

# THE HOLY CITY

## SAVE THE CHURCH

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

For 173 years, Charlestonians have worshipped at St. Andrew's Church, a handsome Greek Revival edifice at 43 Wentworth Street. But unless we act immediately, St. Andrew's antebellum sanctuary will be converted into a private home, and its Parish Hall will become offices and condominiums.

Turning this holy sanctuary into a home would require major changes. Legally speaking, the new owner could damage or remove any part of the interior, including the handcrafted balconies, the vintage pews and pipe organ, and an unusual historic fresco of the ascending Christ.

It might make sense for Charleston to lose a grand old church if it could no longer be used for its original purpose. But that's not the case. The young congregation that's worshipped at



St. Andrew's since 2006, Redeemer Presbyterian, is eager to preserve the church as a *church*. Under an agreement negotiated by Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Redeemer was given 90 days to match the private offer of \$1.6 million. But the deadline is coming up quickly: October 31<sup>st</sup>.

Redeemer members, primarily young families and students, are making donations that represent deep personal sacrifices. They've also secured a low-interest loan from a family of another denomination that supports the church's ministry to needy downtown residents. And Redeemer has developed a sound for-profit business model that will help the congregation maintain the buildings, repay the loan, and eventually expand their downtown ministry.

Altogether, as of mid-September, Redeemer has secured nearly half the \$1.6 million purchase price. **But the church still needs help from the broader community to raise \$800,000 before October 31<sup>st</sup>.**

## The Holy City

The Mayor, City Council members, the Preservation Society, Historic Charleston, and the National Trust are all committed to saving St. Andrew's. That's because the loss of this church would set a terrible precedent for historic preservation. Also, St. Andrew's story is just a symptom of a larger problem: the slow erosion of Charleston's identity as the "Holy City."



**"We must save this church!"**

Charleston was founded as a haven for religious freedom. Our religious community has always been unusually large and diverse. Charleston currently has about 400 houses of worship, and our skyline is memorable because of its many beautiful steeples.

However, high downtown real estate values are taking a toll. Already, a church a block away from St. Andrew's has been converted into a seven-bedroom home. If we lose St. Andrews, and the next church, and the next, downtown Charleston will grow more like an artificial stage set, and less like the diverse and spiritually alive community we enjoy today.



As the Rev. Dr. Peter Moore of St. Michael's Episcopal Church said recently, the effort to turn St. Andrew's into a private home is antithetical to a **"distinct way of life where family, faith and values are all woven into a tapestry that resonates with deep springs within."**

This wonderful "tapestry" of family, faith, and values is what established Charleston

as the Holy City centuries ago. This fundraising campaign, then, isn't just about saving a single church. It's also about protecting the traditional pattern of Charleston's community life.

## History of St. Andrew's

St. Andrew's Greek Revival sanctuary was built circa 1838 by a Methodist congregation. The interior features stained glass windows; a pipe organ from the 1880s; handcrafted balconies on three sides; a graceful arch defining the apse; and an unusual fresco of the ascending Christ.

In the 1850s, hard times and fire damage brought the original Methodist congregation into partnership with a Lutheran church. Later, the Methodists and Lutherans merged and St. Andrew's Lutheran Church was born. Their sanctuary, which was extensively renovated in 1908, is still in very good condition.



The church's brick Parish Hall is separated from the sanctuary by a narrow courtyard cemetery. Built in 1932, it was designed by Simons & Lapham, perhaps the most important Charleston architectural firm of that era. The Parish Hall includes an auditorium, a small chapel, and space for offices and Sunday School classes.

## Redeemer Presbyterian Church

In 2006, St. Andrew's dwindling congregation offered the use of its facilities to a growing new congregation, Redeemer Presbyterian Church. Redeemer, founded in 1999, is known for its community outreach, which has included the following services to needy downtown families:

- Providing free after-school tutoring, school uniforms, and school supplies;
- Delivering van-loads of healthy groceries twice each week;
- Supporting young unwed mothers through the Florence Crittenton program;
- Paying for utilities, medical treatment, and other necessities in emergency situations;
- Repairing homes and providing appliances; and
- Staffing free neighborhood medical clinics.

Redeemer also opens the church to the Charleston community for a wide range of activities, including:

- weddings and funerals;
- music and dance recitals;
- historic tours and Spoleto rehearsals;
- campus ministry activities;
- addiction support groups; and
- family activities and Christian fellowship for MUSC international students, faculty, and post-doctoral scholars.



Redeemer members are so eager to save St. Andrew's that they've developed a sustainable business plan that will help them do so.

Charleston is one of the most popular wedding destinations in the country. Working with several top caterers and wedding planners, Redeemer members have budgeted a scenario for a wedding business that would allow them to pay off a private mortgage loan in ten years. Funds from the business would also maintain the buildings, and eventually expand Redeemer's downtown ministry. The plan is dependent, though, on raising an additional \$800,000 before October 31<sup>st</sup>.



## The Holy City Fund

The Holy City Fund, a new initiative of the Preservation Society of Charleston, supports the preservation of historic religious buildings and congregations in Charleston. All donations made to the fund by October 31<sup>st</sup> will be used to help Redeemer Church purchase this historic church.

The Preservation Society, founded in 1920, is the oldest community-based historic preservation organization in America. The Society focuses on preservation, education, advocacy, and planning, and has more than 2,000 members from South Carolina and beyond.

So please – consider making a significant contribution to the Holy City Fund before October 31<sup>st</sup>. You can donate at the Preservation Society's website:

[www.preservationsociety.org](http://www.preservationsociety.org). Or

write a check to the Preservation Society, specifying "Holy City Fund," and send it to P.O. Box 521, Charleston 29402.

**Thank you very much for whatever you're able to contribute!**

