

April 8, 2022

Mr. Edmund Hartt, Junior Warden and Chair of the Building Committee  
The Rector, Wardens, Vestry, and Building Committee of St. Thomas Episcopal Church  
33 Chestnut Street, P.O. Box 631  
Camden, Maine 04843

Re: St. Thomas Bell Tower

Dear Mr. Hartt, The Rev. Canon Lisa Fry, Elizabeth Moran, Vestry and Building Committee members,

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you at the Building Committee meeting on March 16th about the St. Thomas Bell Tower. My associate, preservation engineer Liz Reynolds and I spent time prior to the meeting perusing the many documents you had shared, including the impressive report by Building Envelope Specialists, a company whose reputation I am very familiar with. We were pleased to be able to join you to discuss the tower and the decision you are contemplating.

#### **Historic Building Standards**

The question that you have been grappling with is whether to restore the 1930 stone tower (as per the BES report) or to remove all but the base of the tower wall and “cap” it with a new roof. We suggested that the first option, restoration, is consistent with the Secretary of the Interiors’ Standards for “Restoration” treatment of an historic property. The second option, to remove the tower and build a new roof for the chapel and flower room, does not meet the Standards for “Preservation” or “Restoration”, but might meet the Standards of “Rehabilitation” if the new design were consistent with Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, Standard no. 9:

New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

#### **Tower Restoration**

The condition of the tower is not unusual for a structure of this age, given deferred maintenance. Many of the problems of water infiltration are likely attributed to poor maintenance techniques used in the 1940s, which led to further problems. Restoration of the tower is certainly possible, and, if properly roofed (added roof drains), reinstalled louvers, and lead-t’s at the horizontal joints, the tower should be set to last another 100 years or more. A maintenance schedule of 20 – 30-year cycles of selective repointing, examination of flashings and other roofing elements will add to its longevity.

#### **Cricket**

A shortcoming of the original tower design is “the cricket” over the Flower Room. With any design change, this critical area needs to be redesigned as it is contributing to interior moisture damage.

#### **Removing the Tower**

The option of removing the tower is complicated. Essentially you are designing a new addition, and to do it well, your architect needs to be well-versed in the Secretary of Interiors’ Standards for Rehabilitation, Standard no. 9. (See attached). It needs to be designed in such a way that the design is a “product of its own time,” yet compatible with the historic church. The drawings and construction

means and methods to accomplish this Rehabilitation will need *considerable* care. The interior volume of the chapel will need to be retained and protected. The height of this volume will dictate the height of the exterior volume (which will likely be slightly taller than Chris Glass's informal sketch).

It is our understanding that the specific design of February 6, 2022 shared with us— the design that removed the tower, retained the base of the masonry wall, and added a hipped roof— would not meet the Secretary of Interiors' Rehabilitation Standards for Treatment of a Historic Property.

### Next Steps

In deciding to move forward we recommend the following considerations:

1. The Architectural/Engineering fees for detailing the tower restoration/rehabilitation would likely be minimal as the report is thorough, easy to follow, and the details are standard fare for a preservation architect.
2. The Architectural/Engineering fees for removing the tower would likely be more extensive due to the complicated details of working with the existing interior volume of the chapel and the need to carefully design and detail the "new roof addition." Although you've expended considerable funds to reach this point, the design and construction fees should not be shortcut or undervalued.
3. The cost of regular maintenance of the tower if restored is likely manageable with a cyclical maintenance plan; the cost of regular maintenance for the "new roof addition" is to be determined, once the materials and details are known.

We believe that the approach the Church has taken to date in identifying the problems contributing to the current conditions is appropriate; however, we do not agree that the current design for the removal of the tower aligns with preservation practices and standards. We strongly encourage you to engage a practiced preservation architect (ourselves or another firm) who is versed in the principles and practices of preservation and is familiar with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Whether the treatment chosen is Restoration of the tower or Rehabilitation because of a necessary design change, such a professional may be counted on to handle the tower project in a manner that will serve the congregation well for many years to come.

We have been honored to consult with you on a pro bono basis out of respect to my long-time friends Chris and Rosalee Glass. I hope our recommendations will assist you with your discourse in this difficult decision. We remain hopeful that your discernment and further care will allow you to retain the historic character of St. Thomas while moving forward with the work that needs to be done. We remain available to answer further questions you may have.

Sincerely,



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Historic Architect 36 CFR 61