

The Campaign for the Restoration of First Parish Meetinghouse

First Parish Meetinghouse (also known as “*The National Memorial Pilgrim Church*”) is located at the top of historic Town Square in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Our current meetinghouse is the 5th building on this site and was constructed during the period of 1893-1897 after a fire completely destroyed the previous building on the evening of November 22, 1892.



We are the oldest continuous ministry in New England, and our church records date back to Scrooby, England, in 1606.

Sacred Ground

by: Rev. Ed Hardy, First Parish Minister

This monument should stand not for perfection, not for a particular religion, or a particular politic, but for human hope, for the desire to live a fuller life of freedom—economic freedom, political freedom, and religious freedom. This is holy ground—the holy ground of hope. The holy ground of human capacity.

This is the sacred earth of the Wampanoags, sacred ground of the Saints and Strangers, sacred ground for they have sung, danced, and lived and died here and so it is sacred ground today and in our trust—sacred for we live, laugh, and love here; we sing and dance here—here on our sacred ground.

On the Horizon

The next project looming on the horizon is to cut out and repoint all mortar on the east elevation which includes the front of the tower, walls between the tower, south front gable, round tower, north and south front gable walls. All areas must be carefully cut at least 1” deep or to sound mortar, whichever is greater.



The front elevation upper area mortar joints are cracked and filled with wet, deteriorated mortar.

All organic materials must be carefully washed from joints before they can be repointed with Type O mortar, which will be matched to the original raised bead tooling detail.

Contact Information

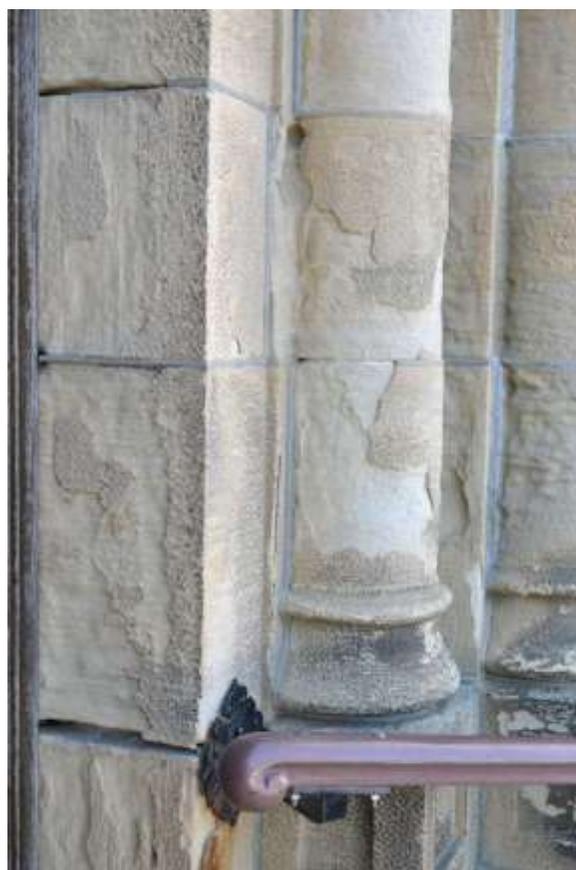
www.restorefirstparishplymouth.org
Facebook – [firstparishplymouthrestoration](https://www.facebook.com/firstparishplymouthrestoration)

(508) 747-1606

First Parish Plymouth Restoration
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Plymouth, MA 02360

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Serious Mortar Issues



As you can see from the photograph above, the front mortar joints are cracked, falling out, or missing in many areas of the east facing wall of the Meetinghouse.

The long-term water content of the tower walls has caused the spalling, disintegration and loss of detail of the more fragile sandstone columns and carved detail of the south facing entry and the columns to either side of the main entry.

Why We Do What We Do

Our History

First Parish Church in Plymouth, Massachusetts, stands at the heart of the Pilgrim story. Its legacy of religious and civic freedom continues to define America nearly 400 years after Plymouth's first settlers gathered their church at the base of Historic Burial Hill.

