



Family friend of Father David Boase speaks on immigration plight and how the community can help

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
September 25 2018 8:24 PM



ALTON – The plight of a retired Episcopal Church Pastor from Alton currently facing deportation has reached the national spotlight.

Father David Boase, 69, was born in the United Kingdom and emigrated to the United States early in 2004. He retired from the Episcopal Parish in Alton in 2014. Since then, he has lived on his church pension while getting additional income from subbing at other Episcopal parishes. He also collects Social Security, as he has been a legal resident working in the United States for long enough to have earned it. With these deportation hearings, however, at least two of those sources of income may be in great jeopardy.

Godorn Robertson's mother, longtime Alton Little Theater Director, Dianna Inlow, has been friends with Boase for more than a decade. Robertson said the entire deportation

ordeal came while Boase was enjoying the PGA Golf Tournament in St. Louis with Inlow.

Boase had applied for nationalization in May 2017 with the goal of becoming a citizen of the United States on his birthday – July 4. Instead of getting the good news he was going to become a citizen of the country he called home, 18 months later, Father Boase was notified he was instead deferred to the deportation process. When asked why this occurred, Robertson said it was because he had voted in 2006.

“In 2006, he had been here for a year and a half, and he thought it was time he got a U. S. drivers' license, as the British one only lasts for so long after you come here,” he said. “He applied for the license and had a U.K. one as well as his passport. He took the test and passed it. The person at the DMV said he could register to vote.

“What David has told me – and I wasn't there – he said that he was very surprised and asked 'are you sure' after they asked about that. He signed the card and was on his way. He got a card in the mail and a polling place to go to. Then in November 2006, he voted in an election – not even a presidential election. He went there for some fire district referendum, which is probably long-forgotten at this point, by everyone, but it was flagged during the bureaucratic process.”

After casting his vote in that local matter, Robertson said Boase spoke to a parishioner who said he should not have done that. Since realizing his error, Boase unregistered to vote and felt embarrassed for making such a mistake.

It was that mistake, Robertson said, which made Boase shift from the path to citizenship to deportation to a nation he has not seen in nearly 15 years.

“He's not denying that he did it,” Robertson said. “He's not denying that it's wrong, either. He also knows ignorance is no excuse for breaking the law. In fact, he understands that law very well right now, but there are discretionary measures the nation can take in matters like this, and we're hoping someone will take them.”

Originally, Boase had a court date for his deportation hearing this coming Friday, Sept. 28, in Kansas City, where the nearest federal immigration court is located. That has since been moved to Tuesday, Oct. 9, 2018. Boase has also attained new legal counsel, since his former representation dropped the case and left town, Robertson said.

“To say the last few weeks have been a down period in his life is an understatement,” Robertson said. “He's not been feeling good for a couple of weeks. He even started telling a few of his close friends that these were his last couple weeks in America.”

While things may seem dismal for the retired priest, Robertson said gratitude is also taking a forefront in Boase's life.

“The well wishes have been great, and the prayers are being heard,” he said.

Outside of being a close friend of Father Boase, Robertson has also made a GoFundMe for him. For the first few weeks, Robertson said the page was private, but it went public last Monday – around the same time the priest's popularity was hitting the national stage. Its original goal of \$1,000 was quickly surpassed. Robertson then raised it for \$5,000. It now sits around \$7,000.

That money is being raised for any legal difficulties being faced by Father Boase as well as the financial troubles sure to follow if he is in fact deported. Robertson said he was not sure if anyone would contribute to the effort, but said support has come from Alton, places he has subbed and from elsewhere – even coming from the pockets of complete strangers.

Since word got out on the priest's current peril, national papers such as the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* and *Washington Post*. An article has even been penned in the international Anglican Church news publication.

Even if the worst does come to pass and Father Boase is sent back to the United Kingdom, Robertson said he knows how lucky he is to be an immigrant who speaks the language fluently and has not been separated from his family or children.

“Not everyone in his position right now can say that,” Robertson said. “This is an issue that humanizes national issues like voting and immigration, and he is not exactly the person many people think of when they look at these issues.”

The GoFundMe can be found here: <https://www.gofundme.com/united-for-father-david-boase>