

## *Rev. Anton K. Jacobs*

### *Celebrating 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination*



Anton K. Jacobs was born in 1947 in a little shotgun house in Dogtown, an old St. Louis neighborhood. He was born with a black eye, and his father complained to the attending physician. The doctor replied, “You’d have a black eye too if you’d been though what he’s been through.” Anton was called “Tony” by family and friends.

As a teen, he was invited by a girlfriend to attend her Southern Baptist church. He had a “born-again experience” in 1964; started both preaching and attending college in 1965. He remained in that fundamentalist congregation till he got into trouble for challenging the inerrancy of scripture and promoting acceptance of inter-racial marriage, at which time he transferred to a more liberal Baptist congregation led by the Rev. Bill Little.

He flourished in that church while attending several colleges in St. Louis and graduating in 1971 from the University of Missouri in St.

Louis. During those college years, he worked at a Sears department store and Renard Psychiatric Hospital and developed strong pro-civil rights and anti-Vietnam War attitudes. He also decided killing was wrong, the draft was wrong, and draft deferments were wrong. Fortuitously he drew a high lottery number and so was not drafted. Apparently, he didn’t think luck was wrong.

In 1971 Tony married Deborah Bayliss and started at Eden Theological Seminary, although he wasn’t certain he wanted to follow a path of church ministry. He decided for Eden because the faculty had their highest degrees from a variety of denominations worldwide, and those of the two nearest Southern Baptist seminaries’ full-time faculty were all from Baptist schools. When finished and after receiving a call from a UCC church in Louisville, he was dually ordained, Baptist and UCC.

His congregation attracted a broad group of parishioners, including Jews, Communists and gender-diverse folks. He began working on a master’s degree in sociology at the University of Louisville. His wife started work on a nursing degree at Bellarmine College. During this time, they divorced.

A friend from seminary requested that Tony manage his campaign for president of Teamsters Local 600 in St. Louis. So, Tony began driving a truck and organizing the effort. This was a participant-observation study about which he wrote his master’s thesis.

After completing the master’s degree, he started work on a doctorate in sociology at the University of Notre Dame while teaching there and at the University of Indiana in South Bend and pastoring a small UCC church in the nearby town of Bourbon, Indiana. He began going by “Anton” when he noticed that people sometimes didn’t recognize “Anton” as “Tony.”

After finishing his course work, Anton went to Vienna, Austria, in search of romance and adventure. He spent three years in Vienna, completing his doctoral dissertation, teaching in a local university, editing English-language periodicals, and teaching English as a second language.

On his return to the United States, he completed his doctoral degree and began dating the recently divorced Jean Roth, whom he had met during his teamster work. Then he spent the next three years pastoring the same church in Bourbon, IN, while teaching at Ancilla Domini College in Donovan, IN.

In 1988 he married Jean and took a faculty position at William Jewell College in Liberty, MO. They and her three younger children moved to Liberty. Anton also pastored St. Paul's UCC in Kansas City for several years. He left the college in 1995 and took a full-time pastorate at St. Peter's UCC in Kansas City, where he spent seven years. After leaving there, he started writing seriously. After completing his first book, *Religion and the Critical Mind*, he began a part-time pastorate at United Church of the Good Shepherd, a Presbyterian/UCC congregation in Kansas City, KS, and teaching interdisciplinary courses at the Kansas City Art Institute. He retired from full-time pastoring in 2010. Except for three years chairing the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies at Divine Word College in Iowa, he has continued writing and teaching at the Art Institute. He is a current member of Kansas City UCC and appreciates the involvement he has had there.