement brings to a close 158 years of family ministry that began with his great-grandfather, John Poucher, a circuit riding preacher and chaplain during the Civil War.

One of his last sermons at United Church was, "A Pastor Looks Over His Shoulder," a humorous look at his years in ministry.

Ordained in 1964, Carlson had been running a student parish since 1961 in South Solon, Ohio, while he



Lisa Goettsche/Daily News-Sun

Pastor Bob Carlson and his wife, Millie, laugh along as their sons tell stories about growing up with a pastor for a father. The stories were part of a celebration honoring Carlson as he retires from United Church of Sun City.

earned his degree from the Methodist-run United Theological Seminary in nearby Dayton. He later earned a master's degree in theology as well.

Upon graduation, he became associate pastor in charge of youth and older adults at St. John's in Genoa, Ohio. That's where Carlson discovered a "delight and leaning toward" helping senior adults.

He remembers his pastorate at First Congregational Church in Wellington, Ohio, once a stopping place on the "underground railroad," as the most "naturally integrated" church he's ever encountered. He also served churches in Pepper Pike and

Massillon, Ohio.

Carlson said his final pastorate at United Church of Sun City, has been a wonderful experience. "Our motto is, 'A place where everyone is someone special,'" he said, "and at my retirement, they made me feel very special."

"They kept stressing that 'We are family' and they were celebrating with me and for me because many of them are already retired and they know what awaits me."

In addition to pastoring, Carlson served for several years on the board of directors of The Ambassadors, was secretary, then president of the Sun Cities Area Ministerial Association,

and was on the board of directors of the executive committee of the Southwest Conference of United Church of Christ.

In addition to losing a few pounds and starting an exercise program, Carlson said he and his wife, Millie, plan to retire to Sedona. "I like doing things different," he said, "I don't want to settle into a rut."

His clown collection will go to Immanuel Campus of Care where, Carlson hopes, it will do for others what it has done for him: lift spirits.

"Laughter is lifting, helpful and healing," he said.

Organist's music blooms in Sun City

By RUTHANN HOGUE
Staff writer

Between pampering delicate rose petals at home to pumping the pedals of some of the finest organs in the world, Joyce Jones rarely has time to catch her breath.

Jones teaches organ lessons and other music classes at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.



Jones

By Friday, she is usually on an airplane headed to her next organ concert. She typically performs on Sundays after teaching a master organ class the day before.

Sometimes, the organ virtuoso visits nursing homes or elementary schools because she enjoys playing concerts au gratis for the elderly and little children.

On Mondays, Jones flies back to her home in Waco which has been affectionately dubbed "Rosen Haus" after hundreds of rose bushes which decorate the property.

Somehow, Jones manages to squeeze designing and sewing original evening gowns into her busy schedule. She likes to wear original creations when she performs.

And as if that wasn't enough, Jones considers cooking a hobby, too, although it takes a back seat to tending her roses.

"Gardening is our real passion," said Jones, who cultivates and plants roses with her husband, Robert, a

retired Army chaplain and Lt. Col.

Jones has performed all over the world. She has wooed audiences in Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco, Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, Calif., and in Notre Dame in Paris.

She's also tickled the keys and pulled out the stops of the organ in the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City.

"It's one of my favorites," she said.

But her favorite organ is in Fort Worth, Texas, at Broadway Baptist Church where she recently performed. It's the largest organ created by Casavant and boasts five keyboards, otherwise referred to as "manuals" by organists.

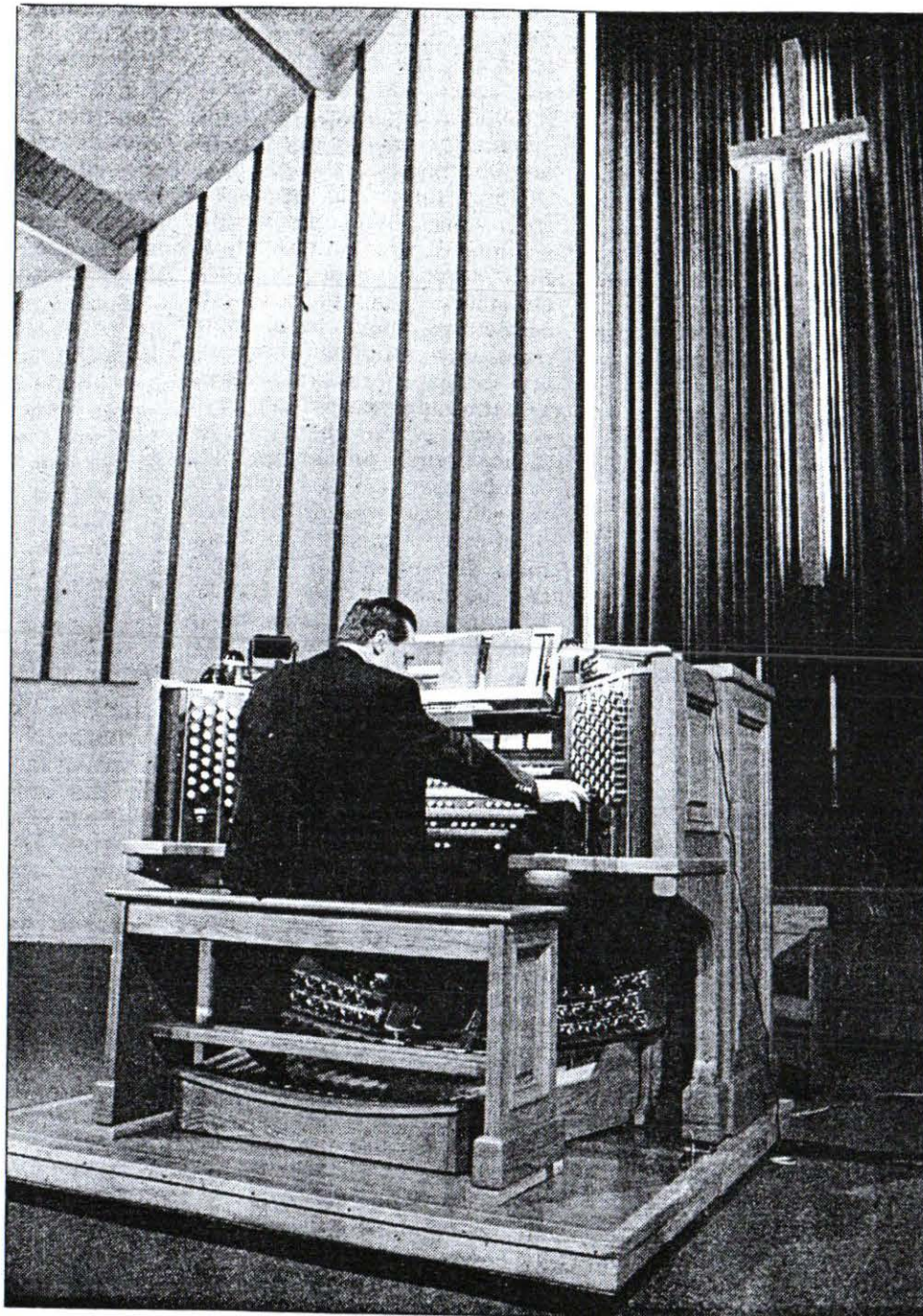
At home, Jones plays a three-manual pipe organ. She remodeled her home by removing the second story bedroom to create an 18-foot ceiling to make room for the pipes.

Jones loves all genres of music, but her favorite piece is Liszt's *Fantasy and Fugue on the Chorale 'Ad nos, ad salutarem undam'*.

"It just covers the whole range of the organ," Jones said. "You just lose yourself in the music. It's such a wonderful piece. Some parts are dramatic, and other parts are so technical and beautiful. It goes from the softest stops to beautiful full sounds."

Jones looks forward to playing the song at 3 p.m. Sunday when she performs on the new Allen Organ at The United Church of Sun City.

"I only play it where there is a really good organ, so I'm excited to play it for Sun City," she said.



