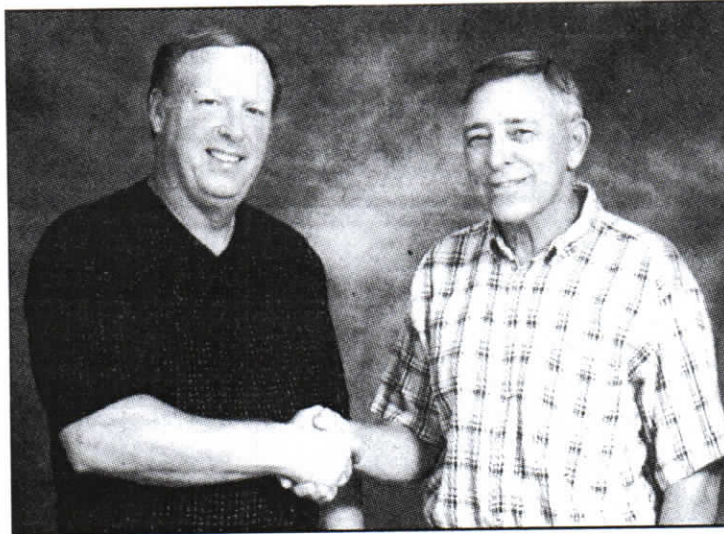


April 30, 2003

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT



Submitted photo

The Rev. Bob Williams, at left, will be the senior pastor of the merged congregations of New Hope Fellowship, where he is now pastor, and the Evangelical Free Church. The Rev. Sam Sawyer, pastor of the Evangelical Free Church, will serve as associate pastor until his announced retirement Nov. 1.

Sun City West churches merge

By Anne Brady
Independent Newspapers

The congregations of New Hope Fellowship and the Evangelical Free Church, both of Sun City West, voted last week to merge their congregations into one.

The official celebration of the merger will be at 10 a.m. May 4. The public is invited.

"Both of us are theologically on the same line," said the Rev. Bob Williams, pastor of New Hope, who will be senior pastor of the merged congregation, which will go by the name New Hope Fellowship (an Evangelical Free Church). "This is really going to strengthen us. ... Both the congregations are really excited."

Initially, the merged congregation will meet where the 2-year-old New Hope has been meeting, the Del Webb Room of the Sun City West Foundation complex at R.H. Johnson and

Stardust Boulevards.

"Hopefully, we will be in a position soon to purchase some facilities," said Rev. Williams.

The 4-year-old Evangelical Free Church met in the R.H. Johnson Lecture Hall. That congregation's pastor, the Rev. Sam Sawyer, will serve as associate pastor at New Hope until his previously announced retirement Nov. 1.

The two congregations worshiped together three Sundays in April before reaching their decision in separate meetings April 21.

The newly combined congregation will have 200 wintertime members with typical attendance of 150.

Sunday worship services will be at 10 a.m., with Bible class at 8:45 a.m.

The office of New Hope, also in the SCW Foundation complex, will continue to serve as the office for the new church.

Call 556-9570.