

A Campaign for the
Waitsfield United Church of Christ
Village Meeting House
BUILDING TO SERVE



WAITSFIELD UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST:
BUILDING TO SERVE

Executive Summary

Perched boldly, the steeple of the Village Meeting House (also known as the Waitsfield United Church of Christ) is a strong and lasting part of the building that has stood in the Village of Waitsfield for over 140 years.

It is a beacon, a landmark and a symbol. As we look to the next 100 years, the church's role is far greater than simply a building for weekly worship services. It is a haven for the oppressed, the hungry, the curious, the traveler and the marginalized. Cultural and educational events, community meals, wedding, funerals, meetings and more continue to be held in this aging facility. The church's members have lovingly cared for the building, roof and steeple for more than six generations and now turns to its community of neighbors to ensure the continued vitality of this community asset.

Opening its doors and walls – both literally and figuratively – the Village Meeting House renovation plans include adding accessibility, functionality, and versatility. Doing so will drastically increase its viability and options for community use. Plans include adding a fully renovated meeting space with energy efficient lighting, a fully renovated kitchen to accommodate preparation of community meals and hosting of special events. The slate roof and flashing will be replaced and the building fully painted. The front entry steps will be fully rebuilt for safety and sustainable access.

Members of the Waitsfield United Church have chosen to move forward with a Capital Campaign to fulfill the dream of a fully restored facility enabling greater community use while honoring both the history of the building, its place in Waitsfield's history and its important role as home to a community of faith.

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Introduction: Honoring the Past While Moving Forward

For more than 140 years, the Waitsfield United Church of Christ (WUCC) has been a fixture in the heart of Vermont's Mad River Valley. The church, with its vernacular architecture and iconic steeple, stands as a landmark in Waitsfield's historic village. In addition to worship, the WUCC has traditionally provided a welcoming space for significant life events, such as weddings and funerals, as well as for community gatherings, such as Town Meeting Day luncheons and holiday celebrations, that foster enduring social and spiritual connections within the community.

The history of the church, from its location in the village center to its use for secular functions as well as multi-denominational worship, reflects its historic role as a meetinghouse serving the civic and spiritual life of the Mad River Valley. The church was built in its current location in 1875. While the townspeople first voted to site the church on the Waitsfield Common, Waitsfield's founder, General Benjamin Wait, felt strongly that the valley floor was more appropriate for the meetinghouse. Ultimately the decision turned in favor of the village location which was more accessible. Since then, the church has served as symbol for the town of Waitsfield. Hundreds of commercial photographs capture the quintessential image of the church in a small village setting, with its white steeple rising up against a backdrop of green, forested hills.

However, the church is much more than a symbol in the Mad River Valley community. Over the last eight years, the WUCC has explored what it means to be "the church" in a day and age when religious institutions are no longer the primary hub of a community's social and communal life. Voicing its mission of "living, serving and walking by faith for the benefit of the local and global community", the local congregation has embraced a greatly increased partnership with the church's wider community.

To this end, WUCC actively partners with a number of community and social service organizations throughout the Mad River Valley to identify and meet the social and cultural needs of Valley residents. It also has revived the concept of the building as the town meeting house. Historically, the meetinghouse was a central location that offered space for a wide range of educational and social meetings and gatherings. This concept aligns perfectly with the church's current work and future plans and honors the history of the facility. On May 3, 2015 the WUCC congregation voted to use the trade name Village Meeting House to recognize its historical role in the community and widen its potential utilization. The congregation will maintain the legal title Waitsfield United Church of Christ to mark its historical and theological identity as a faith community. However, the building will henceforth be known as Village Meeting House.

WUCC's Mission: Supporting Community Vitality and Being of Service

The spiritual and physical needs of the community are changing. Over the last eight years, as a part of the Church's broadened mission, the Village Meeting House doors have been opened more widely to cultural and community functions and consideration of the needs of village neighbors. For example, when the WUCC built a new septic system, it included capacity to serve a neighbor and the Joslin Library. The Church participates in the annual Festival of the

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Arts, hosting exhibits, concerts, lectures and children's activities. Church facilities are shared with the Boy Scouts, Town Meetings, the Historical Society, and other groups, simply for the cost of utilities.

For three months following Tropical Storm Irene, the congregation provided the church kitchen and dining room at no charge to a local restaurant to prepare and serve meals while they rebuilt. The Church is also the site from which approximately 65 Thanksgiving gift baskets are prepared, organized and dispersed via the Mad River Valley Interfaith Council to the community.

Perhaps most significantly, the congregation is in the third year of providing free monthly Community Dinners, in partnership with a number of community organizations. Average monthly attendance is more than 100 people, most of whom are community members who are not congregants of the Waitsfield United Church of Christ. In the summer months, outside tables have been necessary to accommodate all of the participants. These meals, attended by all socioeconomic groups, have clearly met a local need for building relationships and a greater sense of community, especially for those who often eat alone. Through these gatherings, there are renewed connections with friends and neighbors who often linger after the meal is over. Looking to the future, the congregation plans to build a garden labyrinth and an outdoor gathering space for townspeople to enjoy and use for meditative walking and small group meetings.