Steve Chernek/Daily News-Sun

Robert Flood, music minister at United Church of Sun City, plays the church's new electronic organ.

Friday, Jan. 31, 1997 Daily News-Sun, Sun City, Ariz.

United Church unveils custom organ

By RUTHANN HOGUE
Staff writer

The United Church of Sun City is proud of its latest addition: a 960-pound high-tech organ.

Robert Flood, minister of music at the church, helped design the digitalized computer instrument with four keyboards, 250 stops, playback memory and a floppy disk drive. It took hours of planning with Allen organ company representatives in Pennsylvania before Flood settled on a custom combination of sounds.

Its deepest sounds imitate the English Krummhorn, which in classical pipe organs would be replicated with a 32-inch pipe.

"It sounds a little bit like a machine gun," Flood said, during a demonstration.

At the opposite end of the sound spectrum is a replication of a one-foot pipe, the shortest made for organs.

"My dog could hear it, but it goes out of the range of human ears," Flood said.

In between there are tiny reed sounds in the choir that simulate English horns, a romantic diapason and the big reed sound of the trompette. Flood had to make choices for several stops in each division: classic, baroque and romantic.

Flood's most unusual request was for a stop simulating the sound of a rare version of the Krummhorn, which was not immediately available.

"We worked and worked until we had that," Flood said.

Another of Flood's personal requests was for a shulze diapason, a particular kind of English diapason to contrast others he'd already selected.

Two of the stops, viole a pavillon cel and viole a pavillon, were adopted at the suggestion of a concert organist.

"She suggested those two higher-pitch soft strings, so I sometimes refer to them as the 'Joyce Jones' stops," Flood said.

Jones will perform on Sunday, the second of two inaugural concerts, to introduce the organ to the community. She plans to spend up to 12 hours before the show becoming acquainted with the new organ.

"The piano has 88 keys and sometimes the action feels a little bit different, but basically they are all the same," Jones said. "But every organ is different. ... That makes it very interesting. It never gets boring."

The first concert organist invited to play was David Higgs, head of the organ department at

Eastman School of Music in New York. He performed in November for a crowd of 1,200 shortly after the organ was installed. A third concert organist, who will play later this year, has not yet been named.

The organ was made possible through an anonymous \$180,000 gift from a member of the first congregation established in Sun City.

"That person took me out to lunch one day and said, 'Bob, I think we need a new organ,'" Flood said. "That person could have had all kinds of glory."

Church members donated \$50,000 more to renovate the church to coordinate with the oak instrument with walnut inlay.

A cross in the front of the chapel was refinished in lighter wood to match the instrument. And a panel of 37 speakers was installed, some in the front and some in the back of the church.

"It gives you, as the baroque and classical organs did, stereophonic sound — which they did before stereo was coined as a word," he said.

Since the addition of the organ, things have changed at the church.

"I think there is a lot more interest in the organ," Flood said. "People are much more quiet while I play the opening voluntary."

Living the faith

United effort distinguishes Sun City's 1st congregation

By MICHAEL P. HEGARTY
Staff writer

United Church of Sun City continues to move into the future, while preserving its past.

When Sun City's first church remodeled its chapel earlier this year, it upgraded the building from the carpeting and painting to new pews and maintained its history by transplanting the church's original cross on top of the Bowman Chapel.

"It's the old blessing the new," said the Rev. Bob Carlson, pastor of United Church located at 11250 N. 107th Ave. "The cross symbolizes the life of the church."

The church, organized in 1960, will celebrate its 35th anniversary Sunday with a service honoring its charter members and past moderators.

The service will be modeled after the first one conducted by founding pastor, the Rev. Dr. Walter Witt.

"It's a reminder of our roots," Carlson said. "I give a lot of credit to his vision."

Copies of the original bulletin with its "awakening" theme will be distributed to parishioners as a memento

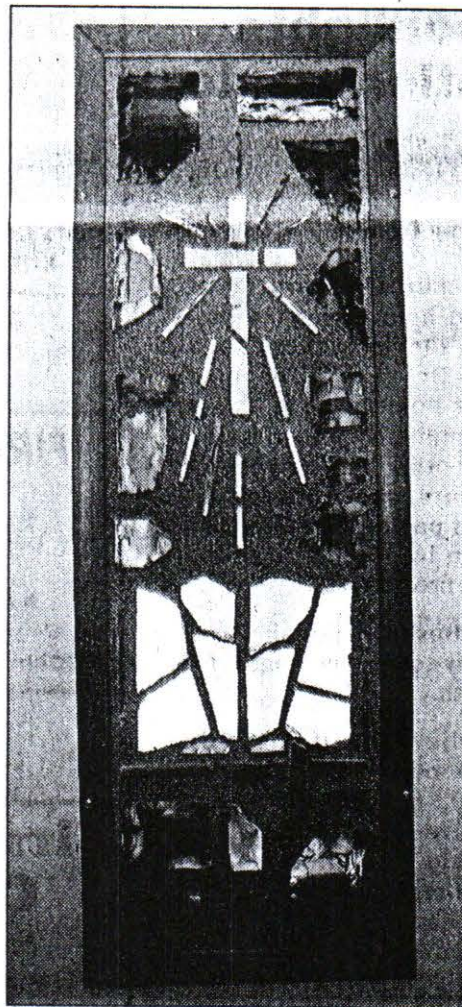
the interdenominational church that helped establish the Sun Cities Area Interfaith Services; Sun Cities Area Ministerial Association; Sun Valley Lodge, the first care center built in Sun City; and the Dysart Community Center, which assists families living in El Mirage.

"It's been jumping since its inception," Carlson said. "The church is always on the move. Even though it was the first established church, there's a vitality that makes me run to keep up with it."

Even though membership has fallen to about 1,000 people — it was 3,000 during the church's height in 1972 — Carlson isn't concerned with numbers. He said the budget is stronger than it's ever been and the members are just as happy. So is Carlson.

"For me, to see an older church come alive is what it's all about," said Carlson, who has been at United for eight years. "The creative energies that flow here are what keeps me going, the creativity of my congregation and my staff."

The talents of the congregation are visible throughout the church grounds



Stained glass windows adorn the sides of the Bowman Chapel in United Church of Sun City.

from the massive painted outline of the United States on the concrete walkway between the sanctuary and Witt Hall to the beauty of both the

► See Church, B2

Church rededicates chapel

■ From B1

memorial garden blessed by a ceramic angel and the newly remodeled Bowman Chapel.

The chapel will be rededicated Nov. 26. Other celebrations for the anniversary include a musical concert by organist Joyce Jones at 2 p.m. Nov. 10, Stewardship Sunday Nov. 12 celebrating outreach ministries and the induction of its a class of 35 members Nov. 19.

"We're awakening people to the potential that might be hidden," Carlson said. "We're moving people from their retirement to their refinement."

Carlson keeps the congregation young. Just outside his office a bulletin board attracts the curious with its "Jest for Fun" section filled with jokes. Next to the board hangs a painting of a laughing Christ.

"It stresses the importance of enjoying life and letting laughter fill you," said Carlson, whose office ripples with humor from more than a hundred objects — gifts from his congregants — featuring clown themes.

"I hope people leave on a lift."



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

The Rev. Bob Carlson discusses the new cross that hangs in the Bowman Chapel that was renovated to coincide with United Church of Sun City's 35th anniversary.

Daily News-Sun

Spirits bright

12-10-95

Church glows with heavenly display

By MICHAEL P. HEGARTY
Staff writer

SUN CITY — The United Church's Christmas lights appear to beam straight from heaven.

An 80-foot stream of white lights runs from the top of the Sun City church's tower to a wooden gazebo that sits in the middle of a memorial garden.

"Glory streams from heaven afar," the Rev. Robert Carlson said of the most noticeable portion of the 5,000-light display that can be seen for blocks.

A huge Christmas tree-shaped display of lights attracts motorists who are encouraged to "stop their car and walk and enjoy the beauty of the garden and the snapdragons, petunias and all the flowers growing in there," Carlson said. "It's so colorful."

