

September 8, 2019

Dear Parishioner

This is my third email on the funds dispute and I want to update you on what is happening.

First, the church has made a motion to dismiss the suit—not on the merits but rather on several contentions that boil down to me not being legally able to bring a suit against them. This is why the Rector’s email some of you received referenced me as a “former parishioner.” In his sworn affidavit he states that I am not a member in good standing. My attendance and financial support has certainly decreased (but not stopped) since the disputed “consolidation” of funds in mid 2016. Giving of my time and talents had not, with over 300 trips to the church from that time until the Vestry demanded the return of my keys, church credit card and passwords in July. So when you read *The Carillon* asking for volunteers, or listen to stewardship talks about the importance of giving your time & talents, think of this.

Second, this past week the church filed a motion demanding that I take down my savethechurchyard.org website. It would appear that the First Amendment is OK for freedom of religion, but not freedom of speech. A second hearing on that demand has been scheduled for next week. Hopefully the First Amendment will prevail. It is very clear that the Rector and Vestry do not want you to hear from me and do not want the court or you to hear the facts, review the minutes, audits and financial records. The savethechurchyard.org site has received thousands of page requests since it launched on August 7, so there is clearly a need for a discussion—and clearly a desire on the part of the Rector/Vestry to quash that discussion.

If you hear the sentiment that this dispute is harmful and divisive, I agree. But I reject any suggestion that I am the cause of the division for the following reasons:

- I worked for three years quietly, discretely, and in a non-confrontational manner to resolve this, to no avail.
- After the action was filed, the Rector and Wardens were given copies of the complaint without actually being formally served. The cover letter offered to delay serving the complaint formally if the parties would sit down to discuss the matter. This was refused, so the Vestry was served.
- The head of the Charities Bureau of the New York State Attorney General’s office offered to act as a mediator. The church refused; another indication that they did not want to have this resolved on the facts.
- It was the Vestry that announced the lawsuit at it’s “town hall” meetings on June 29 and 30. They “let the cat out of the bag” and now seem surprised that I have stepped up to offer you the facts and documents that support my contentions. So they claim the documents are “confidential.”

Those of you who know me also know that I am not a malcontent or gadfly looking to stir up trouble. I am a near lifelong member of Caroline Church (despite my apparent recent “excommunication”) who wants the church to live and grow within its financial means. If it

can't, there needs to be a sufficient amount in the Churchyard Endowment Fund to preserve the cemetery.

Finally, I thank the many people who have called, emailed, and sent me cards. I am very gratified that in the first two weeks since putting up the site I received donations of a bit over \$10,000. But the court appearances this week and next will bring my legal expenses to at or over twice that amount, and I am again requesting your financial support. There will be additional expenses fighting the motion to dismiss, additional expenses in subpoenaing parties and documents to further prove that these funds are restricted. They should not have been pooled to pay the current operating costs without receiving permission of the court.

While some may feel this is my battle, that's only partially true. If you have family or friends buried in our cemetery, it's your battle too. If you love Caroline Church and want it to be around after the next decade, it's your battle too.

Finally, even if you can't financially support this action, I would like to hear from you. If you support me, great—send me an email. Even if you don't support this action but agree that a decision is needed from the courts as to whether the consolidation of funds was proper, let me know that. If you think it's wrong (or right) for the church to attempt to shut down the savethechurchyard.org site, let me know that too. Everyone I have communicated with has been supportive, but I'm well aware that it may be awkward for someone who does not to let me know. But those comments are welcome too. You can reach me at [chris@savethechurchyard.org](mailto:chris@savethechurchyard.org) or [haringjc@gmail.com](mailto:haringjc@gmail.com). Finally please join me in prayer for a resolution to this issue so we can all move on in supporting His plans for our church and ourselves.

Chris Haring