Responding to the Call for Social Services

The congregation has also responded to the need for social services, especially to address homelessness and hunger. While the Mad River Valley is known as an affluent region and four-season tourist destination, there is a significant low and middle-income population that struggles to find a living wage and access to affordable housing. At the Waitsfield Elementary School 16% of the students are on the free or reduced lunch program. In Warren 38% children are on free or reduced lunches and in Fayston approximately 10% of students receive free or reduced lunches. This struggle to make ends meet is also seen at the local food shelf. Approximately 45 families rely on the local food shelf every month. The Church actively works to help meet some of these food issues by helping to staff the food shelf with volunteers and providing over 50 bags of food each year.

In addition, the church has developed a program known as the Community Service Team (CST). CST members volunteer to help anyone in the wider community with immediate assistance needs. Projects range from fixing a simple plumbing problem, patching a leaking roof, providing a ride to a doctor's appointment, or building a wheelchair ramp upon return from the hospital.

The church also collaborates with other partners to provide better access to emergency social services. The service providers that ordinarily respond to urgent needs are located in Barre, approximately 30 miles away. To bridge this gap, two local non-profit organizations, the Mad River Valley Interfaith Council, consisting of the WUCC Pastor and other local clergy, and the

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Mad River Valley Community Fund, have partnered together to help connect those in need to urgent and emergency services, including utilities, fuel, and temporary housing - a scarce resource in the Valley. Because of confidentiality, little is spoken of the compelling and increasing need for help or the WUCC's role in providing support.

The Interfaith Council, in partnership with the Community Fund, has recently contracted with Capstone, a nonprofit human services organization, to address some of the complicated needs in the community. A need for a physical space to support this initiative has been identified. Village Meeting House would be an excellent location to centralize those services. A new office space within the building would provide a welcoming space for community members to discuss confidential concerns and could also fulfill other small group needs.

These and other services are provided by the congregation free of charge to the wider community. Partners for Sacred Places, in collaboration with University of Pennsylvania researchers, have developed a methodology for monetizing the value of such services by calculating volunteer time, staff and clergy time, in-kind donations, cash support, and space provided to community organizations. Using this comprehensive methodology, the estimated public value of the services described above, as well as others provided by the WUCC congregation to the community, is \$172,684 per year.

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THE CAMPAIGN

Capital Infrastructure Projects and Improvements Needed for Serving Community

In order to continue on this path of increased community service and openness to all, as well as to preserve its historic value, the physical structure of the Village Meeting House must be preserved and upgraded. The seemingly immutable landmark building has in fact been renovated by the congregation several times, beginning with foundation work in the 1930's and 1950's, addition of the kitchen and bathrooms, the installation of the bell tower clock (property of the town) in 1957, and repairs to the steeple in 1961, 1986 and 2000. While the church has benefited from these previous investments, the current physical and structural needs call for a focused investment in the church's infrastructure.

Repairs and improvements include:

- Roof Repair: The slate roof and flashings are at the end of their serviceable life. New slate and flashing is necessary to protect the structure from snow and ice.
- Improved Community Space: A range of interior physical renovations (e.g., ADA compliant bathrooms, improved lighting and heating in the communal dining space; private office space for the pastor to meet with those in need of counsel or assistance) are necessary to support and enable the church's current and envisioned community-focused activities.
- Moisture and Air Quality Control: The addition of weather stripping and insulation has reduced the air flow in the church, impairing air quality. New moisture barriers are needed
- Energy Efficiency: The annual energy costs for the church are extremely high and economically burdensome. Significant additional insulation and air tightening is needed as well as new energy efficient heating and ventilation equipment. In addition, the building, built in 1875, is sturdy, but energy inefficient. The congregation's desire is to move toward being "green" thus being able to accommodate a greater number of events and programs with proper stewardship of its resources and less expense.

Professional Services To Date

- William Gallup, Senior Associate, William Maclay Architects – Architectural Design
- Robert Neeld, Principal, Engineering Ventures Inc. - Structural Engineering and Flood Proofing Consulting
- Glenn Thomas, Principal, Thomas Engineering Associates – Mechanical and Electrical Engineering
- Thomas Keefe, Principal, Keefe & Wesner Architects P.C. – Building Conditions Assessment
- Andrew Crane, Vermont Accessible Environments – Independent Reviewer for ADA and VT Accessibility Code Compliance
- Doug Gorton, Naylor & Breen Builders - Head Cost Estimator
- Caitlin Corkins, The Division for Historic Preservation – Grants Coordinator
- Peter Kopsco, Department of Environmental Conservation – Permit Specialist
- Susan Senning, Waitsfield Town Zoning Administrator – Permit Compliance Advisor

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An Invitation to Support the Church

This 140-year-old building has been lovingly cared for over the years through dedicated volunteerism and financial resources of its 94 congregants who have provided a range of in-kind services to maintain the physical infrastructure and financially support the church. To this end, the Church Council has voted to conduct a capital campaign to make its buildings more accessible, inviting, flexible and structurally sound, while preserving its essential historic fabric. As the Village Meeting House seeks to honor its historical role as a town meeting place while expanding upon its contributions to the physical, spiritual and social well-being of the community, the congregation invites the community to join in this important effort to preserve and enhance this irreplaceable element of the Valley's social, religious and rural landscape.

