SOTHEBY’S TO OFFER EXCEPTIONAL AMERICAN SILVER FROM FIRST PARISH CHURCH IN DORCHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

Highlighting the Important Americana Auction In New York on 20 & 21 January 2012

6 January 2012 – Sotheby’s annual auction of Important Americana on 20 & 21 January 2012 will feature a group of rare and important 17th, 18th and early-19th century American silver from First Parish Church in Dorchester, Massachusetts. Both the church and the 24 pieces of silver – sold over 17 lots – are steeped in American history, bringing together important names and events in early colonial history and American silver making. First Parish Church will use the proceeds from the sale to update its building and focus on its mission of serving the local community in Dorchester. The Important Americana auction will be on exhibition in Sotheby’s York Avenue galleries beginning 14 January, alongside the sale of Important American Schoolgirl Embroideries: The Landmark Collection of Betty Ring.

“From its founding in 1630, First Parish Church in Dorchester has always played a significant role in the greater Dorchester community,” commented Reverend Arthur Lavoie of First Parish Church. “With a recent period of
growth and a renewed sense of purpose in the congregation, we are embarking on a new challenge: raising funds to restore and renovate our buildings, with the goal of becoming a place of meeting and strength for the entire community. This sale will allow silver presented to the church in the 17th century to provide for our congregation and city in the 21st century – an incredible gift in both the past and present.”

John Ward, Head of Sotheby’s Silver department in New York, added: “We are privileged to offer this exceptional group of American silver on behalf of First Parish Church. The pieces are of outstanding quality and rarity, and evoke the earliest years of this country.”

Gathered first in England in March of 1630, First Parish Church is the oldest congregation in the current city of Boston, and one of the oldest in the United States. About 140 people came from Dorsetshire, England on the ship ‘The Mary and John’, and arrived in the town they named Dorchester in June of 1630. The church was the site of the first recorded Town Meeting in America in 1633, and was involved in the founding of The Mather School, Massachusetts’s first publicly-funded public elementary school, in addition to being one of the five churches that founded Harvard College. The present structure – which will benefit from the proceeds of the auction – is one of the only Colonial Revival churches built in the late-19th century that is still standing.

First Parish Church’s collection of silver also documents the history of colonial America. The group will be led by The Governor Stoughton Cups: A Rare Pair of American Silver Standing Cups, which represent some of the most remarkable American silver ever to come to auction (est. $1/2 million*). The Cups were made in 1701 by Jeremiah Dummer, the first native-born New England silversmith. They were a bequest of the preacher and Dorchester landowner William Stoughton – notorious for presiding over the Salem witch trials. Of exceptional size for the period, and with Baroque details that are surprising given the donor’s Puritan outlook, the Cups are finely engraved with the original Stoughton arms and remain in exceptional condition.

Also highlighting the collection are The Thomas Lake Beakers: A Rare Pair of American Silver Beakers by Robert Sanderson, Sr. and his partner John Hull – founding fathers of American silversmithing and first mint masters of the Massachusetts Bay
Colony (est. $300/500,000). The initials engraved on the Beakers are those of Deacon Thomas Lake, who was admitted to the First Church of Dorchester in 1640, and his wife Alice. Deacon Lake’s sister-in-law was Dorchester’s only “witch”, sentenced and executed for communicating with the Devil after claiming to have seen an apparition of her deceased child.

In addition, the church’s collection includes: The John Gengen Beaker: A Rare American Silver Beaker, William Rouse, Boston, 1686-87, one of only ten pieces of silver that have been attributed to Rouse (est. $60/90,000); The Ebenezer Withington Cup: An American Silver Two-Handled Cup, William Cowell, Sr., Boston, circa 1710 (est. $60/80,000); and The Sarah Preston Tankard: An American Silver Tankard, Boston, circa 1745 by Paul Revere Sr., father of the iconic American patriot (pictured right, est. $20/30,000).

*Estimates do not include buyer’s premium