

September 7, 2020

Dear Linda,

Thank you for reaching out to me. I want to take this opportunity to share some perspective on our project as well as Grace Church's unique role in the community.

As our grant application details, we are applying to the Newton CPP as part of a comprehensive funding strategy for the urgent structural stabilization and masonry restoration of the 1873 tower at Grace Church, home to the historic Eldredge Chime. The City of Newton has identified the tower as an important historic feature of the Farlow Park National Historic District and our appeal rests primarily on the need to safeguard a local landmark.

That being said, in recent planning reports the city has recognized the important contributions synagogues and churches make to the quality of our neighborhood fabric and community life, activities which are of interest to the LWV Newton.



"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."
Heritage Landscape Report for Newton, 2010

We are proud that Grace Church has long served not only as a local architectural landmark but also as a community and social service resource since opening in the fall of 1873.

In 2009, we entered into a partnership with TILL (Toward Independent Living and Learning), a nonprofit group focused on providing independent living for cognitively challenged adults. We subdivided an undeveloped lot within our property to create a private setting for a new group home while preserving a substantial open space with mature trees along Church Street, an important extension of the Farlow Park landscape.

For the last 28 years, our Rectory has been an outpatient service center for Riverside Community Care which serves thousands of individuals annually and works closely with Newton Schools and the health department taking referrals and doing rapid intakes for walk-ins as part of Newton's Mental Health initiative. Additionally, Grace Church has

created many community partnerships with a variety of social services by offering space at under-market rate rents and accommodating at-risk groups that have been turned away at other locations.

Let me share a sampling of the partnerships we have built over the years:

- Groups which meet on a weekly basis in our Parish Hall include four 12-Step programs and Still Dancing which provides chair dancing for elders.
- Community groups which have used our facilities on a regular basis include the Social Science Club (at Grace Church since 1886) and Zdravets, a traditional Bulgarian Dance group.
- In the 15 months just prior to the Covid outbreak, we hosted 3 meetings of Retired Social Workers, 5 meetings of Kids4Peace (an Interfaith Peace Leader Program), and 8 community piano recitals.
- A team of Grace members continue to work with B-Safe, hosting annual outings for this inner-city summer program for children and teens.
- Since 2016, Grace Church has served as a polling station to approximately 2,000 residents in Ward 1.

As our sanctuary is blessed with exceptional acoustics, we host a variety of musical events every year. Over the past several years, these have included a Tanglewood Festival Chorus member solo recital, a choral concert with the choir of King's College London, Blue Heron Renaissance choir, a Folk and World Music Concert with Four Shillings Short, Buckingham Browne & Nichols Orchestra Annual Concert, and various organ recitals offered by our music director on our restored Hook & Hastings organ.

And finally, the historic Eldredge Chime, unique and irreplaceable, continues to be an important feature of the neighborhood. This June, NNHS asked us to play the bells as part of a city-wide celebration for the Class of 2020. We were also happy to participate in Newton's observance of BLM by playing the civil rights anthem "Lift Every Voice and Sing" in July.

We have the support of both the Massachusetts and Newton Historical Commissions, Historic Newton (Newton History Museum-Jackson Homestead), community leaders such as Brooke Lipsitt and Anne Larner, as well as Newton Corner neighbors. We value the role the LWV Newton serves in our community and we want to earn your support too. I noticed that you are having a Board meeting on Tuesday and I would be happy to attend this or connect with you on the phone to make sure I have adequately addressed your questions.

With warm regards,

Jean

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