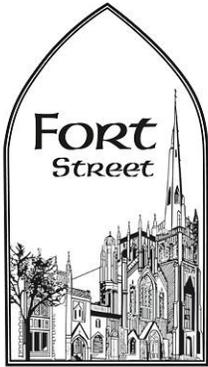


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Fort Street
Presbyterian
Church**

REPAIRS TO BEGIN BY JAN 30 TO HISTORIC CHURCH STEEPLE

Detroit – Misinformed reports that the tall steeple of Fort Street Presbyterian Church could fall onto the streets below have led to sidewalk and street closures at Fort and Third Streets in downtown Detroit, and led city officials to demand expedited repair to the church’s steeple.

The expedited repairs are anticipated to begin next week, as early as January 30, and will see a large crane occupying a traffic lane for approximately two weeks.

Church officers say that the street closures were the result of unfortunately inaccurate, overblown reports communicated to public safety officials, and that the steeple structure, wrenched by a 2017 wind storm, is secure and firmly attached to the church.

“Fort Street has been in the process of a long-term repair to our historic steeple. The structure was examined last year, after strong winds knocked the steeple’s top spire askew and caused damage to its shingles and trim, and was determined to be strongly cross-braced and is securely fastened to the building with steel cabling. An orderly repair has been in the works since November, when the church finally received an insurance settlement that would partially pay for needed repairs,” said architect Robert Sharrow, church Treasurer.

Sharrow said that reports from passersby who recently saw the steeple’s lean, possibly visitors to the auto show, apparently led city officials and representatives of the Michigan Department of Transportation to come to the church site on an emergency basis and close off lanes of traffic adjacent to the building.

“We know that the steeple looks unsightly in its present condition, but we have already contracted with the Detroit Cornice and Slate Company to make the immediate repairs needed to restore the steeple, and have anticipated since December that a crane would soon be on site as part of that effort,” said Sharrow.

He said that the most obvious damaged portion, the finial spire at the top of the steeple, shows a dramatic lean but is still fastened to the peak of the steeple. The hollow sheet-copper finial, a lightweight decorative feature, is leaning inward toward the church roof.

Reconstruction of the steeple will cost in excess of \$100,000. The church is currently seeking additional donations of approximately \$40,000 to offset the cost of the current repairs.

Fort Street Church was built in 1855 and is listed on both the National and State registers of historic places. The church is often described as one of the finest examples of English Gothic architecture in America. The congregation has consistently made repairs and upgrades to the building, most recently replacing the church's entire main slate roof.

In addition to Sunday worship, the building hosts dozens of weddings each year; houses active small group community outreach programs; is home to "The Open Door," a 50-year-old care and feeding program for needy and homeless individuals; and the Fort Street Chorale sacred music program.

"Maintaining a sacred, historic, building is a huge and never-ending responsibility for us. If anyone is interested in making a contribution to help with the repairs, they should contact the church right away," stated Sharrow. Fort Street Presbyterian Church can be contacted at (313) 961-4533.

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