

Rev. David Spaulding

Biographical Sketch

I was born near Springville, NY, a small town in Western NY, not far from Buffalo. My father operated a small dairy farm and my mother was a registered nurse. The farm, currently occupied by my brother, has been in the family four generations. I discovered early in life that I wasn't a farmer at heart—my interests leaned more toward academics and music. I began playing the cello in the fourth grade, was active in the school orchestra, and was selected to perform in county, regional and state-wide festivals during my high school years.

My family didn't attend church when I was growing up, but in the providence of God, at a time of an illness in the family the local Baptist pastor—the husband of one of my mother's friends—took an interest in our family. As a result my mother, sister, and brother were baptized and joined the church. A year later, during my senior year of high school, through a girlfriend and some other friends from school, I was invited on a weekend retreat where I received Christ as my Savior. I was baptized (by immersion, in a pond) on a sunny June day and became active in the Baptist church and a non-denominational youth group in Springville.

I went off to college at the State University of New at Fredonia intending to study music, but my plans changed early in my college career. Music was to be an avocation, not my life's work, and instead I majored in math and prepared to be a teacher. College was an important time for the formation of my faith. While attending a variety of local churches during those years, including my first exposure to Presbyterians, campus fellowship groups played a big role in my life. I became active in the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship* group where I first discovered gifts for teaching and leadership. During these years I also met Lorri Hadley, a clarinet player from Rochester, NY. We shared a common passion for Christ and a love of music.

Upon graduation from college, I took a job teaching in Cuba, NY, a small town near the Pennsylvania border. A year later, Lorri and I were married and she joined me there. During this time we became active in a Wesleyan church, and worked with senior high youth. In my third year in Cuba, I was contacted by a mentor from my college days who had become the Area Director for InterVarsity in Western NY. I heard a call to ministry, and Lorri and I moved to Rochester to serve with InterVarsity.

My years with InterVarsity were an important time in developing gifts for ministry—in teaching, mentoring, and administration. I was also exposed to good biblical and theological teaching and developed a concern for economic and social justice. In the middle of this time, we moved to Buffalo, our first daughter (Anne) was born, and we joined a Bethel Presbyterian church. I served as an elder, and Lorri served as a deacon. Lorri also worked part-time with a refugee resettlement ministry during our Buffalo years.

When I began looking for a direction for the time after InterVarsity, I heard a call to pastoral ministry. I became a candidate under the care of the Presbytery of Western NY, and at my pastor's urging I attended Princeton Theological Seminary. My seminary years provided a healthy challenge for

me. I was drawn especially to biblical studies—I even enjoyed Greek and Hebrew! At Princeton, I also gained a respect for the diversity present in the Presbyterian Church as I interacted with faculty and fellow students, something which has held me in good stead as I have served the church. During these years, thanks to my prior experience in ministry, I found employment at the Kingston, NJ, Presbyterian Church. I worked with a variety of adult ministries, served as temporary supply for a summer while the pastor was on sabbatical, and in my last year led the confirmation program.

Seeking a call after seminary led us to Chazy in the Presbytery of Northern NY. As a small church pastor I became a jack-of-all-trades in ministry. While the center of my ministry has always been Sunday morning, I have done almost everything else one could imagine from leading the youth group to fixing ciphers in the pipe organ. In the mid-90's I began sensing the need to learn more about leading the church into the twenty-first century world, and began to seek training in church transformation. I was also drawn back to the classroom. In 1998 I enrolled in the Ph.D. program of the Faculty of Religious Studies of McGill University (“the Harvard of Canada”), in Montreal, about an hour north of Chazy. Over the “Ph.D. years” the church became involved in a process supported by the presbytery involving a community study that led to some new mission outreach in the community. We also began to participate in the Interfaith Hospitality Network, a mission with homeless families. I also became a founding member of Champlain Valley Habitat for Humanity. In the mid-2000's I received training in Natural Church Development, and have led the church through two cycles of the NCD process. Although numbers haven't increased yet, our surveys show that the church has grown in vitality through our experience.

In 2007, just as I was finishing my Ph.D., financial needs in the Chazy church and the need of the neighboring church in Rouses Point for a pastor led to a shared pastorate—so my time now shared between the two congregations. Throughout my Chazy years I have been an active presbyter as well—chairing committees, including the Committee on Ministry, serving as moderator. I was a General Assembly commissioner in 2000.

Family-wise, during our Chazy years, our second daughter, Christine was born. Lorri returned to her first career as a music teacher, and teaches elementary school classroom music. I reconnected with the cello, too, and Lorri and I have played together in the orchestra pit for seventeen productions of the Chazy Music Theatre. Anne also joined us in the pit during her high school years, but Christine has taken to the stage. We've also played in community orchestras—for the past few years I have led the cello section of a chamber orchestra at the college in nearby Plattsburgh. Besides music (I also love to play the guitar and sing), and reading (aren't all ministers readers?), I get refreshment from riding my recumbent bike on country roads.

Anne graduated from high school in 2004 and has a B.A. in Political Science from the State University of NY at Albany; she will complete a master's degree in education from Nazareth College in Rochester, NY, this May. Christine, meanwhile, is completing her junior year in high school, and (currently) aspires to become a clinical psychologist.

*for more background about InterVarsity Christian Fellowship visit www.intervarsity.org.