

## Our 'Saint David Stone'

Our St. David's in Cullowhee is named after David, patron saint of Wales. Our own founder, Daniel David Davies, was born in Wales and came to the US as a young man in the 1800s. More than forty members of our parish have made the same journey (in the other direction) on pilgrimage to St. David's Cathedral over the past ten years. That cathedral, set on the rugged coastline of southwest Wales, has been a place of pilgrimage for 800 years or so. And though St. David's is the smallest cathedral city in Britain, it is said that two pilgrimages to St. David's equal one to Rome. Three count as a pilgrimage to Jerusalem! People walked hundreds of miles along once-famous, now faded, pilgrim trails, often bringing a stone from their farms or villages as a kind of offering-- enriching their intentions with effort in place of the silver they could not afford.

On the tenth and last day of our first pilgrimage, a Sunday, the Canon of the Cathedral, Wyn Evans (now Bishop of the Diocese of St. David), stopped Barbara and me as we were leaving church. "We've so enjoyed your visit," he said (the 22 of us had participated in many of the daily services during our days there). "And," Canon Evans continued, "we'd love to send you home with a small remembrance—something to keep near your altar in North Carolina to remind you to pray for us as we pray for you!" He waved to the Verger (the British have so many lovely, esoteric churchy names), "Would you bring them our little parting gift, please?" The Verger, a tall man in a black cassock disappeared behind a beautifully carved screen for a moment. When he reappeared, somewhat bent by the weight of what he carried, the Canon said, "It's from our quarry—carved from the same red sandstone as the Cathedral." The Verger handed it to me. It was as heavy as three bowling balls. "Thank you so much, Canon," I said, which was not exactly what I was thinking.

It cost about the same to get our new St. David stone to Cullowhee as it did to fly me home. You'll notice if you visit us that people often bend to give it a rub on their way to the altar, probably more in gratitude than for luck. We're grateful to be regularly reminded of how things connect so meaningfully through both time and distance. We're grateful to have discovered the rich tradition of our namesake and to still be making rich connections with other pilgrims along the way.

If you visit us, by all means, give this old stone a pat and consider yourself, in one way and another, a pilgrim yourself.

Michael Hudson, Rector, St. David's Episcopal Church, Cullowhee, NC