



# “Saving First Church Steeple”

**Bob Cave**

Feb 20, 2023

Old Guard

# First Church West Hartford

<b><i>Founded:</i></b>	<b>1713</b>
<b><i>First Church:</i></b>	Farmington Ave (War Memorial)
<b><i>Second Church:</i></b>	Across Street (Fire 1940)
<b><i>Present Church:</i></b>	Built 1940 to 1948
<b><i>Capacity:</i></b>	1300
<b><i>Christian Library:</i></b>	Best in State
<b><i>Pre School Academy:</i></b>	Since 1940's

**Icon for West Hartford**

**First Church  
-1950's-**





# What is in the First Church Steeple?

**-3 Musical instruments:** Organ, chimes & Carillon

**-Pipe Organ:** Large air blower for the organ

**-Organ pipes:** 700 (steeple) 3,300 (Church)

**-Carillon:** Air conditioned room for player

**-Bells:** 50

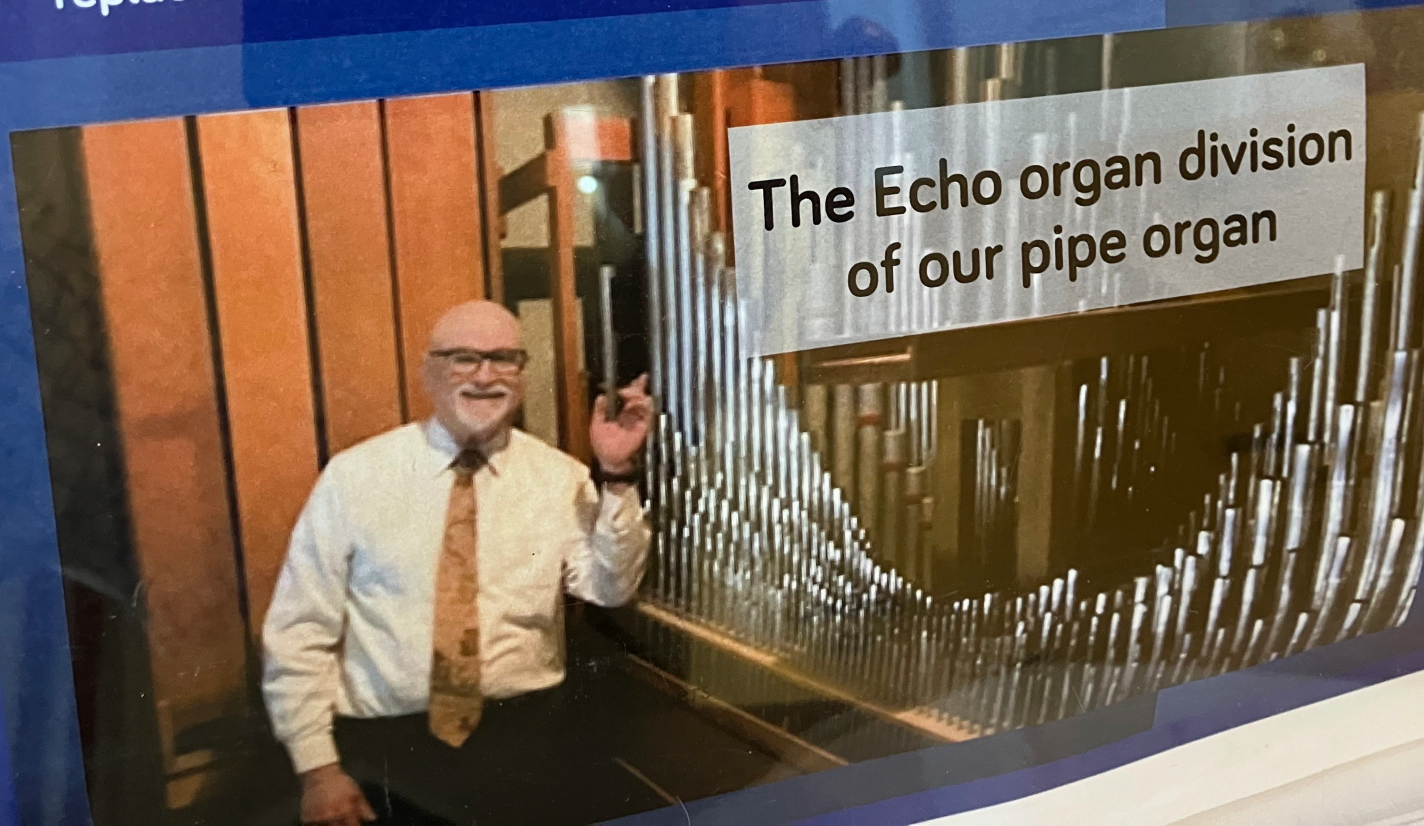
**-Chimes:** 24

***“First Church Steeple is A Beacon that lights up the night”***



# INSIDE THE STEEPLE

This Echo organ division is playable by one of the keyboards of the organ console, and allows the organist to play antiphonal effects from the back of the church. It can emit soft heavenly sounds, or it can sound a fanfare announcing the beginning of an important event. Also housed in this division are the chimes of the organ, often used during Christmas Eve services. The estimate of the replacement of this organ division is \$212,000.



