

The Acton Lawsuit

- The doctrine of separation of church and state can prohibit the use of public (taxpayer) funds to preserve historic religious buildings that are still in active use. The reasoning is that taxpayers' money should not be used to further the religious purposes of any particular group.
Mass. Const. Amend. Art. 46 Sec.2 as amended by Art. 103
- In Acton, MA, a historic local church was awarded three grants under the Community Preservation Act (CPA). One of the grants was to restore the church's stained-glass windows, the others were to fund the evaluation and expense of structural repairs and roofing.
- The town was sued by Acton residents, citing Massachusetts law.
- In its May 2018, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court rejected the grant for the windows, which depicted scenes from the Bible, including a large figure of Jesus. Public CPA funds, the Court held, could not be spent on furthering the specific religious purposes of the church.
Caplan v. Town of Acton.
- September, 2018: FCCOWT sought confirmation of our eligibility to apply for a CPA grant from the Town of West Tisbury, requesting funds to help with renovations to our historic building. Our purpose is not to further our religious beliefs, but to increase our ability to serve the Island community. Our goals are:
 1. To renovate our aging kitchen so that we can increase our capacity to feed the hungry, and support our community outreach;
 2. To eliminate the barriers which make our church inaccessible to those with physical disabilities, by using Universal design and ADA guidelines, to make our beautiful historic building welcoming to all.
- Our application was accepted and placed on the town Warrant, to be voted upon this April 9 and 10, 2019 at the West Tisbury 2019 Annual Town Meeting.