

IN SUN CITY WEST

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Churches to start servicesBy RICHARD MOORE
Staff Writer

It began as the joint effort of five Protestant faiths less than eight months ago.

Public relations people from Del E. Webb telephoned Rev. Leslie Ross of the First United Methodist Church, Sun City, to suggest establishing a Protestant Sunday service in Sun City West.

This was to match the Roman Catholics who would begin celebrating Mass in Johnson Center.

Mr. Ross discussed the matter with the Sun City-Youngtown Ministerial Association, which knew the practice of providing recreation center space to a congregation that had purchased land to build a church.

Churches representing the five denominations scheduled to build in Sun City West accepted the responsibility of conducting trial services during the five Sundays in April.

EACH FAITH was on its own during the assigned Sunday and Mr. Ross conducted the first service April 1.

Seeing the need for some

continuity in arrangements, Rev. Syl Henson, a United Methodist minister living in Sun City West, stepped in as Sunday service coordinator.

After consulting with others specifically to avoid the appearance of a united or community church, he was instrumental in providing the name "Interim Chapel."

Clergymen of the five sponsoring churches met in May and decided to continue the Sunday service arrangement. They established a rotation schedule which extended through October.

In June, the congregation voted to divide whatever funds were left after the last October service. At the same time, the congregation approved sponsorship of a religious survey in Sun City West.

The results of that survey, completed in August, indicated a number of people in the congregation wanted to continue the Interim Chapel after October.

Ministers of the sponsoring churches were willing to continue services until the first Sunday in Ad-

vent, the beginning of the Christian liturgical year.

TWO MONTHS ago, it was apparent the five denominational services would begin in December.

However, some Interim Chapel members wished to continue meeting as a worshipping congregation. Petitions were circulated and 174 signatures obtained of persons who favored its continuation.

The ministers of each denomination still will branch out from the united Interim Chapel and begin organizing their own congregations.

Continued population increases and growth projections in the newest local retirement community have the ministers of each Sun City West church optimistic about their future.

Although all the churches have obtained property on which to build, specific plans and construction are still a long way off.

THE IMMEDIATE concern of each church, according to the ministers, is to provide a community service for Sun City West residents. Such a commitment includes continued educational programs, Bible study classes, musical programs and fellowship.

"This is a big step for all of us, but we have been harmonious," said Rev. Henry B. Getz, pastor of the Episcopal Church of the Advent. "We are not at all competitive."

Father Getz, Episcopal diocesan dean for western Maricopa County, said his church will conduct services at 8 a.m. Sunday in Johnson Lecture Hall.

Lutheran services at 9:30 a.m. Sunday in Johnson Lecture Hall will be conducted by Rev. Elmer S. Hjortland, who is on the staff of the American Lutheran Church in Sun City.

UNITED CHURCH of Sun City West (United Church of Christ), conducting services at 11 a.m. Sunday in Johnson Lecture Hall, will be led by Rev. Frederic James.

United Presbyterian Church of Sun City West

will conduct services at 8:30 a.m. Sunday in Johnson Social Hall. Rev. Paul Calhoun will lead the congregation.

Rev. Byron Haines will conduct services at 11:30 a.m. Sunday in Johnson Social Hall for the congregation of the United Methodist Church.

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Ministers of the Sun City West churches that will begin services Sunday as separate congregations are, from left, Rev. Byron D. Haines, United Methodist; Rev. Elmer Hjortland, Lutheran; Rev. Henry B. Getz, Episcopal; Rev. Frederic James, United Church; and Rev. Paul Calhoun, United Presbyterian.

(News-Sun Photo)



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HISTORY OF THE INTERIM CHAPEL

In March of 1979 the Sun City-Youngtown Ministerial Association discussed the establishment of a Protestant Worship Service in Sun City West. Already in negotiations for the purchase of property in Sun City West on which to erect church buildings, five denominations accepted responsibility for conducting "trial" services during April 1979. Clergymen of five churches (American Lutheran, Episcopal, United Church of Christ, United Methodist and United Presbyterian) met again on May 3, deciding to retain the joint-worship format, with rotating leadership responsibilities, until the second Sunday in October, at which time the five would commence individual services. This termination date for THE INTERIM CHAPEL was delayed, by common consent, until November 25.

On November 5 the clergy of each denomination met to establish time and place for each to hold their worship services in the Johnson Recreation Center Social Hall or Lecture Hall, where they met until each were able to build their own churches.

Source - History of the Desert Garden United Church of Christ.

Five churches set 11-17-79 separate services

The five denominations which have sponsored the Sun City West Interim Chapel will expand into separate denominational services beginning Dec. 2, first Sunday in the Advent.

The five who were assigned space earlier this month in Johnson Center have bought lots to build in Sun City West.

In the meantime, the five will meet Sundays in Johnson Center.

Three congregations will meet in the lecture hall—Episcopalian at 8, American Lutheran at 9:30 and United Church of Christ at 11 a.m.

The United Presbyterian congregation will meet in the social hall at 8:30 a.m. and the United Methodists will worship at 11:30. Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic congregation will change their church time from 9 to 10 a.m. in the social hall Dec. 2.