

Meet the Neighbor Joe and Patti Mitchell

Joe and Patti's early days as teenagers were not easy. Joe's mother died of cancer when he was fifteen and his stepfather kicked him out of the house. From January 1975 through August 1976 Joe stayed with a friend's family until he graduated from Derby high school in CT. Patti's early years were not easy either. With a history of addiction in her family she struggled with sobriety and graduated from Shelton high school, just on the other side of the Housatonic River from Derby. They both went to work immediately and met at Tie Communications in Shelton. They were married several years later on May 5th, 1984.



In 1994 Joe had the opportunity to move to the Charlotte area with Hartmann, Inc. who was opening a new office. He and Patti jumped at the chance to move and fell in love with the Charlotte area. Patti was a paralegal and found a job with a local law firm. Joe had become a specialist with Hartman in SAP operating systems and found a job that has been his home from then to the present, 40 years and counting. He is the longest tenured employee in the Charlotte office.

Patti had been free from alcohol for 27 years, but when her father became ill and died in 2006, she had a relapse in her sobriety for a brief time. She lost her job and it put a strain on their marriage. After her recovery in rehab, she went to work for the State of South Carolina in social services where she has now worked for over 15 years.

Joe loves sports; the NFL, NCAA football, hockey, and especially major league baseball. He loves the NY Mets (there aren't many of them in SC) but has been a fan since he was a kid. Joe even had a brief stint at ESPN radio in Charlotte. They both love the beach and hiking. Patti enjoys bird watching and works out faithfully following major back surgery in 2016.

Joe and Patti's story is one of spiritual renewal and healing. Moving to Fort Mill was divinely appointed, because a young paper board packaging salesperson named Toby came to visit Joe at work and after a friendship was established invited Joe and his wife to his church, Eternal Presbyterian Church. (Eternal Church to most of you.) It took some prodding because neither Joe nor Patti had much to do with church growing up, Patti with a Greek Orthodox background and Joe, Catholic. In May, 2009, they went to their first worship service at Eternal and felt an immediate peace come over them. They've "never looked back" and became members including joining an adult coed Sunday school group.

Later in 2009 Joe had a perforation in his colon that required surgery. The surgery did not go well and as a result Joe suffered a collapsed lung and sepsis eventually leading to a medically induced coma for more than a month. He was flown by helicopter from Pineville to Charlotte to be cared for by Dr. William Miles. The prognosis was grim. Joe would not make it through the week. Many at the church were praying for him and Joe's Sunday school group came to the hospital and prayed over him. Dr. Miles was also praying for him and came up with an unorthodox solution that he tried the next day using kidney dialysis to remove the infection. It was successful and Joe started to recover. After coming out of the coma Joe had to relearn to walk to reactivate his muscles that had atrophied from prolonged inactivity. Also, a screen mesh was inserted over his entire abdomen because of the herniation of the muscle walls. Joe and Patti are grateful to the Lord for his miraculous recovery.

Joe and Patti have two adult children. Jessica, 35, lives in Greenville and Bryan, 30, lives in Fort Collins, CO, but is thinking of relocating back to Fort Mill. They pray daily for their children that the Lord will speak to their hearts so they will experience spiritual renewal.

When you talk to them, you know how much they love the Lord and are deeply grateful for the spiritual impact the church has had on their lives. Joe's favorite verse is Matthew 6:6. *"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."*

Patti's favorite verse is 2 Corinthians 5:17. *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"*

Most Sundays you will find Patti helping in the preschool room and Joe in the back of the church greeting worshipers. You cannot miss him. He is the one with the infectious smile. Now you know why.

Written by Paul Veerman