

January 19, 2021

To the Members of the Newton City Council:

We, the leadership of the Newton Interfaith Clergy Association, write in support of Grace Episcopal Church's application to the Newton Community Preservation Committee for historic preservation funds to restore the Grace Church Bell Tower, which now comes before City Council for approval.

More broadly, we are writing to affirm that Newton's faith communities are inextricably woven into the history, culture, and community development of the City, and as such are appropriate recipients of CPA funding for the purpose of historic preservation, for projects that meet the CPC's guidelines.

The architecture of Newton's houses of worship is part of the cultural inheritance of our city, and anchors many historic neighborhoods in the thirteen villages. The beauty of these churches and synagogues as historic structures is available for the enjoyment of all who pass by them, and is an important part of what gives our city its unique character. The loss of these historic buildings has a broad impact across the city and extends far beyond the membership of any local congregation. Severe alterations to historic houses of worship are also experienced as losses by many citizens of different faiths or no faith. This is why so many other municipalities across the Commonwealth have chosen to fund projects related to the historic preservation of houses of worship through CPA funding.

We note that Grace Church's application has already been thoroughly vetted by Newton's Community Preservation Committee, which has voted to support it, and that Grace Church is already under a preservation restriction in perpetuity by the Massachusetts Historic Commission, a state agency which regularly and routinely funds preservation projects connected to houses of worship which meet its guidelines.

We celebrate the religious diversity of Newton, and wish to see the architectural record of this diversity preserved for future generations. We believe that the citizens of Newton benefit when the City partners with faith communities for worthy projects with the public good in mind, whether these projects are related to social services, civic engagement, or historic preservation. We affirm the efforts of numerous generations of Newtonians who, working through their religious congregations, founded, developed, and worked to maintain the City's hospital and social service agencies, libraries, schools, and parks. We are proud that our congregations serve as polling places, concert venues, sites for food pantries, and meeting spaces for recovery groups and civic organizations, and that even the restrictions on in-person meeting during the pandemic have not stopped the (masked and distanced) volunteerism of our members in our community. We can do more together in support of the common good than we can do alone.

Respectfully Submitted,

The NICA Leadership Team  
Rev. Dr. Kenneth Baily, Newton Highlands Congregational Church, UCC  
Rabbi Allison Berry, Temple Shalom  
Rev. Alicia Johnson, Myrtle Baptist Church  
Rev. Devlin Scott, NewCity Church

**From:** [Candace Havens](#)  
**To:** [City Council](#); [Ruthanne Fuller](#)  
**Cc:** [Barney Heath](#); [Lara Kritzer](#)  
**Subject:** In support of CPA funds to restore Grace Church tower  
**Date:** Tuesday, January 5, 2021 11:53:46 AM

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[**DO NOT OPEN** links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe. ]

Dear members of the City Council,

During the nearly 30 years that I've lived in Newton Corner, Farlow Park has been a hub of community life, and the Grace Church has been an integral and distinctive feature of the Farlow and Kenrick Parks National Register Historic District. Its handsome stone steeple can be viewed throughout the area and the sound of the bells chiming on special days has signaled important events over the years for all within earshot to appreciate. In addition, the Grace Church has been a place where community members of all faiths have gathered for a variety of social and cultural activities including some wonderful community musical events.

If the poor condition of the tower were to render the building unsafe, not only would the City witness the decline of a significant and valued structure that is listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places, but it would also forfeit the vibrancy it contributes to the community. The proposed public/private partnership will enable quality restoration of the tower with thoughtful consideration given to its history and original architectural elements and makes it a worthy and appropriate expenditure of CPA funds and a legacy for the City of Newton. I urge you to support this investment of CPA funds.

All the best for a healthy and happy new year,

Candace Havens

Hunnewell Avenue

**From:** [Alison M. Leary](#)  
**To:** [Candace Havens](#)  
**Cc:** [Barney Heath](#); [Lara Kritzer](#); [Ruthanne Fuller](#)  
**Subject:** Re: In support of CPA funds to restore Grace Church tower  
**Date:** Tuesday, January 5, 2021 7:37:19 PM

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Dear Candace,

Thank you for letter.

I attended the CPC meeting discussing the Grace Church Bell Tower and I have had several phone conversations with Scott Aqualina. I was impressed with their presentation and the thoroughness of the CPC proposal. I was at first concerned about the possibility that it would take away CPA funds for affordable housing and for our significant recreation needs, but my understanding is that only funds dedicated for historic preservation will be allocated for this project over a 2–3-year period.

I am not concerned about funding going specifically to a church. Here in New England, we have much history tied up in our churches. Surely no would argue that public funds dedicated to historic preservation should not go to Boston's Old North Church? I do believe that each project should be evaluated on an individual basis on its own merits.

I worked for the Community Preservation Coalition in Boston for a couple of years and attended the SJC discussion of Acton versus Caplan. We were very concerned that this legal challenge would have a chilling effect on CPA historic projects, and it likely has made communities more cautious. But I don't think we should rule out funding to private institutions or organizations just because they are houses of worship.

This area is my old neighborhood. I grew up nearby and attended the Underwood and Bigelow Schools. I have walked past Grace Church many times on my way to school and with my mother when we took the Newton Corner Express Downtown to shop at Filene's Basement. Little has changed except for the aging maple tree that stood on the corner near the Pomeroy House which was taken down, and some of the older trees in Farlow Park are gone. The Weeping Beech Tree planted in 1902 still remains. It would be a shame to lose the church tower and have only a stump in its place. It would forever change the historic landscape of Farlow Park, which as you know was recently renovated to reflect its historic past at significant expense. But this is what will happen without community support for this project.

I read Attorney Ryan McManus' letter and it is right on the mark. I will be voting "yes" on CPA funds for the Grace Church Tower restoration Project and encouraging my colleagues to support it as well.

Happy New Year!

Kind regards,

Alison M. Leary  
Newton City Council  
Ward 1  
617-821-5619

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**From:** Candace Havens <chavens@rcn.com>

**Sent:** Tuesday, January 5, 2021 10:53 AM

**To:** City Council <citycouncil@newtonma.gov>; Ruthanne Fuller <rfuller@newtonma.gov>

**Cc:** Barney Heath <bheath@newtonma.gov>; Lara Kritzer <lkritzer@newtonma.gov>

**Subject:** In support of CPA funds to restore Grace Church tower

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Candace Havens

Hunnewell Avenue