

## **Vance's Perspective on Michael's Ministry at St. David's**

Kathy and I have been members of St. David's for over sixteen years....it has been a most wonderful church home filled with many, many dear and loving friends and has been led by a very special priest in Michael. I recall our very first Sunday visit to St. David's....we were made to feel very welcome by everyone particularly by Michael and Barbara. That same afternoon around three o'clock we received a call from Michael telling us once again how much he and Barbara enjoyed meeting us and having us visit St. David's. He asked lots of questions about our previous church life and activities in Birmingham and was genuinely interested in our story. We had a great conversation of over a half hour ending with Michael's invitation and encouragement for our return visit to St. David's. Little did we know that Sunday afternoon over sixteen years ago would lead to our finding the ideal church home for us and would be the beginning of so many wonderful friendships and experiences.

When I was asked to share my perspective on Michael's ministry at St. David's, there were many thoughts cropping up in my head and several key words or themes immediately came to mind .The first two of these are helpful and engaged. Not long after we became "regulars" at St. David's we had a parish workday and my first job assigned was to clean out the gutters on Canterbury House. Guess who the first person was up on the roof with me to help with that task....our priest, Michael. My experience over the years has borne out Michael's willingness to help with whatever needs doing whether or not it involves traditional "priestly" duties or not.

Many of you here know that I had a bad accident some twelve years ago when I fell off the roof of a new screened porch I was building. I was out of commission for several months due to rehab and recovery. Want to know one of the key members of the crew that came to my house while I was still in the hospital to complete the work on the porch.....our priest, Michael!

Through the years, Kathy and I coordinated some twenty-one wine tasting fundraisers for St. David's. These wine tastings, as Steve and Pat will attest, are quite a bit of work and require lots of helpers. A key helper at every one of those tastings was, you guessed it, Michael. Cutting bread, cheese, summer sausage and in later years setting up the sound system were tasks that he embraced and handled without ever having to be asked.

This past year when I was asked to coordinate the upstairs build-out of the new parish hall, I sought and obtained many volunteers for the finish work that we decided to do ourselves in order to save money. If you have spent any time at all upstairs in the parish hall you have seen that there is lots and lots of wood trim.....hundreds of running feet of base board , door and window trim. All of this trim was nailed into place resulting in literally thousands of nail holes. Guess who puttied and filled the vast majority of those nail holes so the paint crew could do its work. If you guessed Michael Hudson, you would be “spot on.” These things I mentioned do not have much to do with the traditional role of a parish priest but are things that needed doing nonetheless and Michael has always been there to roll up his sleeves and get the work done.....never just expecting his parishioners to do all the work. That’s what a loving, caring and dedicated shepherd does for his flock and that is what Michael Hudson has always done for St. David’s.

I would be remiss if I did not also mention something else I have observed over the years about Michael. He is always the first to take the time to genuinely recognize and thank all those who do the many, many tasks it takes to keep our parish running smoothly. Michael gives recognition publically to everyone whose efforts make this a better place.

I have always been touched by Michael’s calm, gentle demeanor and spirit. His level-headed and thoughtful approach to any issue that arises is a trait of his that I wish I could emulate more in my life. His is a calming presence that leads to addressing issues in most positive ways....always willing to hear all sides of an issues resulting in positive resolutions.

I close with a final observation regarding my perspective on Michael’s weekly homilies. I have been an Episcopalian for almost forty-five years and have experienced hundreds of homilies.....some good, some outstanding and some, quite frankly leaving me with an empty feeling. Michael’s take, for me, on scripture and how we live our lives and deal with one another and the world always speaks to me in profound and meaningful ways. I am a better Episcopalian and a better person for having Michael Hudson’s ministry in my life. I submit that St. David’s is a better and more wonderful parish for having had Michael as our leader for these past twenty-five years. Job well done, good and faithful servant.