

# Sixty nine year old pastor to begin serving La Porte City

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For Pastor Paul Wood, 69, of the Wapsi Valley Parish, choosing to never stop learning has put him on a dynamic path.

"I'll retire probably when I'm 100, or dead," says Wood with an animated laugh.

Wood is enjoying a malt at a local coffee shop on one of the first truly spring-like days of March.

Wearing a warm-looking, burgundy sweater--sturdy cross necklace resting across its front--Wood relays the storyline of his life (something he's no doubt been asked to do countless times) in an obvious English accent.



"I always liked people...[but] I've become more of a people person since I've been in Iowa."

Wood has been a Methodist minister in Iowa for almost seven years, currently pastoring for the parishes of Olin and Oxford Junction.

He lives with his wife Dorothea outside Center Point on a small acreage along the Wapsipicon River.

Wood came to Iowa in 2005 to work for MidAmerican Energy in Council Bluffs as a contracts manager specializing in the energy field.

When his time in Council Bluffs came to an end he

Today, however, he is visibly content to be rooted in the prairie state--married to an Iowa girl, as he puts it--while continuing to live life as a series of transformations and scenic byways rather than any means to one end.

But his life started out quite differently.

"From the age of six I wanted to be a policeman."

Born in Liverpool, England, Wood did indeed go into the police force--fulfilling his childhood dream--at the age of 17.

He spent 11 years in that role until he injured both legs while on duty which meant he could no longer work "on the outside."

Desk duty just wasn't for him, Wood says, so he enrolled at the University of Sheffield.

"If I had not left the police force, I would not have [one day] ended up in Iowa."

But to label Wood as simply a 'former English police officer/nomadic contracts manager specializing in nuclear energy who one day retired to become a full time pastor in the rural Midwest' is missing a lot.

During the course of Wood's hour-long coffee shop conversation, this laid-back British expat revealed himself to also be "the oldest active rugby ref in North America."

The typical age for a rugby referee is 30-40 years, he says.

He is also "a fanatic Scrabble player," having become a champion of the

never left the state, explaining, "I was dating my good lady so I stayed."

He then made his way to eastern Iowa and Duane Arnold Energy Center in Palo where he spent four years on staff before retiring from that life in 2013.

"I spent 30-odd years living out of a suitcase," says Wood of his nomadic, pre-Iowa existence which found him traveling all over the world for his job.

At one point he was even working for the United Nations.

board game in the 1970s.

He's the author of three published books of poetry, a couple of which include writings from the time he spent in the Middle East.

A frequent volunteer at the Granger House Victorian Museum in Marion, Wood dresses up as a traditional English butler and gives talks on the history of tea--think Mr. Carson from the hit British TV drama Downton Abbey, he says.

He even has a stand-up comedy routine that involves Shakespeare and Charles Dickens.

"I do a lot of things," Wood admits. He is continuing to live a dynamic life without venturing much beyond Iowa's borders these days.

On the schedule for 2019 are multiple gigs as a rugby ref including the upcoming Iowa-Missouri game at the University of Iowa.

In early summer he will be installed as the new full-time pastor at St. Paul United Methodist Church in La Porte City.

His fourth book of poetry--a sequel to his third that is geared toward children--is currently being written.

He might even be found serving tea in butler uniform to tiny Iowans as part of a library program somewhere.

Pastor Paul Wood is living proof that finding purpose in the place where you're planted can be accomplished at any age.

The thirst for knowledge just never has to stop.