

A Church for Every**Body** Accessibility Project Update

Happy New Year!

We are now in the second year of our accessibility project's five-year Church for Every**Body** (CFE) fundraising effort. We are deeply appreciative of all who have contributed or pledged to our campaign so far. Your gifts are making possible long-needed renovations to our church.

The construction of our new Plaza entrance and elevator tower is close to completion. When we reopen, we will be able to welcome all members, friends and the general public through a canopied automated doorway. From the new vestibule everyone will have full access to our newly renovated lower-level Community Room and kitchen, our first-floor Parish Hall and Meeting House, and our second-floor offices, classrooms and meeting spaces. Garden access and security improvements are scheduled for early Summer.

The ongoing pandemic has made it clear to Church leadership that First Parish must be more than physically accessible to fully achieve our vision of access and inclusion. We also have to be virtually accessible. We must address the needs of those congregants who cannot join in person but can participate in church activities online, as well as those who attend services in person but have difficulty seeing or hearing Reverend Christina and other speakers. Virtual accessibility will be the capstone of our Church for Every**Body** project. This will ensure that all people can fully participate in the life of First Parish.

Virtual accessibility offers other benefits to First Parish and the City of Portland. Top-quality online accessibility allows church to be held during medical or weather emergencies. More diverse and complex space rentals will be possible which will improve the church's financial health and its ability to maintain or increase the services we offer to our members and the greater community. And, attendance and membership will likely grow when barriers to access and participation are eliminated.

Your gifts of time, talent, and treasure have made it possible to reach 93% of our fundraising goal. Over the next several weeks we will be reaching out to people and organizations beyond First Parish. We will do this using traditional and social media, mailed solicitations, and in-person (and virtual) contact. We invite you to help us do this. Spread the word to friends, family and work colleagues. "Like" or share social media information about First Parish and its Church for Every**Body** campaign. Provide the contact information of potential contributors to campaign leadership, including personal introductions when possible. Think up and offer creative, "outside the box" money-raising ideas.

The Church for Every**Body** Accessibility Project helps First Parish solve an almost two-century old problem by providing universal access, both physical and virtual, to all of our widely used public areas. Together, we will achieve our accessibility goal and create a legacy that will endure for generations to come!

For more information, please email the CFE Project Team at CFE@firstparishportland.org.

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