Envisioned to be a lasting memorial to the Pilgrims, the 1899 Meetinghouse celebrates and preserves Pilgrim values and beliefs through its rich history, Norman architecture, unaltered Arts & Crafts interior, and magnificent stained glass windows that tell the Pilgrim story.

Due to its important role in our nation's history and its architectural significance, in 2014 First Parish was placed on **The National Register of Historic Places**. Also in 2014, Preservation MA named First Parish one of the most endangered historic resources in Massachusetts.

Architectural Significance

Dedicated on Forefathers' Day in 1899, the present First Parish Meetinghouse is one of Plymouth's most significant historical buildings.



Designed in the Romanesque Revival style by Hartwell and Richardson of Boston during the late 1800s when the Arts & Crafts movement was flourishing in Boston, First Parish's interior remains perhaps the only unaltered example of Arts & Crafts church architecture designed by this well-known firm.



The Meetinghouse's Norman-inspired tower reflects the type of church the Pilgrims would have been familiar with in England and houses the town's Paul Revere bell, cast in 1801, in addition to ten carillon bells, one of which was a gift from the residents of Plymouth, England.

Unique stained glass windows, many of which were designed by well-known opalescent glass artist Edward Peck Sperry of Tiffany Studios, celebrate the Pilgrim values that have

become the core values of America: *civil and religious liberty; the rights of the individual; freedom of speech; freedom of the press; and the right to trial by a jury of one's peers.*



The sanctuary's center chancel window, *Signing of the Compact*, is signed by Louis Comfort Tiffany.

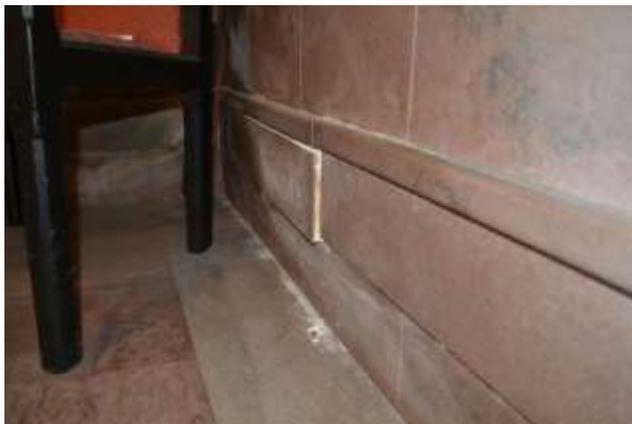
Other significant events in the Pilgrim epic are depicted by windows entitled *The Treaty with Massasoit*, *The Landing in Plymouth*, and *The Smashing of the Pilgrim Press*. Six of the narthex windows depict allegorical figures identified as *Courage*, *Peace*, *Justice*, *Faith*, *Truth*, and *Light* with accompanying verses from the Bible.

The Need for Restoration

In 2010 a structural survey funded by the National Trust for Historic Preservation identified restoration of the stone façade as being essential to maintaining the structural and historical integrity of the building. The report concluded that the ravages of more than a century of time and weather had weakened the mortar of the exterior granite, allowing moisture to permeate the facade and destabilize the interior walls.



Since past attempts to repoint portions of the façade failed, today large portions of the interior plaster are falling from the walls and ceiling on an almost daily basis in both the sanctuary and narthex areas.



Recently, marble blocks in the interior front wall of both narthexes have buckled and have begun to protrude due to the effects of freezing and thawing of moisture in the outer walls.

If the façade is not successfully restored and flashing in many areas replaced in the near future, the deterioration will continue and, eventually, the structure of the building itself will be compromised. Restoring the exterior will involve removing eroded masonry; re-pointing mortar and replacing failing flashing; and installing preventative measures to insure that moisture is unable to permeate the interior walls.

Restoration of the interior's crumbling plaster and deteriorating historic stenciling cannot begin until the entire façade has been restored.