The lights — draped around the flower gardens, through the trees and around the gazebo — were set up by the church's superintendent, Jerry Burke, who makes sure they are turned on every night.

There are benches for visitors to enjoy the setting, including the hand-crafted angel that oversees the garden. The trickling of a wa-

terfall blends in with the chirping of the crickets in the cool, night air.

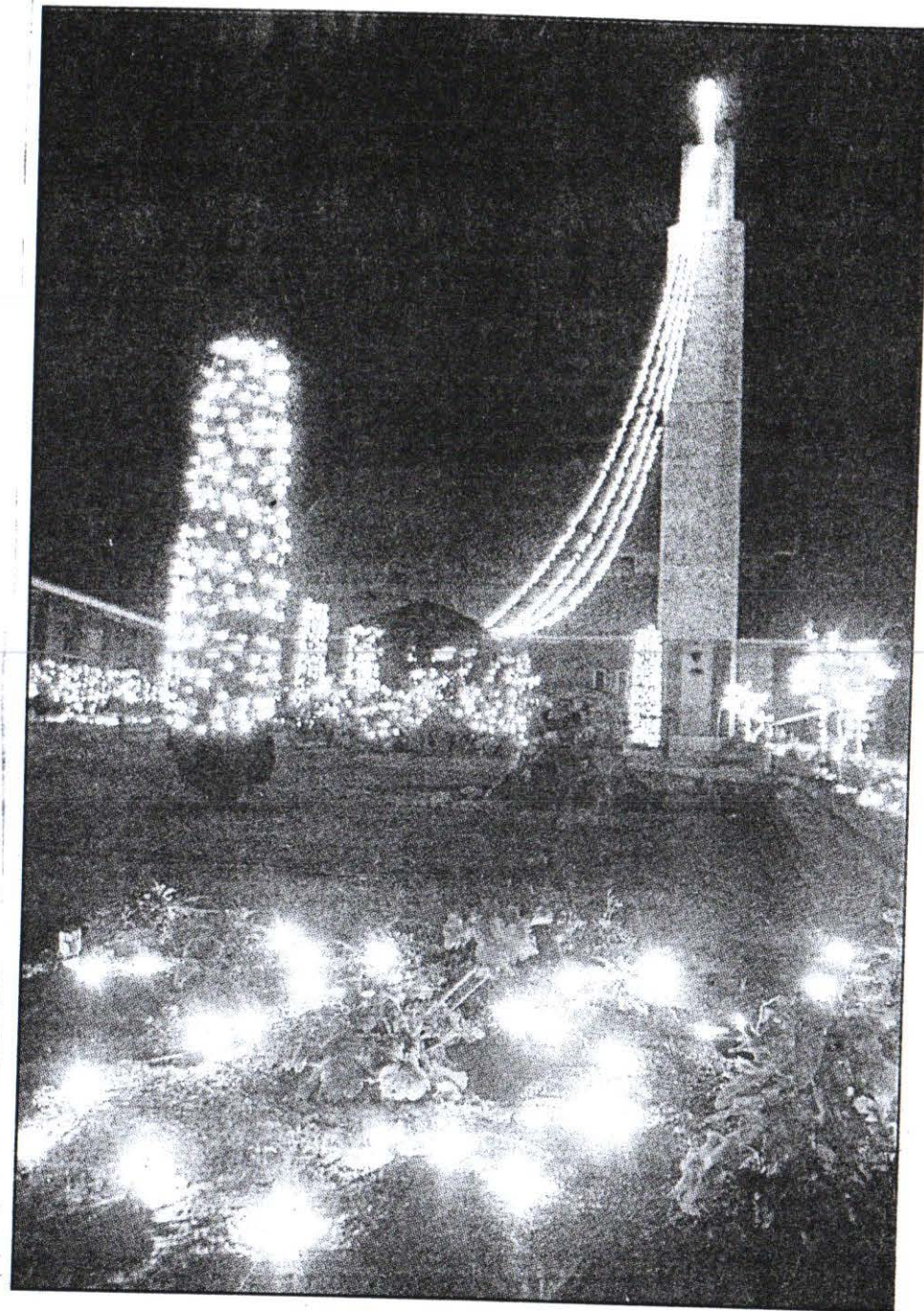
"The garden has become a spot of tender memories," said Carlson, who enjoys sauntering along the gravel trails through the garden. "As I walk through it, I think of the many blessed parishioners who have blessed this church and blessed me. I cherish it."

The idea to light up the garden was inspired last year when the church staff was discussing ways to make its Christmas Eve service glow. They decided to incorporate the memorial garden, "that has blessed the community and the parish," Carlson said.

Since the use of candles by the congregation inside the sanctuary left a waxy trail, Carlson decided to bring the congregation outside to the garden for the closing prayer and songs of the service.

Now, the Christmas Eve service concludes in the garden, with the Christmas lights turned off. A glow of candles illuminates the garden.

Members of the congregation sing hymns and the church bells chime Christmas carols as folks leave the grounds that are lined with luminaries.



Rick D'Elia/Daily News-Sun

More than 5,000 white lights illuminate the United Church of Sun City and its memorial garden at 11250 N. 107th Ave.

United Church celebrates 30th anniversary

By PRISCILLA WILLIAMS
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — The first church in Del Webb's active retirement community played a unique role in the lives of residents. It was formed when only 30 homes were occupied in 1960.

Within a few years, a fellowship hall and a sanctuary would be built, a retirement home would be founded and social services established in a tradition of caring for others.

This month, the United Church of Sun City will celebrate its 30th anniversary with a series of events beginning Sunday. Founding pastor Dr. Walter Witt and his wife, Gladys, will participate in the celebrations.

And this time Gladys doesn't have to bake cookies.

A quick calculation of the cookies she baked and served to potential church members in the early parsonages numbers around 6,000.

After a visit to friends in Phoenix in May 1960, the Witts returned to Sun City. Witt had served as pastor for United Church of Christ in five states and had once been told he was too old to start a new church. The new community before him had only 30 occupied homes but cars were lined up to look at the Del Webb models.

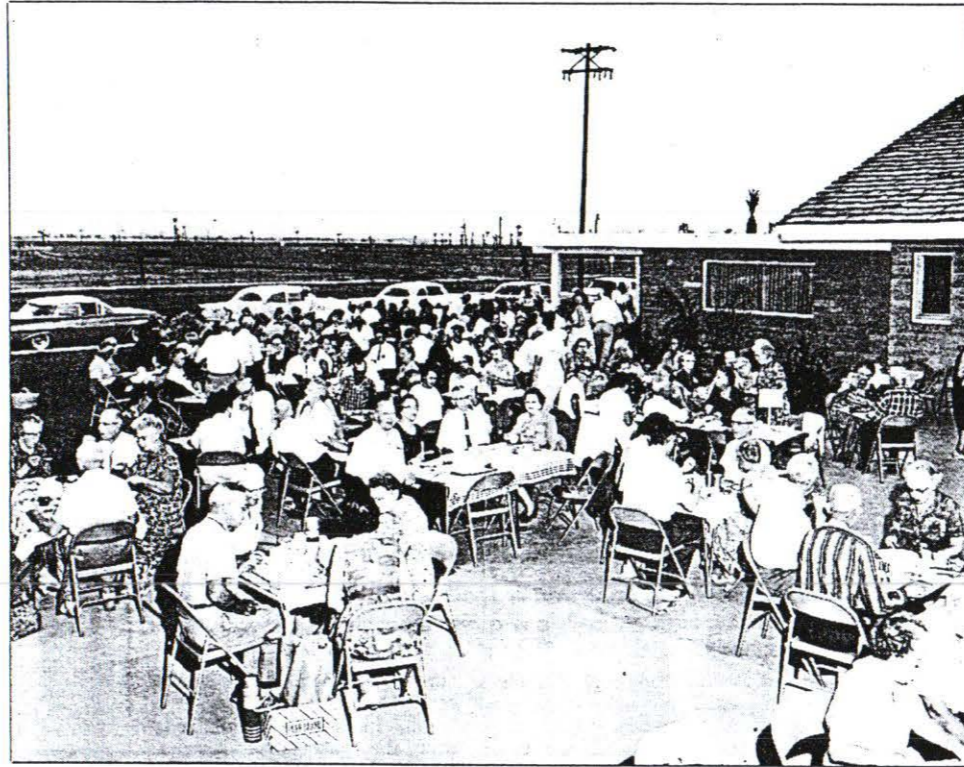
He began ringing doorbells and inviting people over to the Highway Inn for punch and Gladys's cookies.

