

Arts & Entertainment



Father Curtis to release latest CD next month

Launch will be held during Sept. 20 concert at St. Paul's Church

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**
The Champion

In an often dark world full of uncertainty and mistrust, Father Mark Curtis longed to bring his loyal listeners a sense of hope and security.

So when it came time to make his 16th recording, he decided to move forward by looking back, turning to old standards that evoke memories of simpler times.

"Since September 11, people are longing to (hear) comfort songs and older material," Father Curtis said.

And so 'You Bend My Heart' was born, blending much-loved hymns and cherished favourites with original songs.

The CD will be launched at a concert September 20 at 7:30 p.m. at St. Paul's United Church, 123 Main St. The event will be co-hosted by Jim Paulson of radio station AM 740 and Mayor Gord Krantz.

Looking forward to concert

Father Curtis, affectionately known nation-wide as 'Canada's Singing Priest,' said he's looking forward to performing in the large Milton venue and is especially excited about performing with his five-piece band.

Although the CD definitely has an element of nostalgia, Father Curtis said there are also some surprises he expects listeners will enjoy.

"We've incorporated some older gospel hymns and given them new life, zest and flavour musically," said Father Curtis, who has been performing and recording for more than 20 years.

As much as Father Curtis said he personally wanted to do a CD of "comfort songs", it was also a decision based on what would sell.

"I've found that people are looking for security and hope in a world that seems fragile. I chose songs that brought back childhood memories."

He said he hopes a wide age range will listen to the CD.

"This is going to bring back memories for those in their golden years," he said, adding that he hopes it will also "waken the coming generation to the classics and their beauty."

Father Curtis said the title of the CD was inspired by a poster in a church that read, "Lord, bend my heart as well as my knees."

"My source of inspiration is always the Lord. I try to reflect that through my songs," he said.

Father Curtis' CDs have been picked up by a major distributor, which means they'll soon be available in Christian music stores across Canada.

Father Curtis spoke of the many letters he's received containing stories of how his music has touched people.

One man said he was just weeks short of going bankrupt when he found himself at one of Father Curtis' performances. The concert helped him turn his life around and he now runs a multi-million-dollar business.

"There's a spiritual dimension where people are touched at a different level that I know nothing about," he said of his music.

Father Curtis said he views himself as a "messenger of joy" and often finds himself singing in churches that lack joy.

"I try to bring that spark back," he said.

Father Mark will soon begin performing across Ontario and New York to promote his latest CD.

Last major tour?

He said he expects this will be the last time he embarks on a major tour. On average, he performs 250 times each year.

"At my age, (touring) demands are hard on me, especially the time away from my family," he said.

Father Curtis has three children, aged 12, 16 and 20. He said his 12-year-old would rather listen to AC/DC and Led Zeppelin than his singing priest dad.

He said another reason he plans to stop touring is he wants to devote more time to municipal politics. He recently announced that he's running for Milton council.

As far as next month's concert, Father Curtis said he hopes there's a good turnout. "One consequence of being well-known in a small town is that people see me all the time in the stores and stuff, so they wonder why they need to see me perform. I hope people come out."

Tickets to the CD launch concert cost \$15 for adults, \$12 for seniors and \$8 for children. They can be obtained by calling St. Paul's United Church at (905) 878-8895 or Jack White at (905) 878-6807.

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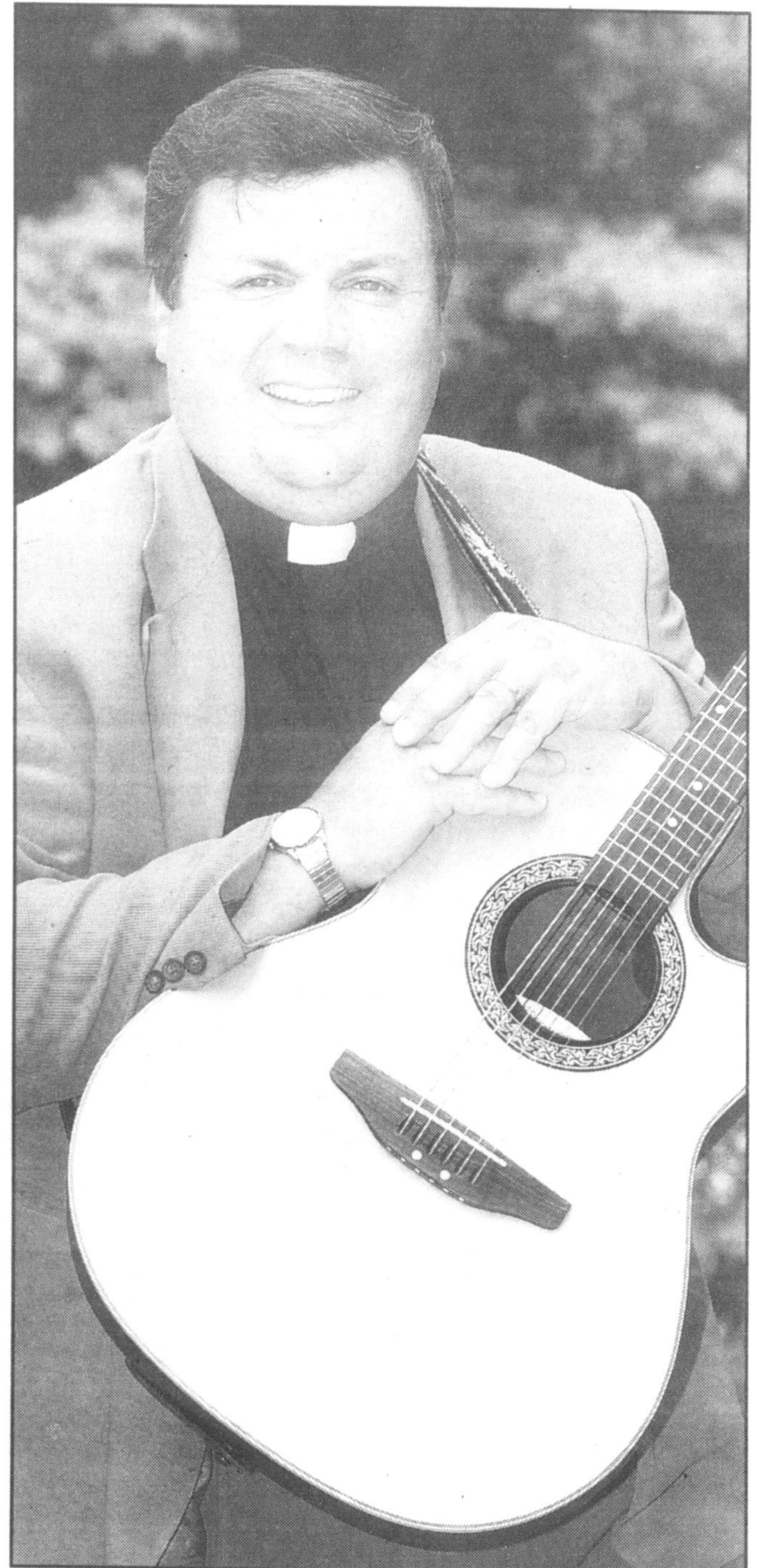


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Father Mark Curtis will release his latest CD — *You Bend My Heart* — during a concert at St. Paul's United Church September 20. Canada's Singing Priest says this could be his last major tour.

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