



WEST CONCORD UNION CHURCH



Parishioners lay their hands on the new foyer and elevator tower as the Rev. Hannah Brown gives a prayer of thanksgiving during West Concord Union Church's dedication ceremony Sunday. STAFF PHOTO BY ANN RINGWOOD

Renovations make church a 'Place for All'

By Cheryl Lecesse
clecasse@cnc.com

PHOTO GALLERY
 Visit www.wickedlocal.com/concord for more photos of Sunday's celebration.

The congregation cheered Sunday as Matt Buckley placed the sphere on top of the finial, marking the completion of a years-long project to make West Concord Union Church a "Place for All."

"It was really a team effort to build as we sang this morning, a truly stately

mansion," said Trustee Tom Rarich, who presented a timeline of the church's "Place for All" campaign during a dedication ceremony Nov. 15.

The ceremony, which followed the church's weekly

service, included a ribbon cutting and blessing of the new addition. Members of the congregation were asked to either touch the building, or form a human chain from a person touching the building, to pray for and bless their new space.

Afterward, a trio of trumpeters played "Joy to the World," as all of the children

CHURCH, PAGE 24

CHURCH

From Page 1

in attendance fled into the new elevator and took the first official ride, to the top floor.

"It was exactly what we hoped for," said Ellie Garvey, a member of the Board of Deacons and one of the original committee members who researched building a ramp at the church.

Project history

Talks of building a ramp at the church began in the spring of 2006, but the idea officially blossomed into the "Place for All" project, to include a four-level elevator and improvements to the church parsonage, in June 2008.

Rarich said, despite the prospect of high costs and an interim time in the life of the church, the idea was unanimously approved during a congregational meeting.

Parsonage improvements — the kitchen had not been renovated since the 1960s — were completed in March. The tower was completed this month.

Jason Murray, president of Murray Brothers Construction, said his crew worked for five months on the site, completing a new foyer and elevator shaft that was designed to replicate the church's front steeple.

"The attention to detail on the elevator tower makes a beautiful complement to the tower on the building," said Rarich.

Paul Minor, a former Concord resident who designed the project, said he was pleased with the end result, and had heard many



Kids flock to the new elevator during West Concord Union Church's dedication ceremony. STAFF PHOTO BY ANN RINGWOOD

compliments from members who said the addition completes the church.

"So much of it is the craftsmanship of Murray Brothers," he said. "They went out of their way to make it work the way it should."

Member donations helped to pay for the work through a fundraising campaign headed by Helen Sayles that included an auction in May.

"It was just really exciting to see that the church was so dedicated to accessibility and welcoming new people," said the Rev. Hannah Brown, who took the reins as pastor at the church in the fall.

Meeting a need

Church leaders said the elevator was a necessity on many different levels. In addition to allowing safer access for members who either can't walk or have a difficult time using stairs, the elevator will help musicians carrying instruments to the Concord Conservatory of Music, on the second floor of the building. It will also benefit participants in the church's Sunday Fellowship program, a 25-year-long

ministry for developmentally delayed adults in the area, and will play a part in the church's new role as an emergency center for students at the Thoreau School.

Previously, according to Garvey, wheelchair-bound members and users of the church building had to use an exterior elevator cage, separate from the church's main entrance, which the new elevator replaces.

"This is an equal entrance," said Brown. "It's not a back door. It's a front door for people who need it."

West Concord Union Church

MISSION TRIP New Orleans in April 2010, open to adults and students. For more information contact Polly Jenkins Man, pollyjm42@yahoo.com.
WORSHIP Sunday service at 9:45 a.m.

LOCATION 1317 Main St.
PHONE 978-369-6309
E-MAIL office@WestConcordUnionChurch.org
WEB SITE www.westconcordunionchurch.org

NEWS



Matt Buckley places the sphere on the finial on top of the new elevator tower at the West Concord Union Church Sunday. STAFF PHOTO BY ANN RINGWOOD