



First Baptist Church in Newton

May 17, 2024

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

Re: First Baptist Church in Newton – Bell Tower Restoration Project

Dear Distinguished Members of the Community Preservation Committee:

We are looking forward to submitting our full proposal next month in preparation for the July meeting. In the meantime, we want to provide an update on developments that have occurred in the past eight months.

In January, we transitioned to a new architect. Our previous architect, David Bliss, is moving toward retirement, so we opted to bring in Scott Aquilina who can see the project through to completion. We were fortunate to have David's skill and guidance for the early part of this project and are fortunate to have Scott's knowledge and skills from here on out. In addition, John Wathne of Structures North Consulting Engineers continues to be an essential member of the team.

We have made significant progress in the design and engineering for the permanent stabilization and full restoration of the Bell Tower. Over the winter, GeoEngineers USA drilled test pits at the base of the tower to test the load bearing capacity of the ground into which we will construct micropiles for a temporary steel support structure, an essential feature of the restoration strategy. Once we received their report, our Design Team was able to finalize the design and engineering and develop construction documents intended for submission to a short list of qualified bidders. We anticipate reviewing bids in early June so that we can develop a more concrete budget to present at the July meeting.

Unfortunately, while these tasks were underway, several additional stones and one of the wooden dunnage beams fell from the north face of the Tower. In March, we engaged Aniceto, a

masonry restoration contractor, to add additional wooden dunnage beams, steel cables, and support beams on the buttresses to further secure the base of the tower. The episode was a reminder of the importance of addressing the full restoration as soon as possible.

On the fundraising side, we submitted a letter of intent to the National Fund for Sacred Places. We expect to hear in June if we are invited to submit a full application to the National Fund. We have also hired a capital campaign consultant and have begun working on a feasibility study to lay the groundwork for our campaign.

We look forward to our continued conversations with you about this critical restoration project.

Sincerely,



Richard A. Ransom,
Tower Restoration Committee Chair