



Photo by Bob Simonelli

Approximately 350 persons attended the memorial service for prominent attorney Lyman R. Smith and his wife, Charlene, at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Santa Paula, Friday

Smiths eulogized

350 attend services for slain couple

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By Gregg Zoroya
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"Certainly there is nothing in life that prepares us for violent, senseless deaths."

Nothing, that is, except the resources of the family, the consolation of friends and the solace of religious beliefs, the Rev. Leonard Dixon (retired) told a crowded Santa Paula church Friday.

Dixon was speaking before 350 persons at the memorial service for Lyman R. Smith and his wife, Charlene. He had performed the couple's wedding ceremony in 1975.

The memorial service was held approximately a week after Mr. and Mrs. Smith were beaten to death while they slept in the bedroom of their Ventura home. Their bodies were not discovered until Sunday.

The bodies were cremated before the services.

For the survivors, said Dixon, "death is never an easy experience. But the sting of such cruelty as this fills us with different emotions. It fills us with loneliness, sorrow, anger. . ."

Judges, state and local government officials, attorneys and a host of other friends and acquaintances filled the chapel of St. Paul's Episcopal Church. All the pews were filled, and people sat in the choir seats, the aisle

and in the balcony, and stood in the back and in the foyer.

"It is a testimony to the abiding nature of their lives that so many have gathered for this service of love and memorial," Dixon said.

Six Ventura police investigators and a sergeant continue to investigate the slayings. Both Smiths were killed by a single blow to the head. Police believe the weapon might have been a log which was found lying on their bed.

The case has a variety of bizarre twists. There was no forced entry into the house, although it is believed the two were attacked after they went to bed, and evidence shows their hands were bound after they were killed.

"I will make no attempt to explain why they were taken so brutally from us," Dixon continued.

He eulogized Smith, who had been a leading candidate for a Superior Court vacancy at the time of his death, as part of a family circle, as a counselor, friend, benefactor ("particularly to the youth") and a co-worker in many walks of life.

Of Smith's 33-year-old wife, Charlene, Dixon said she was "always active," intefested, energetic and creative.

"They were not church-going people," said Dixon. "But that is not to

say they weren't religious."

He said their personal yearning was for the eternal values of life, "those things that abideth long after other things have withered and decayed."

As the service drew to a close and people stood to leave, those first down the aisle were watched solemnly by the hundreds present. They were the family members and closest friends. Among them were Smith's parents and his children.

Most notable was 12-year-old Gary Smith, whose calm, young face reflected an endurance and composure far beyond his years.

Sunday, he was the person who found the bodies of his father and step-mother.

Dixon, quoting an English cleric, said, "the death of a good person is like the putting out of a perfumed candle."

The light is extinguished, but the fragrance remains.