

the Visitor

The Reverend David M. Evans 1928 - 2023

Pastor Emeritus, First Baptist Church in Ithaca



David M. Evans
Aug. 31, 1928 - Feb. 20, 2023

Reflections:

- Lil Barron
- Margie Latham
- Rabbi Scott Glass
- Linda Caughey
- Barbara Fry
- Martha Brewster
- Alice Bancroft Damp
- Jud Kilgore
- Andrea Mooney
- Curt Ufford
- Susan Eymann
- Bill Fry
- Jenny Wurster
- Anna Gibson
- Louise Mudrak
- Myra Fincher
- David Caughey
- Jan McCarrick
- Bob Plaisted
- Jan Butler
- Katy Gottshalk
- Amanda Ufford



Welsh flag

Reverend David M. Evans served as pastor of First Baptist Church in Ithaca for 28 years, from 1966 – 1994. An accomplished musician, skillful leader, creative preacher and supportive pastor, David brought to First Baptist his sensitivity to and artistic vision of inclusiveness, which was physically manifested in the remodeling of the First Baptist sanctuary in the 1970's. The old tiered pews were removed to be replaced with movable chairs. A former pulpit-oriented sanctuary became a community-centered sanctuary to which everyone was welcomed.

During David's tenure as Pastor, First Baptist fully embraced social justice, standing with those willing to affirm and fight for civil rights. First Baptist protested the Vietnam War. With David as a board member of Planned Parenthood during the 1970's, the first Planned Parenthood office and clinic in Ithaca were housed at the church and a member of the congregation supervised the clinic and helped start its education program. Before Roe vs. Wade, David was part of a clergy service that assisted women in locating a site for a safe abortion and was instrumental in supporting the Pastoral Counseling Service (1973 until 2004) which used the room (now designated as the David and Grace Evans room) in the basement of First Baptist for counseling.

In the 1980's, the church joined with the Quakers as leaders of the "sanctuary" movement in the Ithaca area. They called upon the U.S. government to acknowledge the right of Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees to political asylum. First Baptist declared its opposition to the deportation of "refugees as long as persecution, torture, and murder of civilians continued." David's legacy of inclusiveness and advocacy for social justice is embodied in First Baptist's Core Values adopted by the congregation in 2020:

First Baptist Church in Ithaca is a nurturing and inclusive community. Guided by Jesus' Teachings, we strive for Social & Ecological Justice and embrace the Baptist tradition of Bible, Soul, Church, and Religious Freedoms.

This special edition of the First Baptist newsletter, the Visitor, is a tribute to David who passed away on February 20, 2023. The content consists of the reflections of David from his mentees, colleagues, friends, and former parishioners. Thanks to each of you for your contributions. SAE April, 2023

David M. and Grace L. Evans

At David's side throughout his long pastorate at First Baptist in Ithaca was his beloved wife Grace who predeceased him in 2019. Many in Ithaca knew Grace as "Mrs. Evans," a gifted kindergarten teacher at Belle Sherman from 1967–1992. She loved teaching and had a knack for making connections with people. Wherever she was, she immersed herself in her community - Cape Breton, Nova Scotia during summers, Ithaca during the school year and St. Petersburg, FL in their retirement years. She was loved by all.





Connecting with youngsters

Memorial Gift

First Baptist Church received a memorial gift in honor of David Evans from Paul Hurlburt on behalf of ABC-USA in Valley Forge.

From 1968-1966 David served as Director of the American Baptist Churches' Ministry with Youth in Valley Forge. Paul Hurlburt writes that the ABC Board of General Ministries was privileged to assist David as he worked on an evaluation of the church's ministry with youth (see reflections from Lil Barron on the right). He was then not much older than the youth he led at that time.

Hurlburt noted that he (Paul) was at the celebration of Grace Evans's life at First Baptist Church in Ithaca in 2019, but, unfortunately cannot make it to the celebration of David's life on April 15th. *"However, I can tell you I was totally impressed by First Baptist in Ithaca and know that my small donation in his memory will go farthest in contributing to his legacy there,"* wrote Hurlburt.



Margie Latham's ordination at First Baptist Church with Pastor Evans

Lil Barron

While I was a college student at Baptist Institute, a Junior College in Bryn Mawr, PA, I was assigned to Vocational Practice Training at Central Baptist Church in Wayne, PA where I taught Preschool and Kindergarten church school.

A Young Adult Class was taught by The Rev. David Evans. I was privileged to be a part of that class. David was also one of the Youth Ministry Staff at the American Baptist Convention (as the American Baptist Churches, USA was called at that time) in Valley Forge, PA.



