A HISTORICALLY & CULTURALLY IMPORTANT BUILDING

In 1960, the American Institute of Architects designated seventeen buildings designed by Frank Lloyd Wright for preservation as examples of Wright’s architectural contribution to American culture. The list included Fallingwater, the Guggenheim Museum, and Madison’s own Unitarian Meeting House—home of the First Unitarian Society of Madison. The building is known worldwide as a seminal work of mid-century modern architecture and is visited by thousands of visitors from the US and around the world every year.

NATIONAL & GLOBAL SIGNIFICANCE

Before the Unitarian Meeting House was built, church architecture primarily consisted of rectangular boxes with steeples. Frank Lloyd Wright created an absolutely new approach to religious building design by incorporating the steeple, sanctuary, and parish hall into one coherent structure.

SIGNIFICANCE IN MADISON

Wisconsin Historical Society’s State Historic Preservation Officer, Jim Draeger, recently said there are places that are seminal in our understanding of who we are—they give us a sense of place and belonging. These places tell important stories that connect us to our past, present, and future. “There are special places that help define Madison and by extension, they define us.” The Unitarian Meeting House is such a seminal place.

Unitarian Universalist religious activities are only a part of the Unitarian Meeting House’s everyday use. For more than 50 years, it has been home to the Meeting House Nursery School, Shaarei Shamayim, a Jewish Reconstructionist community, maintains offices and holds services and other religious activities in the building. Other faiths, as diverse as a Buddhist meditation group, a Taoist Tai-Chi society, and Faith Leaders of Wisconsin, regularly meet here. Numerous musical events, including performances from the Madison Bach Musicians, are offered regularly and provide important cultural activities for the Madison community. Other non-religious groups meet here, either weekly or occasionally, including Goodwill Employment, Girl Scouts, the Madison Literary Club, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and the Wisconsin Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired.
WHAT’S HAPPENING?
ITS AGE IS SHOWING

Last summer the Unitarian Meeting House roof started leaking, again. Structural engineers determined the truss work supporting the 67-year-old roof needs significant structural repairs. Detailed studies of Wright’s initial drawings have revealed that his design adjustments during construction have seriously compromised the integrity of the trusses over time.

OUR GOAL IS TO SECURE
THE LONG-TERM VIABILITY OF
THIS ICONIC STRUCTURE

Members of the First Unitarian Society and Friends of the Meeting House have raised $1.35 million, which will fund a significant portion of the required work. Our goal is to ensure this designated National Historic Landmark remains an important part of Madison’s cultural legacy. Several generous grants have been received to fund this project, including a $25,000 gift from the Pleasant T. Rowland Foundation and a $100,000 gift from the Evjue Foundation (the charitable arm of The Capital Times).

WHAT WORK IS THE
MOST URGENT?

- Reinforcement of the 10 wooden trusses with lightweight steel and/or gusset plates.
- Replacement of failing nails with modern fasteners.
- Addition of an impermeable membrane.
- Replacement of the failing copper roof and decking.
- Replacement of the wood and glass in the iconic prow. (The Evjue Foundation grant has fully funded this portion of the Unitarian Meeting House restoration project.)

The total costs to fund this critical remedial work is projected to be $2.1 million.
If you share our pride of place or simply appreciate Frank Lloyd Wright and his architectural achievements and want to do your part in helping to ensure the integrity of this historic building into the future, please consider making a contribution to the Wright the Roof Campaign.

**HOW TO CONTRIBUTE**

To make a contribution, please go online at www.fusmadison.org/wrighttheroof, or contact Florence Jessup at 608-233-9774 ext. 110. If you have recommendations for private funding foundations, we welcome an opportunity to speak with you. Starting June 1, 2018 through July 31, 2018, you can also donate through our crowdfunding campaign via Indiegogo at www.igg.me/at/wrighttheroof.

**THANK YOU!**

Friends of the Meeting House
Rose Detmer, President
900 University Bay Drive
Madison, WI 53705
608-233-9774

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