The Cost of Restoring First Parish Meetinghouse

Since its inception in 2009, First Parish's Restoration Committee has consistently set long-range strategic goals and embraced the highest preservation standards, utilizing restoration/preservation specialists in order to assess the building's condition, complete restoration work, and oversee projects. All donations and grant money raised by the Restoration Committee go directly to the restoration of the building.

Since 2009 the Restoration Committee has raised more than \$200,000 from small grants, pledges, and individual donations. In 2012 Plymouth's Community Preservation Committee awarded First Parish a \$307,000 grant, which covered the restoration of the Meetinghouse's windows. **However, approximately \$750,000 still needs be raised in order to restore First Parish's granite façade in its entirety.**



Importance to the Community and the 400th

Due to its rich history, symbolic importance, and unaltered Arts & Crafts architecture, the fifth Pilgrim Meetinghouse is a destination for people throughout America and from around the world.

As Plymouth celebrates the 400th anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims, First Parish will be the focal point of Historic Town Square.

Your support would help us reach our goal of having First Parish's beautiful windows and granite exterior restored by the 400th and have the Meetinghouse rededicated as the National Memorial Pilgrim Church.



National Register Plaque Ceremony at First Parish



A small but enthusiastic group of Plymouth residents gathered on Thursday afternoon on June 18 to unveil the National Register plaque that has been affixed to the Meetinghouse. Jan Palmer-Tarbox opened, welcomed everyone, and then introduced Ben Brewster, *Chair of the First Parish Meetinghouse Restoration Honorary Committee*, who shared some recollections of attending First Parish as a boy, and Donna Curtin, *Director of Plymouth Antiquarian Society*, who spoke to the importance of the Meetinghouse to the history of Plymouth and to the community.

The Restoration Committee is grateful to everyone who contributed to the cost of the plaque which now adorns our building and proclaims our historic significance to all who pass. Thank you for your generosity!

Happy 90th Ben

Ben Brewster is the chair of our Honorary Committee and a direct descendant of William Brewster, Pilgrim extraordinaire.

Ben celebrated his 90th birthday in September, and we can't think of a better way to honor him than by bringing the Robinson windows back to First Parish Meetinghouse, where he has been a member for all his life, before he turns 91! We are asking for your help. Your donation of \$90, \$190, \$290... will honor Ben and bring us closer to re-installing our beautiful Robinson Windows pictured below.



It's So Easy

It's so easy to do many things: fall in love, fall out of love, ride a bike, bake a cake, take a walk, read a book, sing a song. But, to give money? Not so easy. Why? Well, for many of us, it's not that we are not moved by the cause or the need, or that we can't afford a donation; it's something else. We put down the message, we do the wash, make the meal, feed the dog, take out the trash and we forget! We forget that we were moved to make a donation, and the message is expunged. It's normal, but there is a way around it--**Do It Now!** Please. You can help us with this most worthy project to restore this unique property, The National Memorial Pilgrim Church. Whether you can afford a small, or a large donation, you'll become part of something very important, a supporter of our American heritage.

Donations to First Parish Restoration can be mailed directly to First Parish Meetinghouse Restoration, 19 Town Square, Plymouth, MA 02360 by using the enclosed donation envelope or you can donate online by going to our website at www.restorefirstparishplymouth.org.

All donations are tax deductible.

Fire at Meetinghouse



What could have been a disaster at First Parish on Sunday, March 29, was averted, thanks to the combined efforts of Plymouth Police and Fire Departments, who responded when the church's fire alarms went off around 6:30 p.m. A 35-year-

woman of Middleborough, MA apparently gained access to the bell tower sometime after the Sunday service and remained there when the Meetinghouse was locked up. She later set a fire in the foyer, broke a window in one of the inner doors, and damaged a heavy brass book stand, a hand-carved wooden screen in the sanctuary, and some other items, totaling over \$5,000 in damages. After being arrested on Sunday night, she was charged with arson, breaking and entering to commit a felony, injury to a church, and assault and battery (due to throwing items at responders), according to *The Boston Globe*. Her motive was unclear.

