



First Baptist Church in Newton

August 17, 2023

Community Preservation Committee
c/o Lara Kritzer, Community Preservation Program Manager
City of Newton Planning & Development Department
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

Re: Pre-Application for First Baptist Church in Newton CPA Grant

Dear Distinguished Members of the Community Preservation Committee:

Our historic building has sat at the corner of Beacon & Centre Streets for 135 years. From the earliest plans for this structure, it has had people outside of the First Baptist congregation in mind, with the site and size chosen to accommodate the needs of the nearby Newton Theological Institute. Over the years, many music groups have found a home in our Sanctuary and countless community gatherings have taken place here. The partial collapse of our Tower has meant the closure of our Sanctuary space to the community. We are seeking CPA funds for our Tower to preserve this historic structure and fully reopen our building to the community.

The Tower is a striking architectural feature of this grand Richardsonian Romanesque building. Named the "America Tower" after Samuel Francis Smith, who was both the author of "America" (My Country 'Tis of Thee) and the minister of this church during 1842-1854, the Tower is a highly visible and much-admired local landmark.

After a single stone was found on the ground next to the Tower in the spring of 2021, the church solicited expert advice from Bliss Enclosure Consulting & Design and Structures North Consulting Engineers. These two firms, with the help of various contractors, conducted field investigations, masonry testing and 3D laser scanning, documented the existing conditions, and designed emergency dunnage to protect the north side of the Tower. After the March 2022 partial collapse of approximately 35 stones on the north side of the Tower, the dunnage plans were expanded to include the installation of emergency brace work as well. This emergency work was completed in May 2022. Structures North then developed the schematic design for a 9-step plan for the full preservation of the Tower. The first two steps (removal of the bells and deteriorated interior platforms) were performed in January 2023 due to safety concerns.

The church is now embarking upon a comprehensive fundraising campaign to complete the 9-step plan. The remaining work will occur in two phases:

Phase 1 – Install a structure of steel columns and beams that will lift the top portion of the Tower in order to reduce the load on the compromised masonry within the bottom portion of the Tower.

Phase 2 – Remove and replace compromised mortar; remove and reinstall loose stones; cut and repoint the entire Tower; remove the steel structure; replace the interior platforms and stairs; and refurbish and reinstall the bells.

Fundraising will involve a capital campaign, use of existing church funds, solicitation of grants, and the holding of community events. We have already received a \$100,000 emergency grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission

First Baptist Church remains committed to opening our building and sharing our space with the wider community. In fact, most people who pass through our doors each week are not connected to the church congregation. We welcome a daycare center serving over 40 local families, multiple music and arts groups, and elementary school students using the space for graduations, evacuation drills, and concerts. We have also hosted large community events such as the Steven King book talk sponsored by Newtonville Books, a Pete Seeger concert honoring the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington, and a funeral after a local teenager's tragic suicide.

Because of our unique space and ideal location, it is important for the wider community to preserve our building so that it can be reopened for full use. While there are many beautiful and historic buildings in Newton, First Baptist Church is uniquely positioned to build community through gatherings around arts and culture. With a large room that can be used for receptions and its proximity to shops, restaurants, public transportation, and parking, we are positioned to promote a positive arts experience for a wide range of participants and patrons.

Between the historic nature of the Tower, its connection to a famous local figure, and the importance of the building as a whole to the community, we believe this project, as described in the attached Pre-Application, is worthy of CPA funding. Thank you in advance for your consideration of our proposal.

Very truly yours,



Richard A. Ransom
Chair of the Tower Preservation Committee



Charles Cossaboom, Jr.
Church Treasurer and Member of the Tower Preservation Committee

City of Newton



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

Newton, Massachusetts Community Preservation Program FUNDING REQUEST

PRE-PROPOSAL

PROPOSAL

(For staff use)
date rec'd:

Last updated February 2020.

Please submit this completed file directly – do not convert to PDF or other formats.

For full instructions, see www.newtonma.gov/cpa or contact:

Lara Kritzer, Community Preservation Program Manager

City of Newton Planning & Development Department, 1000 Commonwealth Ave., Newton, MA 02459

lkritzer@newtonma.gov

617.796.1144

You may adjust the space for each question, but the combined answers to all questions on this page must fit on this page.

