

# All Saints' marks 75th anniversary of building and gardens

By ELAINE HESSER

IF YOU search The Pine Cone archives for “All Saints’ Episcopal Church,” you’ll find more than 3,600 mentions, starting with its first appearance in February 1915 — the month the paper was founded.

According to the church’s history, “The congregation originated informally on Sept. 25, 1907, when a small group of Episcopalians, supported by the Carmel Missionary Society, began holding Sunday services at the Carmel bathhouse. Services soon relocated to the Pine Inn hotel, with regular gatherings solidifying around 1910.” The next year, they met several times at the Forest Theater.

Along with the Church of the Wayfarer, established in 1904, and, of course, Carmel Mission, All Saints’ is one of

the oldest congregations in town. Its building at Dolores and Ninth — which provides space for numerous community activities — turns 75 this year, and a celebration is brewing, said Rev. Amber Sturgess, the church’s rector (priest), who has been with the congregation for 10 years.

### Sold to city

In 1912, at Monte Verde south of Ocean Avenue, All Saints’ began work on its first sanctuary, which cost about \$1,200. It was designed by San Francisco architect Albert Cauldwell and completed by local master builder M.J. Murphy, who also added a bell tower and vestibule in 1928.

In less than two decades, however, the congregation outgrew its original edifice, which was purchased by the

village in 1948 for \$40,000 to begin a new life as one of the most charming seats of city government around. Pine Cone articles from the period seem to suggest that the congregation continued to use that building for services and events until the new sanctuary was ready.

The structure at Dolores and Ninth was dedicated by Bishop Karl Block in winter 1951, assisted by then-rector Rev. Alfred Seccombe.

“The design for the new church featured a predominantly native redwood interior with soaring beams and an organically integrated use of local Carmel materials in a contemporary structure honoring its environment and history,” the church says.

“The altar and accompanying panels were designed and sculpted from rare woods by Alec Miller. The magnificent stained-glass windows were designed by the San Francisco firm of Harold Cummings and featured the natural tones of the Carmel environment to complement the indigenous materials of the nave.” Renowned landscaper Thomas Church — who worked on portions of Stanford University, Berkeley and UC Santa Cruz — reportedly created the courtyards and gardens.

### Community connections

Almost since its beginning, it has been a center of Carmel life, hosting lectures, concerts, civic groups, fundraisers, and, of course, weddings, baptisms and funerals, as succeeding generations filled its pews. And its congregation has always supported activities not only for those who attend services, but for people in surrounding communities.

Those efforts include the founding of St. Dunstan’s Mission in Carmel Valley in 1955 — now St. Dunstan’s Episcopal Church — and St. Matthias Mission, also now a church by that name, in Seaside in 1956. Marina’s Epiphany Lutheran & Episcopal Church can also trace its beginnings to All Saints’ work.

In 1958, the Carmel church’s rector, David Hill, became an original trustee of York School in Monterey. All Saints’ Day School, now in Carmel Valley, was launched in the early 1960s.

The church owns Santa Lucia Chapel and Campground in Big Sur and a two-story retreat cottage on Lincoln near Ninth, as well.

All Saints’ is a longtime participant in the Carmel Bach



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PHOTO/COURTESY ALL SAINTS' ESPISCOPAL

Rev. Amber Sturgess has been leading the congregation at All Saints’ Episcopal Church for 10 years.

Festival — organ recitals dating at least to the third gathering, in 1937, were highlighted in The Pine Cone — hosting more than a dozen concerts annually. The Monterey Symphony comes to perform chamber music, choral group I Cantori di Carmel has its offices there, and the singers of Madrigalia also use its facilities.

The church’s website advertises weekly prayers and readings with a local chapter of the Catholic Friends of St. Benedict, and it has been the home of St. John’s Greek Orthodox Church since 2016.

In addition, the congregation houses homeless men once a month through the nonprofit I-HELP, through whom the Greek Orthodox congregation welcomes homeless women once a month.

The Carmel Residents Association meets there, too.

### Art and a roof

The church will mark its 75th birthday with a special anniversary celebration on July 26, 2026 — just after the Bach Festival — and will launch a campaign to raise \$500,000 for a new roof and other improvements. The festivities will also feature the unveiling of a new painting commissioned from local artist Elizabeth Barlow.

According to a spokesperson for Barlow, the 8-by-5-foot painting, titled “Transfiguration,” depicts white calla lilies, “enduring symbols of hope, transformation, and resilience,” that also reflect “the natural beauty that surrounds the church itself.”