

Dear Caroline Church parishioner

For those who may not know me, I am Chris Haring. I have attended Caroline Church since 1956 and served on the Vestry from 2003 to 2015 in various capacities. As announced at recent quarterly “town hall” meetings, I recently filed a legal action against the church in an effort to restore monies that were taken from donor restricted funds and are now being used for purposes outside the scope of the purposes of those funds.

Some may think this was an extreme measure. I agree. However, it was done only after attempting for three years to reverse the unwise and unlawful transfers without success. The Rector and wardens were sent a copy of the unserved complaint in early May, with an offer for both sides promptly to meet, without preconditions, in order to collectively find a solution. But the offer was spurned, “more time” was requested to consider the situation, and thus the Vestry was served. In early June the Attorney General’s office offered to meet with the parties and to serve as a mediator. I agreed but the church’s lawyer never responded. So the lawsuit continues.

The raid of the restricted funds is not a small technical transgression or a minor bookkeeping error. It’s a big deal. It’s a major breach of trust that has a major impact on the credibility of Caroline Church, now and into the future. If you donate to the Churchyard Fund, you have a right to expect the donation to be used for those purposes—not put into the operating account and used for any purpose that may arise. The church is currently campaigning to have members engage in “Planned” or “Legacy” Giving. The action of closing out these funds to a “combined” account leaves no certainty that any bequest will be used for the intended purpose—or that only interest/dividends be used so as to ensure the principal of the bequest will last for future generations. The sole purpose of this action is to put the money back where it belongs.

In the late 1990's a misreading of some old minutes led to a belief that these funds could be moved. **See this link** for a complete report of how this myth became widely accepted. Anyone can make a mistake. The measure of our church is going to be how we deal with that mistake: will we fix it or attempt to cover it up?

This is not about personal gain. I am not seeking “damages” for myself. I have spent many thousands of dollars of my savings to pay an attorney to confirm my research and commence this action. I will not be able to recover those attorney fees, win or lose.

The document linked above is on a website that is a work in progress. It includes Vestry minutes and audit copies that confirm the research. I have read, taken notes and scanned over 3,000 pages of minutes, audits, and financial records before taking this action.

I’ll be placing more of those documents on the site over the coming weeks. If you care about Caroline Church as much as I do, I hope you will look them over and let the Vestry know how you feel, regardless of which “side” you find yourself on.

But we all need to stop the procrastination of realizing that something needs to be done about the

annual deficit that is simply unsustainable, yet doing nothing about it. Something has to be done now, and next year, and in the years to follow. Virtually all of us has either family or friends buried in our churchyard. The Churchyard Endowment Fund had sufficient monies to maintain and preserve the cemetery into perpetuity. The account now has a zero balance. The good intentions of the present Vestry to maintain the cemetery will ring hollow in a few years when the new “combined fund” runs low and there are monthly bills to be paid. Please support this effort to preserve the Churchyard and other donor restricted funds. It took over a dozen generations for these funds to reach the year 2000 levels. Don’t let it be our generation that is responsible for their loss.

Chris Haring

[www.savethechurchyard.org](http://www.savethechurchyard.org)

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