Project TITLE	First Baptist Church in Newton, Bell Tower Preservation		
Project LOCATION	Full street address (with zip code), or other precise location. 848 Beacon Street, Newton, MA 02459		
Project CONTACTS	Name & title or organization	Email	Phone
Project Manager	David Bliss, AIA Bliss Enclosure Consulting & Design	david@blissenclosuresdesign.com	(781) 424-3959
Other Contacts	Richard Ransom First Baptist Church Tower Committee Chair	dickransom@comcast.net	(617) 467-4940
Project FUNDING	A. CPA funds requested: \$1,750,000	B. Other funds to be used: \$2,692,355	C. Total project cost (A+B): \$4,442,355
Project SUMMARY	Explain how the project will use the requested CPA funds. You may provide more detail in attachments, but your PROJECT SUMMARY MUST FIT IN THE SPACE BELOW. Use a cover letter for general information about the sponsoring organization's accomplishments.		
<p>The First Baptist Church Bell Tower Preservation Project will restore the structural integrity of the Bell Tower following the partial collapse of exterior stonework in 2021 and 2022. Emergency stabilization work including the installation of dunnage and steel bracing was completed in 2022. Our structural engineers have developed a nine-step plan towards full preservation. Steps one and two (removing the bells and the deteriorated interior platforms) was completed in January 2023 due to safety concerns.</p> <p>CPA funds will be used to complete the preservation work. The next major phase involves constructing a temporary shoring system on the outside of the tower consisting of steel columns and temporary beams which will carry between 25 and 50 percent of the loads at the window level in order to reduce the burden on the compromised masonry below. The final phase involves removing the compromised mortar and replacing it with a rapid-set natural cement grout, removing loose exterior stones and addressing mortar issues, reinstalling loose stones, fully cutting and repointing the entire tower, removing all temporary shoring systems and staging, and refurbishing and reinstalling the bells.</p> <p>A CPA grant toward the entire project will allow us to move forward with this project in a timely manner, thus decreasing the possibility of further deterioration or a catastrophic failure of the tower. Completion of the next phase (temporary shoring system) will allow us to reopen the Sanctuary for use by the community for music performances and community events, thus restoring a vital Newton Centre resource. The final phase will ensure long-term stability of the tower.</p>			

You may adjust the space for each question, but the combined answers to all questions on this page must fit on this page.

Project TITLE		First Baptist Church in Newton Bell Tower Preservation	
USE of CPA FUNDS		HISTORIC RESOURCES	
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY	Preserve	✓	
	Rehabilitate/ Restore		
COMMUNITY NEEDS	<p>From each of at least 2 plans linked to the Guidelines & Forms page of www.newtonma.gov/cpa, provide a brief quote with plan title, year, and page number, showing how this project meets previously recognized community needs. You may also list other community benefits not mentioned in any plan.</p> <p>The Economic Development section of the 2007/2011 Comprehensive plan (page 6-7) states as part of the Village Center Development: “Attract people into the village centers at off hours by developing cultural facilities focused on the local community—small theaters, art galleries, etc.—and maintaining local parks with improved facilities such as public gardens, outdoor cafes, band stands, tennis courts etc.”</p> <p>The First Baptist Church Sanctuary is a highly valued and sought after concert venue due to its large beautiful interior seating 600 and superb acoustics. It is also virtually unique among the top Newton concert venues in having a parking lot and being in close proximity to public transportation and restaurants. Preserving the Bell Tower will allow for the reopening of the Sanctuary to the public which will bring additional traffic to area businesses.</p> <p>According to the 2010 Heritage Landscape Report (page 30), “Churches, synagogues and other places of worship help to define Newton’s villages and neighborhoods. Many are prominently located landmarks with attractive surroundings, have distinctive architectural styles and serve as community gathering places. Some also provide important public functions by housing various social services. Residents emphasized the importance of preserving these buildings, particularly when they are no longer used for worship.”</p> <p>Located at the prominent intersection of Beacon and Centre Streets, First Baptist Church is a striking local landmark. The lawn with its picnic tables and trees lining Beacon Street offers a lunch and gathering place for residents visiting Newton Centre. Called “the pride of the village, in an architectural point of view” by the 1889 King’s Handbook of Newton, the church building with its prominent Bell Tower has been a defining image of home for generations of Newton residents.</p> <p>The 2012 City of Newton Historic Preservation Design Guidelines for Masonry and Stucco states that, “Historically, stone walls and piers were weight bearing and constructed of individual stone units bonded with mortar. In the mid 20th century, stone veneers became popular” (page 3). The large granite church building and Bell Tower are an important reflection of the historic use of load bearing stone in building practices, a practice which is no longer the norm in Newton.</p>		
COMMUNITY CONTACTS	<p>List at least 3 Newton residents or organizations willing and able to comment on the project and its manager’s qualifications. No more than 1 should be a supervisor, employee or current work colleague of the project manager or sponsor. Consult staff on the community contacts required for your specific proposal.</p>		
	Name & title or organization	Email	Phone
	Adrienne Hartzell, Managing Director, Newton Cultural Alliance	adriennehk@newtonculture.org	(857) 636-0199
	Scott Aquilina, AIA	sbaquilina@gmail.com	(617) 943-4079
	Joe Jolly CFO / COO, Director of Development & Legal Affairs Wellan Montessori School	joe.jolly@wellan.org	(617) 916-5923
			Mailing address
			Newton Cultural Alliance 35 Webster Street Newton, MA 02465
			1253 Commonwealth Ave. Newton, MA 02465
			1161 Boylston St. Newton, MA 02464

