

First United pastor starts 2nd 40 years

By Loraine McEllish
staff writer

When the Rev. Arthur Spafford walked into the First United Methodist Church of Farmington to conduct the Sunday service one recent morning, he was met with a huge banner in celebration of his 40 years in the ministry.

Under his name and the years 1949-1989 was the outline of Michigan and a cross fashioned in fabric, marking the sites where he has served.

The surprise celebration continued after the service with a gift of a white robe and a red stole, then visits and reminiscences from friends made during the past 40 years.

Moving from one congregation to another has been a way of life for Spafford.

"I've lived in a parsonage all of my life," he said. "My father was a minister who served several churches in the lower half of the Lower Peninsula," he said.

And like his father, through the many moves, he remained in Michigan.

"I've never gone into a church feeling that it was going to be a temporary thing," he said. "My feelings have always been, 'This is where I am now and now I put down my roots.'"

"I may have suffered some withdrawal symptoms on leaving a congregation, but you make new friends very quickly. You are entering a community where people want to be your friends. I've never known any other life."

When Spafford reflected on those 40 years during the anniversary month, the conclusion, he said, was that he wouldn't have wanted to live his life any other way.

people

SPAFFORD GREW UP IN St. Johns, Mich., where his father was a minister in the Evangelical United Brethren Church, and where he received the encouragement and sponsorship to begin his career.

After graduation from United Theology Seminary, his pastorates from 1949 until 1976 were with the Evangelical United Brethren Church. It was in 1988 that the very small and largely German-speaking denomination merged with the Methodist Episcopal Church into the present United Methodist Church.

The transition was very easy for him.

"The theology was so close to Methodist," he said. "It just never grew as strong as the Methodist Church did. Coming from a very small denomination into a very large one opened up a lot of opportunities for me," he said.

Spafford served Methodist congregations in Dearborn and Ferndale before coming to First United Methodist Church of Farmington in 1983, where the membership is about 350 families.

"That's enough," he said. "That's plenty big enough for one sole pastor."

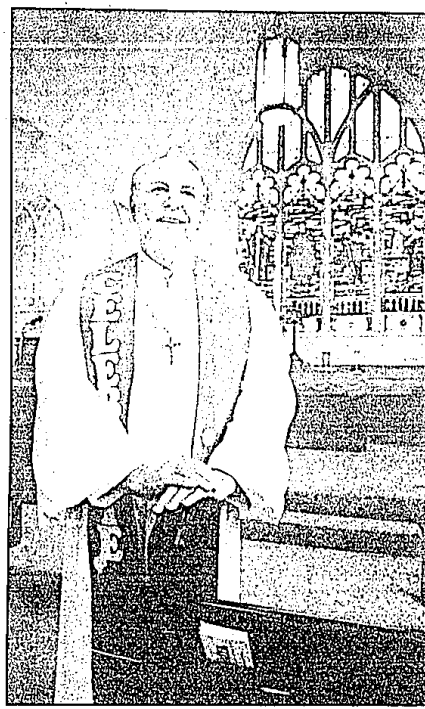
ONE OF Spafford's guiding principles in ministering comes from St. Paul, who advised that God-given gifts should be used for the work of the ministry. With that in mind, Spafford creates "caring ministries" among the church lay persons trained for outreach work in the community.

"I help equip people to be Christian ambassadors wherever they are," he said. "I enable people to be in Christian service wherever they are. We have about 20 trained laymen who are equipped to serve the shut-ins, the grieving or any of vari-

ous hurts. I can make maybe one or two contacts in a day. Our caring ministries can reach out and touch that many more in a day."

Another outreach for Spafford is his involvement with Rotary International. He has served as president of a Rotary Club in three different communities.

"I'm in the business of serving and so is Rotary," Spafford said. "It keeps me in professional and business relationships I couldn't have otherwise, and it is important for me



THE white robe and the red and white celebration stole were gifts to the Rev. Arthur Spafford from his congregation in observance of his 40th anniversary year in the ministry.

to know what's going on in the community."

SPAFFORD AND his wife, Frieda, live in downtown Farmington, not far from the church, and expect to live in Farmington or Farmington Hills when he retires in two years.

The couple have three children: Barbara, a resident of Maine; Robert, a resident of Farmington; and Thomas, a resident of Ann Arbor.

"I am a pastor 24 hours a day," Spafford said.

Computers help cops nab suspects

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Farmington Hills has 20 MDTs; Farmington has six. Countywide, 375 terminals are in use by 34 law enforcement agencies.

"IT CERTAINLY is going to be a benefit to us as crime moves into Oakland County, as it has in the past few years," Dwyer said. "Oakland County is not immune from crime. As the population increases, so will crime."

Besides a keyboard similar to that of a typewriter, MDTs have two rows of special keys. For example, if an officer is struggling with a suspect, hitting one button will call for help.

Officers can type in the license plate number of a suspect vehicle, and within eight seconds, know the owner's name and address, and whether the car or license plate is stolen. Officers also can find out if the owner's license is suspended or if a warrant is out for his arrest.

The main advantages to the terminals is their ability to drastically cut down voice communication time and increase safety for the officers.

"It will increase the number of people arrested, reduce the dispatchers response time and workload, and improve officers safety," Dwyer said.

"The biggest thing it has helped with is radio traffic," said Farmington public safety officer Daniel Dellar. "It eliminates all that radio traffic. It used to be the biggest problem."

"I think it's great, especially on busy shifts," he said. "There's nights when you can't get a word in edge-wise on the radio."

IN THE past, officers had to communicate over radio waves, which

was often time consuming. Running an information check on one suspect could take several minutes.

Because information checks now are quick and easy, officers can make them whenever they see a suspect vehicle, Dellar said.

More checks mean more arrests. Arrests have already increased by 40-50 percent, Dwyer said.

"The key is, it doesn't take up the air time and it's faster for the officer to run (a check)," Lauhoff said. "It's faster and the officer can do it at his convenience."

The computers are set up so officers can get information by hitting only a few keys. "It takes very few functions to operate it," Lauhoff said. "It's kind of like a typewriter. You know where your fingers have to go."

"It's hard for the average person to understand how important this is to officers on the street," Lauhoff added. "It's 90 percent of what they do. They can find out, for both people and property, whether they're wanted or stolen."

"It's probably one of the biggest things that has happened to law enforcement since LEIN (the Law Enforcement Information Network) came along."

MDTS CAN directly access a main computer in the Oakland County Computer Services building in Pontiac, lightning the load for dispatchers.

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Closed pool riles parents

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those repairs later in the year. They will not entail any down time for the pools later in the year.

The pool closure at North Farmington does not affect the boys' swim team, because their season does not start until November, Schwartzberg said.

Cowan said the pool closure is not adversely affecting requirements for ninth grade swimming classes, because curriculum changes to the health and physical education program allow the schools more flexibility.

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