



Father David and his wife Beka took time out of their final days of packing to answer a few questions for our readers. We're grateful for their time, candor and humor!

Q: Father, where did you and Beka first meet? A: We met at a church service in Tallahassee, Florida in 2006.

Q: What first attracted each of you to the other? A: (Fr. David) I really liked her hair. A: (Beka) I liked his shoes!

Q: When were you married and how long have you been wed? A: Our anniversary is November 29 and we've been married for 12 years.

Q: Where were you married and what is something especially memorable about your special day? A: We were married at a church in Seminole and have a lot of great memories from that day. But the first that comes to mind is that we both wanted to stop for Burger King between the ceremony and the reception!

Q: Do you have regular "date nights," and if so, has that evolved since the pandemic began? A: We don't have regular date nights, but look forward to changing that soon! The pandemic definitely has given us much more opportunity to spend time together, which we've both very much enjoyed.

Q: Okay, here is a silly one for you. If you two were on an episode of a show like the dating game, who would likely answer questions about the other more accurately? A: (Fr. David) For sure, Beka. And she says it's the right answer!

Q: What advice would you give to a couple considering Holy matrimony? A: (Fr. David) Pray! A healthy and loving marriage is an icon of Christ to the world and an amazing blessing and responsibility. Take pre-marital counseling seriously! A: (Beka) Pre-marital counseling was beneficial and fun. The harder part is later in the marriage...keep communication open and frequent and give each other the benefit of the doubt. Take joy in it and laugh with each other as much as you can.

Q: Do you have a favorite part of the Episcopal marriage liturgy/service/tradition? A: (Fr. David) Although not

expressly part of the written rite, the tradition of the priest tying the stole around the hands of the couple is a favorite aspect of the ceremony. Every time, I am moved by this symbol of the sacramental nature of marriage. Oh, and Beka likes the parts that remind her of the Princess Bride! ✕

## Love Abides

Parishioners Judy Cairl and Betsy Hocker became pen pals shortly after the pandemic cancelled in-person worship in the spring of 2020. Over the months, Judy reminisced often of her late husband, John. With permission, Judy has allowed Betsy to share a few glimpses into Judy and John's love story for this Valentine issue...

The couple met when Judy was sixteen years old while both teenagers were attending the Episcopal youth group at Grace Episcopal Cathedral in Topeka, Kansas. They fell in love and married five years later. She describes him as a "big man," a former football player, and a devoted husband and father.

It has now been twenty years since John died of melanoma cancer. He was cremated and interred in the Saint John's Church columbarium. Judy finds comfort in visiting him regularly.

Judy feels very fortunate that the couple's children and grandchildren remain close by and fill her life with even more love. Their daughter, Mindy, lives in Broken Arrow and is also a member of Saint John's Church. Mindy and her husband, Jimmy, have two sons, Zac and Ivan. Zac is married to Ali and they have a two-year-old son, Hudson. Judy's son, Chris, lives with his family in Bixby. He is married to Shelly and they have two teenaged sons, Mack and Bode.

It is so touching to witness that death did not distance, detract or destroy Judy's abiding affection. The Cairls' love story continues as does their connection to Saint John's. And, Judy shared that the love the Saint John's family has shown her family has comforted and supported them spiritually in their journey. ✕



## Their Forever Fireman

About this time of year, in 1976, firefighters of Tulsa Station 18 drove their engine to Marshall Elementary School for “safety day.” Kindergartener Ben came home that afternoon excited and told his mom all about his “new friend, the fireman,” and all he had learned that day. Ben was so enthralled with the experience, he drew pictures of firemen for many of the following days and talked about firefighters, especially his new friend.

Little did anyone in the family, or the firehouse, know that God’s amazing plan for the future of several special people now intricately woven into the life of Saint John’s Church was unfolding.

Jessica, Ben’s mom, went on a lunch blind date about a week later with a nice fella and, as the meal and conversation progressed, she learned he was a firefighter. She shared, tickled, at what a coincidence that was and went on to share with her date, Fred, about the story of Ben’s memorable school experience.

Fred asked if the school was Marshall, because he had just been there the preceding week. The conversation evolved into multiple commonalities until Fred the fireman said, “I bet I know which child was yours: the little boy with glasses who asked a whole lot of questions?!” Indeed it was, to Jessica’s great surprise.

Fred and Jessica’s love story developed swiftly and sweetly, with two special boys at the center of a growing bond. Jessica reminisced that the first time Fred came to



their home to pick her up for a subsequent date, Ben ran to the door, looked at the tall guy from his boots to his head and marveled out loud, “That’s my friend the fireman!” It was love at first sight for Ben, his older brother Chris, and for Jessica.

And Fred was suitably smitten by them as well. The Stowells married at Saint John’s Church several months later, where Jessica had been attending.

Jessica gives the Lord the credit. “I had prayed for a man who would love my children as much as he loved me,” she said. They have been each other’s Valentines ever since. ✨

## Celebrate Every Anniversary

On the south wall of the church’s patio a brilliant blue mosaic of tile catches the western sun. If you have spent much time at all at the church for outdoor activities or coffee hour, you have likely seen artwork in the shallow relief on the stonework wall.



But have you ever stopped to wonder about the story behind this “picture perfect” photo location?

In 2014 Kay and Tom Owens had just celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary and began thinking about how they might honor the blessings of their years together with a gift to the parish. They discussed their thoughts with Father Irv Cutter, rector of Saint John’s Church at the time, sharing with him that they loved all forms of art. Together the idea of something special was born. The Owens suggested a mosaic would be perfect for this exterior niche and Father Irv encouraged them to think about a theme for the art based on the Gospel of John. For Kay and Tom, the first miracle at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-12) was the most obvious selection.

The Owens knew of artist Linda Allen, a well-known mosaic designer, and it was arranged for her to consult with them and the church clergy to explore how the scripture might be envisioned. Linda came back with an interpretation everyone loved that included a water jug, grapevines, stars, pebbles, a river, and flowers the colors of those blooming in the patio garden at the time. Central to the message, it highlighted the elements of two golden rings, doves and a twinkling cross.

Kay and Tom celebrate their anniversary on May 16 and have been wed fifty-six years. Every anniversary since the dedication of the mosaic, the two love birds have taken their photo together in front of this special representation of God’s message to us and the reminder of the beauty and sanctity of the wedding covenant.

While few parishioners have been able to enjoy the patio since last March, Kay knows all will be able to in the not-too-distant-future. What a joyful time that will be indeed. Meanwhile, staying closer to home together, this pair of Valentines have enjoyed spending more quality time sharing conversations, meals, reading and walks.

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