You may adjust the space for each question, but the combined answers to all questions on this page must fit on this page.
Full proposals must include separate, detailed budgets in addition to this page.

Project TITLE		First Baptist Church in Newton, Bell Tower Preservation	
SUMMARY CAPITAL/DEVELOPMENT BUDGET			
Uses of Funds			
Partial Collapse Analysis & Emergency Repairs Soft Costs – Bliss Enclosures & Structures North (Completed)		\$85,127	
Emergency Repairs Hard Costs – Consigli Construction (Completed)		\$65,422	
Total Partial Collapse Emergency Costs		\$150,549	
Preservation Project Soft Costs (Future)		\$354,970	
Preservation Project Hard Costs – Stages 1-2 (Completed)		\$194,500	
Preservation Project Hard Costs – Stages 3-9 (Future)		\$3,742,336	
Total Preservation Project Costs		\$4,291,806	
D. TOTAL USES (should equal C. on page 1 and E. below)		\$4,442,355	
Sources of Funds		Status (requested, expected, confirmed)	
CPA Funding		Requested	
First Baptist Church in Newton Parsonage Fund		To be requested	
First Baptist Church in Newton Stewardship Campaign		To be requested	
Community Funding		To be requested	
Amelia Peabody Charitable Fund		To be requested	
Other Grants		To be requested	
MHC Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund Emergency Grant		Funding Complete	
E. TOTAL SOURCES (should equal C. on page 1 and D. above)		\$4,442,355	
SUMMARY ANNUAL OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE BUDGET (cannot use CPA funds)			
Uses of Funds			
Building Expenses (Utilities, Cleaning, Plowing, Landscaping, Insurance)		\$111,027	
Maintenance Expenses (Annual and Major)		\$77,000	
Other		\$290,044	
F. TOTAL ANNUAL COST (should equal G. below)		\$478,071	
Sources of Funds			
Rent		\$339,212	
Pledges and Offerings		\$67,500	
Endowment		\$70,000	
Other		\$25,868	
G. TOTAL ANNUAL FUNDING (should equal F. above) **projected budget surplus of \$24,509		\$502,580	
Project Timeline		Phase or Task	
		Season & Year	
Previously Completed Analysis and Emergency Work, Steps 1&2 of Stabilization and Preservation Plan		Spring 2022-Winter 2023	
Phase 1 – Stabilization (Step 3 of Stabilization and Preservation Plan)		Fall 2023-2024	
Phase 2 – Preservation Work (Steps 4-9 of Stabilization and Preservation Plan)		2025-2026	

