

New Lutheran Church Is Forming

By Joelle Subourne

The newly formed Living Waters Lutheran Church seeks to serve newcomers and people who might have stopped attending church for one reason or another, through two different worship styles: one fairly traditional and another more modern.

The church's first services are scheduled for Nov. 12. Tentatively, they will be held at 9 and 10:30 a.m. at East Amwell Township School. For more information, call 284-9455.

Living Waters' pastor, the Rev. D. Richard Garrison, has knocked on about 3,000 doors and mailed out about 4,000 brochures about the church, informing people about it and its style. Another 6,000 mailings are planned.

For now, the church intends to draw its parishioners primarily from Flemington and Raritan, East Amwell, West Amwell, Delaware, Readington and Franklin townships.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, of which Living Waters is a part, has been looking at Hunterdon County as the site for a new church for 10 years, Rev. Garrison said.

"We were hesitant about coming in here," he said, because St. Paul Lutheran Church in Raritan Township is a "good, solid Missouri Synod church," another Lutheran branch. "But with the tremendous growth in this county, if we located far enough away from them then the impact would not really be a serious one. We would be able to start a viable congregation.

"I'm not here to steal other people's sheep," Rev. Garrison said. Instead, the focus is on people who've never been affiliated with a church or have dropped out for one reason or another.

In particular, Rev. Garrison wants to appeal to younger people with the contemporary style worship service.

"Shall we go on and allow a whole generation not to know the whole substance of the gospel because they don't like the style?" he asked.

The basic difference between the church's contemporary and traditional worship services, is said, is in language and music style, and presenting the substance in a style that appeals to all.

The contemporary service will "pay more attention to new musical beats, which the generation in its 30s is acquainted with. Also, we'll modify the language and get rid of buzzwords, like 'creed,'" he said.

People might not know the Lord's Prayer or Apostle's Creed. "Does the unchurched population know this? I don't think so. The traditional style has served well, but when you have a generation who is unfamiliar with it" services can and should be changed, he added. "How do we minister to people who may have grown up outside a church?"

He plans to include traditional aspects in his services and sermons, but in a more accessible way, with modified language. Instead of traditional

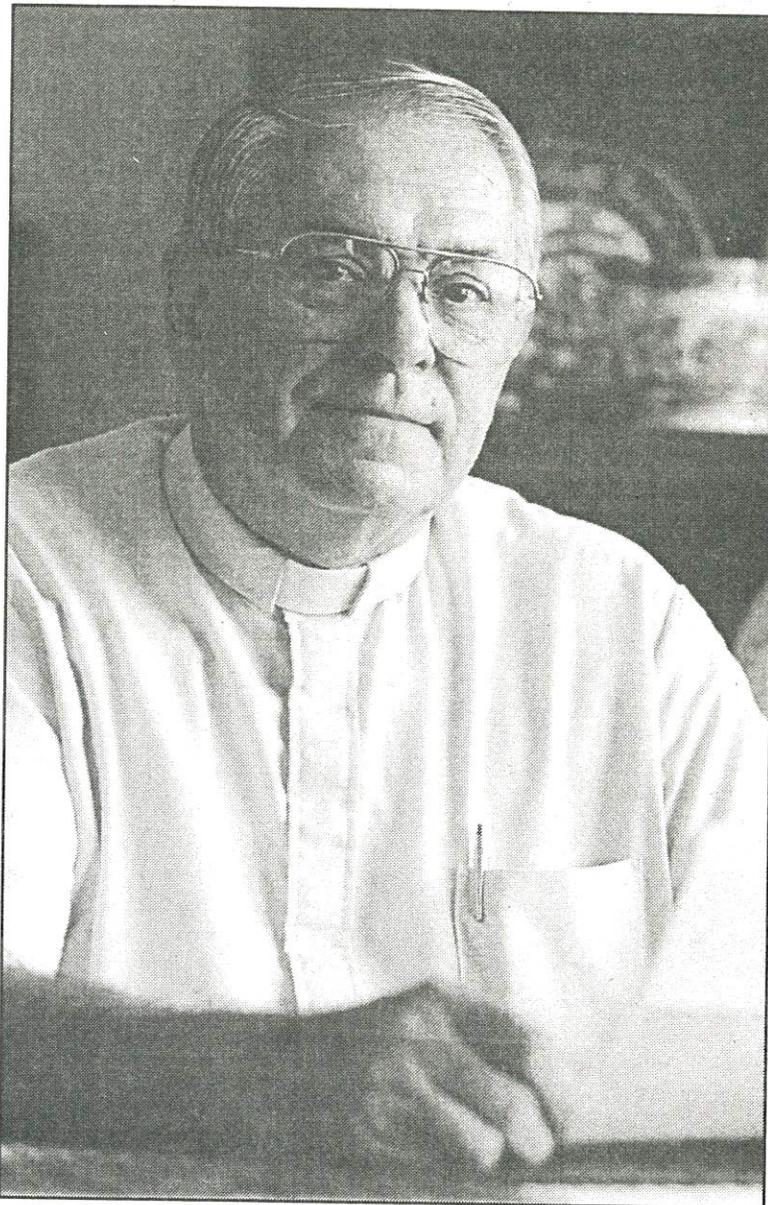


Photo by Walt Lankenau

STARTING A CHURCH means knocking on doors and mailing out information, says the Rev. D. Richard Garrison, who is launching Living Waters Lutheran Church, which will first meet Nov. 12.

hymns, the congregation will sing praise songs.

The other service each week will be what he calls "modified traditional." It will still have more historical liturgy and hymns, but he still plans to slightly modify the language.

"We're a church already committed to diversity," he said.

Starting a new church is the next logical step in Rev. Garrison's career. He served a suburban congregation in Bergen County, a resort community congregation in Ocean City, an inner-city population in Kansas City, Mo., and a small congregation in a rural area in the Poconos.

"The others were in a sense preparation for this," he said. "I'm really enjoying this."

Originally, Rev. Garrison worked in the airline industry but then felt the call to ministry.

"I tried to ignore it for a while, but no luck," he said, smiling. "For the first many years I thought about getting out of it. I was sometimes afraid I had interpreted God's call wrongly and other times rightly."

The church's name is based on John 4:14: "Jesus said, 'Those who will drink of the water that I give them will never be thirsty. It will be in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.'"