

# Chaplain: Pederson follows next adventure

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He will be leading a small church in the town of Windsor — and moving closer to full-time granddad duty.

"I'm going there because I think I'm called there, but also because my grandchildren are there," Pederson said. "It's nice that God is working that out."

He said that happened before — nearly 30 years ago when he was drawn to Dallas. At the time he was a pastor at a church in Kent, Wash. Through an internship he found that he liked working in small, rural towns. Pederson felt compelled to find one in Oregon.

"I didn't know where, but just felt called to Oregon. I checked three churches," he said. "I just drove to the three cities that had openings for Lutheran churches, and when I drove into Dallas, something clicked. I knew this was where I was going to be."

Soon after moving here, he saw an opportunity to fulfill a long-held dream, but it came with a catch. That catch turned into yet another calling for Pederson.

"What happened with that was that I had a childhood dream of being a firefighter and Dallas had a volunteer fire department," he said.

He drove to the station on a night they were training and asked about joining. The volunteer ranks at that time were full at 70, but the chief made Pederson a deal after learning he was the new pastor at Trinity.

"He said, 'well, we do need a chaplain,'" Peder-



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Dave Pederson has served as chaplain for Dallas Fire for more than 29 years.

son recalled.

His response: "I don't really want to be chaplain."

But the chief had something on him.

"He said, 'I'll tell you what. I will make you a deal: You be our chaplain and I will let you be a firefighter,'" Pederson said.

He took the deal.

"I was willing to do the chaplaincy, but I wanted to be a firefighter," Pederson said.

Until 10 years ago, he was a firefighter. He also became a medic. Pederson has been a chaplain, now one of five, the entire time. Chaplains are called upon in times of tragedy to provide comfort and counseling to victims and emergency personnel.

Twenty-nine years later, Pederson said he learned early that filling the role is simple, but never easy.

"You can't change what happened, and you can't make it better," Pederson said. "Sometimes the only thing you have left is your pain and when someone comes along and tries to

take that away, they are taking away the last thing you have of that person and you get mad. What I learned early on is that you just needed to be there."

He also recognizes when delivering death notices to a family, how you convey the message matters.

"I'm always keenly aware

as I walk up with a police officer that we are, together, going to walk up and change these people's lives forever. They will never be the same again," he said. "That's a heavy responsibility, and what you say does matter. This is where it does matter that you are clear. They will remember everything."

Eriks Gabliks, the president of volunteer firefighters' association, said Pederson has served honorably in the position.

"Dallas Fire & EMS has been fortunate to have Dave as both a firefighter (captain) for a number of years, and public safety chaplain for 29 years," he said. "He has been a humble volunteer who has given thousands of hours to our organization and the communities we serve."

Pederson said that same community has given him a lot in return.

His children, Andy and Keriann, graduated from Dallas High School. He has been involved in the school

since, not only through his grilling abilities, but through volunteering on the district's Citizen's Oversight Committee and with the Dallas Booster Club.

Pederson also is one of the founding members of the Dallas Community Foundation.

"If you are around long enough, they start using you," Pederson joked.

He said he will miss Dallas.

"There's so many great people here and people that care for each other. It's a great small community, something that you don't get in a larger town," Pederson said. "The people of this church have been awesome. I'm going to miss the fire department, too. That's been a neat part of my life."

As for burger grilling duty, Pederson said he's found someone he deems capable of filling his shoes: fellow chaplain Ken Braun.

"He's been somewhat reluctant, but he's been guilted and shamed into doing it," he said, laughing.

## Chamber: Metcalfe to focus on events

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"Dallas is a special place that has a lot to offer to residents, visitors and businesses," Metcalfe said in a statement from the chamber. "I have been fortunate to have worked within all of these arenas for the past 12 years and find my passion within community events."

Brannigan praised Metcalfe's leadership during her tenure, especially the creation of the visitors center to continue to promote community events.

The center is the host of Summerfest, Freedomfest, Winterfest, Sounds of Summer and Polk County Bountiful Market.

"She has served the chamber and visitors center and the city of Dallas superbly over the last 12 years," he said. "I firmly believed the chamber would not have survived had Chelsea not been there."

Brannigan said the chamber has been reconsidering its role in the community for some time and wants to shift to a model seen in other communities.

He said modern chambers of commerce have leaned more toward advocacy for business rather than hosting community events.

He said the new director will be tasked with leading the chamber in that direction, while the visitors center continues to focus on events. Brannigan said the new director will evaluate the mission of both organizations and may suggest restructuring to best achieve those objectives.

The process will include community input.

"(The new director) will do an assessment process and make a recommendation to the board about next steps," Brannigan said.

Metcalfe will help with the transition, introducing around town to the community once that person is on board.

"This community has my heart, and I have enjoyed leading both organizations through good and tough times over the years," she said. "I am excited to be able to focus my time and energy on events that bene-

fit our community and to continue relationships with key partners like the city of Dallas, Polk County and local businesses."

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