The Echo organ division  
of our pipe organ



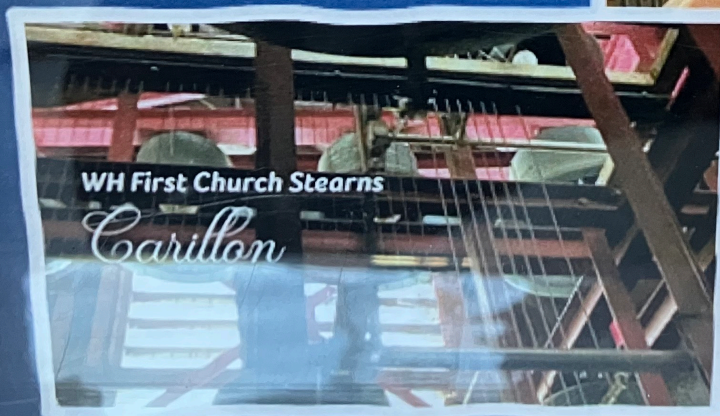




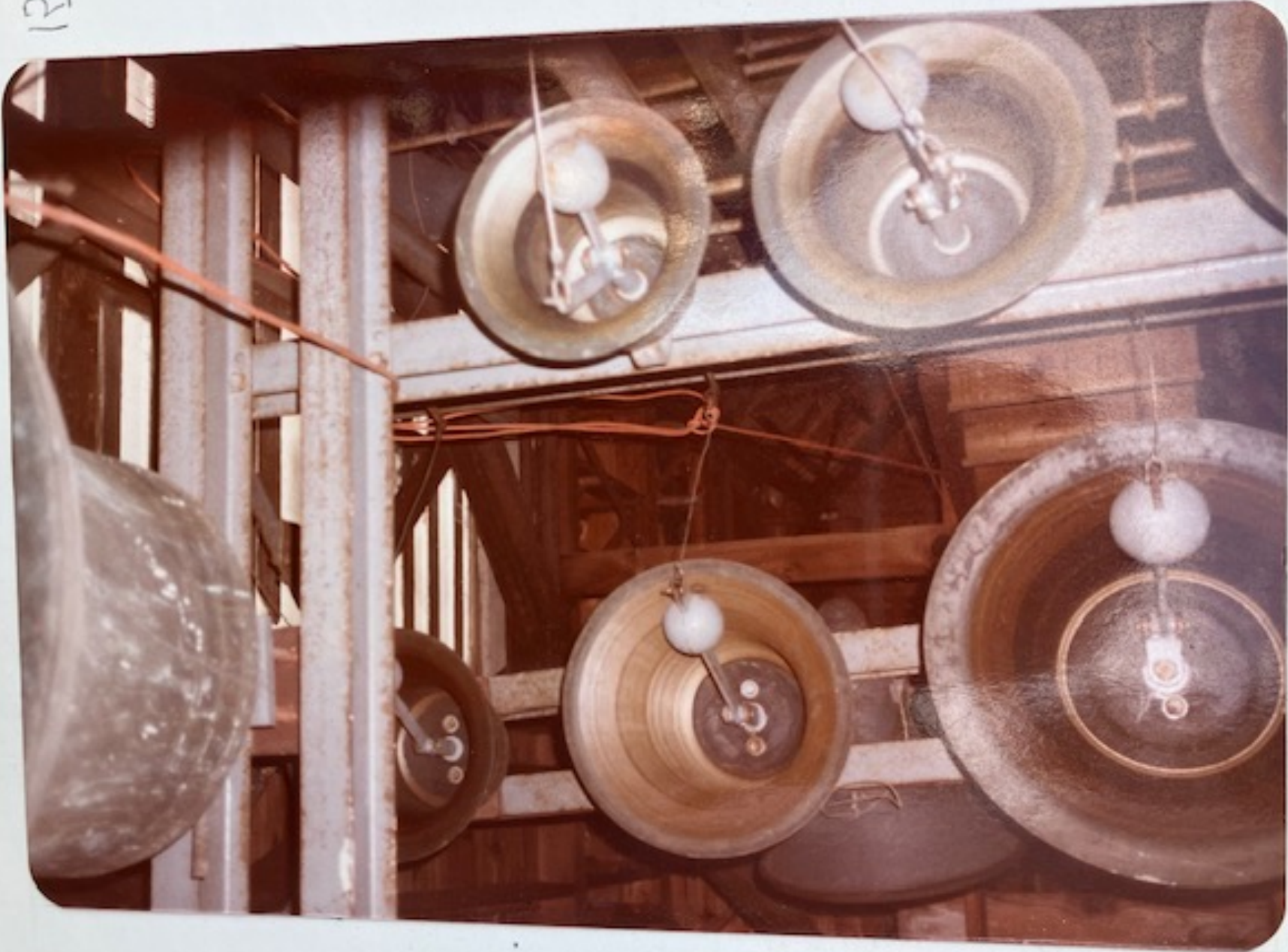
# INSIDE THE STEEPLE

Housed in the upper part of the steeple, where the louvered slats are located, this carillon is a very unique instrument, as its bells were created by the Whitechapel Foundry in England. The carillon is played from a console just under where the 50 bells are installed. Hear the carillon on Sunday mornings, special events, and during concerts in July. The estimated replacement cost of the carillon is approximately \$750,000.

## The Gordon Stearns Memorial Carillon



12





**-Repairs & Painting-  
(May 2023)**



**June – Sept  
2023**





## Why are Repairs and Painting Necessary?

<b><i>Painting:</i></b>	required every 8-10 years
<b><i>2021:</i></b>	could not be painted as is
<b><i>Interior:</i></b>	in excellent condition
<b><i>Exterior:</i></b>	rotten, parts broken, flashing missing
<b><i>Columns:</i></b>	had to be replaced
<b><i>Trim:</i></b>	along roof had to be replaced
<b><i>Windows:</i></b>	had to be reglazed
<b><i>Caulk:</i></b>	required <i>many</i> tubes
<b><i>New boards:</i></b>	Plastic used to replace wood

























