

## **The Canton Center Schoolhouse**

As part of its outreach to the broader community, the church is leading the effort to preserve the one room schoolhouse which is across the street from the church and make it available as a community space. The hope is to restore the building so that it can be offered as a venue for possible uses such as exhibits by non-profit organizations such as the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, the Canton Historical Society, and arts groups; as a place for meetings of small community groups; and as a space for small performances, children's recitals, and the like.

There are present members of the Canton community who attended the schoolhouse as young scholars. There were nine one room schoolhouses in Canton until 1942, when Cherry Brook School was constructed. The ownership of the schoolhouse was then transferred to the church. After the transfer, the schoolhouse was used for various church and community purposes, and for over fifty years housed a small public library known as Cherry Brook Library.

In its efforts with regard to the schoolhouse, the church has sought guidance from national and local experts with regard to such matters, and has particularly looked to the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation for help. The church commissioned an architect and a structural engineer who stated: "The Schoolhouse appears structurally sound." Another architect familiar with old buildings in Connecticut called it "exquisite" and "a jewel of a building with true historic significance."

The building, which housed the South Center District School, is not an ordinary one room schoolhouse. It was built in 1848, and has columns in the front and a large brass bell in its cupola which we can now ring. It has 800 square feet of space inside and is bright with many windows. It is a perfect space for small exhibits and gatherings. It is a wonderful little building!

Members of community groups and of the church have enthusiastically offered to pitch in to help with the project. The schoolhouse could use some professional help along with the volunteer work that is being done. Items needing professional attention include: a new roof, certain carpentry work, and other miscellaneous repairs. The budget for such work is about \$33,000; hopefully a manageable sum. Approximately 40% has already been raised. There will also be operational costs, both during the construction period and after.

The schoolhouse project needs donations. Donors can know that they have been a part of the effort of keeping a very pretty small New England village vital for some years to come, of maintaining an attractive piece of our heritage for our region, and of making available a space for community activities, arts, and culture. Because it is a small building and a small project, every gift is a significant benefit, is meaningful to the project, and hopefully meaningful to the donor as well.

For the preservation and restoration of the schoolhouse and its operation; checks may be made payable as follows: Canton Center Church, Attn.: Schoolhouse Fund; sent to: Canton Center Church, P.O. Box 133, Canton Center, CT 06020; or to: The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, Attn: Canton Center Schoolhouse Fund; sent to: The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, 940 Whitney Ave., Hamden, CT 06517. For more information, send an email to: [1848schoolhouse@gmail.com](mailto:1848schoolhouse@gmail.com).