Lil Barron

As I approached my senior year in college, I asked David about the Baptist Youth Fellowship (BYF) Discipleship Intern Program of the American Baptist Convention (ABC). I had heard about it through a friend who served as an intern during the previous year. David gave me a quick interview on the spot after which he told me that he would give me an application the following week.

A BYF Intern was a young person who gave a year of her/his life in the states and churches of the ABC. There were specialized fields of interning such as Christian Center work, citizenship work with Spanish communities, editorial work and work in various other areas in which the intern was talented. The ABC equated it with the Peace Corps. About six weeks later, David told me the answer to my application was affirmative. Thus began my journey with The Rev David Evans. About three weeks after that, the six interns selected, and four staff members from the ABC Youth Ministry Department of our denomination met together for a long weekend at Valley Forge. David led us in an in-depth training and exercises to help us become acquainted, and explained the history of the intern program.

Six weeks later, we all met at the ABC Conference Center in Green Lake, WI, and trained for another two weeks! David assigned job locations to us and the whole staff had responsibility for helping with each specialized field. My assignment was to work with church youth groups in the Midwest area. David led us in a commitment service and Communion as we prepared to leave for our individual areas.

David was a great leader for us. He also was a music leader for the conference center. When he was leading hymn fests he was all smiles and action. He stood on the platform in the dining hall directing music, sometimes assigning sections for rounds.

David played piano in the hotel lobby which attracted many people to enjoy his talent! Everyone loved him. We interns loved him too as he led us in worship, trust activities, Bible study, the goals of our job, and what to expect (sometimes loneliness), and oh, so many conversations with each of us. There were times when David joined us for pizza night, special picnics on the lake shore, worship in nature "chapels." I don't think you could meet a more gentle, compassionate, caring, socially aware, talented person.

Margie Latham

Without the support and love of both David and Grace Evans I would not have been ordained to Christian ministry by First Baptist Church in Ithaca. David and Grace opened their home to me, offering me a place to stay as I went through the ordination process in the ABC of New York State. They fed me, listened to me, asked good questions, and encouraged me. David was also instrumental in my becoming Interim Pastor of First Baptist Church after his retirement in 1994.

Thank you David and Grace for your love. I carry you both in my heart.



Margie Latham



Birthplace: Senghenydd, Wales

Senghenydd is a former mining town in the community of Aber Valley in South Wales, approximately four miles northwest of the town of Caerphilly and 12 miles northwest of Cardiff, the Welsh capital.

The Universal Colliery at Senghenydd suffered two major gas and coal dust explosions. The first occurred on 24 May 1901. Damage was sustained to both shafts, resulting in a restricted rescue attempt, and 81 of the 82 men working in the mine at the time were killed.

On 14 October 1913, Senghenydd suffered the worst mining disaster in Britain's history, when a second gas explosion occurred at the Universal Colliery, resulting in the loss of 439 lives, and the death of one rescuer. Many of the surviving miners went back to help their workmates who were either trapped or buried alive.

Universal Colliery was finally closed on Friday 30 March 1928 (except for a ventilation shaft) with the loss of 2,500 jobs.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Senghenydd>



Miners' Row

Rabbi Scott Glass

My family and I have been blessed to have had David and Grace Evans in our lives for more than four decades. Many of you have heard snippets of the story of my visit to David in the ICU during a cardiac incident. In those days (the early 1980's), it was common for clergy to ask the volunteer at the hospital's information desk for the census so that s/he could look in on congregants who were hospitalized. I always looked through the entire census because it wasn't unusual for people's religious preference to be listed as "unknown" if they came through the Emergency Room and so that I could see if any other neighbors or friends were hospitalized. On this particular day, I saw that David Evans was listed as being in the Cardiac Care Unit and I made my way upstairs to see if I could pay him a visit. As I walked through the unit, I heard a commotion coming from one of the cubicles and then saw Grace Evans come out of the room. She spotted me and said, "Scott, maybe you can talk some sense to David." When I reached the door, a rather intimidating looking nurse blocked my way. I asked if I could see the Reverend Evans and she replied that only family was allowed in and that, besides this was an inopportune time. "Who are you?" she inquired. I said, "I'm the Reverend Evans's rabbi." At that, the commotion ceased and from inside the room, David chuckled and said, "Scott, is that you?" The laugh broke the tension, he had calmed down and finally acquiesced to the nurses' requests.



