

APPROACH TO TACKLE REPAIR ISSUES

To form a consensus of repairs a Preservation Committee has formed and reports to the Westport Community Association Board of Directors. This group is made of Community Association Officers, members of the History Committee, Planning Board, and former Comprehensive Plan Committee. These members bring interest and expertise to the task. At this time all work is exploratory and investigative to the necessary repairs. There is supportive interest in this project from the History Committee.

OPTIONS FOR REPAIR

Viewing the listed areas of repairs, the Church Preservation Committee has determined areas to be addressed for preservation. The committee has added some enhancements that are beneficial while maintaining the historical significance of the church. The committee is seeking building expertise and quotations from vendors to resolve the issues. Items for repairs and upgrades:

1) Weatherproofing, making structural changes, and adding a concrete floor to the existing foundation. 2) Restoring the roof structure to its integrity possibly with the use of trusses. 3) Putting cement board clapboards and the plastic trim on the front face to withstand weather elements. 4) Installing new windows with storm windows, keeping with the existing style. 5) Design a side entrance with a vestibule connecting both front doors, such that front doors are to be used as emergency exits. The new door leading to a ramp to the lawn is to be of sufficient design to be egress and ADA compatible. The side entrance matches the style of the front entrance. 6) Installation of a heat pump heating/cooling system for year-round temperature/humidity control.

IMPLEMENTING THE CHURCH PRESERVATION PROJECT

The Church Preservation Committee will be seeking assistance in implementing the Church Preservation Project once quotations are in and a work plan is made. These tasks would include bookkeeping, correspondence, public announcements, and fundraising. More on this is to be reported in later issues of this newsletter.

COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS

The Church Preservation Project is a worthwhile endeavor. Doing nothing will mean the loss of this treasure. This project can be accomplished in phases, with phases overlapping, and completed in a respectable time. The Church Preservation Committee is interested in hearing your comments and suggestions. We also are interested in hearing if you would be interested in working on this exciting project. You may do so by emailing: preserveWCAchurch@gmail.com

or writing to The Westport Island Church Preservation Committee
6 Fowles Point Road
Westport Island, ME 04578

Respectfully,

The Westport Island Church Preservation Committee
Rich Lorenson, Debbie Lorenson, Art Weber, Rose Bodmer, Jeff Tarbox, Jim Hatch,
Dick Barker



THE WESTPORT ISLAND COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER SPECIAL ISSUE MAY 2021

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A NOTE OF SPECIAL GREETINGS TO ALL



This special issue of the Westport Island Community Newsletter is devoted to our beloved Community Church set next to our Town Hall. The Community Church, with its early Greek Revival architecture, has been a part of our community heritage since 1864 serving as a sanctuary for spiritual guidance, for weddings, a celebration of life for those who became deceased, and a gathering spot for sharing the joy of the Christmas season. The Community Church has even served as an annex for the 2020 Annual Town Meeting with a closed-circuit TV between the Town Hall and the Community Church, thus allowing participants to be seated safely and a full agenda of warrant items to be completed successfully – a rare occurrence in Maine Town Meetings that year because of the COVID pandemic.

The Church Preservation Committee
6 Fowles Point Road
Westport Island, ME 04578



A BRIEF HISTORY ABOUT THE COMMUNITY CHURCH

The Community Church started as a dance hall at the intersection of what is now Sortwell Road and Main Road on Westport Island around 1840. When the Community Church was a dance hall, the Town Hall served as a meeting place for the FreeWill Baptists sect and the Methodist/Episcopal sect, meeting at separate times. After being partitioned by the Methodist/Episcopalians wishing their place, James McCarty Jr. had the dance hall moved onto a 1/8th acre lot where it still sets on the shoulder of Main Road.

A deed for the lot with the dance hall was issued in 1864 to members of the Methodist/Episcopal sect where it became a church. In 1956 the Maine Methodist Conference transferred the 1/8th acre plot with the church to Westport Community Association ownership.

On July 15, 2002, the Community Church became listed on the National Register of Historic Places in the State of Maine through application by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. Today the church remains a place for nondenominational spiritual guidance, wedding celebrations, and celebrations of life services.



A BRIEF HISTORY ABOUT THE WESTPORT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

The Westport Community Association was formed in 1955 with surnames of the members of Cromwell, Smith, Hodgdon, Greenleaf, Richardson, Graumann, and Knight. Its mission remains the same today as it was when formed, which is 1) to promote projects or ideas for the benefit of the town, 2) to preserve property or interests of historic nature, 3) to promote a sense of community, and 4) to acquire funds or property to carry out these goals. To this end, a calendar of social events is offered to the Westport Island community, as well as assistance to the local food bank, and granting student awards. In 2015 The Westport Community Association officially became an IRS 501.c(3) nonprofit entity. The annual operating budget is generated by fundraising through donations, from commercial sponsors and individual sponsors – no money is gathered from taxpayers as part of the Westport Island Town Budget. As such all funds must be used to aid its programs and can not be used for profit purposes.



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THINKING ABOUT THE COMMUNITY CHURCH TODAY

Residents of Westport Island, young and elderly and in between, whether full-time or part-time residents and guests have a deep attachment to the church. The church, together with the historic Town Hall, forms an iconic representation of that which our earlier settlers lived and passed along to us.

These two buildings still represent a way of life-based on principles of freedom and democracy, striving to be better. Loss of either building would be sorely missed, thus the Westport Community Association is obligated to keep the Community Church in good repair.



REVIEW OF CHURCH CONDITION AND REPAIR ISSUES

The Westport Community Association has been active in preserving the church by painting as needed and repairs to the roof when needed. Recently surveying the church with preservation of it for the next several years leads to some major repairs and modifications being identified. The results at this time are exploratory and cost estimates have yet to be determined. A summary of needed repairs is given.

1) The foundation is formed by granite blocks around the rim. There is no foundation floor and weak wooden structures in the middle need attention. The foundation is not weather-tight and moisture creeps into the sanctuary, leaving it musty, subject to mold and rot.

2) The windows are 2 sashes, a multi-pane wooded framed type that is exposed to the weather. They swell and stick when being opened to provide fresh air into the sanctuary, causing structural and safety concerns. It is only a matter of time before they rot out of existence.

3) The roof structure is weak, where the planking is breaking under load and causing cupping of the asphalt shingles. The roof has been repaired from varmint damage gaining to the roof and entering into the attic. The rafters are weak and support is suspect.

4) The church is located about 4 feet from the road which back in the day would not have been a problem. Today it is subject to safety concerns for occupants entering and leaving because of automobile traffic. It is subject to damage from snow, ice, grit, and sand being splashed during the winter and rain and other road spills being splashed during the remainder of the year.

5) The present church heating system is inefficient and outdated. Its utilization causes stress to all parts of the building and its contents.

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