

MEET DPNC CANDIDATE: REV. DR. CHARLES "RICK" MACARTHUR

By Betty Brandt Passick, bbpassick@comcast.net

The DPNC is putting forth "Pastor Rick" as its choice for the Designated Pastor position at our church. Pastor Rick will be preaching here on Sunday, May 9th, which will be followed by a vote of the congregation that will determine if the congregation wishes to extend an invitation to him as our Designated Pastor. You also have an opportunity to meet Pastor Rick and his wife, Jeannie, at an "Open House" on May 8 (see insert).



Please tell the congregation a little about your and Jeannie's family background.

I was born in Asheville, N.C. I come from a family of immigrants from Canada, Scotland and Germany.

My parents—Charles Frederick MacArthur and Mary Pat (Burdette)—are deceased. I have one sister, Ashby

Jones, three years older, who lives in Helena, Mont.

My parents owned a small flower shop in Asheville and I was raised in flower delivery by eight years of age. When I got my driver's license, I delivered flowers by truck. I never got to go to church on Easter or Christmas Eve because I was always delivering corsages for the ladies or a variety of other flowers. I remember sometimes being able to catch a sermon on the radio in the truck and I would wait for a break so as not to miss an important piece of the message before making the next delivery on the route.

My wife, Jeannie (MacDougall), was born and raised in Keokuk, Iowa. She had one sibling, a brother, who is deceased.

Jeannie's grandfather was a Presbyterian minister whose family emigrated from Scotland. He also taught Greek and Hebrew at Southwestern (now Rhodes) College in Memphis, Tenn.

Jeannie's father, Merrill MacDougall, chose to enter the business world, starting with Swift and Company. After serving in the Navy during WWII, he went to work



1953 family photo of (L-R) "Pastor Rick," age 3, his grandmother, sister, and father.

for Hoerner Boxes in Keokuk, which later became Hoerner Waldorf Corporation of St. Paul. Jeannie's mother was Margaret Dicks of Kirkpatrick, Ind., a suburb of Lafayette. She met Merrill in Chicago, Ill.

Jeannie graduated from St. Andrew's Presbyterian College in Laurinburg, N.C.; her master's degree is from Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond. Also, for three years she attended [Rudolf Steiner College](#) in Sacramento, Calif., receiving her certification in Waldorf Education. [Developed by [Rudolf Steiner](#) in 1919, Waldorf Education is based on a profound understanding of human development that addresses the needs of the growing child. Waldorf teachers strive to transform education into an art that educates the whole child—the heart and the hands, as well as the head.] Most recently, Jeannie has helped develop a preschool pilot program, Austin Waldorf School, the only Waldorf program in the state of Texas. St Paul also has a Waldorf School on County Road B. Jeannie would like to work with an established Waldorf program or perhaps begin one as she has done in Austin.

Jeannie and I have two sons. Andrew, 29, is a chef who would like to evolve into a culinary writer. Trained in culinary arts through an internship in

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Edinburgh, Scotland, he has worked for the prestigious [Michelin](#) stars restaurants, and is currently a sous chef for the FINO Mediterranean Restaurant in Austin. He enjoys taking annual trips to Europe to experience new culinary cultures. We are excited in that Andrew became engaged over Christmas, and he and his fiancé, Brandi, just purchased a place in Austin where they can grow their own organic produce. Brandi has a degree in animal science and she loves to rescue animals. We expect their new place will fill up quickly with gardens and animals.

Our second son, Cameron, 23, currently is a student in a new international program and is being trained as a [Eurhythmy](#) instructor. [Primarily a performance art, it is also used in education—especially in Waldorf education and as a movement therapy.] His goal is to teach in one of the education components in a Waldorf school in Europe.

Why did you choose ministry? What led you to ministry?

I can't remember a time that I was not involved in church. My grade school was a parochial school taught by Roman Catholic nuns. At age 16, because of the racial terrain in the South, my parents sent me to a boys school in Rome, Ga., a Christian school. I attended chapel daily—and even went to chapel when it wasn't required. With great fondness I recall learning the hymns from back then: "Faith of Our Fathers," "This Is My Father's World," and so many others.