The third Sunday in October, 151 people attended the first worship service of Sun City Community Church in Oakmont Community Center. A charter from the United Church of Christ gave the congregation a denomination, but the church operated on an open-door policy for all Protestants.

By November 1960, more than a hundred residents had joined the United Church as charter members. There were 61 denominations represented and Witt took a \$31,000 option on the land at 11250 N. 107th Ave.

Witt recalls that during the first year of his Sun City ministry, he did not officiate at a single funeral. The Witts also said they literally wore out a set of furniture, having meetings at the parsonage.

The social hall, now named after Witt, was



Submitted photo

EARLY CHURCH POTLUCK — Members of the United Church of Sun City enjoy a potluck Oct. 17, 1961, on the patio of the new fellowship hall (later named Witt Hall). Services were held there until the present sanctuary was built in 1965.

completed by June 1961, and services were conducted there.

To develop a community feeling and help neighbors get acquainted, the Witts formed small neighborhood groups called "colony groups." People met in neighborhood homes and got acquainted. Later they were invited to attend church, which many of them joined.

Community involvement has been important to the United Church from the beginning. Soon there was a Dutch Treat Club, an indoor shuffleboard court, a social card-playing group, Singles Club, a travelogue club and organized travel tours.

Other firsts included distribution of food and clothing and the formation of the Dysart Com-

munity Center, impetus to establish Interfaith Services, which involved 18 religious organizations, and sponsorship of Habitat for Humanity, an organization that builds homes for low-income families in the Northwest Valley.

The United Church tradition of benevolence through 1989 totals \$1 million, \$280,000 given to benevolent causes.

In the early days, the church bought turkeys, which were taken home to be roasted by residents and served at church Thanksgiving dinners. The first Christmas a group of carollers strolled the streets of Sun City, and Christmas day the United Church shared the use of Oakmont Center with a group of Lutherans.

The next few years, Witt cooked up gallons of chili for New Year's Eve parties in Witt Hall.

Bernice Wallace, 95, sang in the United Church choir for 18 years. She remembers the holiday carolling parties which always ended up at the parsonage for Gladys's cookies, popcorn and punch.

"We wouldn't have the church we have today if we hadn't had Witt. He organized everybody to help," said Wallace who plans to attend the Nov. 4 Charter Member service.

Charter membership closed in 1961 with 309 members. When Witt retired in 1976 there were 3,000; today there are 1,300.

Witt Hall served as sanctuary until Nov. 28, 1965 when the new sanctuary was dedicated. It is 75 feet by 225 feet and seats 800 on the main floor, 170 in the balcony and 48 in the choir loft. There is a conference room, library, chapel, offices and a memorial garden where cremated remains may be interred.

Today a bell tower encases a 700-pound bell that had hung in a church in Brooklyn, Maryland. It adjoins the patio on which a 100 ft. wide map has been painted. During coffee hour people sometimes stood on the state from which they came hoping to meet others from the same area.

On Sunday, the 1960 order of service will be followed at the 10 a.m. service in the United Church to inaugurate a series of anniversary celebrations. This time there will be no printed hymns in the program, which had been necessary in the early days before the group borrowed prayerbooks and hymnals.

Pastor says wife shares ministry

By RAINEY HOLLOWAY
Daily News-Sun intern

SUN CITY — The Rev. Robert Carlson of the United Church of Sun City says laughter is the best medicine. And he stresses it in his ministry.

He was born in Mason City, Iowa, and attended school in Toledo, Ohio.

Carlson comes from a long line of ministers. His great-grandfather was a Methodist Circuit Writer during the Civil War. His father was a minister and his sister is the director of the Development of Older Adult Resources Center in Phoenix.

Pastor Bob, as he likes to be called, said his family was part of the reason he became a minister.

"I'm sure my family was a major influence," he said. "But so were those who nurtured me at the Toledo Pilgrimage Congregation where my father served."

In high school, Carlson was vice president of the Ohio Pilg-



Daily News-Sun photo

REV. ROBERT CARLSON
— He is the minister of the United Church of Sun City, 11250 N. 107th Ave.

rim Fellowship.

"It gave me a chance to travel," he said. "I learned about the life of the church across the state of Ohio."

In college, Carlson was involved in drama and choir. He

Clergy profile

was honored with the Celebrant of the Faith Award for public speaking and church work.

He attended the College of Wooster in Ohio and earned a Master of Divinity degree from the United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio.

At United Church, which has more than 60 denominations working together under one roof, Carlson stresses the importance of laughter.

In family settings, he incorporates his own clown character, whom he calls Ibe Lost. He says that Ibe is a tour guide who tells everyone where to go and what to do, but does not know where he is himself.

"I believe in the roll of laughter for life," said Carlson. "There is a great healing power in humor. We need to laugh. The clown allows us to be free."

He said he tries to incorporate that kind of thinking into his sermons.

"I think in Sun City, everyone takes life too seriously," said Carlson. "We are quick to judge and slow to affirm. Laughter is affirming."

He and his wife, Millie, are fond of Sun City. He feels their needs are different than the needs of congregations he has taught in Ohio.

"Things such as loneliness and sorrow need to be approached," Carlson said. "You would think it would be easier, but that is not true."

His long range goals for the church are to have people experience the joy of Christ in their lives. His personal goals are to continue to grow within the church community.

Carlson said an influential part of all his work in the church is his wife, Millie, who he met while he was in college.

"She is a very vital part of my ministry," he said. "She provides music in the church. But more importantly, she is a great listener."

Local minister follows family occupation

By P. ATWOOD WILLIAMS
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — "Coming to Sun City is like coming home," said the man who whistles as he walks down the hallway of the church in which he is now senior pastor.

Perhaps the Rev. Robert A. Carlson whistles because his father- and mother-in-law, Merl and Thelma Gilbert, live here, and he has family in Phoenix.

And when Carlson is installed as pastor of the United Church of Sun City, 11250 N. 107th Avenue, at 3:30 p.m. Sunday, it will be a family affair with his parents, The Rev. and Mrs. Alexander Carlson, who live in the Beatitudes retirement complex in Phoenix, and his wife's parents also there.

And his sister, the Rev. Dosia Carlson of the Church of the Beatitudes, will hear one of her musical compositions sung by the 30-member United Church Choir directed by Robert E. Flood at the service followed by a reception Sunday. The Rev. Dosia Carlson directs the Center for Developing Older Adult Resources at the Church of the Beatitudes.

Carlson's grandfather had been a Methodist circuit minister in Ohio, and his father is retired from the ministry.

Carlson said arriving in Sun City was a case of "love at first sight."

"I have always gravitated to older adults who are looking for creative ways to experience the faith."

"Seniors have a hunger to experience the faith, rather than just talk about it. They don't want to just mouth doctrine that is centuries old and kept on the shelf," Carlson said.

He said many want to experience "the realities of Christ's love in their hearts."

Most recently Carlson served for nine years as senior pastor at St. John's United Church of Christ in Massillon, Ohio. Before that he was at Trinity Congregational Church in Pepper Pike, Ohio and earlier at First Congregational in Wellington,

Ohio.

To date in his career he has served churches that represent the four denominational heritages of the United Church of Christ:

- Student pastor of a former Christian Church.
- Associate pastor of a former Reformed Church.
- Pastor of two churches of the Congregational tradition.
- Senior pastor of former Evangelical Church.