Rabbi Scott Glass
Temple Beth-El,
Ithaca for 43 Years

From that fateful day in the ICU when I identified myself as his rabbi, we would joke about it from time to time. But, if truth be told, David Evans was my rabbi — my teacher, my guide, my exemplar. He taught me what it was like to be a responsible community leader, what it meant to be a compassionate and understanding listener, how important it is to stand up for those who are unable to defend themselves, how essential it is to work together with others, how to be a good father and husband while ministering meaningfully to a congregation. The warmth of David's friendship, the ways he took me under his wing when I was just beginning my journey as a congregational leader, the interest he showed in my work and in my family, are just some of the reasons for the deep affection I have always felt for him.

I am deeply grateful for all of the ways that David and Grace Evans added meaning to the significant moments in my life over the years. I will remember them both with undying admiration and deep affection. Their memories will abide with us as a lasting benediction.

Linda Caughey

We came to First Baptist in 1983. We loved the openness of the Sanctuary layout, and had the same feeling with David Evan's preaching on acceptance and compassion.



Linda Caughey

I became church secretary in 1990. Up until then I had not worked with volunteers or within a donation-oriented organization. David was a wonderful teacher, always good as a listener. Poor speller that I am, I put something out about a man named "Earnest." David laughed! Later he told me "We don't make mistakes, we make adjustments!"

Thanks to David Evans we spent a Saturday morning sharing our feelings with those who were frustrated with our "Sanctuary" vote in the 1980s. About the same time he began educating the congregation on homosexuality in adult ed classes, weekend seminars, creating a special service for gays and lesbians with Bill Gibson until we became Welcoming and Affirming.

David Evans was a blessing beyond measure – with Grace as a strong partner.

Wales: A Land of Song

Cymru Fach (‘Dearest Wales’)

Rev. Howell Elvett Lewis (‘Elfed’) (1927), music by David Richards (Translation)

There is a place of the whole of her
in my heart, dearest Wales.
Each mountain, each valley, each
river, dearest Wales.

‘Though I travel far from her
hilltops,

Far from her resounding waterfalls,
Within minutes I will dream my
way back from afar

To that sanctuary of my childhood:
dearest Wales.

Dearest Mother and Fatherland!
Not large, but certainly ample
To fill, to fill my heart
Dearest Land!

There is a place of the whole of her
in my heart, dearest Wales.

May heaven look kindly upon her
aspirations, dearest Wales.

Her warlike castles were destroyed
But may the dream remain in her
heart!

May the song of peace resound
through her hills;

May the song walk the crest of her
hills, dearest Wales.

most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great
name we praise.

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*The red dragon on a green and white background is the proud and ancient battle standard of the Welsh. Officially adopted as the flag of Wales in 1959, it is based on an old royal badge used by British kings and queens since Tudor times. The red dragon itself has been associated with Wales for centuries, and as such, the flag is claimed to be the oldest national flag still in use.*

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Barbara Fry



Barb Fry

David Evans has a special place in my heart. He officiated at Bill’s and my wedding. I was impressed that he agreed even though we were complete strangers and not Baptist. David visited our little apartment and asked if Bill and I would like to consider joining the church. I said, I don’t know if I believe in God. Dave asked “Do you believe in love?” I said “yes.” He let me know that love was enough. We joined First Baptist, David baptized our children and officiated at our daughter, Katie’s wedding as well as Bill’s sister Peggy’s wedding and my mother’s second marriage. I worked as Program Associate with Dave for 10 years. We talked about all aspects of church life, put together agendas for Board meetings, and spent an hour each week in his office planing ahead. He strongly believed in education and at one time worked out a scheme with four adult education topics offered weekly. That was pretty ambitious, but generally we were able to offer three. One of those was music.

Dave had some special traits. He would make eye contact and hold onto one’s gaze until finally it became uncomfortably penetrating. He gave you all of his attention. His sense of humor was refreshing and truth telling. He had a wonderful command of all aspects of church life and leadership from participating in planning church meals, and making sure felt banners were ironed and hung attractively to being an excellent administrator and even better preacher. Dave often offered sermons in three or four parts, building his message week by week. His appreciation for beauty in all forms was wonderful. His first passion was music, loving to sing and play the piano. Creating sacred space was part of what he did. On Christmas Eve situated among the sanctuary pews were small stands and tables holding lit candles. Ceiling lights were off at least part of the time so we worshiped in a sense of peace and mystery.

Dave was not afraid of offering a challenge to his congregation. From championing a women’s right to choose, working diligently on gender-inclusive language, forging our first efforts at being “Welcoming and Affirming, securing the rights of working class people and allowing the church to grapple with a sanctuary movement to shelter illegal immigrants, he created a dynamic opportunity to engage in issues of social justice. He also asked the congregation to consider our future as a downtown church while saying our church building with its pulpit-oriented sanctuary was not a worshiping space that met his needs for community. Dave took pride in First Baptist hiring a Catholic Sister and a Jewish choir director. He loved diversity. In fact at Dave’s retirement he was presented with a hand woven alter cloth named “Unity Amidst Diversity.”

