



*Pew Cushion Restoration
Dedication*

Sunday, May 17, 2026



Pew Restoration Committee

Organized June 8, 2022

Nancy Richards, Chair

Margee Bilyak

Jesse Belfast

Brian Burns

Kim Butler

Linda Ehrlich

David Grinnell

Lorraine Malcom

Jane Skerl

Tim Zinn

Reverend Beth Nelson

Reverend Myles Bradley

Kirk Weaver

Bob Poirier, AHPS President



Pew Cushion Restoration Donations

AHPS

Margee Bilyak ★

Jim and Sally Bird

Reverend Myles and Joan Bradley

Paul and Georgia Brucker

Jorinda Bullitt

Kim Butler

Callie Buzard

Reynolds and Linda Clark

Jerry and Elizabeth Coleman

Linda Ehrlich

Tom and Judy Flaherty

Gary and Deborah Grundman

Brian and Melissa Harvanek

Martha Helmreich

William and Joan Jessep

Cheryl Longstreet

Stephen and Sue Lynch

Judith Melvin

Alfred and Jan Meyers

Reverend Beth Nelson

Mark and Deborah Neuherz

Joe and Beth Ober

Jo Ellen Parker

John and Shirley Parroccini

Rebecca Pesyna

Bob and Cindy Poirier

Nancy Richards

David Rizzo

Jameson and Shelley Rohrer

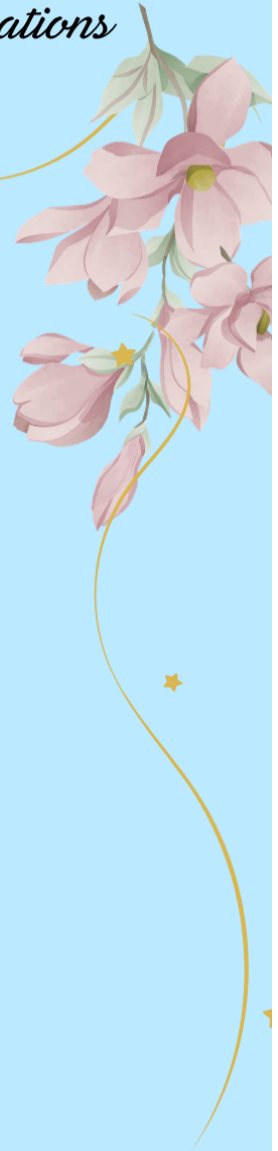
Jane Skerl

George Stowell and Dennis Panek

Rick and Linda Sustakoski

Carl Traud

Rick and Kathy Winne

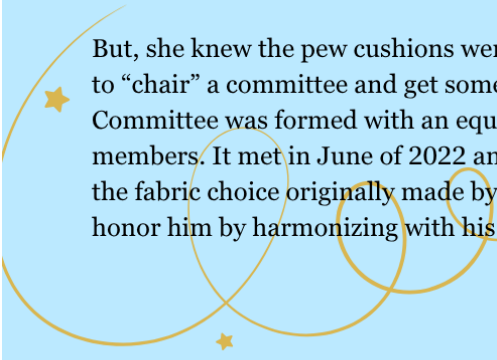


A Miracle in Mexico

Over the years as the pew cushions of Calvary United Methodist Church became more frayed and torn, efforts were attempted to replace or restore them. There was a genuine need to fix the problem, but the real problem was simply no money to do it. So, estimates were given and pondered and then, just filed away for “someday.” In 2016 Eisenhour Church Furnishings of Huron, Ohio gave a bid of \$39,973.50. Waggoners, Inc. of Hutchinson, Kansas also made a proposal, but they were all too much money and just unattainable.

In 1988 the Allegheny Historic Preservation Society (AHPS) was formed to help the Church secure grants from various foundations to save the building which the small band of worshipping members could not do on their own. There was no choir, no Sunday School and only a part-time volunteer pastor. But AHPS was able to publicize the beauty of this amazing and precious building through a series of concerts given on Sunday afternoons in the sanctuary. Over the years these concerts have not only raised funds for Calvary but have enhanced the community’s appreciation of the musical and artistic talent all around us!