Carlson's church involvement

'Seniors have a hunger to experience the faith, rather than just talk about it. They don't want to just mouth doctrine that is centuries old and kept on the shelf.'

The Rev. Robert Carlson, senior pastor of the United Church of Sun City.

began in earnest in high school when he was vice-president of the Ohio Pilgrim Fellowship of the Congregational-Christian youth in Toledo. He said that was when he became aware of his leadership gifts of public speaking and administration.

He earned a bachelor's degree from The College of Wooster and Master of Divinity in 1964 from United Theological Seminary in Dayton. In 1973 he took more courses, in counseling, at Case Western Reserve in Cleveland.

In 1984 his second sabbatical study brought him to his sister's church for creative ministry to older adults and humor in the role of healing. He uses puppets in this last role.

While raising two sons with his wife, Millie, he was involved in clergy associations and activities and served as president of a Kiwanis Club and on the board. He was clergy division chairman for an Ohio county's United Way Campaign and or-

ganized a "Grief Relief" support group.

He is pleased with a Kiwanis Club award for helping bring the community together while making a setting for peaceful religious co-existence. The Ulster Project began in 1981 and raised \$30,000 in a year to bring 14 Irish protestant and Catholic youths together in this country for a year. The individuals met each month during the year.

And it is not unusual for the lanky minister to turn up at a church pot-luck as a woebegone clown with a lost expression on his face. He believes in the healing power of humor, and his office shelf is lined with clowns, most of them gifts. One is a quilted clown face with a message of thanks for showing "that we weren't giving up fun for life in Christ."

He truly believes that he who laughs, lasts.

"Pastor Bob has qualities of leadership that the church was seeking," said Julia M. Ferguson, United Church of Sun City moderator (president). "He and Millie are outgoing and make people feel comfortable. They each have the amazing gift to remember names," she said.

She said Sun City's oldest church's new pastor is a "person of high energy with new insights" and that his spiritual outlook on life is the key to his call to United Church.

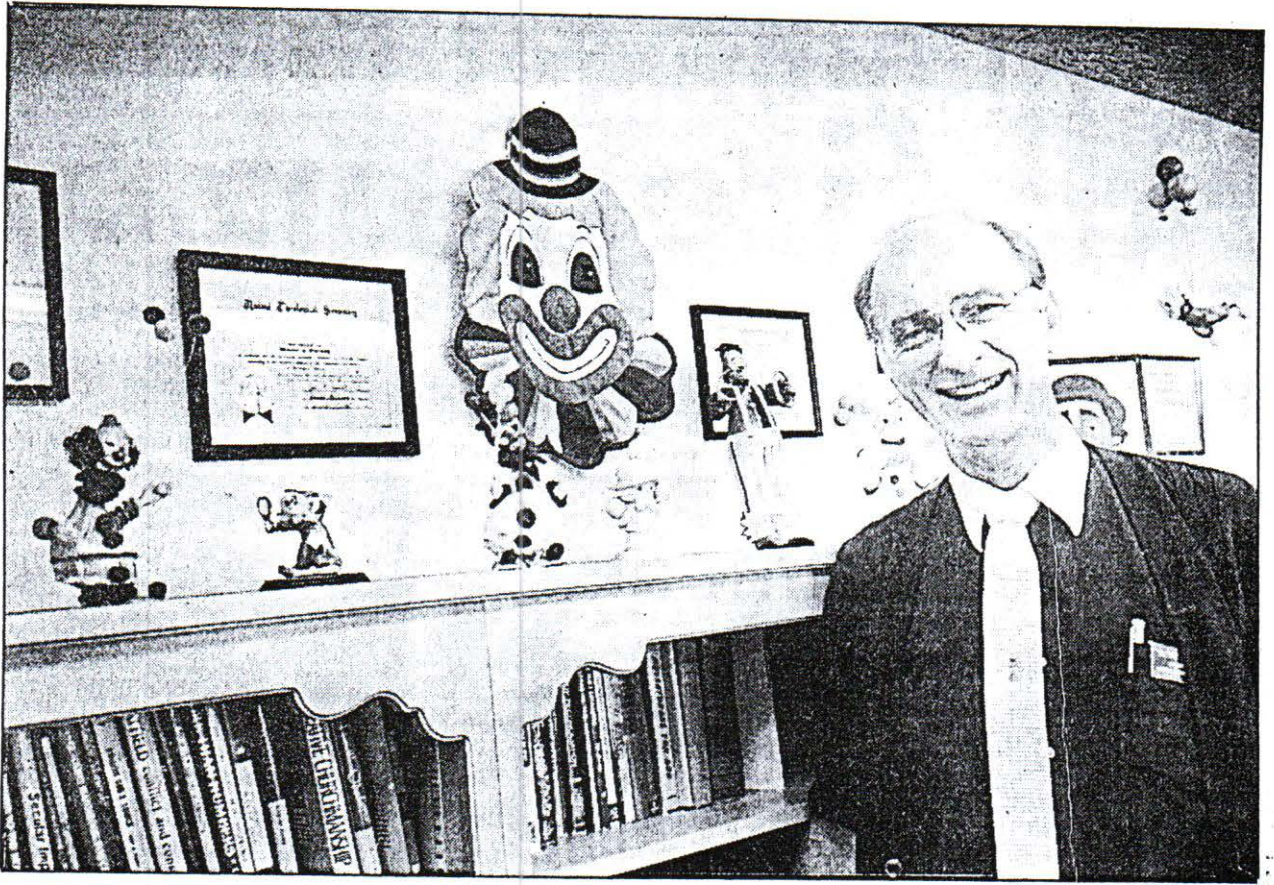
"He radiates with love, shares it, and it becomes contagious as it should." She also thinks his

sermons are down to earth, challenging and inspiring. They've recently drawn several new members under 35 years old and a couple with a six-month-old baby.

"United Church is being revitalized and Pastor Bob's new programs are meeting new needs," Ferguson said.

Carlson said, "In this church is the reality that the aging process is only in the body. People here are more young at heart than many youths I have served."

OVER



HEALTH AND HAPPINESS — The office of the Rev. Robert A. Carlson is decorated

with clowns because of his belief in the healing power of humor.

News-Sun photo

A3 Republic S.C. Extra 1/9/85 NW

'Housing of the soul'

Church serves no single sect, just needs of fold

By THELMA HEATWOLE
Special for The Republic

SUN CITY — "The first and largest Protestant congregation in Sun City. . . . One of the largest United Churches in the country . . . 58 denominations represented. . . . You will never meet a more friendly group."

That's how an advertisement in the 1984 *Sun City Home Owners Directory* describes the United Church of Sun City.

The Rev. Walter W. Witt, 81, the church's organizing pastor, has lived here since 1960, the year this retirement community opened to the public.

Witt said he began organizing the church before there was a church building.

After visiting the community in May 1960, he said he asked and received approval from the United Church of Christ Conference to establish the church.

Witt and his wife, Gladys, arrived Sept. 29, 1960, and made temporary headquarters in an apartment in the community, which then had about 300 residents. The couple invited people into their apartment, told of plans for the church and got the names of others. And while playing hostess to the people, Gladys baked dozens of cookies.

A mailing list was launched, and signs went up at the community's only grocery and drug stores about the opening church meeting in the Community Hall.

"That first Sunday, there were 150 people," Witt said. "We didn't have enough chairs, so we borrowed from the drugstore."

"A week after we got started, the Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church started. Catholics were holding services in Youngtown at the time, and thought they would build there. They later built in Sun City."

Four weeks later, the church received 100 members into its fold.

"We went along with the idea that anyone could come into the membership," Witt said.

"Denomination wasn't important. The important thing was to find a church home, a place to worship."

The United Church's first building was constructed on a former lettuce field at 107th Avenue and Sun City Boulevard. Ground was broken on Feb. 12, 1961. Members moved into the building June 11, 1961.

