

Speech for the Press Conference

October 7, 2027

Given by the Rev. Al Zadig, Jr.

Why Is Charleston Different?

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Good morning.

Welcome Mayor Cogswell, and the President of Explore Charleston, Helen Hill!

Let me begin with a simple question:

Why is Charleston different from every other city in America?

- Is it the aroma of pluff mud?
- The jasmine that fills the air in the spring?
- Our public porches and secret gardens?

- Our basket weavers?
- Our narrow alleys?
- Or the sidewalks that have been walked by
    - Revolutionaries
    - Patriots
    - presidents
    - and generations of Charlestonians?

Yes.

All those things make Charleston unique.

But there is something that literally rises above them all.

Charleston is different because we are a people **anchored to a solid foundation.**

And for 275 years, that foundation has stood right here, on the southeast corner of Meeting and Broad Streets. In fact, since 1680, there has been a church on this corner—pointing **beyond** ourselves and anchoring this city to eternity.

If you are seeing Charleston for the first time, you can't miss it.

- There is City Hall.
- There is the County Courthouse.
- There is the Federal Courthouse.
- **And then there is God's house.**

And every day, Charleston is reminded of that foundation through our senses..

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<u>First…through the eyes:</u>

<u>Look!</u>

Look at our steeple.

At 186 feet, it rises above this city.

And as the sun moves across the sky, the shadow of that steeple moves across the very institutions that govern Charleston.

- First, over the Federal Courthouse.
- Then over the County Courthouse.
- And finally, over City Hall.

Think about that….

Every day, the shadow of this church reaches over the places where our laws are:

- **Written**
- **interpreted**
- **and enforced.**

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The 2nd sense that reminds us of our anchored foundation…comes through our ears:

Listen.

Our eight bells ring:

- Every fifteen minutes,
- twenty-four hours a day.

A reminder that **while WE** live by our schedules and our clocks,

ultimately, we live on God's time.

And when those bells ring for:

- Sunday worship
- Weddings
- And funerals

They proclaim a simple message:

Come.

- Come with your joy.
- Your grief.
- Your questions.
- Your doubts.
- Your celebrations.

Come—because God's love is unconditional, and God's presence is always here.

For 275 years, St. Michael's has proclaimed that sure foundation:

- **Love the Lord your God**
- **with all your heart, soul and mind—**
- **and love your neighbor as yourself.**

This is why our doors remain open virtually every day of the week.

And every day, people walk through these doors for different reasons.

- Some come from the courts.
    - They may be celebrating a great victory—or carrying the weight of a devastating loss.
    - They come here to make sense of what has happened.
- Others are moving to Charleston.
    - They want to know what kind of city this really is.
- And others are from around the world wanting to experience this magnificent space.

Whatever brings them in here, they discover something. **That these pew boxes are more than beautiful antiques.**

These boxes are little **hospital emergency rooms for the soul-**where Jesus does His surgical work on the human heart.

Not just on Sunday.

But Every day.

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And that brings us to our 275th Anniversary.

We are celebrating this extraordinary milestone with a **$10 million capital campaign.**

Why?

Because if this steeple and these bells have been strong enough to proclaim God's love for 275 years,

- We want to make sure they are strong enough to proclaim it for the next 275.

Our campaign will:

- Strengthen this historic campus.
- Help build our Diocesan Camp.
- And help secure a healthy financial future.

But let me be clear:

Our anniversary is about much more than preserving a campus.

- It is about preserving a mission.
- It is about honoring our past while moving boldly into the future.
- It is about making sure that every person who walks through these doors doesn't simply see an historic church.

We want everyone to experience the living love of Jesus Christ.

Which is why as part of our anniversary, we are transforming our Narthex—our entryway into the church.

Today, we are unveiling an important part of that transformation.

As a monument to our past, we are introducing a new faith and heritage tour, accessible through a QR code on your phone.

- It will take everyone through our sanctuary and tell the stories embedded in these walls—
- including the stories of five St. Michaelites who helped found our nation by signing the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution.

And on December 6, we will unveil another piece of that history:

A new plaque honoring these men.

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But our anniversary isn't only about remembering where we've been.

It is about where we are going.

For that reason we are also:

Unveiling a welcome video today that shares the vision and mission of this church-NOW, as a thriving, living, Christ-Centered church. Living that out, we are ALSO preparing St. Michaelite parishioners to become docents and ambassadors who will not:

Simply give tours.

They will give care.

- Care to those carrying burdens from the courts.
- Care to people searching for a church home.
- Care to travelers passing through our city.

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Now perhaps the best way to understand what St. Michael's is today is to look at what happened here **just this past Sunday**.

Three beautiful worship services. Different in style and spirit—but united by the same Gospel.

- Children receiving Communion for the very first time.
- Sunday School.
- Newcomers' classes.
- Parenting classes.
- A burial in our churchyard.
- And at the end of the day, our annual St. Francis Day blessing of the animals.

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Beyond Sundays and throughout the year, we bring people together through the:

- Alpha Discovery of Faith Course
- Bible studies
- home groups
- retreats
- our annual Day of Healing Prayer
- and sending folks into and beyond Charleston on mission.

That is St. Michael's today.

- **History—but not merely history.**
- **Tradition—but not merely tradition.**
- **A building—but so much more than a building.**

Because our mission is not simply to preserve the past.

It is to transform hearts through Jesus Christ in the present!

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And of course…

There are thousands of people who love St. Michael's who may never sit in these pews on a Sunday.

- But they understand what that steeple means when they see it rising above the city.

- They understand what those bells mean when they hear them ring.

Some have even called St. Michael's America's **"Big Ben."** And so, during this 275th Anniversary year, we are establishing something we're calling:

THE Friends of St. Michael's. It is an invitation. An invitation to everyone who believes:

- this place matters.
- To everyone who believes our history is worth preserving
- To everyone who believes Charleston needs places that point us beyond ourselves
- And to everyone who believes the love of God still has something powerful to say to our city—
    - nation—
    - and the nations of the world.

Those Friends of St. Michael's funds will allow us to better care for this campus.

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So, one final time:

Why is Charleston different from every other city?

We are a people anchored to a solid foundation.

- The steeple watching over this city.

- The bells calling us to worship.

- The doors welcoming the:

    - Grieving
    - The celebrating
    - The searching
    - And the curious.

And now it is our turn.

- Our turn to protect this sacred place.

- Our turn to strengthen its foundation.
- And to carry its mission forward.
- Our turn to write the next chapter.

So, I invite you:

Come.

- Come and be part of the next 275 years.
- Come and become a Friend of St. Michael's.
- Come and help us carry the love of Christ from this historic corner of Charleston—
    - to our city
    - our nation
    - and the nations of the world-BECAUSE-The greatest chapter of the story of St. Michael's
- **May not be the 275 years behind us**
- **It may be the 275 years ahead.**