

Historic Church Restoration October 2017 to October 2020

We have been busy over the past three years working on restoring the historic church. Some of the work was expected (such as replacing the slate roof) while some was unexpected (a new boiler, mold in the church). While we have accomplished much, we still have work to do.

In the fall of 2017, our boiler in the church failed. Due to the incredible generosity of this parish, we were able to install a completely new heating system at a cost of \$44,144. During the heating system installation, we noticed that the carpet by the baptismal font was wet which was caused by a leak in the cricket (valley) on that side of the church. We also noticed some odors in the church. The church was tested, and we discovered we had some moderate issues with mold. For health and safety reasons, we closed the church until we could get that under control. The roof valleys by the chimney were patched.

Realizing that we had lots of work ahead, we formed the Historic Church Restoration Team (HCRT). We hired a company to remediate the mold on both levels of the church. We also cleaned out the church basement and then the church basement was demolished down to the load bearing stud walls. The basement windows were removed and sealed with native fieldstone and mortar. Three sections of the earthen floor in the basement were sealed with concrete caps. A commercial strength dehumidifier was installed in the basement.. Through our fundraising efforts we were able to pay for this \$45,247 phase (which was in our original plans for the renovation). By the spring of 2018 we were able to use the church again

The second phase of the project -- replacing our slate roof -- began in the spring and summer of 2018. The HCRT received quotes for the roof and the interior to set the budget and fundraising goals. In January of 2019 we hired NewPort Architecture so that we could begin the roof. We felt we had the money in hand or pledged to begin. At that time, the formal bids we received were significantly higher than what we had seen just 6-9 months previous. We spent the first half of 2019 working with the architect and contractors to lower that price.

Construction on the roof started in September of 2019. We encountered some problems. A few roof boards were rotten but not very many considering they are over 150 years old. The rafter tails were embedded in concrete and that was all spalling (turning to dust). That concrete all had to be replaced. Several brownstone capstones were delaminated. We repaired what we could, but we had to replace several of them. Both the small brownstone cross and the larger cross (which was a cast concrete replica) fell apart during removal. Once again incredibly generous parishioners donated the funds to replace both of those crosses with brownstone. We completed the roof in December 2019 and the copper gutters and downspouts were installed in January of 2020. Members and friends of St. Mary's as well as grants from foundations allowed us to complete this \$608,705 project.

The third and final phase of the project is the interior restoration of the church. In October of 2019, while the roof was being replaced, a significant rain event led to water intrusion into the church again. We had to remediate this situation by removing a large section of wall to eliminate the odor and mold in

that area. Since then, we have conducted several studies on the church interior. We have painted small sections in the back of the church in 4 different color schemes that have been used over the years. The Vestry and the HCRT will now decide which color scheme will be selected. In early December of 2020, the canvas wallpaper in the church is going to be removed from the walls to determine the status of the plaster underneath. Our restoration specialist has assured me that we will be able to use the church even after this is done.

Once we have decided on a color scheme and we know the condition of the plaster walls, we will be able to determine the cost of renovating the interior. It might just be a patch of the plaster and repainting or it may be a complete tear down to the studs. (Those 2 options are remarkably similar in price but to stay as historically accurate as possible the walls should remain plaster) We also plan to remove the carpet and replace it or resurface the hardwood floors underneath the carpet. We are working on developing a lighting package but that will depend on the color scheme that is chosen. Some electrical upgrades are being discussed for the basement and the main church floor. We are looking at a new sound system. Finally we are exploring a restoration of the mosaic floor in the narthex.

While we are trying to nail down the approximate costs, we are going to need to continue our fundraising and grant request processes. We are unsure of the exact amount of the interior restoration, but we know that what we have remaining in the Historic Church Restoration Fund is not sufficient.

Our application as a National Historic Building is still ongoing. Our application is being worked on but because of Covid-19 it has been difficult to get access to the necessary libraries and archives to complete the research. We are on the State of Rhode Island list of Historic Sites that are eligible for National Historic status. We intend to continue to pursue this goal.

The church leadership would like to thank those who have made this possible. The members of the Historic Church Restoration Team include Alex Allardt, Don Berrett, Dave Ferkinhoff, Jon Juhase, Matt Spohn, Hugh Hall, and Harry Gustafson.

The members of the Restoration Fundraising Team include Peter Collins, Marlo Pratt, Hugh Hall, Judy Hall, Sue Hall, Alex Allardt, and Dave Ferkinhoff.

And a special thanks to Dave Ferkinhoff, our grants writer.

We are unsure of when we will continue fundraising for the restoration of the church interior (Phase 3). If anyone is so moved to give towards Phase 3 before then, all donations towards the interior restoration of the church are gratefully accepted.

Your brother in Christ,

Paul Westrom, Junior Warden