By March 26, 1961, the closing date for charter membership, there were more than 300 members.

"At that time, there were 21 denominations represented," Witt said. "It eventually got up to 61."

Lillian Munson, a church member, said in

dedication ceremonies, "What is a church? A thing of wood and steel and stone, of certain form and size? Not so, indeed. This edifice is but housing of the soul, a temple of the spirit, the blossom manifest of the soul's reach."

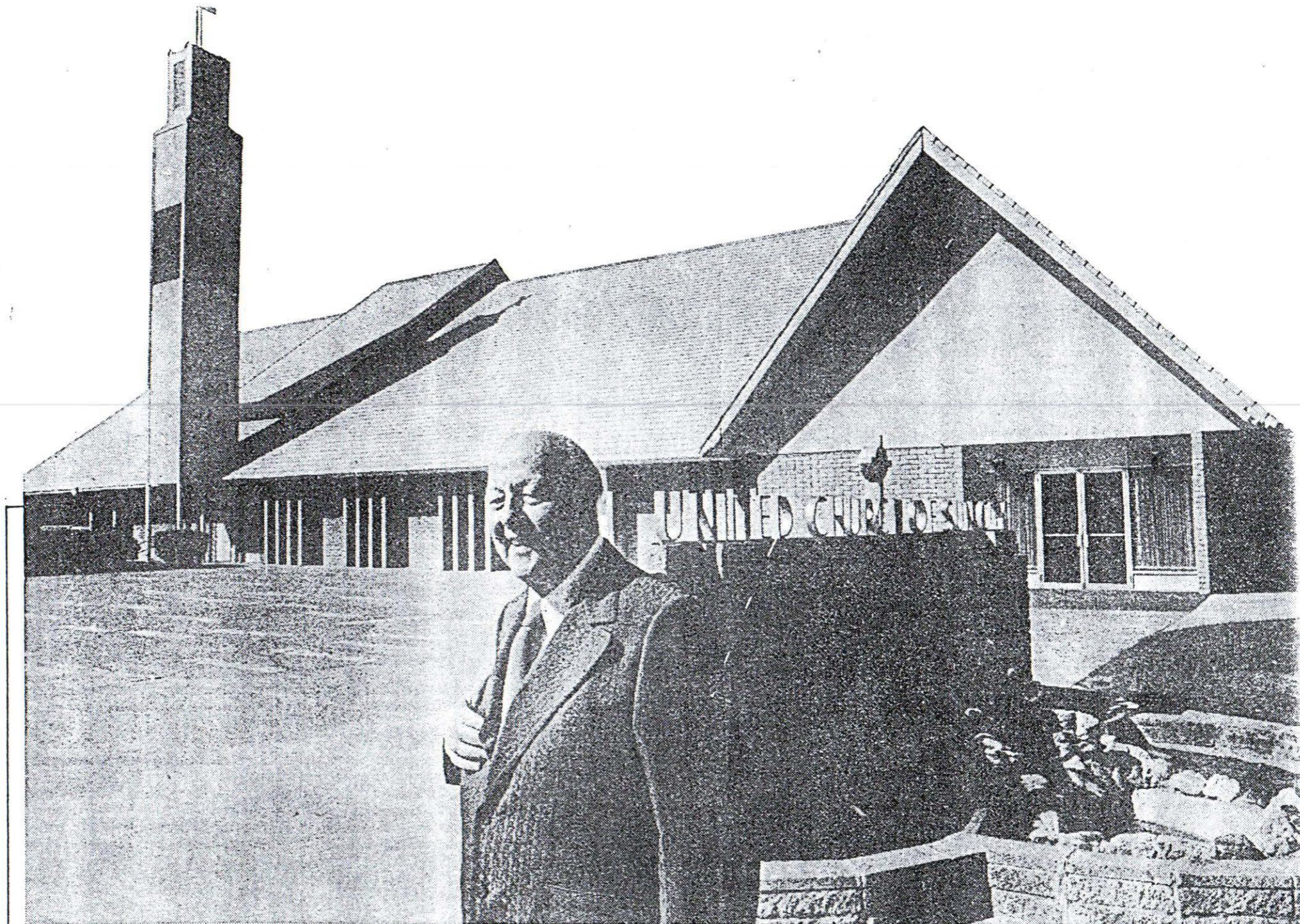
Witt said he officiated at the first wedding in Sun City on Dec. 24, 1961.

As the community grew, church members began to focus on two major objectives: They planned to build a large sanctuary on the 5-acre site and a retirement and nursing home on property at 103rd and Coggins avenues.

With increasing numbers and dedication, they accomplished both objectives in 1965.

Witt said that usually a pastor coming to a new assignment takes on an ongoing church. In Sun City, he and members built a

— Church, Extra C



The Rev. W. H. W. Will, D.D., stands in front of the United Church of Christ, 107th Avenue and Sun City, D. C. (Photograph by Roy)

Community church to be organized

(October 13, 1960)

Initial steps have been taken to establish a community church in Sun City.

The Arizona and Phoenix Councils of Churches have granted a comity allowance to the United Church of Christ for organizing the church, it was reported by the Rev. Perry D. Avery, assistant superintendent of the Congregational Conference of Southern California and the Southwest.

The Rev. Walter Witt, called as organizing pastor, last week moved to temporary Sun City quarters in Apartment 5 with Mrs. Witt.

A committee looking toward the church's organization met at the Rev. Witt's apartment last Thursday and appointed the Rev. Everett B. Luther, minister of Phoenix's North Congregational Church, as temporary chairman.

Other temporary officers are Emil Martin and William Jordan, both of the North Congregational Church, treasurer and assistant treasurer, and Mrs. Max W. Pehl, Sun City, secretary.

A committee was appointed to seek permission to Sun City's interim council to use the community hall for worship services until the church building is available. Its members are Sun Citians Ray H. Conrad, Mr. and Mrs. Forrest McGlynn and Rev. Witt.

Rev. Witt said additional members will be added from other Protestant denominations.

Rev. Witt reported that, through cooperation with the conference, the Board of

Home Missions of the Congregational Church, and the Board of National Missions of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, an option on a 3.1-acre church site on 107th Avenue has been obtained. A parsonage is being built at 11615 105th Ave.

The church will be known temporarily as the Sun City United Church of Christ.

A builder has been asked to give an estimate on the building of a unit similar to the community building, Rev. Witt said, and estimates will be available within two weeks.

"Being a community church," said Dr. Avery, "it will aim to appeal on a broad basis to those of the Protestant faith regardless of denominational background. The sponsoring denomination, known as the United Church of Christ, recently result-

ed form the merger of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the General Council of Congregational Christian Churches.

Rev. Witt, recently of the Church of the Lighted Window in La Canada, Calif., holds his standing in the Congregational Christian denomination although he and his wife were raised as Methodists.

He recently returned from a summer in Europe devoted to travel and professional photography and already has given several lectures in the Los Angeles area on his European trip, especially concerning Russia and the satellite states.

The parsonage is expected to be ready for occupancy by Rev. Witt in late October. He invited persons interested in assisting with the church's organization to contact him.

First church has yet to be outgrown

By VAL BEMBENEK

Planning for future growth may have been a by-word with the developers of Sun City, but it has been a motto for Rev. Walter Witt, pastor of the United Church of Sun City.

In building his church, the first for religious worship here, he not only made it bigger than what any of the other churches would become, he designed for the eventuality of Sunday School classrooms, should future developments nearby include family dwellings.

"I had never built a church before," said Dr. Witt, recalling his first visit to the retirement community in May 1960 when only 30 couples were living here. Minister with a California church then, he was attending a regional conference in Phoenix when a discussion of the fledgling community out in the desert piqued his interest.

By mid-October, a congregation was meeting in Oakmont Center, a three-acre site had been selected, and "colony groups" had been organized. "Almost from the first, I knew three acres wouldn't be enough and arrangements were in the works to obtain six," he said. He also knew the building of a fellowship hall would be the first, a church building later.

