

LET OUR LIGHT SHINE

LET OUR LIGHT SHINE!



First Congregational Church
of Winchester

Capital Campaign 2009-2012

You are the light of the world.

A city built on a hill cannot be hid.
No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the
bushel basket,
but on the lamp stand,
and it gives light to all in the house.

In the same way, let your light shine before others,
so that they may see your good works
and give glory to your Father in Heaven.

Matthew 5:14-16

Dear Friends in Christ,

“Let our light shine!” What a wonderful image—inviting us to be at work in the world reflecting the gifts of God in the life of creation.

It is a particularly apt image for a church like ours—whose illuminated steeple can be seen far and wide. Shortly after arriving in Winchester, I remember visiting with a veteran member who remarked that she and her husband first found our town and church while on a bike ride. They were coming from Lexington and climbed up Johnson hill to see a beautiful white steeple rising above the valley below—which piqued their interest to continue on to see what the community was like that was attached to that landmark. What they discovered was both a beautiful village and a vibrant church. They proceeded to find a home in both.

Today, the image of letting our light shine is apt as well, as we raise the funds necessary to maintain and support that vitality. The programs and ministries alive within our walls are as vital and life-giving as they have ever been. But the physical home in which they exist is tired and in need of loving attention and care. The light which shines out through our beautiful stained glass is quite literally dimmed by clouded coverings, the graceful steeple is in need of a coat of fresh paint, and our classrooms, bathrooms, and access-ways need updating to continue to serve our community well in the 21st century.

We, who have inherited the gift of this community of faith and place, are now being invited --indeed called--to join together and step up to the challenge. Since our founding in 1840, this church has been composed of people of faith just like us, who put faith ahead of fear and who have graciously given of themselves to empower the future. Now it is our turn. **Won't you please join us so that together First Congregational Church can, “let our light shine before others, so that they may see our good works and give glory to our God in heaven.”**

Yours in Christ,

Skip Waterbury



Let Our Light Shine!



First Congregational Church's light has been shining faithfully in the center of Winchester for nearly 170 years.

Throughout the generations, our congregation has gathered to worship and serve, seeking to be faithful Christians, responsive to the joys and challenges that God has provided.

Our strong foundation of faith and tradition, along with a willingness to be led by the spirit and embrace challenge and change, has enabled our congregation **to thrive over time, not only within our walls, but also as God's servants and leaders in the community and the wider world.**

The Spark Ignites

In 1840, a courageous group of 97 people seceded from the First Congregational Church in Woburn to establish our church on its present site. These same community leaders met in the church vestibule to plan and ultimately petition the state legislature to incorporate the town of Winchester.



When the original church building burned to the ground in 1853, the small but vigorous and visionary congregation quickly raised **\$26,000 (over \$5 million in today's dollars)** to build the substantially larger present-day First

Congregational Church structure, which was designed to hold 600 people for worship. The new church building was dedicated just nineteen months after the disastrous fire.



From the beginning, our congregation has understood itself to be blessed by God with an abundance of gifts that we are called to share with one another and the world. In good times and **bad, we have responded to God's trust in us with** faith, determination, imagination and compassion toward others.

Our church covenant speaks to this understanding of our calling:

We, the members of this church, covenant and bind ourselves to strive to know the will of God; to walk in the ways of the Lord, made known and to be made known, to exalt the worship of the one true God; to work and pray for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, the reign of peace, and the realization of human brotherhood.



Times Change and the Light Endures



As our faith community grew, and the times and needs changed over the next century, the church building and mission also adapted and expanded.

In the late 1920s, the sanctuary was redesigned and the memorial stained-glass windows were **installed; the “Parish House”** addition designed by popular Winchester architect Robert Coit was also built, including church school classrooms, meeting and function rooms, Chidley Hall, the large kitchen, and Ripley Chapel.



The last major building project took place in the 1950s, when the sanctuary was updated to create a center aisle and the building exterior was extensively remodeled to take its current form.



Times Change and the Light Endures

In the period since our building was last significantly renovated, the world has changed dramatically – socially, economically, technologically, and in many other ways. Our faith community and ministries have endeavored to evolve as well to serve the needs of our congregation and neighbors:



- In 1961, First Congregational Church voted to join the United Church of Christ, thus embracing and becoming part of a larger and more diverse Christian community.
- In the 1970s, we adopted an innovative Ministry Team model to better serve the changing needs of the congregation in spiritual nurture and outreach.
- In the 1990s, recognizing our own abundance, the congregation voted to increase the percent of our annual operating budget dedicated to Outreach by 1% per year whenever possible, with a goal of 20%; we currently dedicate 15% of our annual budget to external charitable programs.
- In 2001, First Congregational Church became an Open and Affirming Congregation, intentionally welcoming people of all ages, races, abilities, genders, sexual orientation, economic status, ethnicity and religious traditions to join us in worship and full participation in the life of our church.



- In the 21st century, we are embracing a world of new technologies to improve communication and stewardship of our financial and environmental resources.

The Light Shines On

Today, our light continues to shine as we encourage one another to grow in faith and reach out to others in love and service. Our congregation is full of life and spirit, which we experience in a multitude of ways and settings, including:



- Rite-13 and Journey to Adulthood classes (grades 6-9) that are bursting at the seams;



- A highly energetic youth group (grades 9-12) that encourages and guides our young adults through those difficult, wonderful, rebellious, blossoming teen-age years;

- Over-subscribed youth and adult mission trips that provide opportunities for service to others as well as spiritual enrichment;



- Innovative health ministry programs that nurture and explore spiritual wholeness and healing;
- Popular lay-led summer worship services that allow lay leaders to let their lights shine;



The Light Shines On



- A vibrant music program that inspires and moves us;



- Generous outreach giving and abundant hands-on service opportunities;



- Church school classrooms where our youngest children learn that God loves them completely and wholly; and

- **Many vital small groups such as the men's "Platypus" and Sunday evening groups,** Touchstones, Bible study, Ruth group, and much more that allow each of us to explore, develop and enrich our spiritual journeys in community.



