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Annual social helps maintain historical Eliot Church

By Mary Kate Dubuss
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Next Saturday the Eliot Church community will invite all Natick residents to participate in a night of auctions, hors d'oeuvres and cocktails as they raise money to fund the church, one of Natick's better known historical sites.

"It is our biggest social event," said Barbara Bailey, the event's chairwoman. "It is an inexpensive nice evening out."

"We would love the public to attend," she said.

The only cost is \$2 for an auction paddle; once the bidding begins guests will be entertained by auctioneers Tod Dimmick and Andy Frankenfield, two church members.

"They are very congenial and funny guys who work well together. They are good friends out of church," said Bailey.

Up for grabs at both the live and silent auction will be about 100 items including a one week timeshare in Aruba, a stay at a Nantucket cottage for Father's Day weekend and a number of gift certificates and items from local businesses.

"Local merchants continue to support our church," said Bailey, who has belonged to Eliot for 22 years. "They are always so gracious."

Among the business donors are Optica, the Natick Outdoor Store, Concepts for Hair, Corrado's South and Lookout Farm.

In past years, the church, which serves both Unitarian Universalists and members of the United Church of Christ, has brought in between \$5,000 and \$6,000 from this event. The funds are for general expenses and administration costs, as well as for building maintenance and other projects.

"We have a limited budget though we are growing," said Bailey. "Still, we find it [costs] a lot to run a church, more than love, devotion and attendance."

"The steeple repair is a huge program right now," she said. "Opening the old building is showing us it needs tender, loving care."

In return for the continued generosity of local businesses and the greater Natick community, Bailey said her fellow church members "give back to the community however we can."

"We are all here for the long haul," she said, explaining the Eliot Church is involved with the Natick Education Foundation, the Natick Service Council, A Place to Turn and the food pantry.

The benefit auction will take place Saturday March 5 at 7 p.m. It will be in the church's Memorial Hall at 45 Eliot Street, which is accessible for handicap persons.