# Workshop

16 Stories Up













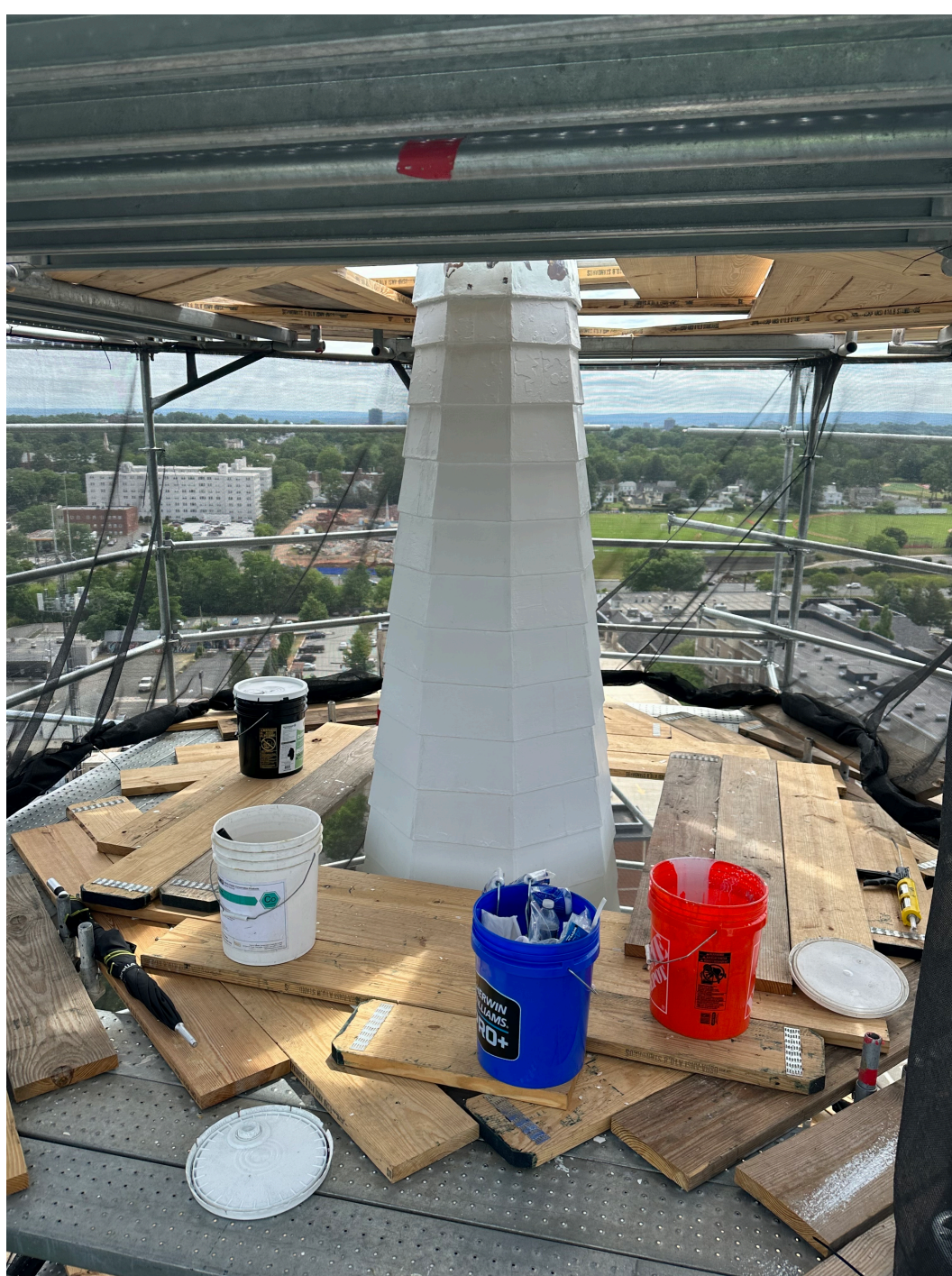






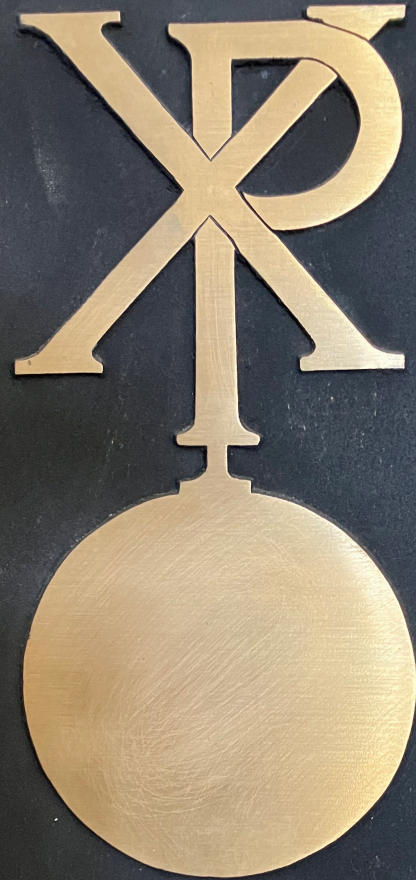








# Chi-Rho



THE CHI RHO,  
ONE OF THE EARLIEST CHRISTIAN  
SYMBOLS, STANDS ABOVE THIS  
MEETING HOUSE SPIRE PROCLAIMING:  
"CHRIST ABOVE THE WORLD."

