

Unitarian Meetinghouse Restoration of Tiffany Window

We'd like to take the opportunity to explain why we believe the CPA grant investment in the Tiffany window makes sense at this time.

What we today call the Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst (UUSA) has occupied the same structure since its founding in 1893. The last major upgrade to the facility occurred in the 1920s. For several decades now, the UUSA has struggled to cope with the limits and deteriorating condition of the building.

The Tiffany window is one of the key features of the UUSA meetinghouse. Designed and created in the Tiffany studios in the 1880s, the "Angel of the Lilies" is a large plated stained glass mural. The window has inspired generations of UUs and visitors. We think you'll agree with a Historical Commission member who called it one of the most beautiful things in Amherst. If you haven't seen it, please contact us (253-2848) for a viewing (before its removal on May 16).

In 2005, we began raising funds from our members to pay for restoration, and vigorously pursued the possibility of grants from foundations and other sources. We were unable to raise enough to begin restoration, but the fund continued to grow.

Our congregation voted in 2010 to begin a building project that is essential to the Society's vitality and to find a way to remain in our present location, rather than to move out of downtown. Our capital campaign fell short of our goal and allowed us only to build an addition. And even though our members have given very generously, we will still have a shortfall in financing essential aspects of the project. In the course of the project we learned that the existing structure would require a sprinkler system, wiring upgrades and new roof. *This activity means we must remove the window for its own safety.* We realized that the timing presents an ideal opportunity for the extensive and essential restoration of the Tiffany window. We again vigorously pursued the possibility of grants. Our only success was the welcome recommendation by the Amherst Historical Commission and Community Preservation Act Committee that Amherst Town Meeting approve a Community Preservation Act grant.

The CPA grant, if received, would supplement funds we have already raised ourselves. Restoration involves replacing dangerously weakened lead and removing grime that has accumulated between the window's many layers of glass over 124 years (the artists used layers to create a stunning palette of colors as well as three-dimensional effects). It will restore the structural integrity of the window and make its colors even more dazzling. The grant would cover about 88% of the cost of actual restoration. UUSA is responsible for the rest.

The value of the remaining restoration and additional work by the UUSA will be in excess of \$26,000. Covered by our construction budget, the additional work will result in:

- Enhanced visibility and protection of the Tiffany. The cloudy, darkened Plexiglas on its exterior will be replaced with a clear, double-glazed, energy-efficient outer window to better protect it from the elements and vandalism.
- New frames for the Tiffany's panels.
- Better interior lighting (on a timer), to make the Tiffany a more visible part of Amherst's evening streetscape.

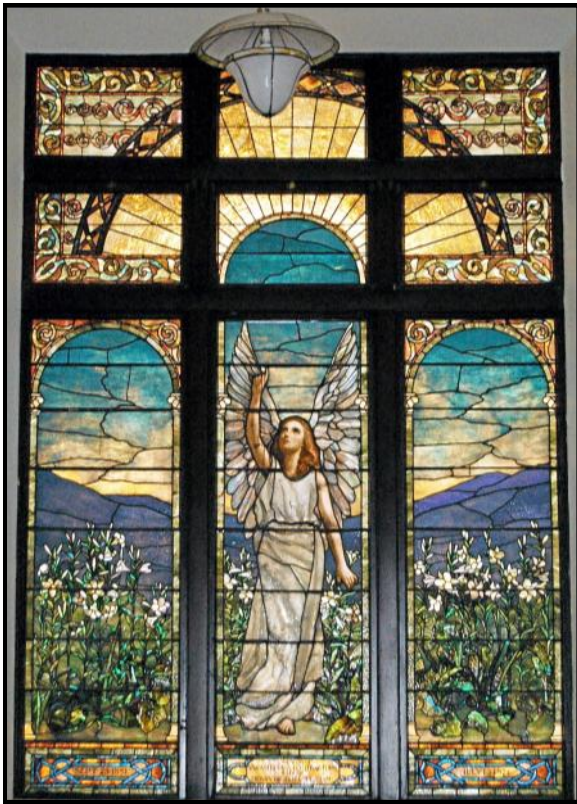
Meanwhile, the overall building project will increase accessibility for viewing the Tiffany from inside by providing more welcoming, accessible entryways, an elevator and accessible rest rooms.

