



St. Mary's Episcopal Church

Ancient worship. Affirming faith. Genuine love.

Presentation of Honors
Organ Rededication Recital
September 11, 2022
The Rev'd Charles Everson

When you enter this beautiful space with its beautiful windows and gorgeous marble altar and fancy pipe organ, it is easy to be deceived into thinking that our little church has a lot of money. We do not. Frankly, we have a hard enough time maintaining his building, and were it not for generous benefactors and volunteers who love this church and the music that is made here from both inside and outside the congregation, such an instrument would not be possible.

William T. Kemper Jr. (known as "Bill") was a lifetime supporter of St. Mary's. When the Church was slated for demolition by the East Side Redevelopment Authority when the highway came through in the early 1960s, Bill is credited for literally saving the church from demolition through a gift he facilitated from the David Woods Kemper Memorial Foundation.

Upon his death in 1989, Bill directed that the majority of his estate be placed in the William T. Kemper Foundation, with Commerce Bank as co-trustee. Since his passing, the Foundation carrying his name has provided two transformative gifts to St. Mary's. First, a \$500,000 grant in 2009 as part of the Church's 120th anniversary campaign primarily to gut and essentially rebuild the parish hall and bathroom area. I have only seen photos of the parish hall before it was renovated, but let's just say that it was not very welcoming or hospitable.

In early the summer of 2019, with the organ in a state of disrepair as you heard Geoff talk about in his lecture, St. Mary's sent a grant request to the William T. Kemper Foundation in the hopes that the Kemper family might be willing to help us once again. After several meetings with members of the Foundation staff and the Kemper family, the grant proposal, written by one of our seminarians, now Fr. Isaac Petty, was approved and we were awarded a matching grant in the amount of \$264,000 to renovate the pipe organ, and to replace the HVAC system in this space with one that helps protect the organ over time.

These gifts were championed in Bill Kemper's memory by the Foundation's co-trustee, first Bill's nephew James M. Kemper Jr., and now by James' son, Jonathan Kemper, who is with us today.

Coincidentally, September 11th is the birthday of the late Mildred Lane (Millie) Kemper, the wife of James M. Kemper Jr. and Jonathan's mother. She had a lifetime passion for music before her passing in 1986. In fact, Millie and William T. Kemper Jr. (known fondly within the family as "Uncle Bill:") enjoyed music and dancing together.

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We are joined today by Jonathan and Nancy Lee Kemper, and their son David; Julie Kemper Foyer and her son Jean Charles Foyer; Michael Fields and his daughter Julia Jackson; dear family friend Kirby Upjohn, and Foundation representative Carrie Stewart.

Next week, we will be mounting this plaque onto the wooden wall that is normally behind the organ bench, and it reads,

In recognition of a generous gift made from the
William T. Kemper Foundation
Commerce Bank, Trustee
for the restoration of the St. Mary's pipe organ
through the generosity of Mr. William T. Kemper, Jr.
a life-time supporter of St. Mary's Episcopal Church
A.D. 2022

Please join me in giving heartfelt thanks to the Kemper family. [applause]

The grant award letter arrived on January 30, 2020, and The Committee began discerning how we might raise the \$264,000 needed to receive the matching grant. Well, we all know what happened a month-and-a-half later: COVID hit. Lockdown ensued, budgets froze, and the world changed overnight. One Sunday morning in July, just a few weeks after we re-opened (with all sorts of restrictions in place), our beloved deacon Gerry Shaon fainted right up here by the altar rail during the service. A few days later, he was diagnosed with COVID-19, and being a lung cancer survivor with already limited lung capacity, the virus was not kind to his body. After a couple of weeks in the hospital, he died on August 13th, 2020.

As a layperson, Gerry served this parish as the Senior Warden in the early to-mid-1980's. After retiring from his career as an accountant, he retired to San Francisco and was ultimately ordained deacon at Grace Cathedral where he served as deacon and parish administrator for 15 years. Upon his second retirement, he came home to St. Mary's, serving as deacon and parish administrator. Unbeknownst to any of us, Gerry left his entire estate to St. Mary's Church, providing the matching funds needed to complete this project. Gerry was a huge music fan, and I can still hear his snarky remarks in the sacristy after the service anytime the organ (or organist) did something that didn't sound quite right to him.

We will also be mounting this plaque which reads,

In loving memory of
The Reverend Deacon Gerald Shaon
December 7, 1940 - August 13, 2020
whose estate contributed to
the restoration of the St. Mary's pipe organ
REQUIESCAT IN PACE
A.D. 2022

Devastated at the loss of Deacon Gerry, but grateful for his generous contribution, we embarked on the two-year project to replace the HVAC system and restore the organ. Reuter Organ Company, under the direction of CEO JR Neutal, began their work shortly thereafter, and here we are. I would like to read you one final plaque that includes the names of those who supported this project financially, were members of the Organ Project Committee, or were champions of this instrument from years past. If you hear your name, I invite you to give a little wave so that others might see you. Please hold your applause until the end:

In thanksgiving for their
generosity and labor of love
in caring for the St. Mary's pipe organ
over the years, upon the occasion of
the successful completion of a restoration by

Reuter Organ Company
AUSPICE MARIA
A.D. 2022

The Neeb Family Foundation, Dr. Michael Frost
Mr. Douglas Funston, Mr. W. Keith Gotschall
Mr. Richard Herndon, Mr. Jeffrey Hon
Fr. Robert Hutcherson, Mr. Jim Lynch
Dr. Anthony Maglione, Mr. Gary Pate
Fr. Isaac Petty, Dr. Bruce Prince-Joseph
Fr. Bruce Rahtjen, Canon John Schaefer
Mr. Robert Trapp, Dr. Geoffrey Wilcken

Thank you! [applause]

Lastly, I wouldn't be a very good priest if I didn't invite you to come back for church. We have services every day except Saturday, and the service times are conveniently printed on the back of your program. Please take it with you and consider attaching it to your refrigerator with a magnet! This community of faith welcomes all with open arms, no matter your station in life. You're invited to join us, and if you're as musical as I am, the 10:00 Sunday service is probably when you'll want to be here.

I invite you to turn to page 5 in your bulletin and stand as we sing "O God, our help in ages past."