David Evans not only has a special place in my heart, he is also someone for whom I hold the deepest respect.

Martha Brewster

Without David’s welcome, inspiration, and support the Pastoral Counseling Service could not have existed and be able to have used the rooms in the basement of the church for counseling. It existed from 1973 until 2004. It was offered to the whole public on a sliding fee scale and to those not able to afford counseling. Sometimes the counselors who were pastors or social workers or marriage and family therapists were paid with a loaf of bread or a bag of organic compost for gardening. The counseling staff was ecumenical. David’s support and vision helped many in our community to find support and help. He truly gave us a welcome home and we are eternally grateful.

The Pastoral Counseling Service. Eternally remembered from Martha Brewster



David, at the piano.

Not only was David a graduate of Colgate Rochester Divinity School, he also held a Masters Degree in Sacred Music from Union Theological Seminary in New York City. He was a valued member of committees that chose hymns for new hymnals and loved leading hymn sings.

A Favorite Hymn

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

William Williams (1775)

- 1 Guide me, O my great Redeemer, pilgrim through this barren land; I am weak, but you are mighty; hold me with your powerful hand. Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me now and evermore, feed me now and evermore.
- 2 Open now the crystal fountain, where the healing waters flow. Let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through. Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer, ever be my strength and shield, ever be my strength and shield.
- 3 When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside. Death of death, and hell's Destruction, land me safe on Canaan's side. Songs of praises, songs of praises I will ever sing to you, I will ever sing to you.

Alice Bancroft Damp - FBC Minister of Music Emerita.

Without a doubt the highlight of my church music career was working with David Evans. He taught me some things about hymn playing I hadn't thought of, such as beginning a hymn introduction by starting with the soprano line and gradually adding in the other voices so that there was a build up in the introduction. Another technique, if the congregation was singing especially well, was to gradually drop out the accompaniment entirely. The resulting sound of the congregational singing alone was magical.

Dave encouraged my organization of the children's choir, drawings kids from First Baptist and St John's Episcopal Church where my husband George was organist/choirmaster. In good weather we would sing at First Baptist and then walk across the park to sing at St. John's.

One Sunday we devoted part of the service to a "Cymanfa Ganu" - singing hymns in the Welsh tradition with Dave playing piano and me, the organ. "God of Grace and God of Glory" figured prominently as one of the hymns.

Dave was very attuned to the possibilities of drama in worship. On Maundy Thursday, the service began in the sanctuary. As it progressed Janel (Dave's eldest daughter) led the congregation into the Community Room while carrying a large jug of water on her shoulder. The Maundy Thursday supper followed. On another occasion in a darkened sanctuary lit only by candles and the gas lamps, Katie Gottshalk sang unaccompanied and carrying a lantern. "I Wonder and I Wander" to start the service.

Periodically, Dave would single-handedly rearrange all the chairs in the sanctuary. It was done in such a way (as Jack Lewis, Chaplain at Cornell, pointed out one Sunday) that members of the congregation looked across at each other rather than straight ahead at the lectern.

One time I decided to undertake a study of the book of Mark using a resource that Dave recommended. At the end I asked Dave, "Why isn't God updating His material?" Dave replied, "He (or possibly he said "She" that was the era when God was possibly a "She" but definitely not just a "He") is through you."

Jud Kilgore

My wife met David Evans when she was Planned Parenthood's first clinic nurse, and their office records located in Ithaca's Baptist and Presbyterian churches. Sue met David, and knew he and I would be a fine fit. Over the next few weeks, David, Grace and their two girls and boy met and bonded with our family's same mix.



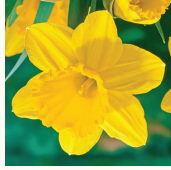
Dr. Jud Kilgore

The following decades deepened our bonds, not only in FBC, but with home visits, trips to the Evans's great Nova Scotia cottage, later to Florida after his retirement.

Almost any complimentary adjective fits him: intelligent, personable, tolerant, funny, brave, tenacious when needed.

He had severe coronary heart disease requiring surgery and close life-long treatment. He faced calmly a hostile medical audience in a meeting I arranged to discuss his aid for women wanting abortion. He is the main reason we have our presently designed Church. On the fun side, he was a fine singer and one of the stars in the Church presentation of "Jesus Christ, SuperStar." It was fun watching the building of the wonderful home on Hickory Road.

I knew Dave as my minister, my patient, and lifelong best friend. It is no wonder that the family he and Grace created became so close to my family.