Our family attended Asheville's First Presbyterian Church, one of the first to address racial issues, preaching the "welcoming of all people." I was raised by a black nanny who loved and cared for me. When we took her home at night, I was aware of the abject poverty in which she lived. She didn't even have plumbing. I vividly recall the signs posted everywhere back then that designated restrooms, drinking fountains and restaurants for "white" and "colored." This discrepancy bothered me.

I finished high school in 1968 and went on to attend the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, N.C. I also worked part time in a flower shop, and this time I was in charge of long-distance FTD delivery. I got to call long distance to place orders all over the world, and this is where I developed a love for the world beyond my confines. I was also on the college tennis team and traveled extensively on weekends. As a senior, I still hadn't selected a major, and for a while I

investigated international political science; the Vietnam War was going on and I had concerns about world peace. I changed my mind about pursuing that career path, however, after talking to the American ambassador in Bucharest, who advised me to reconsider working for the state department.

I traveled around Europe for a while trying to figure out what to do with my life. The night that I was planning to fly back home, I missed my plane. I got a place to stay and spent most of the night in prayer. I thanked God for keeping me safe as I had roamed around Europe. I had climbed the Swiss Alps to the Matterhorn—in tennis shoes—and made it! I had been mugged and lost my passport, and the Embassy issued a new one. I confessed to God that I didn't know what to do with my life. An answer came to me that I should pursue my love of faith.

When I returned to the States, I called my pastor in Asheville, and said, "I want to become a minister." He said, "I'll have you in grad school in a few months. I was excited! This is where my heart wanted to be! My Dad offered, "Why don't you take over the family flower business?" My Mom suggested I consider teaching tennis. But I had decided the church was where I wanted to be. No looking back.

Session sent me to Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Va. In my third year, I was offered a one-year fellowship to study theology at the University of Bern in Switzerland. I was so excited to be in the place that marked the roots of the Presbytery church—where Calvin had walked; where the reformation had taken place; where people had heard about God. I continued my Doctor of Ministry studies (1975-76) and returned to Richmond, receiving a Master of Divinity degree in 1977.

My first call was from the Mossy Creek Presbyterian Church in Mt. Solon in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, which is where I was ordained on November 6, 1977. It was a small church of only 150 members. I was told in advance that the men and women insisted on being separated during worship and classes—and I honored that request during my seven years at this church. Many of those days were filled with riding around in pickup trucks with parishioners, helping butcher animals, and the like. It wasn't unusual to also get a call at 2:00 a.m., for example, to help retrieve sheep who were stuck in a creek. Once their wool absorbed water, they couldn't get out themselves.

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The Shenandoah Valley is so rich with Presbyterian history and is populated with numerous small Presbyterian churches. I used to love to walk through the cemetery and see the names of pastors who served during the Revolutionary War and Civil War. There were many Scotch immigrants.

My next call was to a church in Columbus, Ind., with 350 members, where I remained from 1984-2000. During my 13th year, I was offered a sabbatical and I used this time to attend graduate school at Berkeley, Calif., studying sacred art. After a year, I returned to my position as senior pastor and head of staff at the church. During my time in Columbus, I also achieved my Doctor of Ministry and Ph.D. Theology degrees. Eventually I felt I needed to do something different and I decided to return to grad school, this time at the University of Texas where I studied Renaissance art. I graduated in 2002 with a M.A. in Art History.

Between 2000-2010, I have split my time between working as parish associate for older adult ministry at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Austin, and teaching art history at two universities, Concordia (Lutheran) and St. Edwards (Roman Catholic). After 10 years, I felt the call back to fulltime ministry, to the things I have always loved most: preaching and pastoral care.

What you see as your mission at AHP if the congregation votes to extend a call to you?

My goal as your new pastor will be to discern the best way to minister to this congregation. To discern what you need and want. To listen and learn from you. We are fellow colleagues. I welcome the opportunity to be your shepherd.



Photos of Rick and Jeannie in Switzerland in 2008.



Photo of son Cameron, who is a student in a new international program and is being trained as a Eurythmy instructor.



Photo of Pastor Rick and Jeannie—with son Andrew, who became engaged at Christmas.