

An Interview with Rev. David

By Laura Pearce



Who is this man in clerical robes who greets us with such disarming friendliness on the sidewalk in front of the Fellowship as we arrive on Sunday mornings?

Rev. David is a self-proclaimed “proud Missouri native” who grew up dividing his time between the farm and the big city (Kansas City, that is!). He received a journalism degree from the University of Missouri, his theological education at Starr King School and Harvard Divinity School, and a doctorate from San Francisco Theological Seminary.

David has been married to his wife, Judy, a labor and employment attorney, for 31 years. They have three children – all “thirty-something”: Tanya, who helps run a coffee company in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is due to deliver her first child on New Year’s Day (the first grandson!); Tracy, a film writer, producer and director lives in Los Angeles; and Paul runs main frame computers for the Department of Energy in Los Alamos, New Mexico. All are happily married.

Rev. David has wanted to be a minister since he was five years old. As a young child, he went to live with his childhood minister – specifically, he stayed in the study, where the scent of books and pipes called forth the image of church as a place of refuge and inspiration – for David – a community of meaning.

Nonetheless, Rev. David has had a checkered career. Upon graduation from the University of Missouri, he worked for a time as a newspaper reporter, then an editor. He has also been a high school teacher, and an executive for a national public relations firm. He has been employed by the alcoholic beverage industry, and his duties included advocating “socially

responsible drinking,” and public and private investment in treatment programs for alcoholics.

When asked how he came to become an interim minister, David said that interim ministry was his “calling.” Organizational development appeals to him. He considers himself to be a “transition consultant.” (David is currently the Chair of the Interim Ministry Program for the UUA.) It’s exciting, he explained, to see the process emerging – the fruits of one’s labor, to see a congregation strengthen. It’s fulfilling to be a part of that problem-solving process – of determining healthy solutions and participating in productive visions for the future.

But isn’t it difficult, I asked him, to leave a congregation that you’ve built year-long relationships with? Yes, of course, he said. When he was a high school teacher, he admits that he shed tears when his students graduated up and out of his influence. But it’s all part of the process of growth, and he accepts that.

What do you do when you’re not being a minister? I asked him. He responded that he is working toward sustainable agriculture and economic justice for Unitarian villages in Transylvania. (I concluded that being a minister must be David’s vocation and avocation as well.)

David showed me photographs of cows for the model dairy in the Transylvanian village, and told me with great excitement that the first calf had been born just the day before.

David is President of the Partner Church Council. This year, he is President of Project Harvest Hope, an affiliate (an organization of which he happens to be the Founding President). For the past six years, he has spent three weeks of his summers in Transylvania.

Although so much of his life is devoted to congregational issues, he admits that he’s an avid Oakland A’s fan. “When you see me going out the door in shorts and a baseball hat in the summer, you’ll know where I’m going!”

Rev. David has a strong personality. He seems to call forth strong opinions on issues from members of the congregation. But one thing I see: We are all beginning to trust him, and with that trust comes a strong sense of excitement for this year, and for the coming year. When he called us together on September 11th, I knew we were going to be OK.

Interim he may be, but we have a strong shepherd at the helm!