

## Ralph Blackman & Marlena Tureski

Ralph & Marlena are both natives of Saskatchewan (well Marlena was born in rural Manitoba and lived there for a few years before her parents saw the light). They first met when they were nine years old through their involvement in music programs, and both of them began playing music professionally in their early teens. Apparently Ralph was a real “tease”, although individual recollections on this are somewhat divergent. Anyway, nothing serious came of their friendship until into their twenties when they suddenly realized there was more to it.

After high school they went their own ways. Marlena Tureski did her professional studies here in Victoria at the VCM with James Hunter in 1977, at the same time playing with the Victoria Symphony, the Canadian Chamber Orchestra, and studying with Zara Nelsova in Master Classes and at the Banff Centre. Other Master Class studies include those with Janos Starker, Leonard Rose and Harvey Shapiro. In 1981, she joined the Vancouver Symphony, with which she continues to play on occasion, as she also does with the Victoria Symphony.

Ralph went off to university in New York studying music, but changed to education and completed work at UBC and SFU before finally figuring out that God was calling him into the ministry. His journey of faith is interesting and too long for this short biography. Seminary took him to England for three years where he studied at Salisbury & Wells Theological College receiving his degrees from Southampton University.

It was on a summer break during the seminary years when Ralph was back in Vancouver at a Vancouver Symphony members’ BBQ at his brother’s place, at which Marlena was present, that he and Marlena rekindled their old friendship, which eventually led to dating ... well at least a LOT of letters and phone calls between England and Vancouver. In 1985 everything happened: Ralph was ordained Deacon in the spring in England (another long and fascinating story), they got married in August and moved “back” to Regina to begin a new life together with Ralph’s new job at the Cathedral, and then Ralph was ordained priest in the fall. A very sacramental year!

Our lives have been richly blessed together and we have maintained exciting and dynamic ministries and careers. Life has taken us from Regina, back to Vancouver, to Tacoma/Seattle, to Chicago and to here in Victoria. Ralph has served in small congregations and large cathedrals and some out of parish ministries. Marlena has been a regular freelance cellist with the Vancouver, Victoria and Seattle Symphonies, and the Seattle Opera, and in Chicago. She has done a lot of studio work (movie soundtracks, etc.), and she teaches privately (at last count, 19 students).

We have also been blessed by the unexpected and painful in our lives, including illness, challenges and loss. But these are always counterbalanced by the faithful we meet in the way.