

Marathon-running archdeacon retires from Episcopal diocese, not from track

By JON WALKER

Argus Leader Staff

Paul J. Davis of Sioux Falls — 62-year-old church administrator and marathon man at the YMCA track — will retire Jan. 1 from his job as archdeacon of the Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota.

Davis has been archdeacon since 1976, which is about as long as he's been running seven or eight miles a day to keep his 5-foot-7 frame trimmed to 136 pounds. With his retirement, he and his wife, Ruth, will travel more, but they plan to keep their home in Sioux Falls.

As archdeacon, Davis has been an executive assistant to Bishop Walter Jones, who is head of the Episcopal diocese. There will be no new archdeacon replacing Davis, but an as-

Profile

Name: Paul J. Davis.

Born: June 3, 1920, Milwaukee.

Occupation: archdeacon, The Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota.

Education: McKinley High School, 1939, and Coe College, 1943, both Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill., 1948; Central Michigan University, 1970.

Family: wife, Ruth; sons John, 31, and Eric, 29.

Assistant bishop will be elected as part of a reorganization under Jones.

At work, Davis has been the resident humorist, math-and-finance

whiz and budget man — one of the bureaucrats who runs the church behind the scenes for 15,000 Episcopalians in South Dakota.

"I'm calm, level-headed, dependable, the usual dull-type," he says, "although those who know me know me as the diocesan humorist. I make particularly terrible puns."

Davis, the son of an accountant, was born in Milwaukee and reared in Iowa. After college and a stint driving jeep for the Army in Italy in World War II, he went to seminary in Evanston, Ill., where he met his wife-to-be. For the next 22 years, he was pastor at several churches in Iowa. He came to Sioux Falls in 1970 as dean, or pastor, at Calvary Cathedral and stayed with the diocese

since. Although an administrator the last six years, he still preaches on the pulpit-supply circuit, polishing off his sermons in 10 to 12 minutes.

"I can't put my finger on it," he says when asked why he chose a church career. "It just kind of sneaked up on me while I was in college. There was no big traumatic event. It was a gradual realization that that's what I ought to be doing."

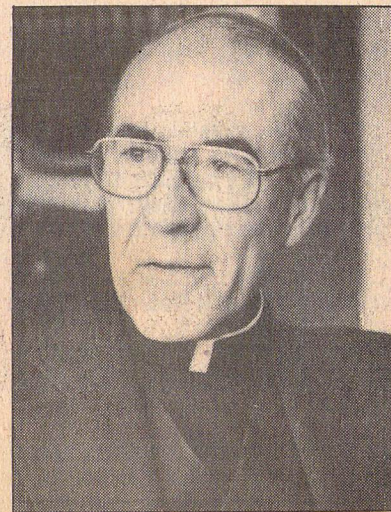
With his retirement, Davis says he'll read and write more, enjoy more opera, and, inevitably, do more running. He's not a fast runner — he calls himself mediocre — and he's not one to quit after a few miles. His tries to run daily, and to compete in two marathons a year.

Several times at the Y track he's

made 24-mile runs, which, considering the track measures 17½ laps to the mile, means he runs 422 laps on some afternoons.

That's not a boring way to spend an afternoon, he says. He doesn't carry a clicker or count laps on his fingers, but instead he watches the clock to chart his progress and make sure he's keeping pace. It's a math game that makes 422 laps bearable.

"I find an outdoor quarter-mile track is boring," he says. "At the Y, I count laps. I'm always doing math in my head, figuring I'm at a certain mile of half-mile. It helps me from being bored. I've got a math mind anyway. I guess that's why they have me doing finance for the church."



Paul J. Davis