

Millbrook Church Welcomes New Pastor

By Elsie Walker

On July 1, a new face was seen behind the pulpit of the Millbrook United Methodist Church in Randolph: Pastor Nick Petrov.

One might say the ministry is in his blood; he is a third generation Methodist minister. He was born in Rousse, Bulgaria, on the Danube River.

His father and grandfather, who were ministers during the communist rule, encouraged him to always study more and he credits them with the drive for learning that brought him and his family to the United States 10 years ago, where he earned a master's degree and this past June, his doctorate from Drew University.

When asked if they

should call him "Dr. Petrov," he will tell people to call him "Dr. Nick" or just "Nick." Recently, the pastor shared a little of his background and personal life, including what drew him to the U.S.

Petrov noted that where he grew up in Bulgaria, it is quite diverse. He quoted a passage by Nobel laureate Elias Canetti that he says captures it well: "People of the most varied backgrounds lived there; on any one day you could hear seven or eight languages. Aside from Bulgarians, there were Turks who lived in their own neighborhood; next to it was the neighborhood of the Sephardim, the Spanish Jews; and there were Greeks, Albanians, Armenians, and Gypsies."

Petrov speaks five lan-

guages: Bulgarian, English, German, Russian, and Macedonian.

According to history books, communism started in Bulgaria after WWII and fell in the late 1980s. When asked about the church and communism, Petrov reflected on how communism affected the Christians in Bulgaria. Both his father and grandfather were ministers in an underground church.

"There was a feeling of discontentment and fear" is how Petrov described the climate for Christians.

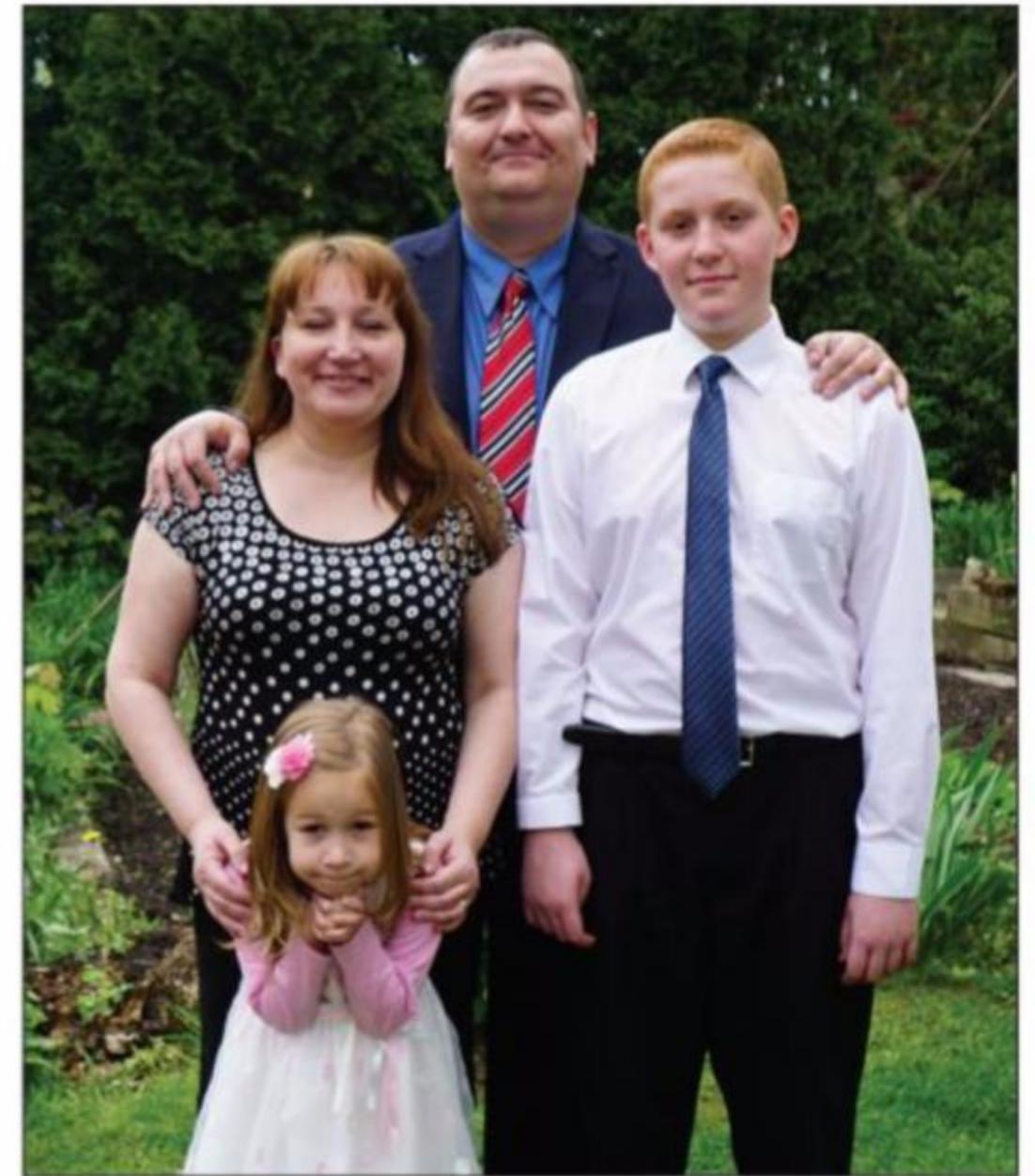
"For example, Christmas was banned by the communists, so Christians had to mark it in secret," Petrov noted. Bibles had to be smuggled into the country. Bibles were smuggled in from the U.S.

and Petrov remembers as a child having a Bible that was printed here.

Later, Petrov would go on to follow in his father's and grandfather's footsteps of ministry, serving churches in Austria and Bulgaria. In 2000, he graduated Martin Luther College in Austria with Diploma in Theology. While at the seminary in Austria, one of his professors was a missionary from the U.S. They stayed in touch after that professor had gone back to the U.S. States to teach at Emory University in Georgia. He encouraged Petrov to come there.

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The new pastor of the Millbrook United Methodist Church, Nick Petrov, and his family: wife Stela, son David, and daughter Evangeline.

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developed a drive "to learn more." He decided to come to the U.S. and attended Emory University while serving at the Harmony United Methodist Church, LaGrange, Ga. from 2008 to 2010. After graduating from Emory, Petrov was encouraged to go for his doctorate at Drew University in Madison which is the home of archives on Methodist History and the archives of the worldwide

Methodist Church. While studying for that doctorate, he started serving as pastor of the Port Morris United Methodist Church in Landing. He will continue to serve there while also serving the church in Randolph.

Petrov says his background is a plus he brings to ministry: "I have experience in a variety of churches, ministering to different cultures."

On a personal note, Petrov has been married to

his wife, Stela for 15 years. They have two children – David, 14, and Evangeline, 6. The pastor's hobbies and interests include music, reading, photography, hiking, and fishing.

"I am very excited about my appointment at Millbrook UMC," says Petrov. "I'm new to the Randolph community and look forward to meeting people in the area. Everyone is invited to Sunday worship which starts at 9:45 a.m."