Project TITLE		First Baptist Church in Newton, Bell Tower Preservation	
↓ Check off submitted attachments here.			
REQUIRED	X	PHOTOS	of existing site or resource conditions (2-3 photos may be enough)
	X	MAP	of site in relation to nearest major roads (omit if project has no site)
Pre-proposals: separate attachments not required, just use page 3 of form. Full proposals: separate, detailed budget attachments REQUIRED.	PROJECT FINANCES printed and as computer spreadsheets, with both uses & sources of funds		
		Development pro forma/capital budget: include total cost, hard vs. soft costs and contingencies, and project management – amount and cost of time from contractors or staff (in-kind contributions by existing staff must also be costed)	
		Maintenance budget, projected separately for each of the next 10 years (CPA funds may not be used for operations or maintenance)	
		Non-CPA funding: commitment letters, letters of inquiry to other funders, fundraising plans, etc., including both cash and est. dollar value of in-kind contributions	
		Purchasing of goods & services: briefly summarize sponsor’s understanding of applicable state statutes and City policies	
Pre-proposals: recommended. Full proposals: REQUIRED.	X	HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE	ATTACHMENT 1: Analysis of Historical Significance (narrative; maximum 1 page)
			ATTACHMENT 2: Description of Historically Significant Features (maximum 1 page)
			ATTACHMENT 3. Summary & Justification of Proposed Treatment (maximum 1 page)
			ATTACHMENT 4. Newton Historical Commission Review (based on attachments 1-3 above)
REQUIRED for all full proposals.	SPONSOR FINANCES & QUALIFICATIONS, INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT		
		For sponsoring organization, most recent annual operating budget (revenue & expenses) & financial statement (assets & liabilities); each must include both public (City) and private resources (“friends” organizations, fundraising, etc.)	
		For project manager: relevant training & track record of managing similar projects	
REQUIRED for all full proposals involving real estate acquisition, construction or other building/ landscape improvements.	DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION		
		Professional design & cost estimates: include site plan, floor plans & elevations	
		Materials & finishes: highlight “green” or sustainable features & materials	
		Environmental mitigation plans (if applicable): incl. lead paint, asbestos, etc. (including disposal of existing fence elements that cannot be repaired or restored)	
OPTIONAL for all proposals.		LETTERS of SUPPORT	from Newton residents, organizations, or businesses



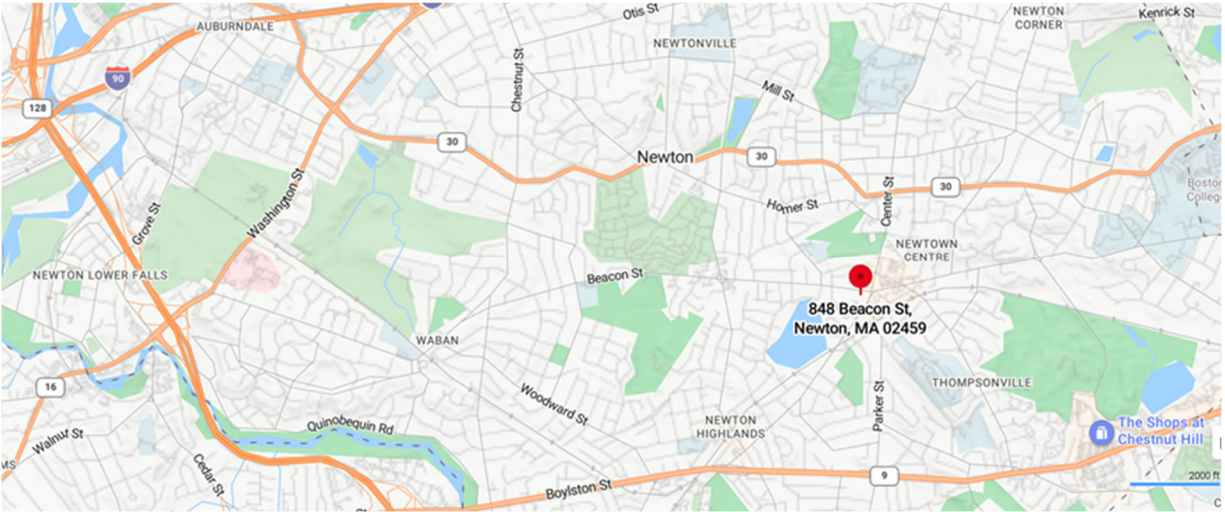
South view of the main entrance and Bell Tower with a clear view of the contrasting colors and shapes of the granite and sandstone stonework.