Even a small fire will not diminish our resolve to continue our efforts to bring this important historical and architectural gem back to her original glory so she can continue to shine for generations to come, sitting on top of Leyden Street looking out over Plymouth Harbor as a monument to those early adventurers and as a reminder to us all of what is possible when we take that first step into new and unknown territory.

The Treaty with Massasoit



There were 102 passengers aboard the Mayflower. Half of the settlers died within the first year; in fact, most of them were dead by April. The majority of historians now agree that the remaining settlers may not have made it through that first winter at all were it not for the assistance of the Native Americans.

About 60 miles southwest of Provincetown Harbor, lived the region's most powerful Native leader (called sachem), named Massasoit. Many Native Americans had died from the diseases carried by the European traders who had previously attempted to create trade outposts in the years prior to 1620 along what is now the New England coastline. Their pow wows were proving to not be an effective deterrent to the men who came from across the sea. They began to see the need to deal with the white man directly.

Massasoit met with William Brewster, and together they created what would be the first, of many treaties. It was an alliance based in fear. The relationship between Native Americans and the Pilgrims was civil for roughly forty years. Then their mutual trust was broken.

It is rare to have a Native American depicted in stained glass; even more so to have it displayed in a church. Our beautiful window memorializes that moment: of fear, compromise and faith. It is a reminder of what we face today, and of our need for our current government to come from fear to agreement, to peace, to commerce and prosperity with all of the peoples on this Earth.

This window (and the other 11 windows on the right and left narthex) were designed by Edward Peck Sperry in 1910. Sperry worked in many well-known glasses house including Tiffany Studios. All twelve windows were donated to First Parish by Mrs. Caleb Brewster Hackley of Tarrytown, NY. Mr. Sperry had designed and supervised the construction of many extraordinary stained glass windows in different areas of the United States and Canada. On June 24, 1903, Yale University presented him with an honorary degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts for his body of work

This newsletter was "produced in cooperation with the Plymouth County Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Plymouth County Commissioners".

Tours of the Meetinghouse

Our First Parish Meetinghouse tours are officially over for the season and we have been very encouraged by all the enthusiastic and supportive visitors that have come through our front doors.

We did have an unusual visitor this summer. It was Bicult, pictured in this photograph, who makes her home in



Jamul, California. She felt very honored by being able to enter such an important place of worship!

If you or someone you know is coming to Plymouth next year, please think of taking a tour of our Meetinghouse. Our regular tour schedule is every Friday and Saturday, from 10:00 - 3:00 p.m. June to the end of October. Children under 16 are free, but we do ask \$5.00 for each adult. Our Meetinghouse is a photographer's delight and we do encourage people to take as many photos as they like.

During the winter months we do welcome visitors to First Parish for a tour but we do ask that you make special arrangements by contacting us beforehand either by phone or email.

Meetinghouse Restoration

Honorary Committee

Chair – Benjamin Brewster

The Rev. W. Scott Axford, M.Div., Pastor,
First Universalist Church, Providence, RI

James W. Baker, Historian

Peggy M. Baker, Director Emerita,
The Pilgrim Society & Pilgrim Hall Museum

Dr. Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs, Director,
Leiden American Pilgrim Museum

Dennis Carlone, Owner, *Carlone & Associates*

Donna Curtin, Ph.D., Director,
Plymouth Antiquarian Society

Ellie Donovan, Executive Director,
Plimoth Plantation

Peter Forman, President & CEO,
South Shore Chamber of Commerce

The Rev. Ed Hardy, Minister
First Parish Church, Plymouth, MA

Christopher Hussey, AIA Emeritus

The Rev. Dan King, Minister,
First Parish Church, Kingston, MA

The Rev. Gary L. Marks, Pastor Emeritus,
Church of the Pilgrimage, Plymouth, MA

Sen. Therese Murray, Former President of the
Massachusetts Senate

Joyce Stewart, *The Plymouth Guild, Inc./Plymouth Center for the Arts*

Timothy Turner, Manager, *Wampanoag Indigenous Program at Plimoth Plantation & Director, Native Plymouth Tours*