

First Baptist Church in Needham
One in the Spirit: Transition Prayer Resource

January/February 2023



Transition Edition 19
(for whenever you are so led to pause, reflect, and pray)

858 Great Plain Avenue · Needham, MA 02492
www.fbcneedham.org

A Letter from the Pastor

January / February 2023

Dear First Baptist Church in Needham,



I am writing to you with the utmost appreciation and admiration for your continued faithfulness. Throughout my time with this congregation you have been faced with difficult questions and realities that are facing churches in our current day and era, and that have presented in your own context: what does a congregation do when its membership ages and declines in capacity? How does a church steward its resources responsibly, and perhaps more pertinently, steward them beyond itself – toward future possibility? How does a church embrace new possibility and live into something different and life-giving? There are many possible answers to these questions. Often churches bury their heads, or hide their eyes from the present realities facing them – failing to acknowledge the import of the questions and concerns, and failing to see that they too are a part

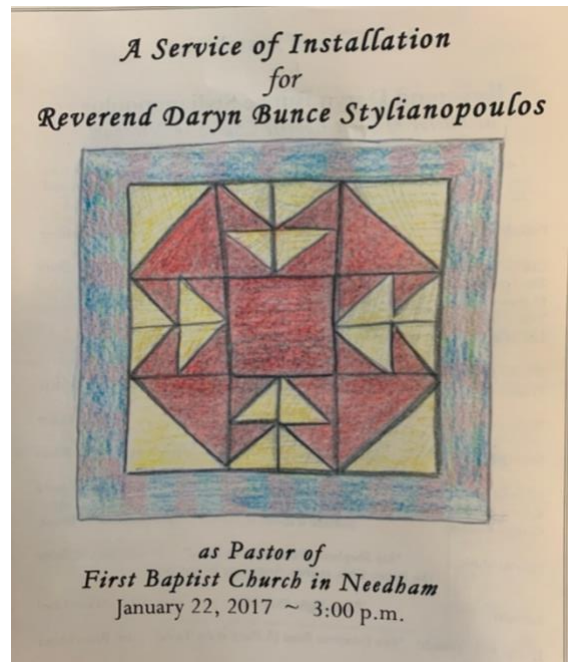
of faithful following of Christ's witness to share and be the Gospel (good news), and be good stewards of resources, and to trust that death or closing is not the end of things, but an opportunity for God to work new life-giving miracles in our midst. Instead, you took on the challenge, dedicated your time, your prayers, your efforts and your ministry to intentionally discerning the new thing that God had in store for you – even if it meant that closing or dissolution would be the result, because you trusted that no matter what the outcome, God would lead you where you needed to be, and that with your hearts on these important, Gospel centered priorities, you would arrive at a place that was life-giving: What will be life-giving/good news for the community? What will be life-giving/good news for our congregation and its members?

Our Annual Meeting took place on the anniversary of my installation as Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church in Needham. In that service we committed ourselves to one another: I pledged, "I do pledge my commitment to First Baptist Church in Needham. I pledge that as Pastor I will fully participate in the life of this community; I will serve the people of this congregation as we seek to grow in our faith and understanding together; and I will lead through the gifts afforded by the grace of God, our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer."

You pledged, "We, the members and friends of First Baptist Church in Needham, do pledge to work with Reverend Daryn and all the pastoral staff toward our common calling: to heal the

sick, to comfort the brokenhearted, to free the oppressed and to proclaim the good news of God's inclusive love.

I feel we have upheld our commitments, and have been led toward our common calling and grown in our faith and understanding of one another along the way. I cannot think of a more appropriate thing to occur on such an anniversary than the favorable vote to merge with First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain, a faithful step into a new calling. As was said at the Annual Meeting, multiple times, "it feels like this is a match made in heaven." I believe it to be. God was certainly along the journey of discernment with us toward this calling, and the Holy Spirit has been an intentional and trusted partner with us throughout our Creative Callings journey. Our resources of space and financial means complement perfectly FBC Jamaica Plain's expansive vision for community ministry, programming and The Centre for Faith, Art, and Justice's mission and possibilities for ministry. First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain's capacity and expanding membership, creative spirit, and inclusive, justice-oriented and love-centered mission is the perfect complement to our vision for ministry in the Needham community and beyond. I am reminded of the book of Acts and the early church community when it was starting out in ministry – they held all things in common – none were proprietary about their resources, but they shared them as all had need and great grace was upon them all (Acts 2:43-47; Acts 4:32-37). What a beautiful thing to combine resources toward new possibilities of grace and beauty!



