

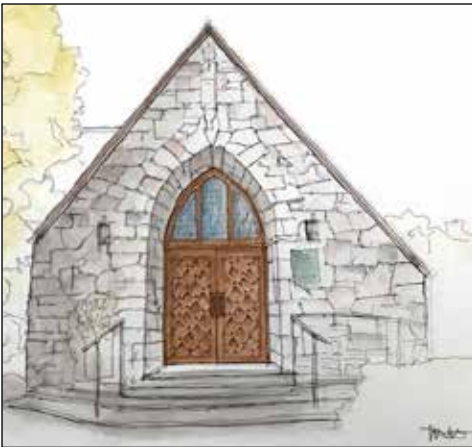
THE CALL

ST. ANDREW'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
WELLESLEY, MASSACHUSETTS

NO. 388
FALL 2020
SPECIAL EDITION

The refurbishment of our church sanctuary

by Adrian Robbins-Cole with Jim Blackwell



I AM SURE LIKE MANY OF YOU, during the months of the pandemic, I have really missed our beautiful church sanctuary. I have missed both the building, but more importantly, I have missed being able to be with all of you worshipping God together in our sacred space. I am so looking forward to when we can gather again “in person” to worship in our sanctuary. What will make our eventual regathering even more special is that our church renovation project, which we postponed this past summer due to the pandemic, will have been completed.

This “special edition” of the Call is about the church renovations. It contains a description of the background and rationale of the project, illustrations of aspects of the projects we will be undertaking, and a projected timeline of the project.

Sacred space in our tradition

From the very beginnings of our faith, setting aside sacred spaces

to encounter the divine has been central to us. At the beginning of the Bible, in Exodus, God speaks to Moses in the burning bush and sets aside Mount Horeb as a place for worship. It is not that we believe God can only be encountered in certain designated holy spaces. As Bishop Laura Ahrens told us in her sermon at our 125th anniversary, we need to go beyond the walls of our church to meet Jesus who is already present and working in the streets of Wellesley. But equally, I have heard many of you speak with awe about the sense of the divine, or of generations of prayerfulness they have encountered when visiting churches, cathedrals, temples, mosques, and synagogues.

St. Andrew's is our sacred space

It is our holy place set aside for us to encounter God within our own home community and town. Every time I enter the sanctuary, I have that sense of God's presence and of the prayers that have been said over generations from the pews. It fills me with a sense of gratitude to the previous generations who originally built our church and then added to it and cared for it over the last 125 years.

Our building as part of our mission

This fall, we will be doing our part to contribute to the renovation and care of our sacred space. We are doing these renovations not just for ourselves, not just for future generations, but also for the new people who we hope will be drawn

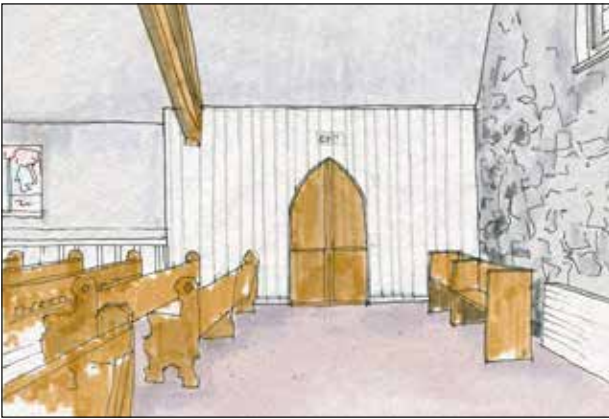
to the sacred space of our church over the next several years in order to encounter God. Central to our vision of why we are undertaking the renovations is the role of our church building as an important part of what draws new people to St. Andrew's, alongside our liturgy, music, children's programs, adult education, and fellowship.

In “normal times”, throughout each year, we have many people coming to “check out” St. Andrew's and the first thing they encounter, along with our greeters, is our building, our sacred space. Our vision is that our building should be beautiful and well cared for, reflecting the spiritual vitality and commitment to the faith of our congregation. It has been 25 years since the renovation of our main sanctuary and over 50 years since updates have been made to the Children's Chapel and the narthex (the main church entrance hall where the long coat rack is located). In some places our church building is looking a little tired.

Let there be light!

