

## Capital Campaign Testimony – April 23, 2023

Both of us, Kelly and Sheryl, grew up in relatively privileged situations. Our families had enough. Our parents were employed and paid well; we grew up with plenty. And because of that, we were able to get through school without taking on debt. We were able to get through college and to get all the way through our Master of Divinity programs without taking on any debt. That's a huge privilege, and it set us up in a particular way in this world that not everybody is able to do. We're really conscious of that privilege. Through that, of course, we worked lots of different jobs. We worked lots of jobs on top of each other, so that we would be able to be sustainable, so we would have our needs met. Both are true—we hustled, and we had a head start.

After we graduated with our Master of Divinity degrees, we knew we wanted to study more and to go on for PhDs, and we knew that might be an expensive endeavor, especially if we wanted to do so at the same time and in the same place. So after graduating, we worked hard and saved up as much as we could. We're aware that we haven't chosen the most lucrative of professions—we're both ministers and teachers, and we don't regret or resent the choice to follow our vocation, even though it means we're not able to earn as much as some of our friends and peers. More than some, less than others. But eventually we saved up enough that we could come here to Berkeley to be PhD students at Graduate Theological Union. GTU is a tuition-driven institution, and Sheryl only had a student visa for the first three years here, so between paying tuition and Sheryl not being able to work off campus, we were barely breaking even for the first few years we lived here. But now we've graduated and stopped paying tuition, and we're finally for the first time in our lives really able to save and plan for the future without such huge expenses.

So when we thought and prayed about the capital campaign, what we decided was that because Kelly's employed at 80% here at First Church and that 80% pays a living wage, and on top of that Kelly is also teaching at a couple of the member schools at the GTU, we decided we would live on the 80% and put Kelly's teaching income towards the capital campaign. We took an average of the last three years of teaching income, which is \$7,000 a year, and multiply that by three for the campaign. So we're pledging \$21,000 towards the capital campaign. We know it's not enough to get us all the way to the campaign, but it's a significant sum for us. It's a decision to divert some of our ability to do other things, including saving for retirement or towards a down payment. We feel really good about offering this gift towards this campaign, which is something we really believe in.

In the Book of Acts, we hear that one of the first things that the followers of Jesus did upon witnessing the resurrection was that they pooled their resources together. We love that vision of a response to the story of Jesus, to take what we have and be able to do more collectively and build a safety net together, a common pool in ways we can't and shouldn't do as individuals. Rather than investing this sum in our personal future, we want to invest in our common future. As Sheryl shared in her sermon, we believe that buildings can serve both as monuments and to further movements, and we're so privileged to have the resources to be able to help bring this building to life through this campaign.