When Nancy Richards was asked to join AHPS after the death of her husband, Rev. Bob, she wasn’t sure where she would fit in and help as the long-time members of the group were professional archivists, so knowledgeable about restoration and preservation. They were focused on things having to do with saving the church building—important things like fixing the slate roof and leaking gutters, repointing the stone walls and finding authentic light fixtures. She couldn’t even join the conversation.



But, she knew the pew cushions were in a dreadful state and so, agreed to “chair” a committee and get something going. The Pew Restoration Committee was formed with an equal number of Calvary and AHPS members. It met in June of 2022 and all agreed that we should replicate the fabric choice originally made by Louis Comfort Tiffany which would honor him by harmonizing with his magnificent windows.

Everyone inspected the sad state of our cushions and agreed they needed to be replaced, but as there was no money, there was nothing we could do. So nothing happened.

But, that's when the idea of the Tiffany cards was born! Kirk Weaver took beautiful photographs of an angel in the Ascension window and another of the Rudy memorial window of an angel holding a lily. Nancy presented these photos to the Board and proposed ordering two thousand of each angel which we could fold, package, and sell for ten dollars a package. Everyone helped count, fold, and stuff the cards and envelopes into cello packages. Soon, we had to reorder. The cards were a quick thank you note, a sympathy message, or gift. The profits all went to the Pew Restoration effort originally, but now, they continue to fund new restoration projects.

Now that there was some money trickling in, it was time to find the fabric. Checking with upholstery firms in the city, we learned that 100% cotton velveteen was only made in a few places in the world and could cost \$170 per yard for 60 inch wide fabric. Calvary has 109 pews and it was going to take hundreds of yards of fabric if it could be found. It looked like it would take years of angel card sales to raise enough.

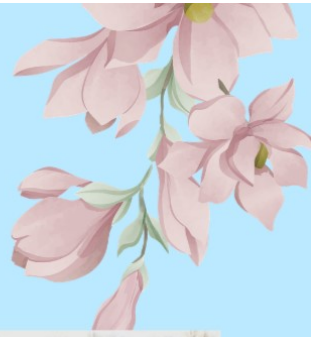
Fast forward to a spontaneous trip to Cancun that the Richards' children gave their mom. During this trip, they met Peter and Maria Garber who were staying at the same villa on the beach. Maria asked Nancy if she was retired. Nancy laughed and said she had never worked a day in her life, reflecting on her role as a "Minister's wife" who volunteered, raised the kids, and kept house. But Jennifer, Nancy's daughter, got out her phone and showed Maria photographs of stained glass windows that Nancy designed and built. Maria was generous, but Nancy deflected the praise by stating her biggest challenge now was trying to help this historic Pittsburgh church find hundreds of yards of velveteen to restore the pew cushions. Maria said, "I can help you." Maria owned a wholesale fabric store in Manhattan, and soon she would be attending a world-wide fabric show where she could look for the velveteen fabric.

That's how miracles happen. You don't expect them. Maria found a mill in Tuscany, Italy which wove beautiful velveteen fabric the way "they used to" and for only 18 euros a yard. (\$19.63) She put Nancy in touch with the manager, and Velvetex sent samples of various green colors to compare to the original fabric. These samples were spread across the pews, and one color was selected.

Rev. Myles Bradley and Lorraine Malcolm helped Nancy measure every pew in the sanctuary so that enough fabric could be ordered. Calvary members donated generously to raise enough money for the fabric, shipping, and insurance. The cutting, sewing, and button covering were done by Amish upholstery friends. Upholstery services were provided by Byerly Upholstery of Volant and Eastland Tarp Company (Rudy Miller) of New Castle. Brian Burns rented vans and made many trips hauling the cushions from Calvary to these companies and back (Myles made one emergency trip.) Mike Poirier also helped in stabilizing the wobbly pews that were unsafe. With the angel card sales, the Calvary donations, a national grant, and AHPS funding, there was enough to cover expenses.

As we celebrate the completion of the Pew Restoration Project, it is our hope that you will enjoy the loveliness of our sanctuary now that it has been enhanced by the generosity and talent of so many friends—many of whom we will never get to meet or thank. Many are listed in this memorial program and are with us today. I hope you will seek them out and express your gratitude. For sure, we have been blessed so we can be a blessing to others!







Calvary United Methodist Church

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