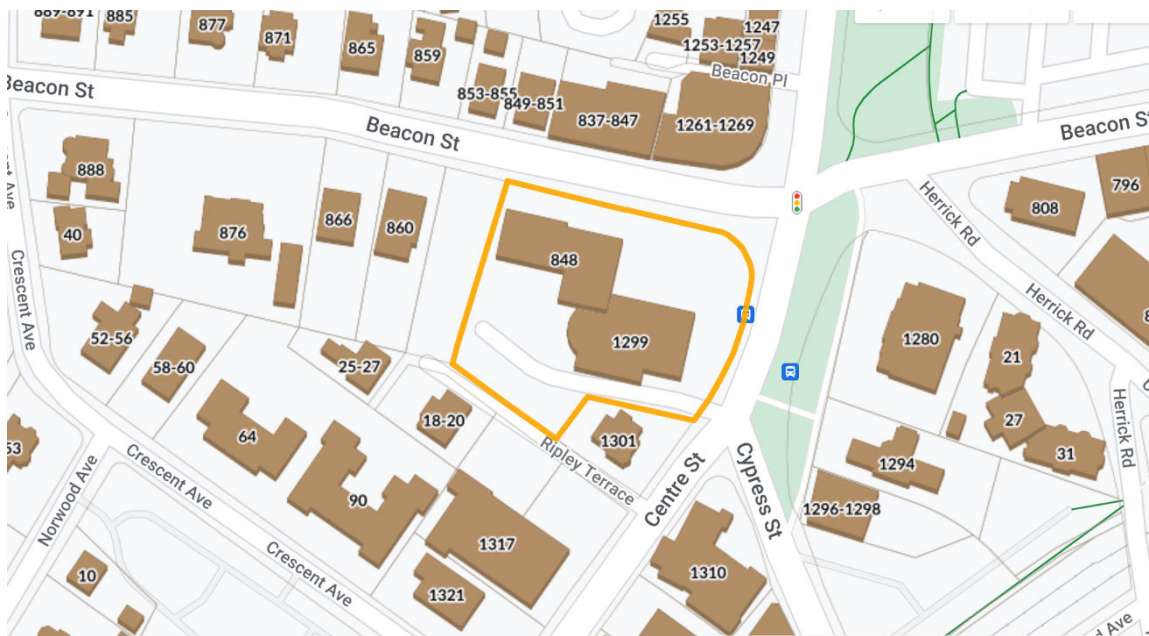
North view of the prominent Bell Tower rising above the building.



Dunnage and emergency brace. Marked and inventoried stones preserved on pallets for reinstallation.

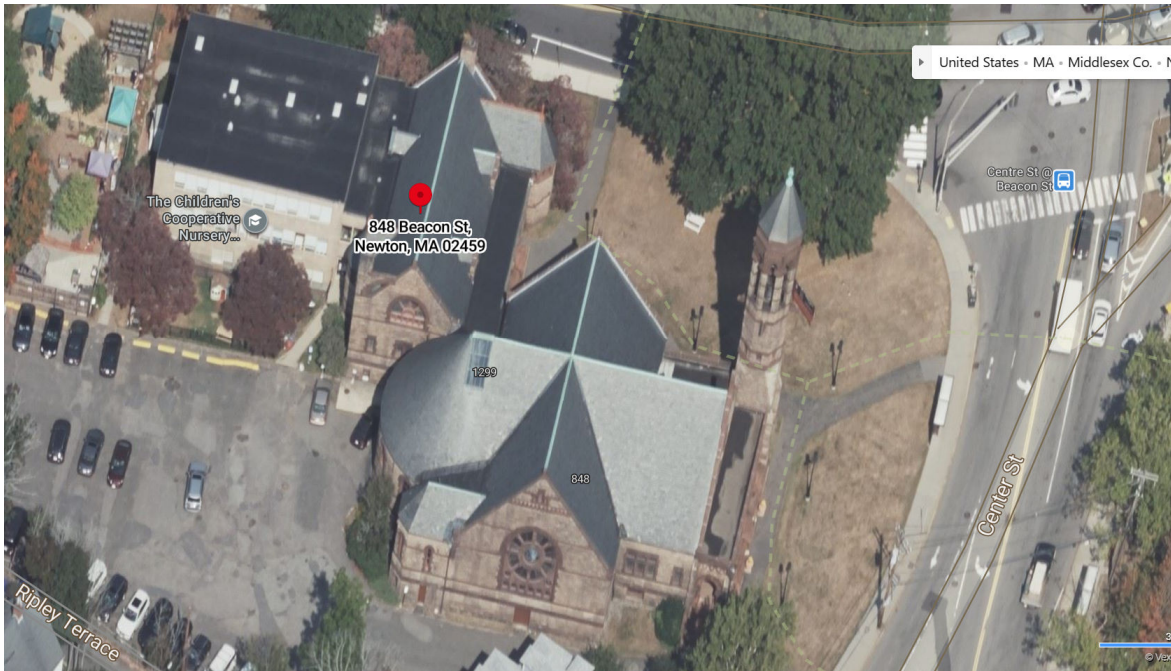


City-wide Map



Assessor's Database property map

<https://newtonma.mapgeo.io/datasets/properties?abuttersDistance=100&latlng=42.329702%2C-71.195624&zoom=18>