Daffadil - The national flower of Wales

A Favorite Hymn

Immortal Invincible God Only Wise

Arthur C. Smith (1857)

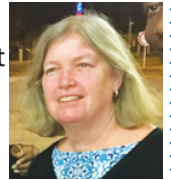
- 1 Immortal, invisible, God only wise, In light inaccessible hid from our eyes, Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days, Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.
- 2 Unresting, unshaking, and silent as light, Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might; Thy justice like mountains high soaring above Thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.
- 3 To all life Thou givest, to both great and small; In all life Thou livest, the true life of all; We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree, And wither and perish, but nought changeth Thee.
- 4 Great Father of Glory, pure Father of Light Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight; All laud we would render, O help us to see: 'Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee.
- 5 Immortal, invisible, God only wise, In light inaccessible hid from our eyes, Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days, Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.



Cape Breton Get-away

Andrea Mooney

In the mid-80's, Dave Evans and I were part of the group that brought hospice care to Tompkins County. I had never experienced a "man of God" who was impassioned and principled but also humble and respectful. After thirteen years of Catholic education and many more years of no church at all, I decided to visit First Baptist Church. His sermon that day was about Anne Frank, and what her experience must have been like. It was powerful, thought-provoking and drew me to this remarkable church.



Andrea Mooney

David could always be counted on to raise a point of view that was unexpected. He preached a sermon shortly after an Ithaca police officer was killed in the line of duty. While remaining respectful of this man's sacrifice, David also pointed out that many people's lives were deserving of the kind of ceremony and accolades that this officer received. Not the message I was expecting! I also loved how he would stop in the middle of a sermon to sit at the piano to sing a line or two from a hymn to illustrate his point. I also loved how each week the worship service was different – the chairs might be in a different place, the order of the service re-arranged, or instead of a sermon he would do a conversation with the whole congregation.

What I will remember most about David was his love for Grace, his love for music and the way he inspired and led through his own life. His was a life truly well lived.

Curt Ufford

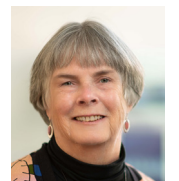
I remember one Sunday when David Evans asked everyone in the congregation to bring a musical instrument of any kind to the worship service the next Sunday. There were clarinets, violins, a trumpet, flute, lots of soprano and alto recorders, so many others I can't remember them all. I brought my accordion. Near the end of the service we all gathered our instruments and formed a circle that was large enough to encircle all the pew chairs. We were all to play together on the same pitch. Though there were a variety of instruments, we did manage to find and hold the same pitch. I still think about that from time to time. A succinct sermon.



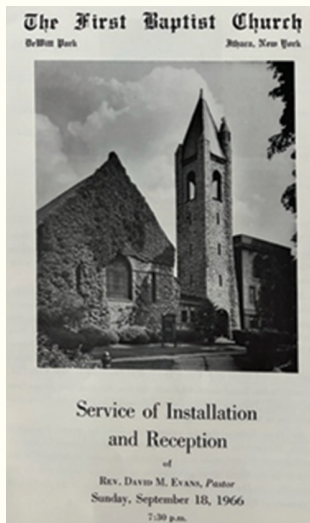
Curt Ufford

Susan Eymann

Tony and I got to know David after he had retired from First Baptist. Tony had met David earlier at downtown clergy meetings and had known his mother Annie Evans when she was a resident at Ithacare when Tony was chaplain during the 1990s. When Tony and I were planning on getting married, Tony suggested approaching David to officiate at our wedding. David said that he would want to meet me first so we agreed to meet at Ragmann's on Aurora Street for lunch. Our meeting was rocky. When David began asking me somewhat sensitive questions, I immediately became defensive and clammed up. The meeting did not go well! But that soon changed as we got to know both David and Grace. David did indeed officiate at our wedding one misty, moisty, but warm May morning at Taughannock State Park and we were delighted anytime they were in town and we could see them. We once visited them at their cottage at the tip of Cape Breton in Nova Scotia and Grace served us oatmeal cakes, a first for me. I also recall David's leading occasional hymn sings while enthusiastically accompanying the hymns on the piano. In a guest sermon shortly after 9/11 he introduced the concept of Restorative Justice instead of Retributive Justice. His words continue to resonate with me. I would tease David that he was my second favorite pastor (Tony, of course, being my first).



Susan Eymann



Installation

David was installed as pastor of First Baptist Church in Ithaca on September 18, 1966 after having served as Director of the Department of Ministry with Youth of the American Baptist Convention for the previous eight years. Before that he had served as pastor of churches in Port Jefferson, NY and Spencerport, NY.

