

The clock tower and chimes have been restored at the Church on the Hill in Lenox, but there's more work to do

[By Clarence Fanto, The Berkshire Eagle](#)

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Phase one of the Church on the Hill Meeting House's transformation plan has been completed, which includes the restoration of the clock tower. An automated clock mechanism has replaced the original works, and the exterior clock faces have been restored — along with the weathervane that tops the cupola.

LENOX — The bells are ringing once again atop the restored Church on the Hill tower.

The resumption of the hourly chimes marks the end of the first phase of a major exterior and interior restoration of the [iconic landmark](#) on the hilltop overlooking downtown Lenox.



The Rev. Elizabeth Goodman, pastor of Church on the Hill in Lenox, holds a pendulum rod from the original clocktower mechanism in the church's sanctuary in Lenox, where it is on display for visitors to see after being replaced by an automated system.

And for the Rev. Elizabeth Goodman, pastor of the church since 2019, it's music to her ears.

"The tower is now complete," she said.

The restoration includes new clock faces with gleaming numerals and hands, a refreshed paint job and stenciling, and a shiny weathervane. Goodman noted that in deference to the neighborhood, the automated hourly chimes ring only from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily.

Two matching grants from [the Community Preservation Committee](#) and private donations covered the costs of the recent renovations.

The entire project from start to finish is estimated at \$1.5 million, said [Janice McCormick, president of the Friends of the Lenox Meeting House](#), a nonprofit organization that incorporated last October. So far, nearly half of the total has been raised through donations and grants.



The original clock works at the Church on the Hill in Lenox have been replaced with an automated mechanism and moved to the main sanctuary for visitors to view. The chimes in the restored tower ring out the hour from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.

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The Friends group is overseeing the restoration as authorized by the church, which owns the building. The entire project is [based on a master plan](#) adopted in 2021.

Now it's on to the final two phases, targeted for completion by 2028, with additional town support and donations gathered from the Friends.

McCormick stated that the Community Preservation Committee "was very supportive because the Meeting House is an icon of the town.

The Friends nonprofit hopes to raise two-thirds of the project cost in the community “so people feel like they have a stake and a vested interest in this and a collective sense of ownership,” Goodman said.

The project won a total of \$117,350 in 2023 and 2024 awarded through the town’s share of the taxpayer-supported statewide [Community Preservation Act](#).

The committee recently approved an additional \$117,252 to support preservation of the Meeting House to make it accessible to the community for events and activities throughout the year. All CPC awards require approval from annual town meeting voters in May.

Specific projects for the 2025-26 phase two include foundation repair and new lightning protection; ADA-compliant accommodations including a new exterior entry ramp, restored marble entry stairs and railings, refurbished doors and windows, and new exterior lighting.

The total cost of work during the first two phases comes to about \$550,000, said Davis Dyer, a member of the Friends leadership team.



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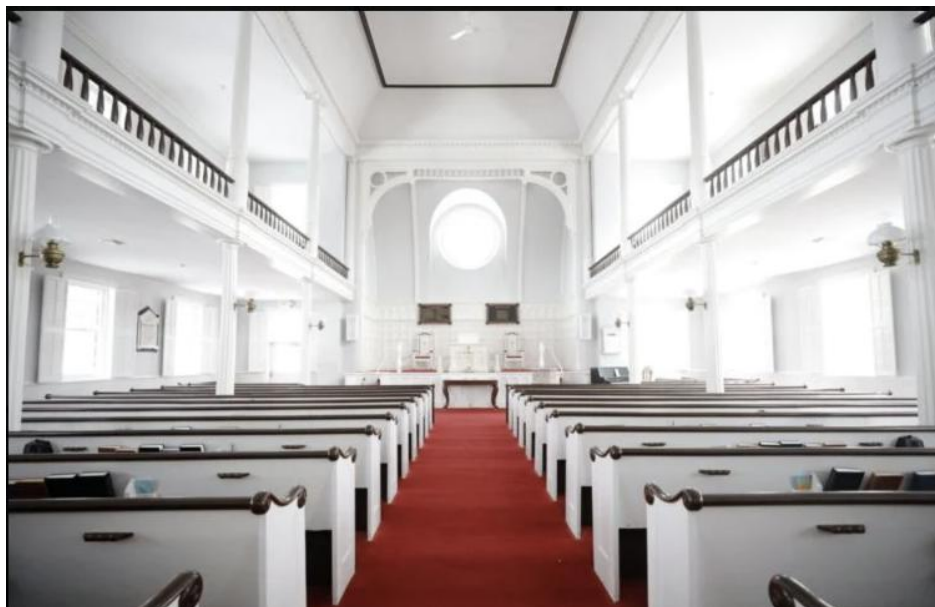
Goodman praised the “amazing generosity” of the committee, pointing out that “they want to see a project that progresses and succeeds, and the Friends of the Meeting House under Janice’s leadership has shown success.”

The third and final phase of the project would include interior work — a new heating system, lighting, movable pews, new flooring, a kitchenette, accessible bathroom and perhaps an accessible balcony reached by an elevator.

That would restore the building to four-season use, accessible to everyone, McCormick pointed out. To save on heating costs, [the church’s Sunday services](#) during the winter are currently held in [the smaller chapel at 55 Main St.](#), built in 1877 down the hill from the church.

Sitting on 6 acres of land, including the town-operated cemetery, [the historic Church on the Hill building was dedicated on Jan. 1, 1806](#). It served as the town’s Meeting House during the week as the only municipal building at the time and offered Congregational worship services on Sundays.

The congregation, organized in 1769, is affiliated with [the United Church of Christ](#). The building was listed on [the National Register of Historic Places](#) in 1982.



Phase one of the Church on the Hill Meeting House’s \$1.5 million restoration plan has been completed, including the renovation of the church’s clock tower in Lenox. The final phase includes movable pews so the space in the 1805 building can be opened up to accommodate meetings and family gatherings.

Goodman pointed out that the project is not a church effort based on a specific faith, but the building should be widely used and appreciated, regardless of a person's faith (or lack thereof). Along those lines, McCormick stated that not all the members of the Friends group are members of the church, and vice versa.

Once completed, Goodman suggested, the Meeting House and church would be an additional community center accommodating 220 people, suitable for family reunions, book clubs, proms, Thanksgiving dinners and anything for group gatherings larger than a typical home living room can host.

Rental prices would be affordable for area residents, joining buildings such as the [Lenox Community Center](#), [the Sedgwick Reading Room](#) and the [Duffin Theater at Lenox Memorial Middle and High School](#), she added.

“It would be a place where people could turn to for that thing people have been wanting to do but haven't quite figured out how to do,” Goodman said. There's no intention of competing with other community gathering places in town, she said, “but the goal is cultivating social ties that really make life enjoyable.”

McCormick also noted that the acoustics of the building are impressive — especially for music groups.

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https://www.berkshireeagle.com/news/central_berkshires/church-hill-lenox-chimes-tower-restored/article_dc481862-eee9-11ef-9c81-0fe6e2b01830.html