

Caring minister feted at surprise dinner party

By Shirley Rose Feden
staff writer

HE'S THE KIND of person who makes a city feel like a small town and considers his congregation one big family. The Rev. Dr. Paul Sutton learned Friday night just how much his congregation loves him, his colleagues and friends value his love and dedicated service.

Sutton and his wife, Ruby, invited to attend a recognition dinner at the Sheraton Southfield Hotel, arrived at the party and found that they were the ones being recognized.

The occasion was the 25th anniversary of his ministry at the Southfield United Presbyterian Church.

"We sent out invitations for this in February to friends all over the country, former church members and present members," said Steve McConnell, a seminary intern at the church.

"I've been interning here for six months, and Dr. Sutton has been at the church since before I was born."

Church members, trying hard to

keep their surprise intact, tendered a reception at the church on Sunday as a diversionary tactic.

"HE'D RATHER talk about you than himself," says Judy Denniston of her pastor. A resident of Farmington Hills, her family has belonged to the church for 17 years.

"This church has been our home away from home, for us and our children. Dr. Sutton has led us in mission giving and made our church a leader."

Denniston says the minister is an inspirational pastor who loves Bible studies twice each week and adds energy to the life of the congregation and meets the needs of those ill in hospitals or at home.

"He conducts services in hospitals and nursing homes," she says.

Sutton, presently the president of the Southfield Clergy Association, was the 1981 Moderator of the Detroit Presbytery of some 100 churches.

He and his wife, who was honored also for her services as choir director, went on a trip around the world in 1968

visiting Presbyterian missionaries all along the way.

Two of their three children, Anita Milne and Tim Sutton, were present at the surprise dinner. "Tim and his wife, Mary, were flown here from Albuquerque, New Mexico by the congregation as part of the surprise," Denniston explained.

ANOTHER surprise was a telephone call from the Suttons' daughter, Linda McCleary, who lives with her husband, in Amman, Jordan.

Sutton grew up in Drayton Plains, Mich., where his father was the organizing pastor of the Presbyterian Church there. He graduated from Clarkston High School in 1942 and attended Sterling College in Kansas.

Following his graduation, he entered the Pittsburgh-Zenia Theological Seminary and was ordained by Charles Presbytery in Washington, Pa., through the United Presbyterian Church of North America.

Sutton spent six years in Minden, Nebraska from 1952-58 and obviously made a lasting impression. A group of his former Minden congregants came to Southfield for the dinner, enhancing the surprise.

Several skits were prepared to entertain Sutton and his wife, who teaches music in the Detroit Public Schools.

Among the gifts they received were a set of golf clubs for him and a ruby pendant for her.

Sutton has always referred to the Southfield United Presbyterian Church as "distinctive among the churches of Southfield."

"IN THE FIRST place, we are the only Presbyterian church here," he says, "and we have a minister (January 1971). "We are a Southfield church and we focus on Southfield."

"We have our roots here and we have a commitment to the city regardless of what happens to it."

Located at 21575 10 Mile, the church may be the oldest one in the city. Irish immigrants who had been Presbyterians in Northern Ireland organized it.

It was founded in April 1850 when a

petition signed by the 17 original members was granted. Members met in a donated building for the first two years, then moved to the present site.

The original church building was constructed at a cost of \$1,500. In 1865 a small, white frame, one-story structure was built and remains at the west end of the present complex.

"We have members today who are descended from the original families," said Denniston.

As the congregation grew, so did the church. A two-story addition was built onto the original church in 1941, and an educational wing added in 1955.

Today, the church complex includes the pastor's office, church school offices and a new sanctuary, dedicated in 1960, two years after Sutton became the pastor.

SUTTON'S church has a commitment to the teachings of Christ on local and worldwide levels. It is this philosophy that has inspired him and his congregation to support mission efforts everywhere.

At home in Southfield, Sutton has been part of the Parent Youth Guidance Commission and a Citizens Advisory Committee for Special Education.

In 1980-81 he was Dean of the Young Pastors Seminar.

In his church, Sutton oversees morning and evening mid-week Bible sessions, three choirs (under Ruby's direction), has supervised three summer interns and 10 year-round interns.

The little white Presbyterian church, now 133 years old, continues in the firm tradition of the many pastors who have shepherded the flocks there.

