

BELIEFS *Values*

## Minister aims to hone congregants' creative edge

BY KENA FULKA

University Presbyterian Church began as a mission of the Presbytery of Detroit when 168 individuals met for worship in Lawndale Hall in 1858.

And though the Rochester Hills congregation has weathered its share of changes, from building expansion projects to transient members committed to jobs on the move, the initial goals have remained constant.

"The church from the very beginning has been a pro-active congregation, trying to deal with the serious problems of society," said charter member Dorothy Beardmore, adding that members have welcomed and supported three different families from war-torn countries through the years.

"The congregation made a commitment early in its time that half of its receipts would go to missions locally, nationally and internationally," recalled the Rochester Hills resident. "We never quite reached that point, but it continues to be our goal."

With the December installation of the Rev. Dr. George Portice, Beardmore feels that the emphasis on church goals will be enhanced.



JOHN STUMZAND/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

**Senior pastor:** Dr. George Portice's primary role at University Presbyterian Church revolves around preaching and teaching, which he coordinates with administering, pastoral care and counseling.

"What he can bring is a continuation of what the church has been from the beginning," said Beardmore, who is a member of the State Board of Education. "We're not just an isolated group in what is now Rochester Hills. We have obligations elsewhere that we want to meet."

University Presbyterian's 10-member search committee includ-

ed Rochester Adams High school student Chris Keats, who now attends Cornell University. The well-rounded team met weekly during the 17-month selection process reviewing over 150 resumes, conducting 40 phone interviews and making five out-of-

town visits before selecting Portice.

"I think he's warm and compassionate, very understanding and very innovative," said Karen Reynolds, search committee co-chair. "He had a lot of leadership qualities and he was also very easy to talk to. The committee felt very comfortable with him."

When Portice came to candidate in July, the congregation voted nearly unanimously to call him as the fifth pastor to lead the Oakland County church.

"A lot of people were praying from the very beginning that God would lead the right person to us," said Reynolds, a Rochester Hills resident who is an ultrasonographer at William Beaumont Hospital in Troy. "One of the nicest comments he gave us was that there's a lot more potential here than he had initially imagined."

Since its founding nearly four decades ago, University Presbyterian Church has outgrown Lawndale Hall — the original Wilson Dodge House purchased by the congregation. It now holds church

offices, classrooms and conference rooms. A contemporary sanctuary and a two-story Christian education center is located in the adjacent brick facility at 1385 South Adams Road.

Portice, who hails from Pickford in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, served in Pennsylvania and in the Long Island Presbytery in

New York before coming to Rochester Hills.

As senior pastor of University Presbyterian Church, Portice's primary responsibility is preaching and teaching, which he coordinates with administering, pastoral care and counseling.

See HOME, 20A

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