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**Before Gilding**



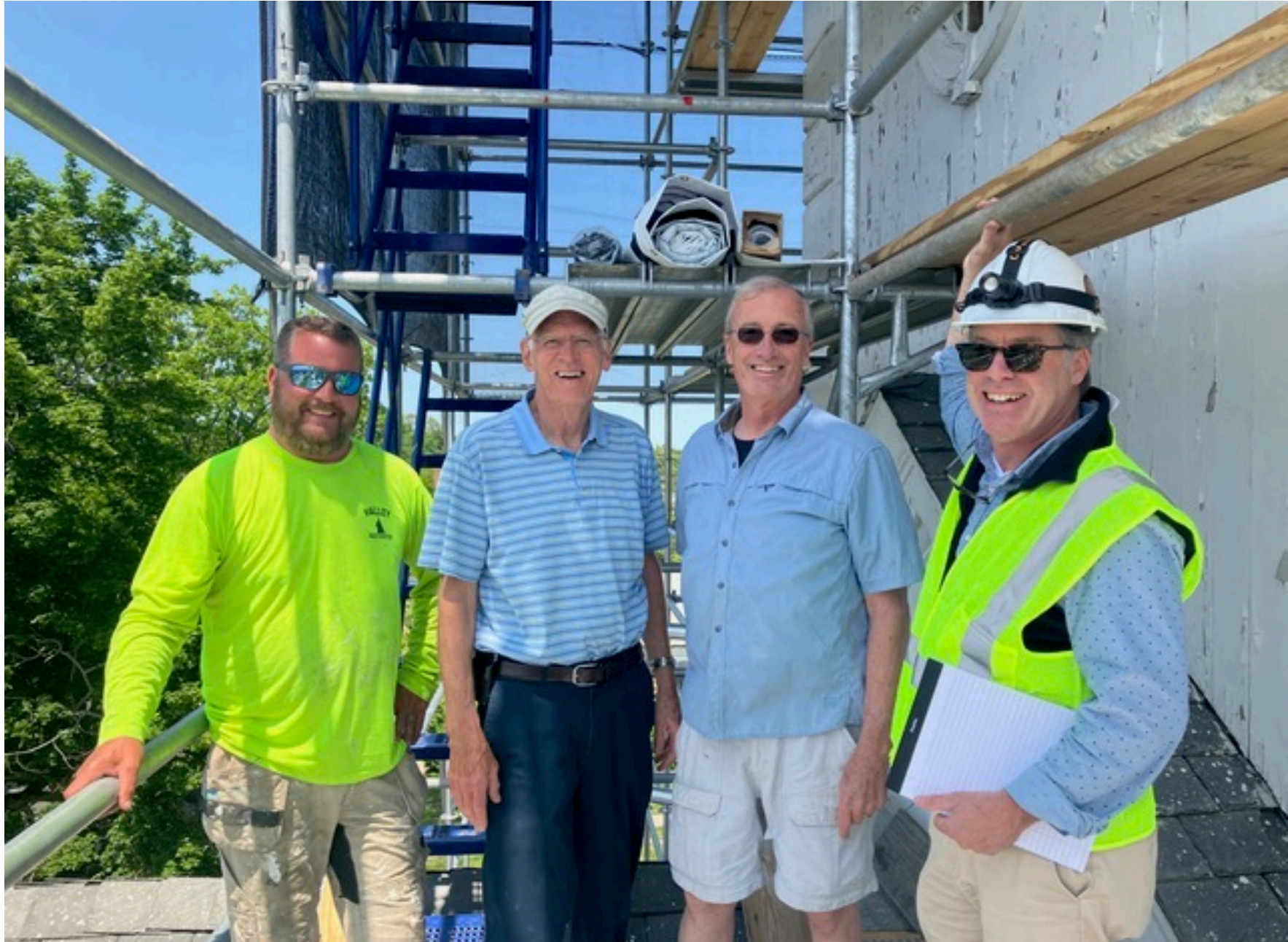


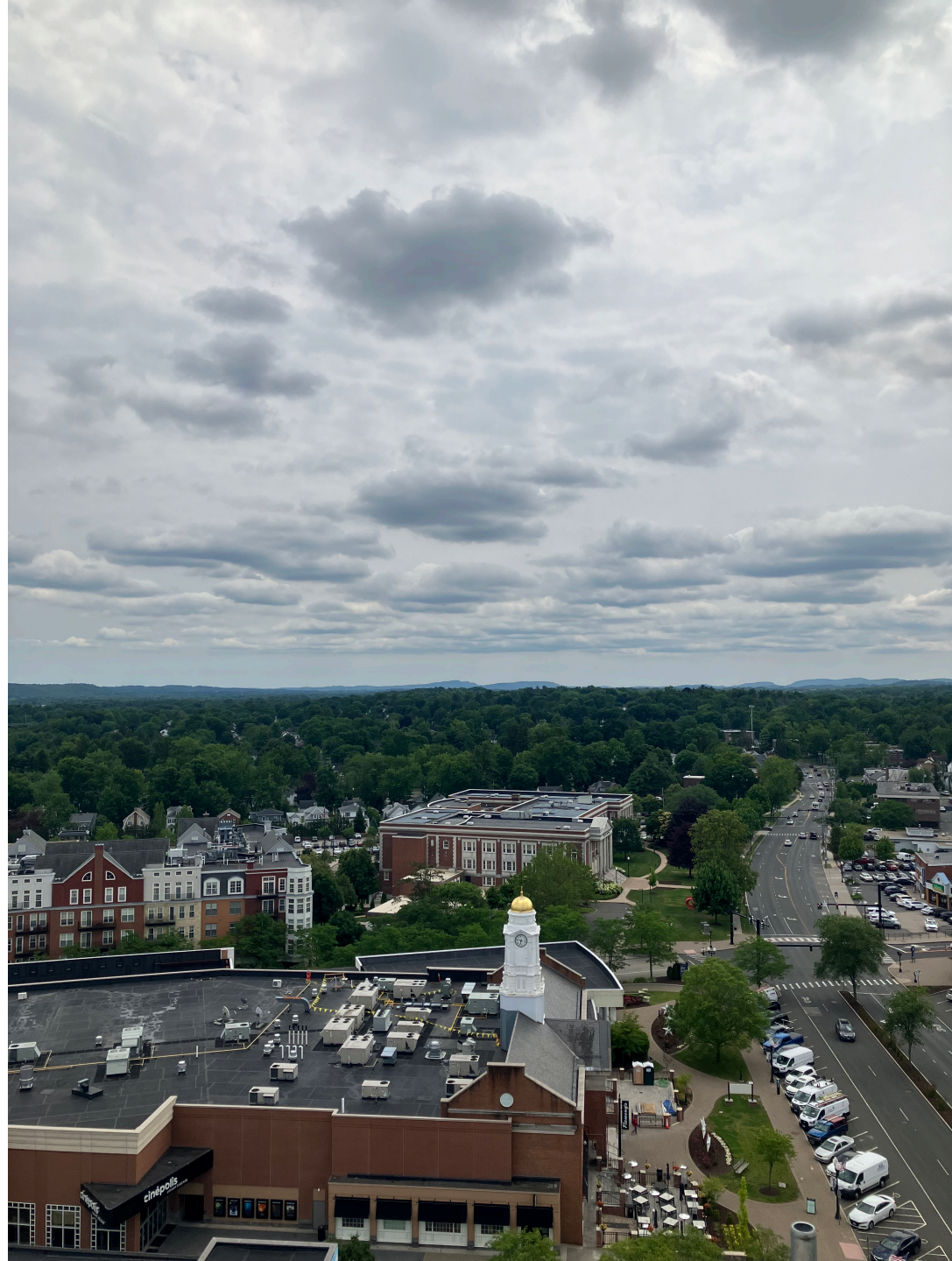




**September**





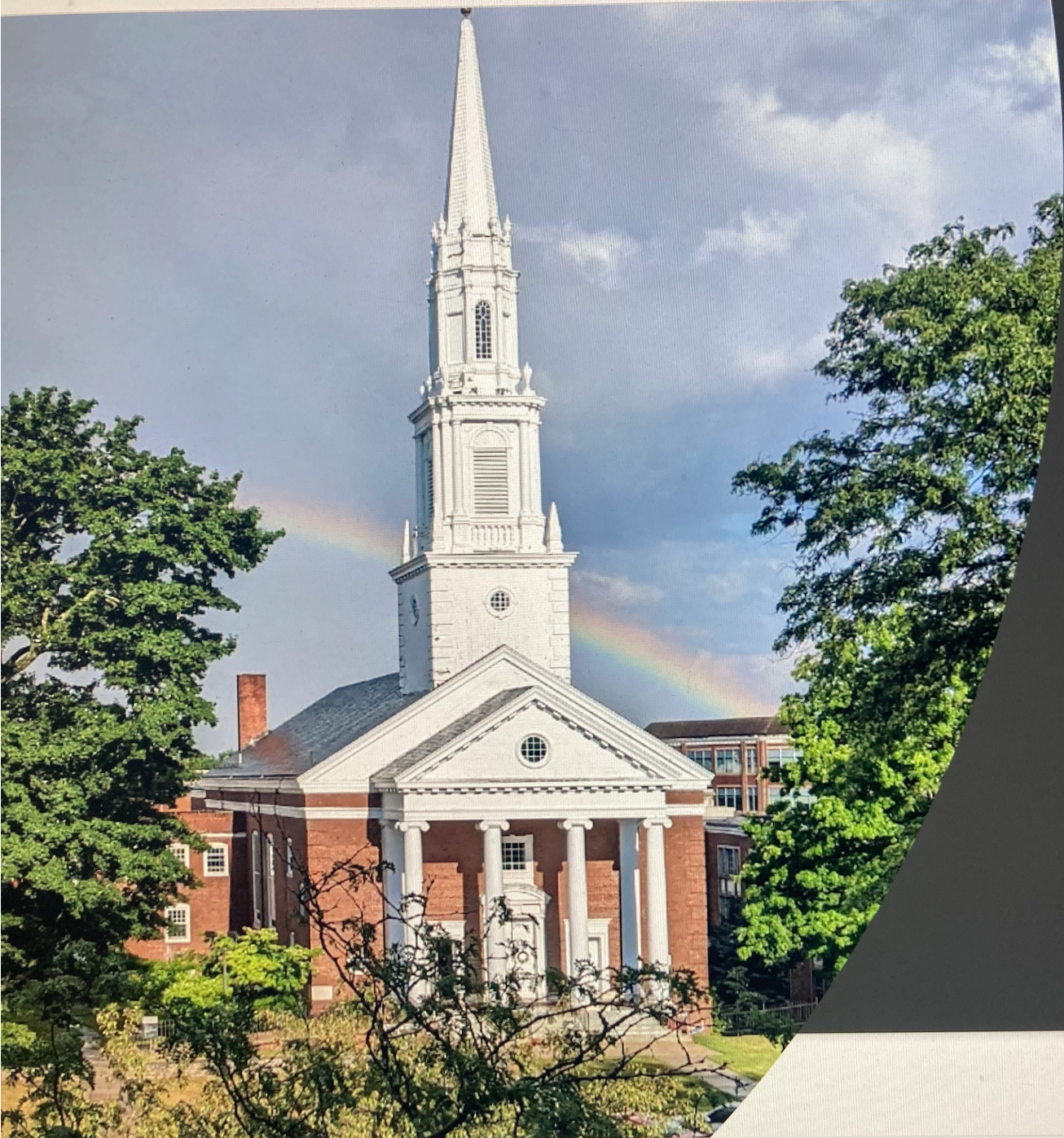












Save First  
Church  
Steeple

# Fund Raising







**The Foundation**  
for WEST HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DEDICATED TO ENHANCING THE CLASSROOM  
EXPERIENCE FOR ALL WHPS STUDENTS

PROUD TO HAVE PROVIDED OVER  
**\$2 MILLION** IN GRANT FUNDING SINCE 1997



FWHP.S.ORG

Donate at [whfirstchurch.org](http://whfirstchurch.org) • Thank you West Hartford!



