

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF SAN FRANCISCO  
"YEAR OF THE PHOENIX" (1973-74) \$100,000 FUND-RAISING CAMPAIGN  
2006 Guerrero Street, San Francisco, California 94110

September 9, 1973

To: All Members and Friends of Metropolitan Community Church

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

On Friday morning July 27, 1973, at approximately 2:00 a.m., an arsonist or arsonists set fire to our church building at 1074 Guerrero Street here in San Francisco. Fire and smoke damage to the structure, both interior and exterior, was extensive. The building, although owned by another denomination, had been occupied by us on a monthly rental basis and most of the many recent improvements to the building had been made by our congregation. We have recently learned that the property was greatly under-insured, and its owners have indicated that they prefer not to rebuild or restore the building to its pre-fire condition. Since the fire our congregation has been meeting on a temporary basis, a few blocks away in the sanctuary of the Mission United Presbyterian Church. Our Presbyterian friends have been most generous and are genuinely deserving of all our thanks and prayers. Their Christian attitude in sharing with us at this time truly demonstrates that Christ lives within us all.

Our church here in San Francisco has had to relocate many times since its beginning in January 1970. From that first meeting of a dozen or so individuals gathered in a small apartment living room, the church's history here has been one of continual growth . . . . . and relocation. First to an upstairs room of a local bar; next to a small meeting and then the largest meeting room of California Hall; next to shared-quarters with the good people at St. Aidan's Episcopal Church ( a small church in our Diamond Heights area); and finally to our present fire-stricken sanctuary where we minister to a congregation of from four hundred to seven hundred members and friends of the community. During this period we have actively engaged in a program of ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of our brothers and sisters. The major portion of our revenues and resources have been devoted and expended for this purpose. Church offices were opened in a small store-front location in mid-1970 and subsequently a Church Center was opened in the "skid-row" area on Sixth Street in November of that year. Until we were finally "burned-out" by our second arsonist-set fire at the Center in mid-1972, we devoted most of our resources to its maintenance as a gathering place for new arrivals and those in need of counselling, food or a temporary place to stay. Although the Sixth Street Center is now closed, we continue to conduct a small Sunday morning service in the area at the nearby S.I.R. Center. Most of the other activities formerly at the Sixth Street Center have been continued at our Church Parsonage next-door to the fire-stricken sanctuary.

The response to this latest fire & especially as it relates to our immediate needs, has indeed been heartwarming. Messages of sympathy, concern and expressions of unity together with offers of assistance have been received from individuals and groups, both "gay" and "straight", from throughout the country. It is in response to these generous offers and gestures of support that the need for this letter first became apparent. It is also for those same reasons that I have briefly recounted our church history, its past activities and would like to now share with you some of our plans and hopes for the present and future.

Our Church Board of Directors and members of the community have been meeting together to decide how best to use the many offers of support we have received, for the benefit of all our sisters and brothers. The single most important understanding reached during these meetings has been the recognition that we must, first and foremost, acquire a permanent home! It has been suggested that we attempt to acquire a structure capable of meeting the needs not only of our church, but those of a multitude of other "gay" local and national groups, as well. Proposals of space for a "Gay" National Library Wing, Headquarters for various National activities and office spaces for lesser known local groups are among the multitude of suggestions which have been put forth at this time.

Unfortunately, as is often the case, the needs appear to be greater than the available financial resources. In addition, real estate values in San Francisco are among the highest of any city in the country. A \$50,000 structure in another area could easily exceed several millions in value if located here.

It is believed that we should immediately inaugurate an extensive building-fund drive to raise the resources needed to acquire a suitable structure. Our initial fund-raising goal for the next twelve (12) months has been set at \$100,000. We hope to raise at least 90% of this goal from within our immediate area. A suggestion that we mount a National Campaign for the balance is a possibility presently under consideration.

As has previously been announced, a co-ordinating group has been formed to develop the fund-raising program. Our theme for the campaign is "The Year of The Phoenix" and the slogan is from the 61st chapter of Isaiah, "to give unto them beauty for ashes". Many fund-raising projects are progressing through various stages of planning and are briefly outlined below.

- (1) Sheriff Richard Mongisto, State Senator Milton Marks and Supervisor John Molinari are planning a special fund-raising activity during the month of October. Their Project will be a "straight-oriented" community effort designed to appeal to donors outside of the local "gay" community.
- (2) Under the direction of Tavern Guild President, Bob Ross, a series of fund-raising projects is being planned at several of the community bars. The first of these efforts will be held at the ... Next Sunday we hope to be able to announce the exact date of the ... by President Ross and his staff.
- (3) Several prominent theatrical personalities within our community are planning a series of special fund-raising productions. Mr. J.J. Van Dyke, Mr. H.L. Perry and Mr. James Thomason-Bergner will each be directing a special production during the next few months. Mr. Thomason-Bergner has announced that his group's production will be a "star-studded special" entitled "Costumes, by Pat Caspano" to be performed on a Sunday afternoon during the early part of December. Details of the other productions will be released as soon as arrangements are completed.



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(4) Our Church's Assistant Pastor, Austin Amerine, has agreed to take charge of the fund-raising efforts among our own membership. On October 14, 1973, at our regular Sunday services, a special fund-raising appeal will be made on behalf of the building fund program. We hope to have many local dignitaries and community personalities present together with a majority of our congregation for this very important occasion. Please mark your calendar and urge all your friends to attend.

(5) Many other prominent members of our community have offered their endorsements of our fund-raising program. They have also offered their assistance and have each agreed to serve as Honorary Co-Chairpersons of the Fund-Raising Campaign. The names of our Honorary Co-Chairpersons are as follows:

Hon. Jo Daly, Member, C.A.T.V. Task Force  
Mr. Frank Fitch, Past-President, S.I.R.  
Mr. Jim Foster, Executive Director, Whitman-Radcliff Foundation  
Ms. Madeline Isaacson and Ms. Sandy Schuster, "Lesbian Family"  
HRM Marcus Manulis, Emperor I of San Francisco  
HRM Jose Sarria, Empress I de San Francisco  
Kate and Scotty of "Scott's Pit"

(6) A volunteer staff has been appointed to coordinate the fund-raising activities. Executive Coordinator of the program is your Pastor, James Sandhure, and working directly with him as our Campaign Secretary will be Bond Shands. A Public Relations Support Group and a complement of sixteen (16) volunteers from the Church completes the organizational staff.

In the near future we will be publicizing exact dates for specific events. Also, you may contact the Church Office at 285-0392 or the Campaign Secretary, Bond Shands, at 63-1942, for additional information. We still need additional volunteers to assist in this campaign. If you are interested, please contact Bond after services or by telephone.

Sincerely Yours,



JAMES SANDHURE  
Pastor