

# First Parish in Needham



*The First Parish church before it was moved. Sketch by Timothy Newell Smith, c. 1860*

The first organized parish in Needham was formed as a result of the separation of Needham from Dedham on November 6, 1711. The legal definition of a Town in Massachusetts was a church, a school, and the means to pay a minister. Therefore, the church was by law an essential part of the town governance.

The church was originally located in the old town center, at the corner of Nehoiden Street and Central Avenue. The current (third) structure, which dates to 1836, was lifted and moved to the corner of Great Plain and Dedham Avenues in 1878 after the advent of the railroad caused the town center to shift to its present location. The bell in its steeple, which still rings today, was cast by Paul Revere in 1811 for the Needham Centennial.

The church's recent renovations restored the historic sanctuary, expanded the program space, and reduced energy usage by 50% - making it the first house of worship in Massachusetts to earn the EPA's Energy Star rating.