



CPC Pastor Emeritus Profile

Rev. Paul Palmer

OKLAHOMA FARM BOY MAKES GOOD IN THE BIG CITY

I plead guilty only to part of the above heading. After all, I was fifty before making the move from a pastorate in Dodge City, Kansas to the Chicago suburbs. And if I ever had fifteen minutes of fame, I can't recall it. By God's grace, however, I've often been in the right place at the right time. After forty years in the gospel ministry and fifteen years as an actively retired pastor, I look back on these years of serving with an amazing sense of fulfillment.

The most fulfilling of my four pastorates were the nearly 16 years spent here – as pastor of this wonderful congregation – from 1979 to 1995. It is here that a creative gathering of God's people (read CPC) led me, and occasionally allowed me to lead them, through amazing times: of abundance and poverty, of faith and doubt, of joy and sorrow. We have endured and enjoyed the full range of human experiences, the birth and baptism of babies, the trauma of teen years, the joy of weddings, the growth and education of families, the difficulties and beauty of congregational and personal relationships, illnesses and a few failures that are associated with life, and our eventual entry into that time of eternal life with the Lord.

A few high points in my life are these. Having lived my first 15 years on a farm near Stillwater, Oklahoma, our family moved to Pullman, Washington, where I graduated from high school. Back in Oklahoma, at OSU, I received a bachelor's degree in music (with plans to be a high school band director, before being diverted into the ministry). I married a lovely college classmate, Maxine, in 1951. Our first daughter, Camille, was born in 1953, the same year we headed off to New Jersey, where I received my master of divinity degree from Princeton Seminary. I was ordained pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Chickasha, Oklahoma in 1956, shortly after our second daughter, Deedra, was born. A year later a son, Russ, came into our lives, and then in 1964, while pastor of my second congregation in Harrison, Arkansas, we adopted a fourth child, Lisa. A lovely family, if I do say so myself, although sadly, we lost Russ to AIDS in 1990, and Maxine, my wife of 56 years, died in 2007. CPC has ministered richly to my joys and sorrows, as I have ministered to theirs.

Across the years, I pursued a couple of not too unusual hobbies, photography and a love for classical music. As a devoted Presbyterian, I served the larger church often, including the honor of being elected Moderator of three Presbyteries (in Oklahoma, Kansas and Illinois), as Moderator of the Synod of Mid-America, and for a number of years I served on various national committees devoted to peace concerns and civil rights. In retirement, I have continued doing a fair share of pastoral duties, particularly teaching Adult Ed Classes (especially Church and Bible history) and preaching as an occasional fill-in. Actually, I like to brag about "my harem of five churches," in Winnetka, Arlington Heights, Palatine, and Mt. Prospect, where I am often invited to teach or preach.

Although I view the world as my parish, I confess that CPC is still my home congregation. I dearly love the people of this church. It is here that I faithfully contribute my tithes, and here that I pray for each of our members – as for my own family. I suppose my greatest pride is in having each of you as a friend, second only to the joy of having the Man of Nazareth as my Lord.