**SAVE First Church STEEPLE**



THE PLACE 2 BE

# August Prizes

to benefit  
**Save the Steeple fundraiser**

For every five dollars donated, you can take a chance at winning a gift package; you pick the package you want to bid on!

- ### GIFT PACKAGE "A"
- Arugula Bistro (\$25)
  - bartaco (dinner for 2)
  - Cinépolis (4 passes/ 4 popcorns)
  - Elbow Room (\$30)
  - Mecha Noodle Bar (\$50)
  - Relax the Back (\$75)
  - The Next Chapter (\$50)
  - Zohara Mediterranean Kitchen (\$50)

- ### GIFT PACKAGE "B"
- Cafe Sofia (\$25)
  - Crate & Barrel (\$50)
  - Fleming's Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar (\$50)
  - Kilwin's (\$25)
  - Larsen Ace Hardware (2 water bottles and a tea towel \$57)
  - Mecha Noodle Bar (\$50)
  - Place 2 Be (\$20)
  - Sparrow Pizza (dinner for 2)

... Singing concerts in August, or during fellowship on Sundays. Winners

**Congregational Church steeple  
reconstruction rises over West Hartford**

Local Media  
**Articles**



# 'An icon for West Hartford'

**Congregational Church steeple reconstruction rises above town**

By Steve Smith  
Hartford Courant

The landmark steeple at the First Church of Christ, West Hartford Congregational, has been a South Main Street landmark since it was first erected about 75 years ago.

But while it was receiving a routine fresh coat of paint earlier this year, the painter noticed some deficiencies in the structure of the steeple. Bob Cave, a member of the church and the buildings and grounds committee, said he was told by the painting contractor that the steeple would need a "total overhaul."

That prompted a repair effort that now nearly complete.

"What's amazing is that it was built during the war," Cave said. "I don't know where they got the steel for the inside of the steeple. The exterior had deteriorated but the interior is fine. Some water had gotten in, but a lot of the columns had rotted."

Courtland Lewis, chair of the building and grounds committee, said the church meetinghouse was built in the 1940s, and footage of its original construction still exists. It was actually the fifth meetinghouse for the church, which dates back more than 300 years. An assessment of needs throughout the building was done last year.

"It turns out that when you've got 50,000 square feet built 80 years ago, there are things going on," Lewis said. "The steeple is the most obvious and apparent one. We've got some other work to do, as well."

Valley Restoration, based in

Torrington, is the contractor for the project.

Some polyvinyl chloride (PVC) is replacing some of the original woodwork, in hope of adding to the steeple's life, before the next restoration is needed.

Lewis said, despite a fear of heights, he climbed up the scaffolds to see the parts being replaced.

"It's amazing when you get up close and personal. The original craftsmanship and design is really pretty cool," he said.

The quote for the rehab was \$400,000, and a fundraising committee was set up. Multiple local businesses donated funds and/or service to aid the project. Many donate items or gift cards, which are being raffled on a weekly basis, to raise funds. Lewis said the goal is to raise at least 10% of the price tag, and the rest will come from an endowment the church has maintained since 1885.

The reconstruction, which began in May, is expected to be complete by mid-September. A page on the church's website has been devoted to the fundraising and providing updates, via video, on the progress of the work.

The steeple contains 40 carillon bells played by a keyboard.

and about 5,000 tubes for the church's pipe organ, and several chimes.

"I got three musical instruments in it, that steeple," Cave said. Church member Terry Schmidt built a miniature replica about 10 feet tall, of the steeple, that is raffled when the raffles are drawn. "I'll have it with leftover stuff around here," Cave said. "That's the thing that went into the steeple during his fundraising."

The scaffolding has started coming down, a Chi Rho (early 19th-century Christ), which is now visible.

can see it throughout the town of West Hartford.



# WeHa

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## *Rebuilding a* **Landmark**

BOWH | FASHION | FOOD | FINANCE | GARDEN



**A West Hartford Icon!**









**Questions?**