"I COULD visualize where everything would go; you collect a lot of ideas over the years for exactly what a church should be. We had planned for years in California to have a prayer garden, but it was always put off. I knew this would fit into the Sun City setting, so it was planned from the first."

Yet in building a dream, the needs of the people he

was serving were uppermost. "I was minister of education in California, directing a Sunday School of 1,200 youngsters and three youth groups. That seems like a complete turnaround as far as religious emphasis, but it helped me stress to parishioners that the future is what's important, even though youngsters have more years ahead than retirees."

Dr. Witt and his wife took an active role in promoting a "community feeling," organizing small neighborhood groups so that new neighbors could get to know one another. "Developing a 'fellowship' was the goal of the 54 groups in those first years, not so much joining United Church," he said. "Other congregations were already forming in Sun City and Youngtown had its churches.

"WE HAVE always wanted people to find a church, put their roots down, whether or not they joined us. Even today there's a great need to bring Sun Citians into a church," he said, estimating that about 40 per cent of the residents today do not have a church affiliation.

Meeting community needs also was part of Dr. Witt's philosophy from the first. The Dutch Treat Club, a social card-playing group tripled in membership between the first and second meeting and was formed as an independent group. The Singles Club was formed by the church for single women of the community and grew so quickly that a separate group just for members was started, too. The lecture series is in its 10th year of public programs and every summer, weekly film programs fill the void when



From his pulpit, Dr. Walter Witt not only can look out or he can speak with usher in narthex, control lighting, spe

Rec Center films stop.

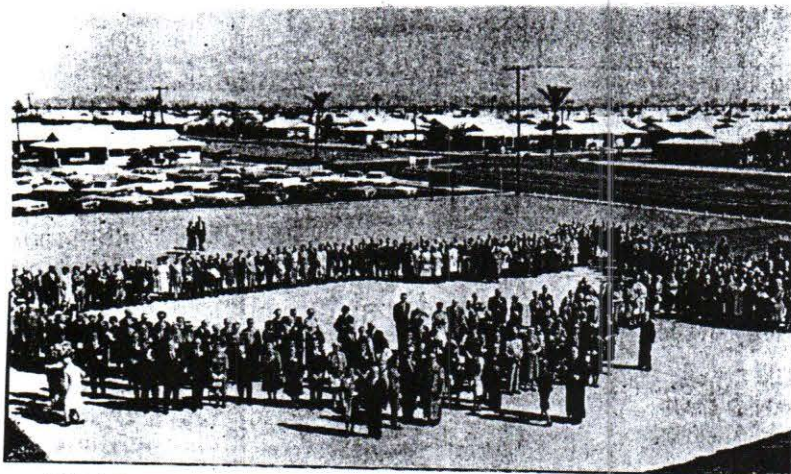
Travel tours to various parts of the world also are organized by Dr. Witt, with church members and nonmembers invited.

"I DIDN'T anticipate all these community things evolving, but when the interest became apparent the church became involved," he summarized.

By the time the fellowship hall held its first services in June 1961, the two services at Oakmont Center were at maximum capacity.

"I had to talk others on the planning committee into building a church to seat 1,000 instead of 500; the smaller number would have been only a duplication of the seating capacity of the fellowship hall," he said, agreeing that his estimate of church attendance must have sounded like a pipe dream 14 years ago.

OVER



United Church's courtyard map of United States is peopled from border to border on any Sunday.

"YET TODAY, there are Sundays when we have 1,300 attending services and we're the only church which holds two services during the summer. Especially then, people are more comfortable if they're not crowded together and our capacity has meant we can host union services, such as for Thanksgiving."

Every other church in Sun City built small, then found it had to add on. "The only 'addition' we've had to our buildings since the church was dedicated in November, 1965, was raising the roof in the fellowship hall to accommodate the movie screen. And we did that ourselves because contractors told us they'd never done anything like that and wouldn't touch it.

"It looks like it was planned that way," he mused with a smile, "because the slightly raised portion of the roof matches the cantilevered effect on the church structure."

AMONG the unique features built into the church are a tiny chapel for private weddings and meditation; five aisles in the sanctuary allowing shorter pews (which are upholstered); an altar room where large floral arrangements are dismantled after services and remade into smaller bouquets to be delivered to shut-ins in the community; generous office space which could convert to classrooms for Sunday School should the need arise; a pulpit where the speaker can control the lighting and sound system, contact an usher in the narthex, or indicate to the choir to speed up or slow down.

Dr. Witt even saw the need for members to hang onto the fellowship of their 'old' state, so the concrete courtyard between the buildings is painted in a huge map of the United States.

"During the social hour

between services, people stand on their home state and meet new friends that way—or extend a visit to someone in another state and have something to talk about immediately," he explained.

YET HIS most unique contribution to his members was in thinking ahead to their physical needs in years to come. "As soon as I began working here, I wondered where people who became ill or could not care for themselves would go after enjoying the active Sun City life."

Sun Valley Lodge was just an idea, a concept, for many years until the church got a 'grass roots' membership support for this type of facility. Though operating now as a separate entity, the lodge continues to have United Church members on its board of directors.

"The opening of the lodge and the dedication of the church are the high points of my years here," Dr. Witt said. But his desk, loaded with piles of busy-looking papers and books, shows that he's neither resting on past laurels nor slowing down in anticipation of retirement.

"WE ARE a growing church, averaging more than 200 new members per year; our 3,000 membership with 60 various denominations represented is by no means static," he stated. As the growth of Sun City extends even beyond Bell Road, will United Church of Sun City build a second worship facility in that area? "We've considered the possibility; let's say the proposal is in abeyance right now," he said, adding there are many factors still to be considered.

While other churches with specific doctrines erect buildings and flourish here, United Church continues to join together older persons of many religions in a Christian fellowship; that has been Dr. Witt's ministry.

United Church Dedication Held Here On Sunday

"I have built Thee an exalted house — a place for Thee to dwell forever" First Kings: 8-13.

Last Sunday more than 2,000 members; friends and visitors worshipped for the first time in the new sanctuary of the United Church of

Sun City. The long awaited day of the completion of this spacious edifice filled the hearts of Sun Citians with joy, pride, thanksgiving.

The larger nave, the offices, studies, choir room, lounge and meditation chapel will enable its staff and members not only a dignified and sacred place in which to worship but will afford a greater and more fulfilling service to the community where they can reach out and become more effective in surrounding communities.

Entering the wide doors of the Narthex one finds a gracious room, softly lighted by horizontal panels of faceted art glass in blues, gold and black. At each entrance the floor is of terrazo with sienna-spice carpeting in the center of the room, on the two graceful stairways and the floor of the balcony. The upholstery on the walnut pews is the same sienna-spice color. The glass wall between the narthex and sanctuary is draped in a filmy, sheet material. The carpet in the nave is aqua-bronze and covers the whole floor including the wide steps and the chancel. At the back of the balcony the East window depicts Christ in bright faceted glass, a welcoming figure to all who pass by.



THE DEDICATION SERVICES, on Sunday Nov. 27, of the United Church of Sun City, attracted many Sun City and area residents who came to view

the new edifice and to take part in the service of dedication.

On the right side of the nave, 12 art glass panels, set in the low side walls of natural adobe brick, show the old Testament prophets while on the left are the 12 New Testament apostles, with the names of each inscribed in the glass.

The graceful Gothic arches and the ceiling are softly colored natural wood with

Continued on page 2

United Church

Continued from page 1

suspended cylindrical light fixtures.

In the chancel area the outstanding feature is the Dossal cloth of rich royal blue which hangs from the apex of the first Gothic arch. A cross, made of a solid piece of wood from a forest that was growing at the time Christ was on earth, hangs in the center of the cloth with muted lighting behind it. The Dossal cloth and the cross were the donations of Dr. and Mrs. H. H. Donnenworth.

On the far right is the choir loft of redwood, as is the back-rail. The lecturn is just in front of the loft and the pulpit to the left of the chancel. A long walnut Communion Table stands in front of the altar on which are two antique candelabra on each side of the Bible. The flowers, highlighting the richness of the wood were coral gladiola and golden - bronze chrysanthemums.

