

Rev. Aimée Eyer-Delevett
Parishwide Capital Campaign Kickoff Event Comments
How Firm Our Foundation

Each one of us is here today because someone who came before us cared enough to pass down the gift of faith to us. A father who prayed us safely through delivery into this world.... A mother who taught us to pray as she tucked us in bed.... A grandparent who passed down the stories of our faith....

In fact, we aren't here because of someONE, We are here because of countless someones, many of whom we will never know.

They are those who called a church into being, on the shores of the Pacific, where there was no church in which to praise God. The ones who nurtured a little house of prayer where folks could "Bide a wee and pray." The ones who, as they prayed, were moved to share God's mercy with the least in our midst, that all might know the reach of God's saving embrace. They gave their gifts in service to the church, that we might have an inheritance. And here we are....

We live out this inheritance at All Saints by the Sea, this beloved community of faith that we have chosen as our spiritual home. Thanks to the work of the faithful people who came before us, we are sheltered and strengthened for service in our beloved sanctuary.

Now it's our turn....

I am confident that you have heard of the dire conditions of our sanctuary. She is crying out for our care and it's time for us to heed her cry.

We've just prayed that, trusting in God's love, we might provide this community with a safe, accessible and welcoming church. That pretty much sums up what this project is about. Safe, accessible, welcoming.

Safety is the first and foremost motivator, and the bulk of the project.

As you likely know, our iconic Bell Tower is essentially free-standing and unreinforced, and the foundations under the oldest west end of the sanctuary are minimal at best. Neither would likely withstand a significant earthquake. Additionally, engineers have told us that the building needs lateral bracing on both its north-south and east-west axes. We must do this critical seismic stabilization work to ensure a true, safe—and standing!— sanctuary.

And not just for us, but for all people. Accessibility is a vital goal of the Sanctuary Preservation and Readiness Project. Our altar, the center of our common life, isn't accessible to everyone. For nearly a decade, the lay leaders and clergy have set a goal to right this. The plan now is to lower the communion rail to the floor level so that everyone can bring themselves to the altar to receive communion. Accessibility improvements also include installing a small lift for altar

servers to access the chancel; and providing ADA restrooms, made possible by repurposing the existing Vesting Room and other rooms on the south side.

Now, accessibility isn't only about having physical access to our sacred spaces. Accessibility, at its deepest level, is about providing welcoming space for all. Three project elements will make our sanctuary more welcoming: our new organ, The Seaside Chapel and Memorial Chapel.

For the past few decades our pipe organ has literally been growing mold and corroding with the sea air and climate. It is only about 30% functional and must be replaced. We need an instrument that doesn't hinder our worship, but that welcomes all to worship with music worthy to offer to God.

The Seaside Chapel is envisioned to be a center for life-long spiritual formation. Currently an underutilized space adjacent to the sanctuary, the Seaside Chapel could be used to welcome young children and their families in worship oriented especially to them. This space could be used during other services as a place where families could go if their child needs to move around or be nursed, but where mom or dad could still have visual and audio participation in the service thanks to a sliding wall. And during the week this sacred space could welcome the ever-deepening spiritual practices at All Saints: contemplative prayer, Christ-centered prayer, healing touch, Circles of Trust, and other such ministries that deeply tend the spiritual life.

Finally, the Memorial Chapel allows us to welcome those who have lived out their lives in the church to find their final resting place in a columbarium within the walls of their sacred home. It also allows the church to offer pastoral care to the family of the deceased in a unique way. And it's a physical and visible reminder of what is already spiritually true—that we gather each week in the mystical communion of the faithful who have come before us.

And because the church is a sacred gift not only to us, nor to those who have come before us, but for those yet to come, this project also includes the creation of an endowment and reserve funds to ensure our ability to be good stewards of this building and the ministry it houses for future generations of Christians.

During the next several months, you'll have an opportunity to learn more about the details of the project, as you'll soon hear from Sheri Benninghoven, Campaign Co-Chair and Raye Haskell Melville, chair of our Special Gifts Committee.

But right now, it's time to join together in this work. When I accepted the call to serve as your rector, many, many hours of service by many, many people had already gone into casting a vision for the Sanctuary Preservation and Readiness Project. I have to admit, it was an intimidating goal: \$11.6 million. But I knew, beyond a shadow of doubt, that I was called to lead with you to fulfill God's purpose for this church. And this is where we start, so that we can ensure that this church will be a beacon of God's love and mercy for generations to come.

This project is just the beginning of the faithful ministry we will accomplish together, but it must be done. Now. By us. And, I believe we WILL do it, together.

Today, I invite you all to join me and the project leadership in this necessary work to which we are all called. It will mean all of us giving as joyfully and generously as we can, just as our forbearers did. And it will mean acting faithfully, so that what may seem impossible to us, God will make possible through us.

The wonderful thing about doing this together, is that (quite obviously) not *one* of us has to do this alone. Whatever our capacity to give, we can give as joyfully and generously as we can to achieve this goal.

I assure you that Leslie Ridley-Tree, our Honorary Campaign Chair and the giver of our lead gift gave in just such a spirit. She told me she gave because she loves God deeply and awakens each day to ask how God will have her serve that day. She gave because she loves All Saints and knows that this project isn't optional, but must be done. And she gave because she wanted to inspire each one of us to give with the same kind of generosity of spirit. She said to me, that I might share with you, "this is our work to do, each one of us, together, as the household of God. It is such a joyous gift to give. It is a privilege, a freedom to worship, the freedom to choose, and we choose to come to All Saints. To make this our home. And so therefore we have this wonderful opportunity to save the house where our souls rest."

Alyson and I made our gift from a similar place of joy and gratitude. We asked ourselves, what are we able to give, and what does our faith and our love for the church inspire us to give. Somewhere between those questions we found our answer. And while I still wish we could have given more (and while I still seek to find means to give more, a second time), we also feel really good about the joyful and generous gift we made.

Some of us have the resources to give large amounts. Some of us have the resources to give modest amounts. It will take all of these gifts together to reach our goal. I assure you, when we move beyond our self-limiting fears, and plant our trust in God's abundance and generosity to us, we will give joyfully and generously, no matter the amount. We will inspire others to give generously. And we will grow stronger as the Body of Christ.

In union with one another, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, let us do the work and raise the funds necessary to accomplish the goals God has set before us, that we can pass on the inheritance of a safe, accessible, welcoming church to our children, and to all who will come seeking God.