Description of Capital Campaign

- **\$72,000** Repair historic slate roof
- **\$36,000** Mitigate potential flood damage to prevent further weakening of foundation's structural integrity
- **\$27,000** Improve moisture and air quality control systems to deter further structural damage and poor interior air quality
- **\$25,000** Create new ADA accessible bathrooms
- **\$142,000** Improve and expand community dining and meeting space, providing flexible venue for both large and small gatherings and private meetings
- **\$54,000** Renovate communal kitchen to accommodate Community Suppers and other community group dinners
- **\$19,000** Install fire alarm system to meet state code and improve safety

Steps Taken by Congregation Leading to Capital Campaign

Over the last 10 years, the congregation has carefully and thoughtfully undertaken a series of steps that have ultimately led to the decision to conduct a capital campaign. Numerous workshops, strategic planning meetings, and congregational votes, as well as utilization of our own physical labor to upgrade and fix our facility, have created a strong foundation upon which we could take the leap into a capital campaign.

- Convened four congregational Leadership Summits to address vision for the future; two meetings were led by outside facilitator
- Developed Mission Statement
- Embarked on and completed the process to be designated an 'Open & Affirming' church offering welcome to those of every gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, mental and physical ability, age, ethnicity, nationality, faith background, marital status, economic, legal and social status, and family structure.

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- Purchased land behind church for off street parking
- New land enabled church to build new septic system with capacity for greater future use
- Hired and completed thorough feasibility study through Partners for Sacred Places
- Voted to become known as: *Village Meeting House* to amplify openness to the wider community
- Voted to conduct capital campaign in partnership with wider community and to have half of the Steering Committee be from the congregation and half from the community

Conclusion

The Village Meeting House is at an exciting point in its history as it rounds the corner to 150 years in existence. Over the last eight years we have explored, researched, laid a foundation in the church culture and shifted our orientation such that change and growth is beginning to unfold with fresh enthusiasm and momentum. The time is now to move forward in new ways embracing the needs and desires of the congregation and the community as we honor who we are and what we have to offer those around us. The building's integrity is still intact but calls out for renewal and renovation. The open space and expanding possibilities for use of the facility in the heart of the Village prompts us to take action in this moment.

The Mad River Valley is growing and developing with new families and businesses. Waitsfield Village has recently gone through a time of revitalization since the flooding of Tropical Storm Irene and the rebuilding of the covered bridge. As our visibility and appeal to visitors and residents increases, the role of the Village Meeting House grows as well.

Please support the *Building To Serve* campaign.

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STEERING COMMITTEE

Jon Jamieson and Bill Gallup, Co-Chairs

Church members

Jon Jamieson
Business Owner, Jamieson Insurance

Susan Graham
Human Resources Consultant, Interim HR Advantage, LLC

Vince Gauthier
Church Moderator, Retired Electrician, Business Owner

Peggy Stokes
Steering Committee Clerk, Church Clerk

Andrew Cunningham
Business Owner, Property Management, Inc.

Gary Kingsbury
Retired High School Principal and Teacher

Nancy McHugh
Minister, WUCC

Community members

Bill Gallup
William Maclay Architects and Planners AIA

Liza Walker
Executive Dir., Vermont Land Trust

Roy Hadden
Veterinarian, Valley Animal Hospital

Anne Bordonaro
Consultant, VT Agency of Education

Rep. Adam Greshin
Vermont General Assembly

Josh Schwartz
Executive Director, Mad River Planning District

Local, Statewide, and National Partnerships:

Partners for Sacred Places
Waitsfield Planning District
Preservation Trust of Vermont
Vermont Division of Historic Preservation
Mad River Valley Foundation of the Arts
Mad River Valley Community Fund
Mad River Valley Interfaith Council
Mad River Path Association
Town of Waitsfield

Waitsfield United Church of Christ, 4355 Main Street, Waitsfield, VT 05673

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GIVING TO THE CAMPAIGN

Please consider a contribution towards our goal of \$375,000 (which includes project administration fees), to help ensure that this historical gathering place continues to serve the community for generations to come.

Ways to Give:

The "Building to Serve" campaign accepts gifts in the form of check, cash, or securities. Tax-deductible donations may be made online via our website, www.waitsfieldchurch.org. If you would like a pledge form or if you are interested in making another form financial contribution to the campaign, please contact Jon Jamieson at [802-496-2080](tel:802-496-2080) or at jon@jamiesonins.com.

Naming Opportunities:

The building restoration offers a wonderful opportunity to honor those individuals or institutions most important to us and our community. Here are the levels for such recognition:

- \$50,000 Naming rights for the renewed community hall, with a plaque displayed at the entrance to the room.
- \$30,000 Naming rights to refurbished community kitchen with a plaque placed over the door.
- All donors giving over \$500 will be recognized on a plaque in the narthex of the church.