

Why Preserve the Meetinghouse?

Built by the descendants of the first settlers of old Nutfield, the Meetinghouse is a significant historic landmark and a destination for scholars and tourists from New England, Northern Ireland, and around the world. It has served as the center of religious and civic life—hosting Derry Town Meetings for 150 years, for example—and appears in the town seal and more as a beautiful reminder of the New England village image we cherish and lifestyle we strive to retain.



Today over 30 community and social groups use the First Parish facility, and the new spaces in the finished Meetinghouse will serve the community even better. The Sanctuary itself—with great acoustics, accessibility, and heating—will be a beautiful new mid-size hall for concerts, lectures, and more.

Help Make this Happen

The small but passionate First Parish congregation has so far raised over \$1.2M, with grants, community fundraising, and a bank loan bringing the amount invested to over \$1.8M. Now another \$1M is needed to finish the job, hopefully on the schedule shown.

The congregation continues to give, but more help is needed from the community. The Friends of the Meetinghouse, a separate 501(c)(3) organization, offers multiple ways to give, with grateful acknowledgments for individuals and families and effective promotion for companies and organizations.

Your support can make all the difference; please visit the Facebook and website destinations below to learn more about the projects and how you can help.



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Fundraising Info:
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PRESERVING THE 1769 MEETINGHOUSE AT FIRST PARISH IN EAST DERRY, NH



Rehabilitation Overview

Historic Preservation and Handicapped Accessibility Projects

In 2010, First Parish Church began an ambitious effort to renew the 1769 Meetinghouse in East Derry. A new team hired historic architect Norman Larson, who did comprehensive analysis and planning to produce the 2011 formal Historic Assessment that continues to guide the work.

The historic building has since been undergoing “rehabilitation” as defined by the Secretary of the Interior’s preservation standards. This protocol honors past methods and materials but yields a living, safe, useful building. A solution for easy access by everyone—the adjacent Accessibility Connector—hence became an essential element.

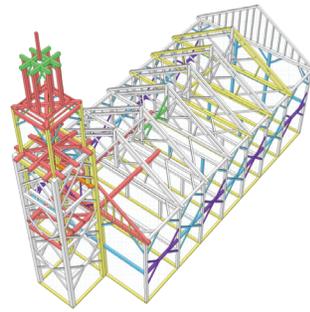
So far, over \$1.9M has been invested in a very successful series of rehab projects. About \$1M worth of work likely remains.

This pamphlet gives a brief overview of the rehab effort. See other brochures and the websites listed on the back for more details.



First Things First

Work began in 2011 with repainting the exterior and fixing hazards. A 2012 structural analysis by Preservation Timber Framing (PTF) identified bad timbers and joints, and in 2013 they reinforced the Tower to stop its movement.



Rebuilding from Bottom to Top

The granite and rubble foundation was in bad shape; the crawlspace dirt underneath almost touched the floor timbers. Emptying the building and other preparations for a new foundation proceeded through 2014–2016 (Easter 2016 was the last service held in the Sanctuary).

In May 2016 the Meetinghouse and Tower were lifted, and a state-of-the-art foundation poured. The timber frame floor and walls throughout were then extensively repaired.

The exterior now needs lead paint removal and repainting; this is targeted for 2021. The Roof also needs refurbishment. After straightening the building frame and repairing the worst leaks, the full roof system rehab can wait.



Conquering A Towering Challenge

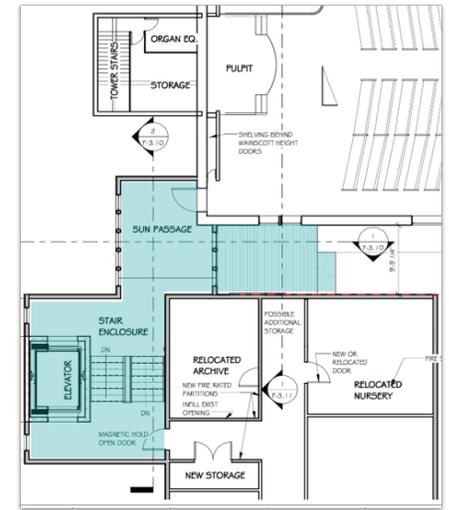
The 100' tall Tower was quite deteriorated. PTF lowered the Steeple to the ground in September 2015, and ended up rebuilding 95% of its structure and trim before finishing it in 2019.

The Tower base was rehabbed in 2017–2018, including removal of steel beams installed in the 1990s and replacing two 60' tall corner posts. Tower work finished in September 2019, with the Steeple's placement back on the base, exterior lead paint removal, and repainting.

Opening It Up to Everyone

The new elevator building will provide multi-floor accessibility for the disabled (and eliminate the need to carry coffins up the stairs).

The foundation, shell, and masonry elevator shaft for this Accessibility Connector were completed in 2016. 2020–2021 saw it get doors, windows, and siding. The Elevator was installed and the interior finished in 2021–2022.



Making Interiors Usable

The structural rehab of the Meetinghouse will sustain it for another century, but the building is not yet ready for use. Besides completing the Accessibility Connector, the upper-level Sanctuary and the lower-level meeting and function rooms all need rehab.

The massive Sanctuary project (2022+) requires: abating peeling lead ceiling paint and cracking asbestos floor tiles; repairing historic plaster walls; returning the pipe organ; applying new finishes throughout; and upgrading electrical, lighting, and multimedia systems.

The lower level will have a large meeting hall, conference room, music room, and history museum, all of which need to be designed and built (2024+).