In the main church sanctuary, the most significant single piece of work will be the replacement of our failing lighting system. The existing system is 25 years old with many of the fixtures no longer working. Our plan is to install a new lighting system which will considerably enhance the experience of worship in the sanctuary. We are blessed to have in our congregation Carrie Hawley, one of Boston's leading

continued on the next page



New wood panelling on wall surrounding Denton Road door

light designers, who has worked on significant churches such as Trinity Church Copley Square and the Bigelow Chapel at Mount Auburn cemetery. As part of our planning for the lighting system, we undertook a field trip to the Bigelow Chapel and we were able to see first-hand what a difference a well-designed lighting system can make. Another parishioner, Laura Brown MacKinnon, who is part of our property team and who teaches stage management at Yale, pointed out that the poor lighting in the pulpit can actually make it difficult for parishioners to concentrate on the sermons.

The pews will be removed so we can erect scaffolding to do the lights. This will give us a chance to refurbish and repair the pews, as well as sand the wooden portions of the floor. All the kneelers in the pews have already been re-covered. We plan to repaint the

sanctuary. The last time it was painted was 1994 and we expect this to make quite an improvement.

Improving air quality and comfort level

We will be adding air conditioning to the sanctuary and installing better ceiling fans for more comfort on extremely hot days. These improvements will be most welcome as the climate unfortunately

continues to warm.

Recently, we learned from Greg Dubé, a former parishioner, about an air ionization system designed to clean air from pathogens like COVID-19. We are excited about this system and plan to install it or something similar. More and more institutions like schools and businesses are installing these technologies in response to the pandemic.

Improving our sound

In the sanctuary we are making improvements to the sound system including some new speakers and the addition of microphones over the choir to allow us to record our fabulous choir. Another exciting new addition will be a video camera allowing us to live stream as well as record services. This will enable parishioners who are housebound or away to participate in our Sunday worship. These improvements really bring us into the 21st century!

Tidying up some corners

We will also be making some improvements to two areas of the sanctuary whose appearance detracts from the overall beauty of our church. The first is the right rear corner of the sanctuary where the door to Denton Road is located. To bring it up to the standard of the rest of the sanctuary, we will be adding wooden paneling to the area surrounding that emergency exit door, complementing that around the door leading from the sanctuary into the narthex. The other area in need of improvement

is the usher table area at the back of the church next to the door into the narthex. Since there is no adequate storage in that corner, odds and ends seem to accumulate there making it look messy and uncared for. We will be putting a custom-made credenza in that corner which will give it a much neater appearance and look less like a “lost and found” area.




New storage space in usher's corner

The narthex

Entering a sacred space

As we think about welcoming visitors and people coming to “check out” St. Andrew’s, the first space visitors encounter when they enter the church through the main entrance to the sanctuary on Washington street is the narthex (the ecclesiastical term for the entrance chamber or porch of a church). An important part of our renovations is the complete refurbishment of the narthex which has not been updated for over 50 years.

The plan is to give the narthex a character which fits in with the overall medieval feel of the sanctuary. To achieve this, we are replacing the existing coat rack with a custom-made rack made in the style of a row of choir stalls in an ancient cathedral. This will help give the narthex a medieval feel in character with the sanctu-



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ary. We are also putting in a stone floor which will add to the ancient cathedral feel. In addition to these changes we are replacing the main church door, which is falling apart, with a door with a similar “castle-like” character. Our hope is that this will give visitors a sense that they are entering a building which is both attractive and cared for, but also immediately gives a sense that one is entering into a special place, a sacred space.

The Children’s Chapel

Our hidden gem

The other worship space where we will be undertaking some refurbishments is the wonderful Children’s Chapel—one of the hidden gems at St. Andrew’s. This is a beautiful space but one that has not been updated for decades and as a result looks rather tired. The dated blue colored walls will be repainted a white color which will help draw our eyes to beautiful blue stained-glass windows which make up one wall of the chapel. We have already replaced the old red carpet with a wooden floor. Given that we are using the chapel more and more for both adult and children’s worship and activities, we would like to see it refurbished in a way that brings out its true beauty as a sacred space for encountering God.

Project timeline

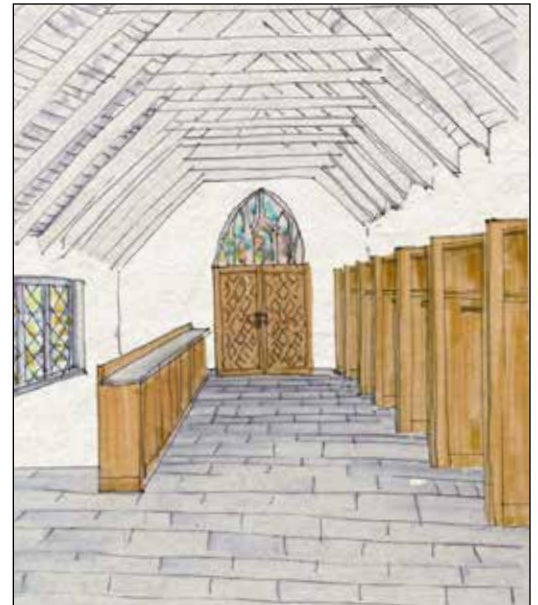
In early September, the property committee and the vestry gave their approval to proceed with the project. Since then, Jim Blackwell has been working with Bill Foley, our construction manager, to put the project back online. All our original subcontractors are still available and eager to work. Bill, Jim, and Tala Klink, our architect, are finalizing details and obtaining updated pricing from them. Our plan is to start construction activities during October hopefully by the time you are reading this Call. We expect renovations to be completed during January 2021. All state COVID-19 guidelines for

