

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Restore. Rebuild. Grow. *A Capital Project for Our Church Home*

*A Place
to Gather,
to Learn,
to Worship
and to Serve*



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

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The First Baptist Church congregation cherishes its deep roots in Saratoga Springs, and its historic role as a community meeting house. The congregation's mission of worship, caring and social justice is timeless. All are welcome in our church home.

The graceful and strong church building provides the 125-person congregation with worship space, classrooms, and meeting rooms where community groups gather each week. Over the past 150 years, the congregation has had little call to alter this magnificent structure to meet their needs. As a result, the church building is an enduring legacy of the design and craftsmanship of the mid-19th century. Still, in the early part of the 20th century, the original clock tower was removed, truncating what was once the tallest peak in the city.

Over time, age and weather have taken a toll on the building. The roof needs to be replaced. There is evidence of water seeping into the ceiling and the barrel vault underneath the church bell tower. Some of the lovely stained glass windows need to be repaired. Some sections of the exterior walls and trim are in need of repair and restoration. Disabled and elderly people have limited access to the sanctuary. Restoration of the clock tower to its place high above the city will be a symbol of the rebuilding of the church.

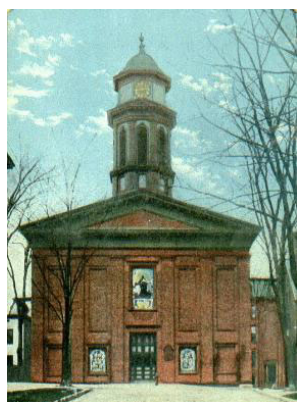
Several years of planning have led the congregation to a modest concept that rebuilds the clock tower, repairs the damage caused by age and weather, and provides improved access to the church for all people. Working with architect Tom Frost, the plan involves replicating the clock tower, installation of a new roof, constructing a new stair tower for handicap accessibility, repair and cleaning of the stained glass windows, and interior and exterior repairs. Fully realized, the plans will preserve this historic, landmark church for generations to come.

The future of the First Baptist Church comes around to its past. For over 175 years, its passion for creating a welcoming community, marked by a commitment to human service and social justice, remains intact. There is strength in continuity, and this capital project takes up its call.



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A Saratoga Springs Landmark



A Gift to the Community

In 1813, Gideon Putnam, founder of Saratoga Springs, bequeathed land on which to build the First Baptist Church, with the condition that if the building ever ceases to operate as a house of worship, the land and the building revert to Putnam's heirs. By 1855, the Baptists had raised enough money to build a grand extensive church on the Washington Street site, which was by then located between two major hotels – the Union Hall and the United States. Preaching at the First Baptist Church became a major attraction in the Spa City.

The Community's Meeting House

From 1855 on, Washington Street would take on the appearance of a miniature heavenly city with the Baptist church sitting alongside the Methodist Church with its grand gothic revival façade built in 1871 and the more restrained Bethesda Episcopal Church designed in a traditional English gothic style built in 1841. When completed, the First Baptist Church was the largest assembly space in the village, rivaled only by the American Hotel. It was an example of the Greek Revival style, a republican classical design that was by then old-fashioned. An octagonal drum surmounted the whole on which rested the bell tower. In the tower, the highest in Saratoga Springs, the village trustees were allowed to place a clock mechanism so that the bell struck hourly. Thus the bell was at the service of the entire community, a circumstance that gave this church the greatest claim to being the community's meeting house.

Realizing the Vision for the Future

The project cost of \$575,000 will be raised from individuals, families, foundations and businesses. It will draw on the very sources that keep the church vibrant: its membership, its service attendees, program participants, and its visitors and supporters who understand the importance of an urban-centered place of worship with a community-minded heart.

Members of the First Baptist Church Capital Project Leadership Team will be contacting parishioners and interested community members to talk about making this project a priority for their charitable giving over the next few years. Once 60-percent of funds are pledged, the capital project can break ground and start to build. Together, our congregation, strong in spirit and continuity, can bring its vision for the future to realization today.

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Serving the Community Today

*Each year, nearly 2000
members of the commu-
nity are served by the
First Baptist Church*

- Community Food Pantry
- Meeting Space for Alcoholics Anonymous
- Pre-License and Defensive Driver Training
- First Night Venue