

# Religion

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## Three new Protestant pastors join local churches

By JEFF HUDSON  
CORRESPONDENT

January brought three new pastors to the area.

The Rev. Duncan Hanson began serving at St. Andrew Presbyterian in Aptos the day after New Year's, after a search for a new pastor that began a year and a half ago when the Rev. John Trittenbach left to work with another congregation.

Hanson has spent the last 10 years with a Presbyterian church in the Seattle area, and before that, with a congregation in southern Oregon. Although he has spent the last several years in the Pacific Northwest, he is a native Californian, having been born in San Clemente. He is a graduate of Yale.

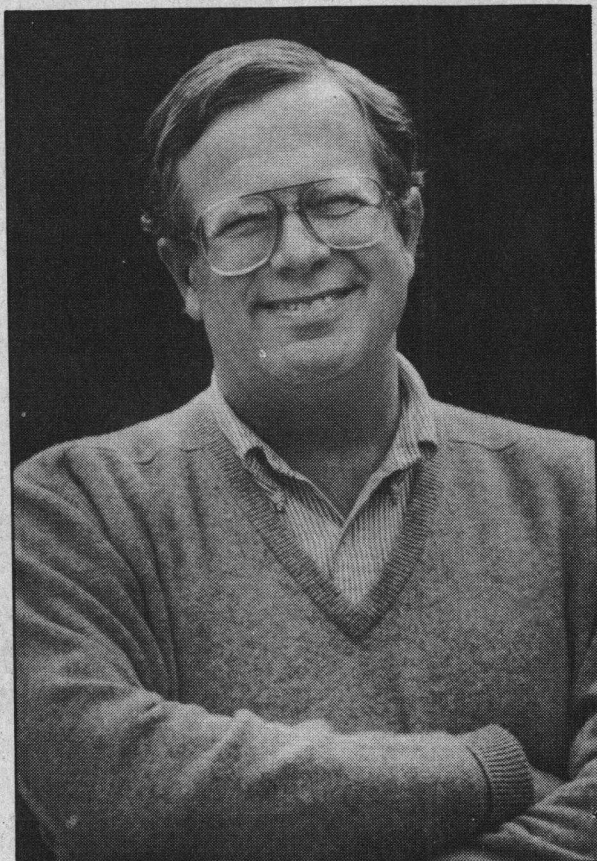
The 40-year-old Hanson offered several thoughts concerning his own tasks as a pastor, and the mission of the St. Andrew's congregation.

"The church needs to relate to the world — there are lots of needs that we need to match," he said.

Among these: "The church needs to be place that supports people who are stretching — stretching both economically and in relationships. People deal with some tough issues, people who are parents with small kids and full-time work, and not having a jillion dollars to work with and big payments."

Hanson says he thinks the church should be a place where people can "ask questions, explore answers freely, without being diverted down narrow channels ... part of my job is being someone who gives permission for the process of exploration, and assist people who want to do that."

"Faith is a journey, not a set of definitions," he said. "It's about the quality and integrity of life,



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### The Rev. Duncan Hanson

and more than a system of doctrines."

He does not see church membership as a one-way process.

"People come to church to give, to take part in something important in their personal lives, inside and outside of church," he said. "Church really exists for people who are outside its walls."

St. Andrew, at 9850 Monroe Ave, off Soquel Drive, holds services Sundays at 10 a.m.

**T**HE REV. Dennis Smith became the senior pastor at Green Valley Christian Center in Watsonville just after the first of the year. He was born in Iowa, studied at Central Bible



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### The Rev. Dennis Smith

College in Springfield, Mo., and later joined the staff at Bethel Church, a large Assembly of God congregation in San Jose.

"Ministry to the family" is one of Smith's priorities, he said. "It may be a traditional family, it may be a single parent family ... our desire is to strengthen the family."

Part of this involves young people.

"You have to provide a program for the children as well as parents," he said. "If you're really going to reach the parents, you have to help them in taking care of the kids."

Smith said Green Valley Christian has an associate pastor who

works with youth programs, and a youth pastor who organizes a program for teenagers. Another focus is on seniors.

Smith said his wife, Deanna, will be "a vital part of what's going to happen." A pianist, she studied at Fresno State under Philip Lorenz, and holds a master's degree in performance. She's on the faculty at Bethany Bible College in Scotts Valley, but expects to spend more time at Green Valley starting in the summer.

Green Valley Christian worships Sundays at 10:45 a.m. and 6 p.m., and has a Wednesday evening "family night" featuring youth activities and prayer meetings for adults at 7 p.m. The church is at 360 Green Valley Road in Watsonville.

**T**HE Rev. Mark Gambino actually took up his new post at House of Prayer Com-

munity Church two days before Jan. 1.

Gambino came to Watsonville from Berkeley, where he was with the First Assembly of God congregation.

"What a change!" Gambino said of the transition between the two communities.

Born and educated in the Detroit area, Gambino went to the seminary in Springfield, Mo. After graduating, he served a congregation near Pensacola, Florida, before coming west. The 44-year-old pastor has also had a career in radio as a talk show host.

Gambino said he has a hunch that "the Gulf crisis is going to stimulate church growth. It makes us consider life a little more delicately, and our national roots with the Lord. In a similar way, churches went through a growth spurt

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because of the Vietnam crisis.”

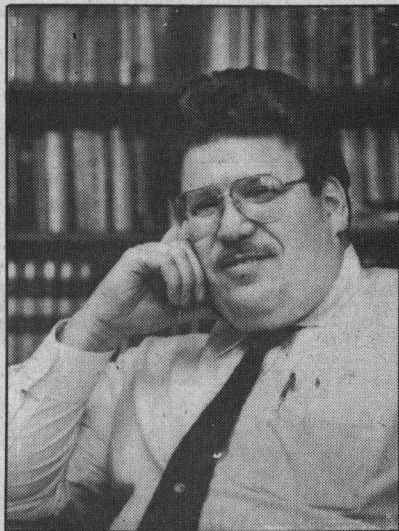
“My focus is to make the church a center of activity for the community, and to provide essential services to adherents — not just members — who consider the church to be their home,” he said.

A church, Gambino said, should include “potlucks, volleyball, singing, movies” and similar activities as well as Sunday worship, so “our young people are not relegated to a drug-infested culture to find something to do.”

“I strongly believe in evangelism, to reach out to as many as we can,” he said, “not just to build church membership, but for the cause of the Lord.

“A lot of churches are overseas oriented, which is OK, but America needs as much or more evangelism as foreign fields.”

Gambino has served several congregations during his career, and he said that “no two churches are alike, they’re all a little different in style. I think that a church ought to be fun. We’re very serious about faith, but we don’t want to be so rigid and stiff that we can’t enjoy worship. Music is very instrumental as a focus, if you’ll excuse the phrase. My wife plays



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**The Rev. Mark Gambino**  
piano, and I do a lot of singing.”

Gambino said he hopes his young son, Brodie, will continue in the family musical tradition.

Gambino also said he wants to reach out to some of the older members of the community — “people between 55 and 70 years of age. They’re kind of set on a shelf. Churches do youth programs, or baby-boomer emphasis. Very few have any kind of program for senior ministries.”

House of Prayer holds services Sundays at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., and Wednesdays at 7 p.m. The church is at 905 Amesti Road.