Increasingly, as the needs of our church community continue to evolve and our church building continues to age, the current physical state of our church building belies our inner vitality as a community of faith. And portions of our church remain inaccessible to many persons in our congregation, including the Palmer level, the basement school rooms, church office, and cramped choir practice room.

Envisioning a Lighthouse for the 21st Century



For over a year, the congregation engaged in an active process of generating ideas regarding capital projects that promote good stewardship of our church facilities and support our ministries now and into the future. With the help of our architects, Menders, Torrey and Spencer, we developed a comprehensive **5-year, \$7.2 million Master Plan, based on our congregation's** collective vision and needs.

The master plan is intended to guide us as we work to enhance our life together as a community of faith and express our vitality to the wider community. It is based on the following common principles:

- We are a welcoming and caring Christian community; therefore, our facilities must be fully accessible so that all may join us and know the joy of worshipping and serving God together.
- We are committed to growing in faith, and to serving God through our lives in the wider world; therefore, we must update our sacred spaces, including worship spaces, classrooms, offices, and gathering spaces, and invest in technology to better nurture spiritual development at every age.
- We seek to be good stewards of all our gifts, including our building and the environment; therefore, we must make necessary repairs and improvements to the church exterior, including the roof and stained glass windows, and conserve energy wherever possible.
- We believe in reaching out with love to our neighbors; therefore, as we prepare to invest in our own spiritual home, we plan to contribute meaningfully to an organization that promotes social justice in our community.

While we believe that all of the projects detailed in the comprehensive Master Plan are vital to the life and ministries of our church, we recognized that it was unlikely that we would be able to accomplish it all at once, even before the recent economic downturn. Accordingly, we commissioned a feasibility study and went through an extensive process of prioritizing projects, according to prudential and ministerial need and impact.

Taking the First Step Together in Faith

The current economic environment is much less favorable than the period during which we were developing our Master Plan and has worsened still since our feasibility study. Our member families are struggling with financial uncertainty, as reflected in lower stewardship pledges and operating budget challenges for the coming year. Moreover, we are well aware of needs within our broader community and the wider world.

It is also true that in difficult and uncertain times, people need their faith community more than ever. In all times, God calls us to let our light shine forth boldly to welcome, encourage and serve others; through Jesus, God promises us that we will never be alone in this important work.



As a congregation, we feel strongly that we must be responsible stewards of our wonderful church building, which was gifted to us by past generations of faithful people, to prepare the way for those to come in the future.

From a prudential standpoint, there are certain projects that are simply mandatory, such as repairing the roof, restoring the stained glass windows, and painting and repairing the exterior of the building. Furthermore, there are steps we must take to improve the accessibility of our building so that all people may be fully welcomed into the life of our **church. It is our generation's turn to invest in the future of our faith community.**



Therefore, First Congregational Church has committed to moving forward in hope and faith with a moderated, yet still bold plan to raise \$1.4 million to revitalize our spiritual home in order to **“Let Our Light Shine!”**

Taking the First Step Together in Faith

Specifically, funds raised during Phase 1 of the campaign will be used to:

Improve accessibility to and throughout our facilities



- Make the classroom and parlor level fully accessible by installing a lift and bridge from the second floor elevator landing;
- Create a unisex, accessible restroom at the Chidley Hall level; and
- Install an exterior ramp at the Chidley Hall entrance.



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Expand and enhance classrooms and meeting rooms

- Create a large third-floor classroom by removing partition walls;
- Provide additional 2nd floor classroom spaces by moving two staff offices to 1st floor;



- Convert the upper-level of the main office into two staff offices;
- Refresh and improve classroom/meeting room lighting, technology and furnishings; and
- Update life-safety measures, including fire doors, sprinkler system and smoke alarms.

Taking the First Step Together in Faith

Repair and renovate the building exterior

- Repair the slate roof;
- Repair woodwork and paint building exterior;
- Restore stained glass windows; and
- Repair and paint the steeple, and improve lighting.



Extensive work was done to research the most efficient ways to carry out these projects, and to ascertain accurate estimates of the costs involved. These estimates include design and project

management fees, overhead and contingency allowances. In addition to the costs above, we estimate an additional allowance of up to 5% in campaign-related costs, including consultant fees, printing, and events. Construction is anticipated to begin this summer, and to be finished by Homecoming Sunday, 2010.



Keep Our Light Shining

As our congregation moves energetically into the 21st century, the time has come to revitalize our church facilities to enhance our current ministries and prepare the way for future generations to experience the joy we know as a people of a loving God.



It has been 50 years since the last major renovation to our church building. Our well-used and well-loved spiritual home is tired and portions of it are inaccessible to many of our congregation.



It is our generation's turn to invest in the future of our faith community. We must make a significant investment now in order to preserve and improve our treasured building, so that we may better nurture our faith community and let our light shine to the world.



We are ultimately aware that the light we want to shine is a reflection of the light of God which has shone into our hearts, inspiring us to be grateful and generous participants in **God's work.**



We enthusiastically welcome the participation of all those associated with the **First Congregational Church of Winchester** in our **“Let Our Light Shine!” Capital Campaign**. For more information on getting involved, please contact any member of the Steering Committee:

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