Birds-eye Aerial View



Neighborhood View

Organized in 1780, First Baptist Church is significant as one of the earliest churches formed in Newton Center and as the first Baptist congregation in Newton. The original meeting house was built on land given by Noah Wiswall, the first settler in this area of Newton. A nearby lake once called Wiswall Pond and later Baptist Pond (now Crystal Lake) was used by the church for baptisms during the 19th century. The church was also closely associated with the Newton Theological Institute (later Andover Newton Theological School), which was established in 1825. Many of its pastors were also professors at the school. In 1836, the church moved to the site of the present building at the corner of Beacon and Centre streets to be more closely situated to the school and students. The 1836 structure was replaced with the current stone building in 1888. A generous grant from local benefactor Gardner Colby enabled the construction of a more fire-resistant structure that was large enough to accommodate the growing congregation and student presence. The church Sanctuary hosted many of the theological school's graduations until their move to New Haven, CT in 2017.

Designed by John Lyman Faxon, the First Baptist Church in Newton is a significant area landmark called "the pride of the village, in an architectural point of view" by the King's Handbook of Newton (1889, p. 276). The church is a fine example of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture following the example of the leading architect of the day, Henry Hobson Richardson. The uniquely American architectural style exemplified by Richardson was short lived. A fading cultural memory of the excesses of the 1860s and the restrictions surrounding the 1873 depression led to the final years of the 19th century embracing new wealth and a return to popular European styles of architecture. First Baptist Church in Newton is a well-preserved example of this important and uniquely American architectural style.

Another important historical aspect of this building is the connection to Rev. Samuel Francis Smith, prominent Newton resident, author of *History of Newton, Massachusetts: town and city, from its earliest settlement to the present time, 1630-1880*, and minister of this church from 1842-1854. In 1899, an eleven-bell set of chimes was installed in the tower with many of the bells given in memory of Rev. Smith. Thirty years later, in 1932, the tower and chimes were named The America Tower and dedicated to Rev. Smith in reference to his popular hymn "America," often known as "My Country 'Tis of Thee." Rev. Smith remains an important part of Newton's history, as evidenced by the Samuel Francis Smith Homestead Society, established in 1958 to preserve his former 1181 Centre Street home and the stone marker that was placed to commemorate the site after fire destroyed that home in 1969. His influence continues to garner attention as seen in a current exhibit at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, MA: *Bethany Collins, America: A Hymnal*.

The church Sanctuary is a beautiful space rich in symbols including stained glass windows, Romanesque arches, carved oak pews, and ornately painted walls. It is known not only for its beautiful interior but also for superb acoustics, making it a favorite performance space for many musical groups in Newton including Newton Philharmonia, Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra, Commonwealth Chorale, and the Suzuki School of Newton as well as other local groups including Boston Saengerfest Men's Chorus and Chorus Pro Musica. It also hosts Wellan Montessori School graduations, Mason-Rice Elementary School evacuation drills, and other community events. Through these and other public events, history continues to be made in this historic building.

Built in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, First Baptist Church is an example of a uniquely American style of architecture from a significant but short-lived architectural era. Sandwiched between the European influenced high Victorian styles of the 1860s and the Georgian and Federal styles regaining popularity in the late 1890s and beyond, the decade of the 1880s was one of the most significant in the development of American architecture. Following the Civil War and the 1873 financial depression, there was a strong desire for a truly American style of architecture without the excesses and trappings of their European precedents.

Henry Hobson Richardson led the nation's architects in developing a new style which removed common stylistic details such as Greek columns or large cornices that could limit the development of new design. The new style also made use of American building materials such as rough-faced granite, painted plaster in various textures, and local woods such as oak, walnut, and hard pine as opposed to the European influenced use of carved marble, mosaics, and exquisite wood.

