

Zion Lutheran Member “Spotlight” DANIEL DRAGER

By Ken Picking



Not once in over a half century serving Zion Lutheran has Daniel Drager considered hanging up the golden candlelighter and passing it on to the next generations.

“Being an acolyte helps our youngsters understand what goes into presenting a church service,” says Daniel, who assumed acolyte leadership duties from Rich Yarnell.

“Maybe because I have done this so long and am so comfortable with the way things are done it has become second nature. I really hope this kind of involvement continues beyond my time here. This connects us to the history of our church.”

Since 1974, after the Drager Family moved to Wooster from tiny Cannon Falls, MN, Daniel has served Zion faithfully as acolyte, lector, communion steward and cross bearer. He calls himself a “behind-the-scenes guy.”

When the burly, bearded son of Pat Drager and the late Larry Drager carries the Cross proudly and in a stately procession to the Altar for the start of a 10:45 a.m. Sunday Worship Service, a visitor in the congregation might be thinking, “I would hate to see this church’s football team.”

Daniel Drager is atypical in most of who he is and what he does.

He is a generous adult acolyte who instructs and mentors the youth of Zion.

“We have so many good kids at Zion,” he says. “I love watching them develop. The main reason I carry the Cross so much is we simply do not have a large group of youngsters. The young children we have are involved in so many activities. It’s difficult to fill all of the positions.”

Daniel is a professional truck driver, gentle, soft-spoken, who does not smoke or chew tobacco, rarely drinks coffee, and has no tattoos.

Following graduation at Wooster High School in 1981, Daniel was accepted at prestigious Case Western Reserve with a major field of study in Electrical Engineering and Applied Physics, minor in Anthropology. He finished three years, “before the money ran out,” he says, “and I had to go to work.”

Daniel’s engineering skills did pay off, though, leading him to a wife and an unexpected trucking career.

After departing Case Western, Dan returned home to Wooster and worked for a builder who put his engineering knowledge to use. That’s when Dan met his boss’s daughter, Debra. They have been married 30 years and have 3 children, Maxwell, Lavender and Leslie.

Debra was told truck drivers made a good living with benefits.

“She kind of pushed me into it,” says Daniel, who operates an 18-wheel flatbed, day cab diesel truck delivering shingles for a TMC Transportation, Des Moines, Iowa, the largest privately-owned flatbed company in the nation.

Five days a week he is up at 2 a.m. for 4 a.m. pickup in Medina. Some days he drives hundreds of miles.

“The best part of being a truck driver is that I was home every night, so I could attend the kids’ sports and productions many fathers could not,” says Daniel (his preference over “Dan”).

And the most challenging part?

“Most definitely the traffic,” he says. “People do not pay attention at all. They will cut you off, give you the one-finger salute. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve seen people on their phones, not paying attention. It’s crazy out there.”

Daniel says he has no hobbies or recreational interests. His time and efforts are dedicated to his family and Zion.

Pets always have found a welcoming home at the Drager residence ever since Debra was manager of the Wayne County Humane Society. Currently “the pack,” as Daniel calls them, is comprised of a purebred Pomeranian, a miniature Goldendoodle and “rather large” Sheepadoodle.

Daniel says: “My faith is personal to me. I don’t really try to force anyone else to feel what I do. I used to read a lot and that includes religious topics. I even managed one theology class in college. I am comfortable with how I see Christianity and my place in the world. It gives me comfort.

“To me, Lutheranism is a great foundation. I find a lot of truth and wisdom, which is not emphasized in other religions.”