

# Preserving Westford's Historic Meeting House

First Parish Church United is embarking on a generational gift to the future of our church and the Town of Westford



## **Dear Members of the First Parish Church United Community,**

First Parish Church United is embarking on a generational gift to the future of our church and the Town of Westford.

Our current meeting house has served many generations of Westford since it was built in 1794. Although we have been faithful stewards of this beautiful structure, time has inevitably led to wear and degradation. **With our 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025, we chose to seize the moment and explore a major restoration of our historic building.**

We are doing this in partnership with the Town of Westford. At Annual Town Meeting in the spring of 2025, our town voted to use Community Preservation Funds to conduct a full assessment – an investment of \$100,000.

**The results are in** – a very thorough assessment by architects, engineers and historians was completed this summer with cost and project guidance of what will be required to take us through the next historic chapter of First Parish. The report offered 3 phases of work (see chart to the right) totaling \$1,136,265, of which we plan to pursue phases 1 & 2 at this time. For those that wish to review this well-written and comprehensive document, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/45k75cms> or view a printed version in the church office.

### **We of First Parish have an obligation to do our part to support this critical work.**

We believe that if we are going to ask for town support of this magnitude, it is our duty to also make a meaningful financial contribution (and it would likely strengthen our application.)

We also know that there is critical work that we must do that is **NOT** eligible for CPC funding because much of it will not fall within the statutory definition of historic restoration (see chart on next page.)

**With these obligations and enormous opportunities in front of us, we have set a capital campaign target of \$150,000.**

**We ask for your pledge toward this target so we can demonstrate our commitment to the Community Preservation Committee and citizens of the Town of Westford.** We ask you to pay your pledge in thirds in 2026, 2027 and 2028, both to make it more manageable for you our members, and to roughly line up with the timing of the actual expenditures. This capital campaign pledge would be in addition to the annual pledges we make to support the operations of the church.

**The Three Recommended Phases of Historical Renovation:**

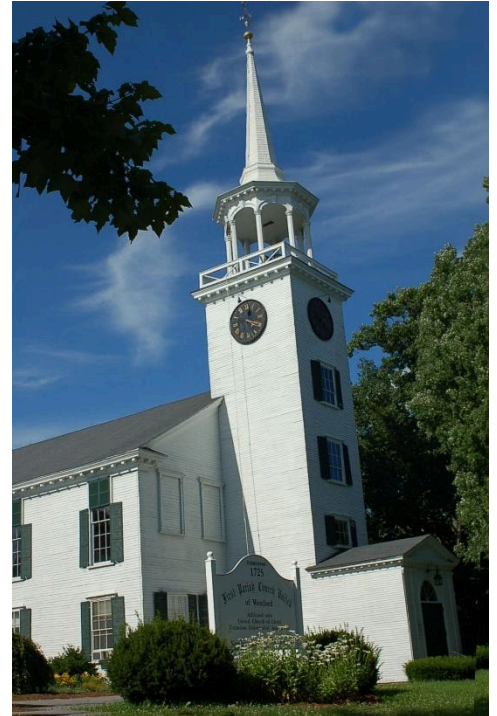
Phase 1	Urgent	\$518,112
Phase 2	Necessary	\$386,145
Phase 3	Historically Desirable	\$232,008

**What comes next?**

This January we plan to approach the Community Preservation Committee to request funding to complete Phases 1 & 2 or \$904,257. With the Committee’s support, we would bring this before Annual Town Meeting in March of 2026.

**What work is not covered by historical renovation and will be paid for with our pledges?**

- Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning ~ \$12,400
- Rebuilding of fire exit staircase ~ \$14,000
- Gutters and drainage work ~ \$50,000
- Energy efficient heat pumps for Fellowship Hall ~ \$40,000
- Installation of a back-up generator ~ \$30,000



**We need your support to preserve our meeting house for future generations!**  
**Please email your pledge amount to Tom Clay at [gtclay@comcast.net](mailto:gtclay@comcast.net)**

For any questions you may have related to your pledge, please feel free to contact a member of the fundraising committee. We are so appreciative of your consideration of our First Parish Church United home, both now and for our future.

Sincerely,

The Capital Campaign Subcommittee of the Prudential Committee

Alison Peternell, [alison.peternell@gmail.com](mailto:alison.peternell@gmail.com)  
Tom Clay, [gtclay@comcast.net](mailto:gtclay@comcast.net)  
Tim Deren, [tderen11@gmail.com](mailto:tderen11@gmail.com)

~See FAQs on back~

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How much should I pledge?

To reach our target, we will need an average pledge of \$2000 for each current pledger. We have some generous donors who have contributed at a level higher than this, but we will all need to consider a significant donation.

### What if the Town only supports Phase 1 funding or does not approve funding at all?

We will make the best decisions about which projects to tackle and will likely follow up with a future request at the next Town Meeting.

### Is the town likely to support a restoration project at a church?

The town has supported projects at First Parish and other churches in town in the past. Because of the important historical role early churches played in the civic life of Massachusetts towns use of funds for this purpose is allowed. Our church served as Westford Town Hall for more than 100 years!



### Will you be seeking funds for Phase 3?

We are focusing on the critical and substantial work contained in Phase 1 & 2 at this time.

### Will we be seeking contributions from outside our Congregation?

Yes. We have identified other people and organizations in the town who have a connection to FPCU to ask them for assistance in our fundraising campaign. In addition, we have several known grant foundations to which we will be submitting grant applications.

### Will my contribution be tax deductible?

Yes.