First Baptist Church features heavy Syrian arches and contrasting bands of stone similar to another local Richardsonian building, Boston's Trinity Church (1877). The structure has a traditional apse and transept with three gabled ends facing north, east, and south. Another gabled wing extends from the building's northwest corner. The building is distinguished overall by its wall surface decorations of contrasting colors of Gloucester granite and red sandstone worked into geometric patterns. Visually striking is the octagonal 90-foot corner Bell Tower by the triple-arched entry porch.

The building is on the National and Massachusetts Registers of Historic Places and has preserved these important historic and architectural elements. The partial collapse of the exterior stone on the north face of the tower jeopardizes the structural integrity of the tower and poses a risk to this well-preserved historic structure.

The Church plans to preserve the historic 1888 Bell Tower exemplifying Richardsonian Romanesque architecture in compliance with The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for *The Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings*. Archival research may be needed to confirm historic conditions.

The tower is load-bearing masonry, largely constructed of "Gloucester granite", with dark brown/red sandstone trim and black slate roofing. The tower base and the open belfry are both constructed with massive stone blocks while the shaft includes an unreinforced interior wythe of uncoursed rubble stone set in mortar and exterior face stone. Reinforcement is limited to iron lintels supporting triangular transition areas at the interior wythe above the tower base and iron straps connecting the belfry piers across the eight arched openings.

In May 2021 Bliss Enclosure Consulting + Design (BECD), was engaged to inspect the bell tower following a call from the FBCN Properties Ministry reporting a displaced stone on the ground below the north elevation. After a walkthrough and visual field inspection BECD issued an initial report outlining three areas of concern due to advanced deterioration: 1) Tower Base, 2) North Porch and 3) Upper Tower and Belfry.

In November 2021, Structures North Consulting Engineers (SN), conducted a hands-on investigation from an aerial lift of the entire tower and followed up with "Emergency Dunnage" sketches intended to stabilize the area of bulging stone on the north elevation of the tower. Safety restrictions closed public access to the adjacent Sanctuary, with the tower interior also deemed off-limits by the assisting contractor, Consigli Construction. In their 2/4/22 conditions report, SN detailed the extensive deterioration and noted the ability to restore the tower in place was questionable. In March 2022, prior to installation of the dunnage, a partial collapse of the stone facing on the north elevation above the buttresses occurred. Subsequently, the dunnage plans were modified to additionally shore the stones above the area of collapse, and Existing Conditions Inc. (ECI) was engaged by the design team to document existing conditions using laser scanning. Following a permitting process, temporary dunnage was installed in May 2022.

In November 2022, SN provided mortar test results and analysis, concluding the tower takedown was not needed and proposing the 9-step stabilization process summarized below:

Steps 1 and 2: Remove the bells, interior wood platforms, and furred wall finishes and erect an internal staging tower and stair. (Completed January 2023 by Yankee Steeplejack Company)

Step 3: Install a temporary steel structure with needle beams extending through existing window openings, fitted with steel plate supports and a load-monitoring jack system to reduce upper tower loads acting on compromised masonry below.

Steps 4, 5 and 6: (Certain items include a multi-step incremental process utilizing a proprietary system of equipment and materials for grout injection). Carefully remove and replace unsupported face stones and compromised mortar at the transition level (below the window openings); inject natural cement grout compatible with the existing intact mortar to resolidify the existing masonry; reinstall facing stone to original locations using concealed stainless-steel ties and refilling the collar joint with compatible materials; and restore other masonry deficiencies, including cutting and repointing the tower exterior.

Steps 7 and 8: Remove the temporary steel shoring, patch to match existing materials and finishes at temporary openings. Reinstall restored or replace-in-kind new windows, replacing in kind the interior platforms and belfry waterproofing and drainage systems, bell player instrument cabin, and vertical access ladder, stairs, and hatches.

Step 9: Refurbish the bells and install on a new frame, with a restored or replicated player instrument.

SN issued Schematic Design documents in December 2022. In early 2023, the Schematic Drawings were split into two phases, providing a potential opportunity to stabilize the tower sooner and more reliably during the multi-year fundraising period. These two phases have been priced by both Aniceto Masonry and Fennessy Consulting Services with total construction costs within about 4% of each other, after adjusting to similar design contingency percentage allowances.