Above the chancel, on the vertical portion of the section of raised roof, are the same blue - gold - black art glass panels as are in the Narthex which were designed to cast a unique, muted lighting effect on the chancel.

At the morning service the 36 voice choir under the di-

rection of Corleen Wells, sang "The Heavens are Declaring" by Beethoven, accompanied on the Baldwin Organ, with echo organ and tower chimes, by the church organist, Treva Boman.

The Rev. Mr. Walter W. Witt preached the sermon with Dr. Herbert Donnenworth and Dr. John Wick Boman assisting in the invocations, prayers and the reading of the Old and the New Testament scriptures.

At the 3:00 P.M. Service of Dedication, Treva Boman used for the organ prelude, a Pastoral, "A Gothic Cathedral" by Gulmant.

The choir sang "Psalm 150" . . . "Praise the Lord, Praise God in His Sanctuary," by Franc. The Rev. Walter Witt welcomed the congregation and visiting ministers: Old Testament scriptures were read by the Rev. Frank Splies and the New Testament by the Rev. Dean E. Dalrymple, minister of the Congregational Church of Tempe and Moderator-elect of the new Southwest Conference.

A greeting from the Sun City - Youngtown Ministerial Association was given by the Rev. Finley Reid and "An Historical Memoir" by Dr. Culver H. Nelson. "The Ultimate Mark of the Christian Community" was the topic of the Rev. Hugh Shelby Lee,

main speaker. Prayers for the Church were said by Dr. H. H. Donnenworth after which presentation of the Building Committee was made by Mr. Herbert Martin, Moderator, with a response by Mr. Paul Albert, Chairman of the Committee. The Act of Dedication was made by Dr. Perry Avery and the congregation in a litany, followed by a solo, "Bless This House" sung by Evelyn Robb.

A prayer of petition and thanksgiving was said by Dr. John Wick Boman.

Refreshments, provided through the courtesy of Betty's Bakery were served in Witt Hall by members of the Women's Fellowship.

"Now the Lord has fulfilled His promise which He made . . . I have risen in the place of David . . . and I have built the house in the name of the Lord" — First Kings 8:20.

JANUARY 26, 1961

\$31,000 Church Fund Pledged

Approximately \$31,000 in building fund pledges were received in a one-day campaign last Sunday by the United Church of Sun City, and hopes were high that follow-up operations would bring in another \$4,000.

This was the report of Rev. W. W. Witt, church pastor, who said the congregation's steering committee wrote Monday to the church's home mission society in New York announcing that the drive was oversubscribed.

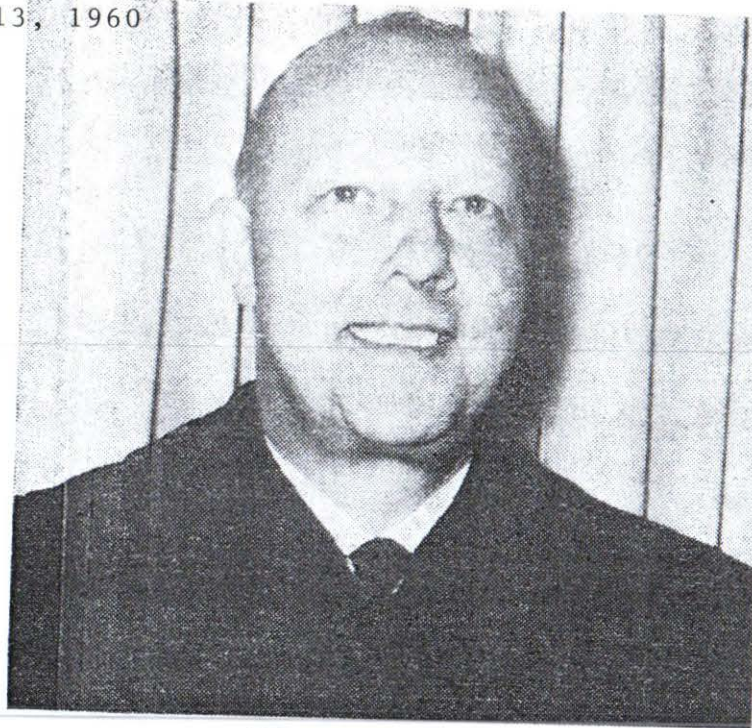
A FUND OF \$30,000 in cash and two-year pledges was sought in order to obtain a home missions loan of \$50,000 to finance first - stage construction of a church building. Erection of a large fellowship hall is planned for the church site at 107th Avenue south of Alabama Avenue.

Rev. Witt said that in addition to the \$30,000 needed as a base for the loan, the congregation was aiming at a \$5,000 fund for furnishing the building. He plans to announce final results of the campaign at this Sunday's 11 a. m. services at the Community Center.

MORE THAN \$25,000 was pledged at last Sunday's service. Members who were unable to attend or who had indicated a desire to contribute were canvassed by 40 men, operating in teams of two.

The church building committee planned to schedule meetings this weekend with the church architect.

Rev. Witt said an answer to the steering committee's letter by the home mission society is expected next week.



REV. WALTER WITT

Sun City Community Church To Form

Initial steps have been taken to establish a community church in Sun City.

The Arizona and Phoenix Councils of Churches have granted a comity allowance to the United Church of Christ for organizing the church, it was reported by the Rev. Perry D. Avery, assistant superintendent of the Congregational Conference of Southern California and the Southwest.

The Rev. Walter Witt, called as organizing pastor, last week moved to temporary Sun City quarters in Apartment 5 with Mrs. Witt.

A COMMITTEE LOOKING toward the church's organization met at the Rev. Witt's apartment last Thursday and appointed the Rev. Everett B. Luther, minister

of Phoenix's North Congregational Church, as temporary chairman.

Other temporary officers are Emil Martin and William Jordan, both of the North Congregational Church, treasurer and assistant treasurer, and Mrs. Max W. Pehl, Sun City, secretary.

A committee was appointed to seek permission of Sun City's interim council to use the community hall for worship services until the church building is available. Its members are Sun Citizens Ray H. Conrad, Mr. and Mrs. Forrest McGlynn, and Rev. Witt.

ALSO SERVING on the organizational committee are Dr. Avery, assistant superintendent of the Congregational Conference of Southern California and the

Southwest, Mrs. Conrad, Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Barrett, members of the First Congregational Church of Phoenix who will move to Sun City about Nov. 1; D. H. Halloway, Otho Greenway, and the Rev. Lee Smallsreed, pastor of Scottsdale's new Congregational Church.

Rev. Witt said additional members will be added from other Protestant denominations. The committee's next meeting is set for 4 p. m. next Wednesday.

REV. WITT REPORTED that, through cooperation with the conference, the Board of Home Missions of the Congregational Christian Church, and the Board of National Missions of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, an option on a 3.1-acre church site on 107th Avenue has been ob-

tained. A parsonage is being built at 11615 105th Ave.

The church will be known temporarily as the Sun City United Church of Christ.

A builder has been asked to give an estimate on the building of a unit similar to the community building, Rev. Witt said, and estimates will be available within two weeks.

"BEING A community church," said Dr. Avery, "it will aim to appeal on a broad basis to those of the Protestant faith regardless of denominational background. The sponsoring denomination, known as the United Church of Christ, recently resulted from the merger of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the General Council of Congregational Christian Churches.

Rev. Witt, recently of the Church of the Lighted Window in LaCanada, Calif., holds his standing in the Congregational Christian denomination although he and his wife were raised as Methodists.

HE RECENTLY returned from a summer in Europe devoted to travel and professional photography and already has given several lectures in the Los Angeles area on his European trip, especially concerning Russia and the satellite states.

The parsonage is expected to be ready for occupancy by Rev. Witt in late October. He invited persons interested in assisting with the church's organization to contact him at Apartment 5 or at YE 3-0058.