

A Good Word for David Gordemer
November 1, 2006

David was one of the first members of Park Road Baptist Church that we met. Long before most of you had ever heard of us, David had heard us preach. David was part of that brave group known as a “Pastor Search Committee.” Untold hours of meetings, reading through resumes, conducting phone interviews, and then more meetings. We arrived on a Thursday afternoon, greeted by the chair of the committee before being led into an eight-hour grilling – I mean interview. I remember meeting David with a firm handshake, and he had his big smile. He said, “Hello, I’m David Gordemer. Nice to meet you.” And we said, tactfully I’m sure, “You’re not from around here, are you?” That beautiful accent gave him away. But then he said, “I am most certainly from the south.” Our faces somewhat perplexed, his big smile widened and he said, “South of London, that is.” I can tell you that two, young and nervous and inexperienced pastors-to-be were calmed by the people in that room that day. I can also tell you that until today, it never dawned on me what it would feel like to bury one of those committee members. At the time, we couldn’t see past the moment to envision having built a life here that would lead to this day. Russ and I will be forever grateful to David – for his vision and risk-taking, for his open-mindedness and his positive acceptance – we will be forever grateful for his vote of “Yes” for us. On the day that David died, with Kathy by his side, I gently wiped his face with a warm wet washcloth. He said, “Tell me a story.” And so Kathy told him the story of how they had met and built a life together. She told him about how they loved each other more than most folks love each other. He smiled and nodded his head yes. I asked him if I could tell him a story. He nodded yes. And so I recounted for him about the committee he had served on 6

years ago and what fun he had had doing so. He smiled a smirky smile. He knew the story. I thanked him for his work on that committee and expressed that I hoped he had not been disappointed. And then I said, “I never dreamed that six years ago I’d be wiping your face today, but I am honored and grateful to do so.” A few tears came and he nodded yes.

You see – that was the kind of man that David was. Smiling and agreeable. Risk-taking and open-minded. A visionary. He made his way from London, England to the United States of America and decided to make a life here. He worked hard and was good at his work. And he was determined to become a US citizen. It was a proud day for him on December 16, 1980 when his determination and hard work paid off. His framed certificate of citizenship hangs prominently and proudly in their hallway.

David was always willing to help and Kathy says that he could do anything. Fix it. Build it. Plant it. You name it and he could do it. From computers and electronics to gardening, David loved staying busy. I think this is why the last few months have been so difficult for David. Not being active and involved and working – this was not in David’s nature.

David and Kathy loved to travel, and they have seen just about every part of the world. From Japan to the Holy Land and to Ireland – where indeed he kissed the Blarney Stone!

David loved music, and he was a percussionist. You may have wondered why Jonathan played the timpani today. David had said that he had never played timpani and wanted to learn. We thought it fitting on this All Saints Day to remember David with the beat of a drum. You see, the drummer is always the one responsible to keep the beat. It

seems to me that is who David was. The one who kept the beat. He was steady and strong and sure. He gave energy and life to the living. The drummer is sometimes almost behind the scenes yet is the main one to keep the music playing. That seems a fitting description of David to me.

But it was David's smile that could light up the room. Mike said it best when he said that David had *southern charm with an English accent*. I'll miss that smile, and I'll miss that accent. Our accents may have clashed, but our relationship was strong.

The best compliment about David came from Mike. When Kathy was sick, and I mean really down and in a bad way, David truly took care of her. He visited her every day bringing in her favorite foods from their favorite restaurants. Even on days when he was in pain himself, he truly lived out his vows – in sickness and in health. He was a caretaker extraordinaire.

David was active in our church in Sunday School and faithful in worship. He could hold down that back row better than anybody I know, and I miss him back there. The room doesn't sit the same without him there. His faith was deep and abiding. On his darkest days reading scripture to him brought comfort. His faith brought him peace. And today, we rest in the assurance of the promises of God – that forever God and David live - together. That is our Blessed Hope. That is to what we cling. That is Good News.

The very first time that David and Kathy talked on the phone, when they got ready to hang up, Kathy said, "Well, Toodeloo." David couldn't believe his ears! This was an English expression - a reminder, I think, that with Kathy he had found his home again. And that became their word – Toodeloo. It was the last word he spoke to her and to me on the day of his death. So this day to David, and to all the saints, I simply say

“Toodeloo – May God’s peace and presence sustain you, both now and forevermore.

Amen.”