



Case Statement

Church on the Hill (CoH) is seeking funding to make our meetinghouse accessible and adaptive for broad community use. We shall retain the beauty and historical character of the sanctuary and narthex while making the pews moveable and installing a full kitchenette, thus making it serviceable for gatherings other than traditional worship such as community meals, family reunions, holiday celebrations, concerts and dances, theater productions, and farmers' and crafters' markets. We will also make the building handicap-accessible, with a fully accessible bathroom, make it efficient to heat with effective lighting, and create more and better parking.

Community Context

Lenox, in the center of Berkshire County, boasts a rich history and current environment for its 5,000 residents and many visitors. Due to diligent guidance and effort, the qualities of small-town New England still prevail, the meetinghouse of CoH being iconic of this. It's an emblem of early Lenox and New England, serving as one of the gateways to Lenox's newly created Cultural District. As such, it sits poised to offer affordable meeting spaces and programs with the aim of vibrant community for years to come.

Its History

Dedicated on January 1, 1806, the meetinghouse was built in two years by Benjamin Goodrich of Richmond. Its edifice is one of the few remaining examples of Federal Period architecture in the region. The steeple above the clock is an Asher Benjamin design, while the lower tower is after Charles Bulfinch. The lightning rod is of Benjamin Franklin's design. The original clock was a gift of Fanny Kemble to the town in 1849. Because it "did not have an enviable reputation for telling the truth about the time of day," it was replaced in 1899 with a clock from Seth Thomas & Co., gift of Mr. Morris K. Jessup. Most recently, as the clock has been stopped for several years and the hourly bell silent, CoH won a CPC grant from the Town of Lenox and is slated to have it repaired, its face restored, and the hourly bell returned to duty this summer.

Inside, the floor plan was changed in 1866 to its present arrangement, though the master plan makes it so the pews could be returned to the original placement. (The pews are not original to the building.) In 1880, the northern wall was extended eight feet and the present platform was erected and the pulpit, which is moveable, was placed there. In 1868, the present tracker action Johnson organ was installed in the southern gallery. In 1955, the building was completely electrified, and a year-round heating system installed. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

Current Condition

CoH recently agreed upon a master plan, having retained James Hundt, an architect who specializes in historical renovation and sacred spaces. His thorough reckoning of the current condition of the building found it to be in excellent structural condition though in need of reconfiguring to be of broader use.

Given its mission as a church to cultivate relationship and to lift the human spirit, CoH recognizes our meetinghouse as a beloved though underused gem that could enrich all. Our aim is to make it so.