



That alliteration (above) had been useful in writing a humble piece that I always hoped had a chance of being either informative or inspiring. The 'humble' thing is vexing as the minute the idea of being humble is brought to mind it negates the very thing itself. I'm not sure any of the informative/inspiring/humble worked, in these articles but, as I learned of you, you learned of me.

I've loved being in a place where I could live out some of my dreams. Joining the already well established family known as St. David of Wales (see Norm Eveleth's book on St. David's), has filled my soul like no other church and I'm so very grateful. For so many years I longed to find a parish church that was closely linked with the work of improving the lives of those hurting ~ from homelessness, hunger, loneliness, et.al. You were already doing it and I got to come along. The food bank, Saints Pantry; the shelter and feeding program, now known as Community Lifeline; and

other community connections, were here. They were a testimony to the faith and resolve of a family church that placed a high value on getting connected with the community and doing the required heavy lifting. Wow! I say from my heart, Thank You for the ride.

Together we have done much: the Annual Church Picnic at Ann Ollie's, Easter egg hunts, Pet blessings, the concerts at the Church, the All Parish Breakfasts, attending the College for Congregational Development, the soup and supper Lenten programs, Rotary lunches at the Parish Hall, the Bible studies, and so many more ways in which we have come together. We have prayed, worshipped, mourned, celebrated, cried, laughed, got mad at each other, rejoiced together and all those things that church families do. Yet, as I start to feel good about it all, I always stepped back in the cataloging of stuff and wonder, was God present? Did we come closer to Christ, become more attune to God's will for us, more attune to each other? *No, probably not so much.* Wait a minute. Yes we did. I did. And if not, still I was amongst friends who lived their faith. Thank you for that as well.

Now comes, for Nancy and I, a new adventurer. In our time here, we got married, at St. David's Church with a lovely reception at St. Andrew's House. Nancy earned her Master's of Social Work at the U. of W. and we lived comfortably enough here in Shelton. We said, as we considered returning from a brief time away, 'we love Shelton'. It's been fun living in this community. How amazing was that. Thank You yet again.

And what about St. David's? Well, I have to say I'm reminded of that old joke about the young clergy person who came busting in to their first Sunday bent on changing the church with all things mastered in seminary. A senior member of that church saddled up along side the new, young and full-of-himself priest and counseled: "Welcome. I'm a member of the "Be-Here" committee. Continuing, "We be-here before you came, we be-here while you're here, and we be-here after you leave." You gave me space to make mistakes, to try stuff and have it not gain much of a response. You loved me through a lot of emotions, and life experiences and some hardships. It is a memory I hold close. It is who we are as a Body of Christ. Be who you are as a new priest joins you. Be who you are with Fr. Steve and Beth as they grow closer to you. But mostly: *Thank You! We love you!*

*Pax,
Fr. Joe*