A small congregation in a rural Michigan area at the outset, Southfield United Presbyterian Church has continued to grow and remain a vital community force.

For a quarter of a century, the Rev. Dr. Paul Sutton has been central to that vitality. His congregants think it fitting that his 25th anniversary and that of the city coincide.

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Grant-a-Wish members make dreams come true for ill youth

By Loraine McCleish
staff writer

Grace Amara wants it known that Grant-a-Wish has a representative in Detroit's north and west suburbs. She's been a member since January of the volunteer organization which grants wishes to seriously ill children.

Grant-a-Wish was started last fall in Michigan by Dr. Kevin Brown, a child psychologist with Michigan Osteopathic Medical Center.

"The first time I heard of Grant-a-Wish I knew this was something I'd be willing to work for," Amara said. "If I could work to fulfill a child's dream, I could make that my dream."

Amara responded to a radio program that asked for Grant-a-Wish volunteers, and along with 22 others in the metro area who called the radio station formed a committee.

Of those 22, Amara said she is the only one living in the northwest area.

Grant-a-Wish is going on in several other cities now but the most successful ones are always the ones with the most volunteers.

"The more volunteers we have the more likely somebody is going to know somebody who is going to know somebody who can give us what we need to pull the wish together," she said.

AMARA SAID that working for Grant-a-Wish is granting her the opportunity to honor a son she lost two years ago.

"My son was killed suddenly," she said.

Santo Amara was electrocuted in an accident in Farmington Hills. He was 26 years old.

"I have only good memories of him growing up and the good things, nice things he did while he was

with us. That's a lot different from the parents who have an ill child, who have to deal with day-to-day living while all the time knowing that child might not make it.

"We're meeting in one another's homes now and I don't mind at all traveling to Warren, Grosse Pointe when I see what this little group has done and what they can do for a sick child," she said.

Amara said granting a wish is more detailed than it might seem.

She gave the example of a child who asked for a puppy. This had to be agreeable to the family, first.

Then the committee members set out and were successful in obtaining a free puppy, free pet food for a year and free veterinarian services for a year.

"That took more phone calls and more soliciting than you would suspect. And the only way we were able to give a complete gift was that there were enough of us who might know somebody we could call on to ask for what we needed," she said.

IN THE TIME Amara has been with Grant-a-Wish she said she the most frequently asked-for wish is a trip.

"Those will have to be very well checked out on all fronts and will probably take more money than the wishes we've granted before," she said.

"We're starting a fund this month to grant those wishes. We're out soliciting now and so far that's been going very well. We're still getting started, still feeling our way around, but we're also working on several wishes, handling as much as we can."

Amara will take inquiries about Grant-a-Wish at 476-5533.

For those who wish to make a donation, checks are to be made payable to Grant-a-Wish and sent to P.O. Box 02213, Detroit, 48202.



Grace Amara, a volunteer for Grant-A-Wish, looks for donations and volunteers willing to work to help make an ill child's dream come true.

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Lions host 102nd birthday

Neil Trad celebrated his 102nd birthday with longtime friends from the Highland Park Lions Club.

Service club meetings or parties for service club members are not unusual in Oak Hill Nursing Home since Trad became a resident there a little more than a year ago.

Since Trad hasn't been able to attend the Lions Club meetings, the Lions meetings often come to him. And it is not unusual to see the nursing home halls filled with Shriners there to visit him.

This week most of the entire Lions membership from his home chapter traveled to a Farmington Hills restaurant to toast its Life Time member who was born March 14, 1881 in Lebanon.

Barbara Charlton, activity director for Oak Hill, describes Trad as "a little hard of hearing, very sociable, enjoys visiting with people and loves his cup of coffee and chocolate."

A former teacher and longtime instructor of English to foreign-born employees of Ford Motor Co., Trad published a booklet titled "Thoughts at 100 Years" in 1981.

The autobiography included his memories of meeting and associating with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, George Washington Carver and other well-known personalities.

Trad was married to the late Mary Burdella Trad. He has two daughters, two grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

He is a 32nd degree Mason and a member of Scottish Rite, as well as Downtown Mason Shrine and the Lions.



Neil Trad, born in Lebanon in 1881, marked his 102nd birthday with friends from Highland Park Lions Club.

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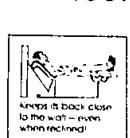
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