At his installation Pastor Evans noted that his ministry is undergirded by several theological concepts - the importance of a significant gathered church experience if the dispersed church witness is to be authentic, and the need for the church to minister to the whole person and their relationships. He also underscored the need for a new shape of the church and new patterns of ministry in a changing society.



First Baptist Church Winter 2022

Bill Fry

I have many memories of Dave Evans. Here are some of them.



Bill Fry

Dave was an artist. He was an artist at the keyboard – either piano or organ, and he was very deliberate at the keyboard. He never rushed to the keyboard or rushed to start playing something. If the keyboard was part of a service or part of a social event, Dave made it into a major part of the event. He was clearly a showman when he sat down at the keyboard. Sometimes there would be the most delicate and soft sounds, but at other times, there would be a blast of sound. Both were remarkably effective.

Dave was also an artist in constructing a worship service. Everything had to be “just so” in terms of timing and positioning. He really enjoyed the flexibility provided by the moveable pew chairs. Perhaps the most impactful service of the year was the Christmas Eve service. The sanctuary was typically darkened and the end result was a sacred, magical time.

I was moderator when the church voted to become a “sanctuary” church by public declaration. We supported an undocumented person who was housed, not in the church building but elsewhere in Ithaca. Dave was the clear leader in that public stand. Our public stance was voted on in true Baptist style and this vote caused at least one person to leave the church. I remember the Dave remarked to me that in the event of someone being sent to jail for the stand, it was likely to be the pastor or the moderator or both. I was relieved that neither of us was sent to jail.

Barb and I first met Dave, when we decided to get married in Ithaca at the end of our graduate education. Neither of us knew any clergy in Ithaca at that time. However, some friends of mine had known Dave when he was pastor of First (or second?) Baptist Church in Lincoln, NE. I think that even my Methodist parents might have known of Dave and Grace. So we approached Dave and he agreed to marry us, but he stipulated that we had to meet with him first. I don’t remember much of the interview, but I do remember one question. He asked: “Why Barbara?” I remember being completely flummoxed by the question and I have no idea how I answered. I’m sure that I had never addressed that question. He probably asked Barb the companion question, but I have no recollection of that. I’ve thought about that question a lot since then, and I’ve thought of many different answers – the most accurate is probably that I was completely smitten, and she was willing.

When we moved back to Ithaca, and when we were starting a family, we decided to associate with a church. FBC was the logical choice. A major attraction for me was Dave Evans’s tolerance of folks searching for a path. He was welcoming and respectful of persons who were searching. He certainly never forced a literal interpretation of the Bible. He was a strong proponent of taking the Bible seriously, but not necessarily literally.

Jenny Wurster

Dave Evans was my pastor for my entire childhood. There are so many memories. One of the most vivid is a sermon where the Biblical passage was about Elijah sitting under a broom tree. Dave walked into the middle of the sanctuary with a broom which he then sat under. I can’t recall if he gave the whole sermon sitting or just started that way.



Jenny Wurster

Additionally, I have no first-hand knowledge but I remember someone sharing at the memorial for Helen Jensen, (church secretary during my early years) about Dave Evans having a secret phone line (at the church I think) for women seeking abortion care in the pre Roe vs Wade days. Hopefully, someone with better information shares more about this as I’m not at all sure of the details but it seems especially relevant in light of recent Supreme Court decisions.



Checking out his old FBC pulpit during a visit from St. Petersburg

A Favorite Hymn

Our God, Our Help in Ages Past

Author: Isaac Watts (1719)

- 1 God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home:
- 2 Under the shadow of your throne your saints have dwelt secure; sufficient is your arm alone, and our defense is sure.
- 3 Before the hills in order stood, or earth received its frame, from everlasting you are God, to endless years the same.
- 4 A thousand ages in your sight are like an evening gone, short as the watch that ends the night before the rising sun.
- 5 Time, like an ever-rolling stream, soon bears us all away; we fly forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day.
- 6 O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, still be our guard while troubles last, and our eternal home!



David and Grace (1994)

Anna Gibson

It was my dad who introduced me to David Evans and First Baptist. He was disillusioned and disappointed by the Presbyterian church which was moving to get rid of their perfectly good minister. He admired Dave for his work with conscientious objectors among other reasons, and decided, in spite of being a Presbyterian minister, that he would rather worship at First Baptist. My Dad often said that Dave really "crafted" a service. He put great thought into the order of the service, the music and how it all fit together with the sermon. I would agree. But every once in a while, David would do a service of just music. He would sit at the piano and play old hymns, most of which I hardly knew having grown up in the Presbyterian Church, but I just loved it. He had a gift for getting everyone to sing loud and joyfully.

