

# Efforts Underway to Preserve Historic Church

BY CAROL COULTAS

Since 1843, the Elijah Kellogg Church has anchored Harpswell Center, its graceful silhouette a landmark for residents and visitors alike. Now its members are attempting to preserve the building for another 171 years by undertaking a \$400,000 capital campaign to raise money to restore and preserve the church.

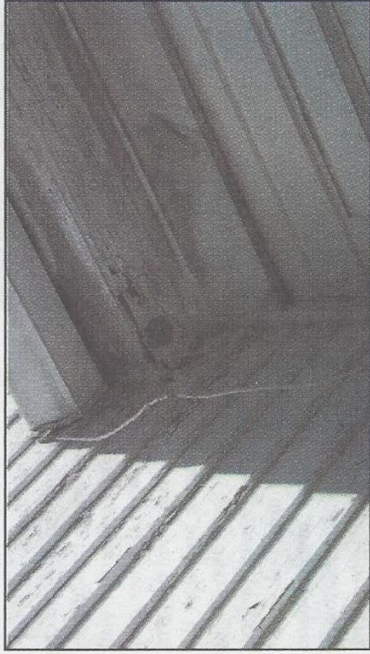
The campaign got its official kickoff with a brunch planned for April 27 at the church, which featured a presentation on the importance of preserving rural churches by speaker Christopher Closs, a preservation adviser to Greater Portland Landmarks. A committee of church members has been meeting for several months, detailing the work that needs to be done to preserve the church and parsonage, and de-

vising a strategy to finance it. The committee set a goal of raising \$400,000 over a period of three years to complete the list of repairs and renovations.

Brochures explaining the scope of the project were mailed to church members and friends earlier in April. To date, the effort has produced more than \$200,000 in pledged donations.

"The early response has been tremendous and humbling," said Bill Hunter, who co-chairs the capital campaign. "I think it's a reflection of the importance people within this community feel for the church, whether they choose to worship here or simply appreciate the church's historical significance and beautiful architecture."

Several members of the church with experience in carpentry and construction have worked with tradesmen and con-



**Something's rotten** Restoring Kellogg Church's wood siding is one of the more immediate requirements. (ROBERT ANDERSON PHOTO)

tractors to assess the extent of the needed work. Among the most pressing concerns is restoring the church's wood siding, which has borne years of weather and wear. Complicating the task is the likely presence of lead paint. Other pri-

orities are making the exterior of the parsonage weather tight, repairing the steeple, insulating the sanctuary and other projects.

The church was designed by local architect Anthony Coombs Raymond, who also designed

about five other churches in the region, according to Bill Greenwood, a committee member with extensive background in historical preservation. Before retiring to Maine, Greenwood founded a Virginia engineering and architectural company that counted among its clientele the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and the National Park Service, which oversaw restoration efforts at Mount Vernon, Montpelier and Monticello.

Greenwood said the Elijah Kellogg Church is at a critical point in its history and needs urgent attention if it's to be preserved for future generations.

"Five years from now, we'll be replacing the wood, rather than painting the wood," said Greenwood. "The thing that strikes me as a lover of historic buildings is that this church is a wonderful

See CHURCH p. 18

## Church

From page 8

example of Greek Revival architecture—it can't be replaced. If it's not preserved properly, its authenticity cannot be regained. That's why this project is so important."

George Patterson, a church trustee and member of the capital campaign committee, agreed with Greenwood's assessment that the church and parsonage need immediate attention to prevent any further damage.

"Basically, it's our turn to take care of what we have inherited as our legacy," he said, adding that all the contractors who have examined the building are impressed by its craftsmanship.

Patterson said people have expressed special concern about deterioration of exposed wood at the front door and windows of the church, threatening the distinctive arched frames of the church's exterior. The framework, built by local carpenter Moses Bailey, has begun to rot in spots, especially where the frames meet sills and floorboards.

The church also needs to improve its insulation, a project complicated by the network of ventilation channels built into its original framing.

"It's quite ingenious, since the ventilation system is what has

prevented rot and mold and other damage that is caused by trapped moisture," said Greenwood. "Improving insulation while preserving the ventilation system will be a challenge."

The church was built by congregants who had been worshipping in what is now the Old Meeting House directly across from the church. But the meeting house was used for municipal purposes and sharing the space became cumbersome. Congregants decided to build a new church and woo Elijah Kellogg, who as a student at Bowdoin College came to love Harpswell Neck before he left for Andover Theological Seminary. He served as minister of the church from 1844-1854.

In the capital campaign brochure, the Rev. John Carson, pastor of the church, invited all to participate in its preservation. In the invitation, he remarked that the Rev. Elijah Kellogg, for whom the church is named, accepted the request to serve the congregation with this caveat: "Oh yes, if you will keep the old church as it is for a memorial to God's goodness, and build a new one as a pledge that He will guide you forever."

Progress on the capital campaign, the restoration project and the instructions for contributing to the campaign can be found at [www.elijahkelloggchurch.org](http://www.elijahkelloggchurch.org) &