

## Stepping Forward Together

Here is why Jim and I have supported our Step Forward campaign. When we first came to this church, in the summer of 1990, other church members had generously contributed to a capital funds campaign that financed the addition on the west side of the church. At that same time, Pioneer and Blachly Halls were redecorated. In the almost twenty-eight years since, countless hours of worship and education, community outreach, and church family fellowship have occurred in these rooms, but it is time to renew these treasured spaces.

For almost 160 years, Pioneer Hall has been a place of worship; it was the original church building built by our Abolitionist forbears in 1859. Our church family used Pioneer and Blachly Hall for worship as recently as the years 1999/2000, when the sanctuary was last renovated, and we continue to use Pioneer Hall for worship in our weekly contemplative Taizé services. Nor should we ignore the many hours of adult education classes that have occurred in Pioneer Hall.

Pioneer and Blachly Halls are also used for outreach to the Manhattan Community. Jim and I are regular cooks and church hosts in our Second Helping Program, which will celebrate its 20th anniversary this fall, and from the beginning, we have served in Blachly and Pioneer Halls. The Women of the Church also serve food to and host meetings of the American Association of University Women four times a year, and once again, these rooms provide the home.

Lastly, I am convinced that the fellowshiping home provided by Pioneer and Blachly Halls is vitally important to our church family. Fellowship Hour is more than coffee, punch and cookies; it is also an important place for us to strengthen the ties that bind us together as a church family. Over the years, other social occasions important to that family have occurred here as well: in these rooms, I have attended wedding and baby showers, anniversary celebrations, and yes, funeral receptions, for people very dear to me. Our daughter Emily, now a free-lance violinist living in Denver, chose to give her senior-year violin recital here in our church sanctuary. Many, if not most, of the attendees at that recital were from her church family, and yes, we held a reception afterwards in Pioneer and Blachly Halls.

So, dear friends, I encourage you to support this campaign to renovate this very important part of our church building in whatever way you can, and I thank you for that support.

Gretchen Lewis