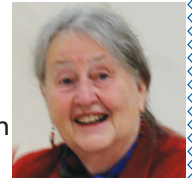


Anna Gibson

Louise Mudrak

David Evans- ALL WET!

It was 1983 or maybe 1984. My late husband, Frank, and I had our first child, Erika, who was a busy, busy little toddler, just learning to use her words. We discussed wanting to raise our kid within a church family. I was raised in an American Baptist Church in Madison, Wisconsin. I asked Frank if his family had been part of any church. He was raised by his father, Frank Sr. and his Czech grandparents, "Mommer" and "Popper" Mudrak in suburban Chicago. He responded saying he saw a rosary in the casket when Mommer died so he supposed maybe she was Catholic.



Louise Mudrak

We went to the First Baptist Church in Ithaca a few times and then filled out a pew card and said we were interested in talking to the minister, David Evans. David called and asked if we would like him to come to our house to talk. Frank and I were both working and Erika was in daycare so we settled on a weekday evening. We knew it would be sort of hectic but we did our best to clear a place for everyone to sit and hoped things would be calm enough for a talk. I tried to get Erika ready for bed but she escaped, diaperless for a streak through the house just as Rev. Evans appeared at the door. This was not going well.

We all chatted a few minutes and managed to convey the idea that we were looking for a church family. We described our spiritual backgrounds and David remained very calm and welcoming. He assured us that he and Grace had three children so he understood the chaos and wonderful busyness of family life. I then whisked Erika upstairs to bed (hopefully) so Frank and David were free to talk. I came downstairs later and asked Frank how it went. He said he thought we should join First Baptist and that he wanted to be baptized. I stopped in my tracks and said, "What?" Frank explained that he asked David what a Christian is and David said there are many ways to become a Christian and lead a Christian life. Frank said he wanted to do that.

We joined and at Frank's baptism, the baptismal pool was filled and banked with flowers. I sat near and let Erika stand on a pew chair so she could see well. Rev. Evans was in a robe in the pool and Frank appeared in a white robe. He descended the steps and David baptized Frank. As Frank emerged from the water, Erika shouted out "Daddy all wet!!!" It was beautiful.

Thank you David.

Myra Fincher

David's quiet, gentle Welsh heritage and gift of music was special. I remember our joyful singing and David playing the old hymns at his home one time. He led the services for my parents, Myron and Evelyn. David always gave me reassurance and comfort.



Myra Fincher

National Anthem of Wales

'Mae Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau'

Lyrics: Evan James; melody: James James
(January 1856)

- 1 Mae hen wlad fy nhadau yn
annwyl i mi
Gwlad beirdd a chantorion,
enwogion o fri
Ei gwrol ryfelwyr, gwladgar-
wyr tra mād
Tros ryddid gollasant eu
gwaed
Gwlad, Gwlad, pleidiol wyf
i'm gwlad
Tra môr yn fur i'r bur hoff
bau
O bydded i'r heniaith barhau
etc.

Translation:

Land of My Fathers

1. This land of my fathers is
dear to me
Land of poets and singers,
and people of stature
Her brave warriors, fine
patriots
Shed their blood for freedom
Chorus:
Land! Land! I am true to my
land!
As long as the sea serves as
a wall
For this pure, dear land
May the language endure for
ever.
2. Old land of the mountains,
paradise of the poets,
Every valley, every cliff a
beauty guards;
Through love of my country,
enchanted voices will be
Her streams and rivers to me.
3. Though the enemy have
trampled my country under-
foot,
The old language of the
Welsh knows no retreat,
The spirit is not hindered by
the treacherous hand
Nor silenced the sweet harp
of my land.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

David Caughey

David Evans was an important draw in Linda's and my decision to worship at, and join, First Baptist in the early 1980s. David's thoughtful sermons and active support for social, racial, and gender equality were important elements in our decision to become members. But, what I remember most fondly about David was his pride in his Welsh heritage and in the musical impact of the Welsh on Christian hymnody. He loved to sit at the piano and to play hymns and to lead the singing – especially those of Welsh origin (e.g., Bread of Heaven/Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah to the tune of Cwm Rhondda and many others). And, as an element in the Memorial service for his mother Annie, he asked us to play a recording of the Welsh national anthem, Land of My Fathers – sung not in a formal choral setting, but in a full-throated rendition by the fans at a Welsh rugby match. After cutting in on Jesus to dance in heaven with his beloved Grace (as imagined by Bronwyn), I can picture the two of them settling in, with arms around each other, and dozing off to a rendition, in Welsh of course, of Ar Hyd y Nos (All Through the Night).



