



TO: Mark Armstrong and Newton CPC

FR: Jean Papalia, Sponsor of Grace Tower Restoration Grant Proposal

DA: October 1, 2020

Grace Church Community Engagement for 147 years

As our grant application details, we are applying to the Newton CPA as part of a comprehensive funding strategy for the urgent structural stabilization and timely masonry restoration of the 1873 tower at Grace Church, home to the historic Eldredge Chime. The City of Newton identified the tower as an important historic asset of the Farlow Park National Historic District in its application to the National Park Service in 1982. Our appeal rests primarily on the need to safeguard a local landmark and is based on support for the appropriate Historic Preservation of Newton's architectural assets.

Recent city sponsored planning reports recognized the important contributions synagogues and churches make to the quality of our neighborhood fabric, community life and social service outreach.

"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

That being said, we understand community interest in understanding the role Grace Church plays in the life of Newton and in supporting initiatives like Open Space and Affordable Housing that the City Council prioritizes.

We are proud that Grace Church has served not only as a local architectural landmark, but also as a community and social service resource since opening in the fall of 1873. Even during this pandemic, we continue to contribute to Newton through our work and also by making our facility available to the public. Our contributions to the City of Newton are a part of a long arc of commitment and leadership. We are proud to share this timeline highlighting contributions over the past 147 years.

Brief Highlights of Community Involvement

- 1873 Stone Church and Tower officially opens in Newton Corner.
- 1880 Land donated for Farlow Park by Grace Church leader John Farlow.
- 1881 A group led by Mayor Royal Pulsifer and the Rev. Dr. George W. Shinn of Grace Episcopal Church found the Newton Cottage Hospital, which we know now as Newton Wellesley Hospital.
- 1883 Rector Rev George Shin supervises design of Farlow Park.
- 1886 Social Science Club founded at Grace Church – continues to meet there!
- 1931 Grace Church family donates land for Newton Children’s Library at the Chaffin House.
- 1966 Grace Church joins with Massachusetts clergy and lay leaders to found Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries for social justice.
- 1968 Rector Rev. Thomas Lehman helps establish the Newton Community Development Foundation to expand affordable housing.
- 1975 Grace community sponsors the resettlement of a Cambodian family in Newton.
- 1982 Grace Rectory is converted to an outpatient service center for (what is now known as) Riverside Community Care which serves thousands of individuals annually and works closely with Newton Schools and the Newton health Department by taking referrals and doing rapid intakes for walk-ins as part of Newton’s Mental Health initiative.
- 1992 Grace Church takes an active role in sponsoring Second Step to partner with domestic abuse survivors in building brighter futures for themselves and their children.
- 1994 Grace community volunteers with CAN-DO (Citizens for Affordable Housing in Newton Development Organization), a community-based non-profit developer of affordable housing for individuals and families with low and moderate incomes.
- 1990s Musicians from Grace Church and the community joined to form *The Grace Notes*, a musical troupe performing American Songbook classics of Frank Sinatra, Cole Porter, Gershwin, Duke Ellington, and Hollywood Musicals. For a decade the Grace Notes performed annual concerts for the community and at local nursing homes.
- 2000 Grace hosts tours of the historic Stained Glass Windows for Newton residents.
- 2009 Grace enters 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.

- 2015 Grace Church joins Temple Reyim to found NBARC (Newton-Brookline Asylum Refugee Committee) to help asylum seekers access housing, food, clothing, ELS instruction, daycare, education.
- 2016 Grace Church opens as polling station to approximately 2,000 Ward 1 residents.
- 2018 Grace Church supports Boston Chapter of Ignatian Spirituality Project for men and women recovering from homelessness and addiction.
- 2020 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 also participated in Newton's observance of BLM by playing the civil rights anthem "Lift Every Voice and Sing" in July.
- 2022 Once the tower is restored, we plan to host summer bell concerts in Farlow Park. (preliminary plans were underway for summer 2020, but were aborted due to the safety concerns of the tower.)

Additional Support of our Community today

We continue our commitment to community engagement by sharing our building generously. We have created partnerships with a wide 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. Here is a sampling of the partnerships we have built over the years:

- 12-Step Recovery programs - Grace provides space for 5 meetings weekly
- Still Dancing: chair dancing for elders
- Social Science Club, at Grace Church since 1886
- Zdravets, a traditional Bulgarian Dance group
- Kids4Peace, an Interfaith Peace Leader Program
- Regular community piano recitals
- Wide range of musical concerts open to the public

Commitment to Affordable Housing and Open Spaces

As you can see, Grace Church has actively supported Affordable Housing and Open Space for nearly 150 years and we will continue to do so. Our grant does not deprive the CPC from continuing to support these important initiatives. Preserving this tower is an issue of the Newton CPA expanding the portfolio of potential Historic Preservation projects beyond a narrow group of city-owned buildings to safeguard our broader 19th

century architectural heritage. In opening up CPA funding to more private, non-profit organizations, including those associated with faith communities, Newton will join Boston, Cambridge and 79 other municipalities across the Commonwealth who have been doing so since the CPA was first adopted 10 years ago.

Support for Preserving the Tower from Newton Residents

The citizens of Newton support this project. As of October 1, we have received more than 590 signatures of support on our Petition to “Help Save the Tower.” A majority of those signing live in the neighboring 02458 zip code.

Our website provides the public access to our full grant application, description of the urgent need, the budget for stabilization and repair, existing Preservation Restriction with the Massachusetts Historical Commission, and National Historic District inclusion from the Secretary of the Interior. Letters of support from the community include:

- Historic Newton (Jackson Homestead)
- Newton Historical Commission
- Massachusetts Historical Commission
- Friends of Farlow Park
- Riverside Community Care and other Social Service agencies whom we sponsor.

The Eldredge Chime



The Eldredge Chime of Grace Church was given by Elizabeth T. Eldredge. Housed in the tower's belfry 60 feet above the ground, the nine bells combined weigh 8,296 pounds, are known for their remarkably pure tone, and were the first chime introduced in Newton. They were cast in the summer of 1873 by William Blake & Co., utilizing techniques Blake acquired while training with Paul Revere, III. Grace's chimes define the bucolic soundscape of the Farlow and Kenrick Parks Historic District, having pealed to celebrate the end of world wars, to solemnize 9/11, the Boston Marathon Bombing, and Black Lives Matter and most recently, at the request of local teachers, to honor Newton's class of 2020 as they observed their graduation in the midst of a pandemic.

While Grace has contributed to the social and historical fabric of the city of Newton for nearly 150 years, Grace is NOT a museum dwelling in Newton's past. Grace is a living, breathing community which has contributed to Newton's past, continues to contribute today, and will make a positive impact in the future. The architectural merits of the stone tower and its history as a landmark in Newton Corner are extraordinary. And the tower is in dire need of preservation funding. To lose the tower and the bells would be a sad day for Newton and a tragedy for historic preservation.

Thank you for considering the proposal to help save this iconic landmark.