

'Church family' share 100-year heritage

By NANCY KASSEN LIESE

The members of Salem United Church in Farmington are also members of another group, "our church family."

"This does not exclude anyone. Any one can come and worship here, but we try to keep this feeling of being a family," said the Rev. Carl Schultz, pastor of the church since 1936.

The Salem United Church is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. Through the last century the congregation has grown from about 50 families to 150, Rev. Schultz said. And Farmington has grown along with it.

"Farmington has changed from a small community to an urban community," he said, as he sat behind a brown wooden desk in his small office.

"When we came here in 1906 every one was a neighbor. You just didn't know any strangers." Now, he said, you always see strangers when you walk downtown.

Remaining open-minded, he doesn't assess the changes as being good or bad, but he does admit, "It's too bad you can't continue a whole atmosphere like that."

With the "church family" he hopes to keep some of that atmosphere around, he said.

THE SALEM UNITED Church was built on its present site at Oakland and Grand River in 1902. Additions in 1925 and 1958 brought it to its present size.

Salem United was the result of the unification of three different churches. Originally a German evangelical, in 1934 the Evangelical Synod of North America merged with the Reform Church of the United States, making it the Evangelical and Reform Church.

In 1957, the Evangelical and Reform Church joined the Congregational Christians, forming the United Church of Christ.

Salem United's small membership works at maintaining its family feeling by working, as well as praying, together. Different groups in the church have undertaken special projects, like the renovation of the basement of the

building or the painting of an inscription honoring the 100th anniversary on the arch leading to the sanctuary.

The members take pride in the church, Rev. Schultz said, particularly in the church windows. Made of multi-colored stained glass in designs of leaves and grapes, they give the inside of the church a mellow glow.

The windows were "probably imported" when the church was built, he said, because the United States had "not developed stained glass here yet."

Their pride comes from the sentimental as well as monetary value of the windows, he said.

One window over the main entrance bears an inscription in German declaring the building an Evangelical Church.

THE ORIGINAL FOUNDERS were all German, Rev. Schultz said, and the background of the church is German.

The present altar, lectern, baptismal font and pews are the originals, he said, and are all made out of carved wood. The wooden floors creak when you walk down the main aisle, and the doors are dark, heavily stained wood with iron handles.

Salem United is one of the few churches to have bells still rung by hand with a rope, Rev. Schultz said. He estimated they were made "around 1902," and an inscription on one indicates they came from Northville.

The church has celebrated its anniversary with many special projects including German dinners and pancake breakfasts. The Ladies Guild has raised funds for improvement of the church and for donation to a home for the aged in Saline.

Two special Sunday services were held in commemoration of the event, one on May 18 and one on Oct. 12. Called "Special Sundays," one was in recognition of the church's past, the other in recognition of the church and the community.

"It was recognizing where we are now. We're not living in the past anymore, and hopefully we're a benefit to the community."



REV. CARL SCHULTZ, PASTOR, SALEM UNITED CHURCH (Staff photo by Harry Maucher)

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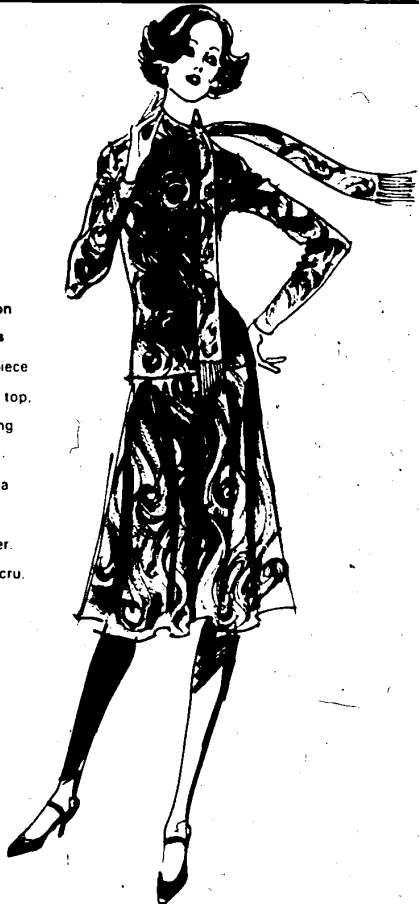
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Fresh greens workshop

Van Askounes, a well-known figure about the Farmington Community Center for her know-how in arranging fresh and dried natural materials, works with fresh Virginia boxwood for the holidays. The next workshop on the

agenda is set for Monday, Dec. 1, from 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. where participants will learn how to put together their own wreaths, trees, or centerpieces. Reservations are necessary, through the center.



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