David Caughey

Janice McCarrick

My family and I came to visit First Baptist one Sunday in the 1980's and found David Evans enacting the Sojourner Truth speech "Ain't I a Woman." I was blown away, and I always continued to be impressed by David's warmth, empathy, and heartfelt sincerity. David's love of music was always a joy.



Jan McCarrick

He and Grace always had ready smiles while they warmly welcomed people into their church community, which my family always were made to feel part of. David and Grace are missed.

Bob Plaisted

The thing that stands out in my memory about Dave's term as pastor is leadership. I can recall six issues that could have splintered the congregation, but he did not let that happen. On each occasion the congregation ultimately faced the issues. One of these was the consideration of whether we should invest in the building downtown or move to a new site. And, of course, we all remember the new music he brought to the service.

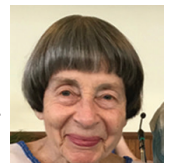


Bob Plaisted

Bob & Ellen Plaisted (1946-1950; 1956-present)

Jan Butler

When our family was about to move to Ithaca in 1976, our friend Margaret (Maggie) Crain McNeil was excited for us. She said "Oh! you must meet David Evans. He is pastor at First Baptist there, a wonderful person and a good friend. I was on a hymn book committee with him some years ago. We together chose the hymns for our new hymn book."



Jan Butler

Frank and I had planned to visit various churches when we arrived, so that we could choose the one which seemed right for us. Because of Maggie's recommendation, we picked First Baptist for our first trial visit. We never had the desire to go elsewhere – as we immediately felt at home here.

Our many years under the guidance of David and Grace were an such an important time in our lives and in our children's lives. He welcomed us and graciously included some of our family's music-making into numerous worship services. We, of course, in addition to David's pastoral guidance, were warmed by David's love of music and his great abandon and joy in sharing his piano playing with all who listened.



Please keep in your prayers the Evans Family

Children:

- David Trevor (Shirl) Evans
- Janel (Phil) Miller-Evans
- Bronwyn (Sara Shenk) Evans

Grandchildren:

- Meghan
- David
- Ian
- Arthur
- Trevor
- Kelly

Great granddaughter

- Loretta Grace.

And all those who knew and loved David and Grace.

~~~~~  
 The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members, a heart of grace, and a soul generated by love.

CORETTA SCOTT KING



Daffodil Bouquet

*the Visitor* — April 2023  
 A Tribute to  
 Rev. David Evans

**Editor/publisher:** Susan Eymann

**Proofers:** Andrea Mooney, Tony Lister

**Contributors:** All the friends, colleagues and First Baptist parishioners of David Evans

## Katy Gotschalk

When I think of David Evans, I think not just of wonderful sermons and sensitive counsel but of music.



Katy Gotschalk and husband John Paul

When I joined First Baptist Church in 1967, I had been singing there as a guest, and once I joined, the singing continued. I remember that David enjoyed including the “Alleluia” from Mozart’s “Exultate Jubilate” in services, which I enjoyed singing during those early years. David himself led the congregation not just with his words but with his music; I’m sure I was not alone in looking forward to those times when David, an accomplished musician, sat down at the piano to lead us in hymns—he played and sang with such love and energy that we all sang better and with greater understanding. David regularly drew on the arts to create beautiful services, sometimes including dance as well as music. Each year I especially looked forward to his leadership of Christmas Eves, which memorably created that occasion’s beautiful awe and joy.

David, this loving, kind man, was quietly and indispensably there for me in the bad times as well as the good, and I will always carry him in my heart.

## Amanda Ufford

I’ve never forgotten Dave’s comment to Janet Brown (Betty’s sister, for those of you who didn’t know her) when he had just announced his retirement after 28 years here. Because Dave was so much loved by the congregation this came as a blow to us all. Many people at First Baptist had hardly known another pastor. Dave said how important it was to realize that pastors, no matter how much you appreciate them, are not the Church. As far as I was concerned, David’s message was simple, helpful, and profound.



Amanda Ufford



**David M. and Grace L. Evans:** *Theirs was a love that flourished throughout their lives and beyond. As a teenager in Lincoln, NE, Grace met and fell in love with David Evans. Shortly before Grace’s death in May, 2019, Grace and David celebrated the 75th anniversary of their first date. They married in 1952 and moved to Ithaca, NY when David became pastor of First Baptist Church. In Ithaca they raised their three children Trevor, Janel and Bronwyn. In 1967 Grace began her career as a beloved kindergarten teacher at Belle Sherman elementary school. In 2013, they moved to St. Petersburg, FL near their daughter Janel.*