
New Dollars/New Partners Success Story

Calvary Episcopal Church, Tarboro, North Carolina



Calvary Episcopal Church's spire.

Photos Courtesy of Calvary Episcopal Church of Tarboro

A Gothic Revival church built in 1867 stands proudly among ancient live oak and incense cedar trees in a small North Carolina town. Calvary Episcopal Church, which anchors a 45-block historic district in Tarboro, appears solid, but the roof and exterior of the building and the 1922 parish house are in need of repair.

Following *New Dollars/New Partners for Your Sacred Place*, Calvary successfully completed a capital campaign in 2007, raising 31 percent more than the \$563,000 goal necessary for repairs. "Frequently, people within a church give far more than they first believe they will give when you organize a campaign effectively," explains Whitney Jones, President of Whitney Jones, Inc., a fundraising firm in Winston-Salem, N.C.

Jones teamed with Partners for Sacred Places to introduce capital campaign strategies to congrega-

tions during the *New Dollars/New Partners* program in 2006. Sponsored by the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina, the training encouraged ten congregations to discover resources within themselves and in their greater communities.

A Strong Identity

The congregation's embrace of its heritage and its role as a community anchor provided a solid foundation for fundraising. Calvary's historic grounds and William Percival-designed church are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The churchyard, classified as an arboretum, attracts genealogists from across the nation to research the burial monuments dating to the eighteenth century. But the exterior masonry of the church and Hobart Upjohn-designed parish house must be re-pointed, and the gutters must be replaced. Additionally, the congregation plans to install ramps to make the parish house and All Saints Chapel accessible, in a manner complementing the architecture.

The buildings and the congregation are also an asset to the community because of their ministries. A generation ago, Calvary was a founding organizer for the local men's shelter, soup kitchen, and women's domestic violence refuge. Calvary continues to support arts and culture programs and even provides outreach to the local court system. Additionally, Calvary welcomes other congregations to use its kitchen, gymnasium, and parlor space in Memorial Hall.

Calvary's rector, the Rev. William Smyth, states that Partners has helped the congregation in taking that level of hospitality one step further. Following *New Dollars/New Partners*, the congregation invited a local community advocacy group to use the office space in Memorial Hall. "It is routine stuff," Father Smyth modestly suggests, "but for us in a small town it is a big deal. This kind of hospitality is important to us, and we are not just a passive historic site."

Additionally, Father Smyth credits Partners for his decision to join the Tarboro and Edgecombe County Chamber of Commerce, as well as approaching additional community organizations like the arts council and the community theater group. "After the Partners weekend (training), we redoubled (our outreach efforts), and tried to be more conscious of how we can be responsive to the community's needs."

Energizing a Congregation for a Capital Campaign

As a fundraising consultant, Jones has been assisting nonprofit organizations and congregations throughout the southeastern United States since 1981. In Jones' experience, volunteers within congregations are more committed to lead and give of time and funds. "A campaign for a church builds the church, builds unity, and connects the church to the outside community in a stronger way."

Father Smyth cites Jones' *New Dollars/New Partners* presentation about stewardship and capital campaigns as key to Calvary's success. "He reminded us that one of the most important things was to work real hard on your advanced gifts. Get your most generous givers in place before you launch the campaign fully."

Jones also indicated ways in which annual stewardship campaigns should differ from capital campaign efforts. Father Smyth found this valuable, since congregants need to know the gift ranges needed for a successful capital campaign, and the campaign should have a more strategic, four-phase approach. Jones adds, "When people give to an annual campaign they frequently give out of their annual income, whereas for a capital campaign they more frequently give out of assets."



A bluegrass worship service in the churchyard.

Echoing themes in the *New Dollars/New Partners* training, Jones also advises:

- *approaching former members who have moved elsewhere.
- *contacting townspeople who have a second home in the community and an attachment to the church. "They may not seem very active, but if they have a connection they will give," states Jones.
- *approaching members of organizations using the congregation's buildings as a public meeting place.
- *approaching preservationists or people with an interest in the architectural gems of the community.
- *hosting benefit events; they may not yield a large amount of money, but can be helpful.
- *getting to know foundations that give for historic preservation.

Organizing a Successful Capital Campaign

Father Smyth credits his dedicated parishioners, as well as former members with strong family ties, to his congregation's success. "The real engine behind our capital campaign is the loyalty; first, of our own parishioners, for our buildings and

the churchyard. Number two is the loyalty of the extended family of Calvary Church."

When organizing the capital campaign, Father Smyth strategically appointed two recognized parish leaders as co-chairs. The co-chairs visited a handful of parishioners for initial large gifts before announcing the campaign and selecting an additional nine committee members to be responsible for the broader parish effort.

The committee involved the entire congregation in the fundraising effort by hosting an information session during a church supper. Inspired by a Partners PowerPoint presentation, Calvary projected photographs showing the damage to the buildings, and detailed the repair and maintenance needs. "People walk by windows of the church all the time... but if you take a picture of them and put them on screen, suddenly they see things in a way that they do not in their Sunday-by-Sunday experience."

Additionally, Calvary used its powerful case statement, created the following guidance from the first *New Dollars/New Partners* training, as a tool for motivation. "We emphasized to our congregation the importance of preserving our buildings -- that it is not about us, but our service to the community. Anyone in our congregation would say, 'This is important to who we are.'"

Not only did Calvary exceed its goal from its own congregation, it managed to raise an additional \$5,100 from resources unrelated to the church. Father Smyth shares that the anonymous donors were members of the community who had friendships or business relationships with congregants.

"I think what was unusual to the campaign is our intense loyalty, and the experience of belonging to the thriving parish with a beautiful service, an excellent music program, strong lay leadership, and good involvement in education programs and outreach. It is just a wonderful place."



Calvary's congregation installed brick ramps (in background) complimentary to the design of the Gothic church to make the building accessible.

If you have questions about the *New Dollars/New Partners* program or an interest in bringing it to your community, please contact Elizabeth Terry, Director of Training, at 215-567-3234, ext. 19 or eterry@sacredplaces.org.