We have agreed with the Historical Commission to set up regular times when the window will be available for public viewing from the inside. We have agreed to this restriction and others assuring the ability of the public to view the window for 99 years. Following our building project, the new social hall and other facilities will make our downtown building an even more visited venue for concerts, weddings, and events where this window will be enjoyed by the public.

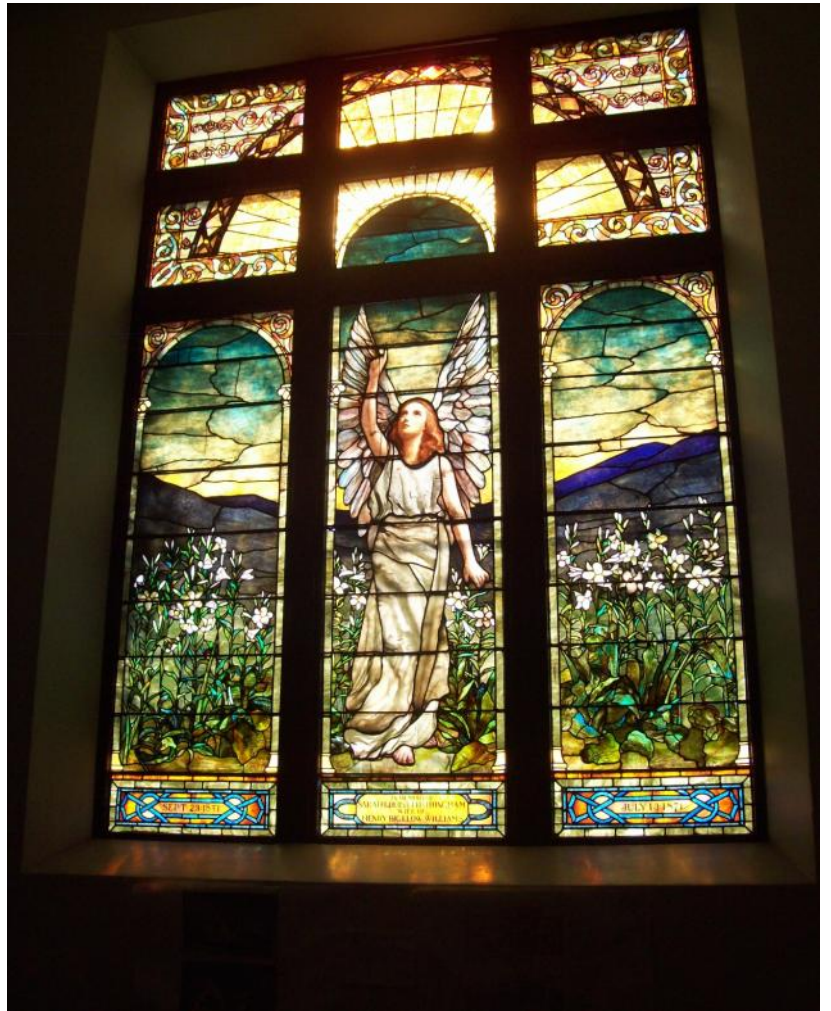
The building plans have been reviewed and approved by the Planning Board and the Historical Commission and Design Review Board, which noted the careful integration of the new addition with the original building. It has not been without challenges however, one in particular being a pin oak tree on Kellogg Ave. next to our proposed addition. UUSA is cooperating with Amherst Tree Warden Alan Snow to attempt to preserve the pin oak tree. Another challenge has been meeting our space needs while preserving some parking. Following construction, remaining parking spaces will once again be available for public parking.

We want to thank you for your consideration of the CPA grant. If you should have further questions contact us and we would be happy to answer your questions.

The Angel of the Lilies
at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst
Iridescent colors change throughout the day



In the morning



In the western sun of afternoon



*A few
of the
luminous
details*