construction will be adhered to. Contractors will be required to wear masks and maintain social distancing.

It is impossible to develop a linear schedule for the project since there is so much overlap between all the trades. Initial tasks will include some demolition, installing a new stone floor in the narthex, pulling old wiring in the sanctuary, and moving the pews for repairs and refinishing. Steve Killeen has already moved all the books and the re-covered kneelers to the basement. The mechanical and electric contractors have quite a bit of prep work to do before they install the air conditioning equipment and new lighting.

The revelation

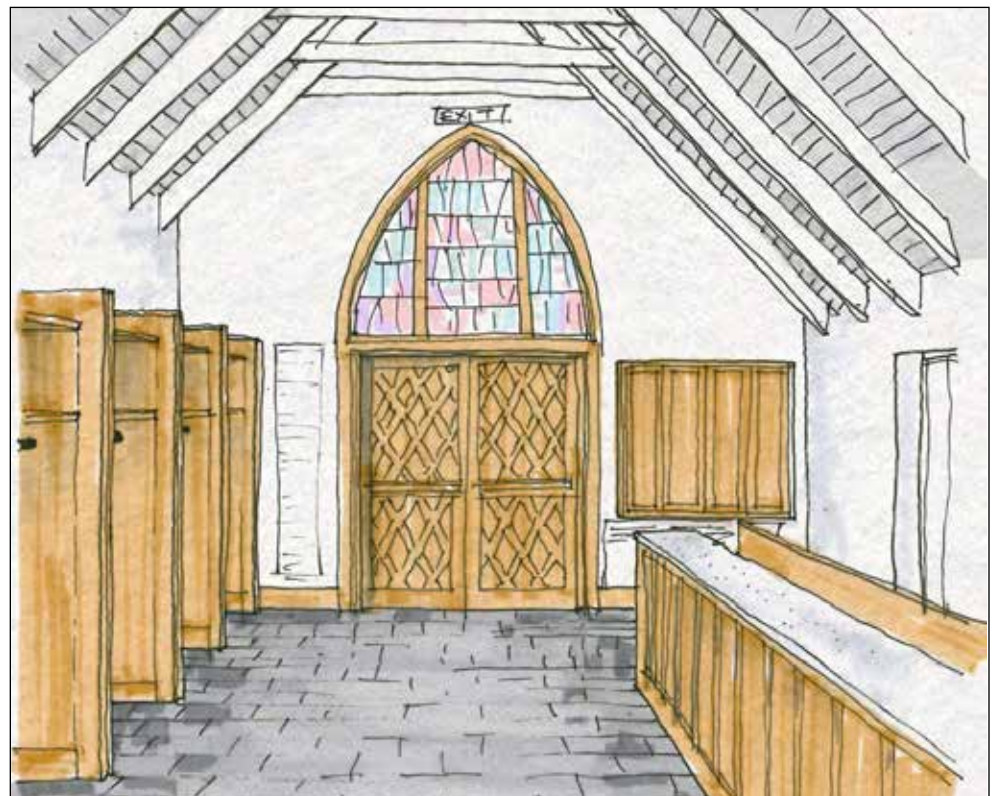
I hope this brief journey through the planned renovations will make you look forward even more to returning to St. Andrew’s once we are able to regather in person. I would like to thank Jim Blackwell and the other members of the property committee who have worked hard to oversee and bring this proj-



Refurbished narthex looking towards the sanctuary

ect to fruition. The members of the committee include Laura Brown MacKinnon, David Hamlin, Carrie Hawley, Michael Mahlenkamp, Steve Mahoney, Paige Manning, Randy Parker, and Sam Schaeffer.

Our main hope is that these renovations will help enhance our sense of St. Andrew’s as a loved and cared for sacred space set aside for us to encounter God.



Refurbished narthex looking towards the main church door



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St. Andrew's Episcopal Church Floor Plan Scheme A- One-for-one Replacement/Relamping Upgrade

