

MEET ROGER BURGESS

Candidate for Pastor of Visitation and Care

ROGER'S JOURNEY OF FAITH

Roger Burgess was born in Groton, Connecticut, the Submarine Capital of the World. The shipyard where they build submarines is one block down the hill from the house where he grew up. His parents met at Emmaus Bible School in Toronto, Canada, where they studied God's Word. Upon graduation, they were asked to move to Connecticut to help in a small church.

Roger clearly remembers hearing many specific Bible stories told by his dad in dramatic fashion. In the summer of 1957, Billy Graham held crusade in New York City at Madison Square Garden, Time Square, and a single event at Yankee Stadium on July 20. Roger and his family had the privilege of attending the service in Yankee Stadium. He thought it was very exciting to be there because that is where the Yankees played! Roger still has the program from that evening. Billy Graham's crusade in NYC was extended throughout the summer, and it was on television every Saturday night. After watching the message one Saturday in August, Roger decided to give his heart to Jesus. Mr. Graham preached on "don't be left behind." Roger knew that his older sister and parents were Christians, and he did not want to be left behind but be in heaven with Jesus. He talked with his dad who shared Revelation 3:20 with him, and together they knelt by the red couch in his living room. Roger confessed his sins to the Lord and asked God to forgive him. As a five-year-old, that was a major decision that set the course of Roger's life.

He is thankful that his Plymouth Brethren chapel in Groton became a charter member of AWANA clubs. He benefitted greatly from additional Scripture memorization, and today he still remembers many of those verses in the King James Version. Simultaneously, Roger was memorizing verses through the Bible Memory Association and through Sunday school, as well as from his Christian camp experiences. Roger and his wife, Janet, have devotions and pray together on a daily basis which they both consider to be a great way to begin the day. In addition, Roger enjoys reading consecutively through the Bible.

HOW ROGER ARRIVED IN WHEATON

As a senior in high school, the only college to which Roger applied was the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, across the Thames River in New London. He received early acceptance and was planning on a possible career in the Coast Guard (during the time of the Vietnam War). In March of that year, Roger went to the Academy for a series of physical exams and failed the vision test. Suddenly, he did not have a college to attend. He had a cousin who was going to be a freshman at Wheaton College. Roger had never heard of Wheaton, Illinois, or the College, but he applied and was accepted. God was clearly changing the trajectory of his life. He realized first-hand the truth of Proverbs 16:9, "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps."

After one course of calculus with a brand-new teacher, Roger switched majors from math to Bible. He couldn't believe he could get credit for studying the Bible, something he did regularly. Later, he changed his major to Elementary Education because of his love for children. Roger wrote on his student teaching application that he wanted to teach someday at a school for missionary children, so he was assigned to student teach at Wheaton Christian Grammar School. Once again God was clearly directing his steps. He was hired as a 5th grade teacher and 7th grade soccer and basketball coach at WCGS, beginning in the fall of 1974.

After five years of teaching with Janet Newlin, they were married in June 1979. Roger had just completed his master's degree in Counseling. In 1981, he also completed a master's program in Educational Administration (both from Northern Illinois University). In addition to expanding responsibilities as school counselor and assistant principal, he became a dad. Roger and Janet's children were born in 1982 (Andrew, presently a missionary with his wife in Zimbabwe) and 1984 (Elizabeth, a 4th grade teacher near Grand Rapids, MI).

Through the years, Roger has been responsible for leading the WCGS chapel program as well as missions emphasis which has included Roger's leading 8 mother/daughter, father/son trips down to the Dominican Republic during spring break to help College Church's missionaries—Trautweins and VanDerMolens who work with Kids Alive, helping at-risk children. June 30 will mark the completion of Roger's 48 years of serving God with joy at Wheaton Christian Grammar School.

COLLEGE CHURCH INVOLVEMENT

Roger and his family have been worshipping at College Church for 26 years. They very much appreciate the Bible-centered preaching and the great music which helps them worship and praise God. Roger has helped with the church's PADS ministry, taking WCGS 8th graders to help serve breakfast (students arrive at 5:00 AM, bringing with them the needed provisions for the breakfast) until COVID struck. Roger has served as chair of the Christian Education Board as well as the Family Task Force which was formed in 2008 to determine how to best help College Church families relationally and spiritually. As an usher, Roger enjoys greeting people with a big smile as they arrive to worship corporately. He has also led a monthly missionary prayer support group for the last 20 years, as they pray for Jeff and Ann VanDerMolen as well as the needs of each group member. Most of the people in the small group have been to the Dominican Republic to better understand Jeff and Ann's ministry. With recently having their meetings on Zoom (thanks to COVID), the VanDerMolens now often join them for their prayer time, sharing their prayer requests as the group also prays for the requests of the others in the group.

If Roger is approved as Pastor of Visitation and Care, he would look forward to building relationships with and spending quality time with the seniors of College Church. God has gifted him with a wonderful ability to reach out to people of all ages with words of encouragement and biblical truths. His years of ministry at Wheaton Christian Grammar School have helped him develop people skills and learn not only how to relate to families on a daily basis but how to help them in times of family crisis while totally leaning on God for wisdom and strength, "doing all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).