I have no doubt that as we continue to lean into the goodness and creative whims of the Spirit, and trust in God's provision, that good things will come to be for both churches, and for the Needham community. I am grateful to have shared this journey with you all as your Pastor, and I will continue to serve as a Pastor to you in the new iteration of our ministry. As a Pastor of Congregational Care I will continue in my commitment to you with visits, calls and prayer, worship facilitation, and provision for you in your time of need. It is my joy and honor.

In Christ,
Rev. Daryn Stylianopoulos, Pastor
First Baptist Church in Needham

+ We Hold in Prayer +

My Prayers of Gratitude & Thanksgiving

O God, thank you for each new day and all that it brings.

You promise to provide all that I need, caring not only for me, but for all creation and so I rejoice...

In celebration of all those in our circles with January and February birthdays, Jim Fuller, Anne Wile and Bruce Wile; we are grateful for your life and witness in this world! ...

For the faithful vote of our congregation to merge with First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain toward new possibilities for ministry in our community and in the world ...

With Andrew Thoresen, that his adoption process has finalized, Wren becoming his daughter and Carmen his granddaughter ...

With Robin Bevilacqua who is recovering well from surgery and was able to enjoy time on a pre-planned cruise between surgery and her continued treatment ...

With Pastor Daryn as she celebrates her Dad's recovery from surgery ...

For John Crimmings, who is back in good health and continuing in his joy-filled exploration of faith traditions, including a visit to the Sikh community later this month. And for John's granddaughter, Abigail, who will be continuing in her own journey of faith in CCD – that she is inspired toward life-giving goodness along her faith journey ...

With Marty and Liz, for TABCOM's Elder Ministry program that affords technological possibilities to seniors and for the iPads that they are receiving as a result of this program ...

For all that have dedicated themselves to the restoration of our front porch: Eric Gustafson, Tom Evarts and Yankee Steeple, Curtiss Landscaping, our Administration Ministry, the Town of Needham, and other generous donors of time and resources ...

††† Offer your own prayers of gratitude and thanksgiving here. †††

Praise God, from whom all blessing flow....

Prayers of Personal Concern, Healing, Solace, & Courage

**Faithful God, you know me inside and out,
all my hopes and dreams, fears and failures.**

**You hear your children cry out for healing and consolation, courage and strength. Send
your Spirit in the sharing of the concerns of our hearts as I pray...**

For the family of Louise Mason, who passed away on January 6th. We give thanks for Louise, for her life of faith, for her care for her family and church family, and for those of her community. We give thanks that she is held in light and love by God in a new way, and that she is relieved of all burdens physical and otherwise, and reunited with loved ones gone on ahead of her. May our love continue to find her and her family, particularly daughters, Donna and Cindy, and offer peace to them ...

With Daryn, whose recent biopsies revealed skin cancer that needs to be removed. While holding gratitude that this form of cancer is generally not aggressive, we pray for the skill and wisdom of doctors and surgeons, and for Daryn's family as she navigates this diagnosis ...

With Liz, whose animal companion, Maxwell, is struggling with neurological concerns and loss of appetite. We pray God will provide his every need, and provide comfort and relief for Maxwell, and also for Liz and Rascal as they accompany him through his illness ...

††† Offer your own prayers of concern, healing, solace, and courage here. †††

Lord, in your mercy, hear my prayer....

Prayers in Our Transitions

God of Life, in all of life's turns – planned and unexpected – you are there.

**For the transitions that are hard for me to bear,
grant me the strength to be vulnerable and seek loving accompaniment.**

For the changes I anticipate, grant me hope and wisdom.

**Trusting your Spirit is moving to prepare a place in fellowship and community for each
beloved member of our First Baptist congregation, I pray...**

For our Administration Ministry's continued work toward the merger with First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain, and that God would guide us forward toward new and life-giving possibility together as one ...

††† Offer your own prayers for our transition here. †††

Hear my prayer, O Lord...

Prayers for the Community, Nation, & World

God of compassion and justice, there is so much in the news that is painful, from natural disasters to governmental actions to hunger, poverty, and violence. And there are so many instances of lovingkindness, beauty, and hope. Move among your creation and your children, as I pray...

For the precious lives lost in our country to recent mass shootings, and that their families would know they are held in our hearts during this time of deep grief and loss. God, incline your ear to us and grant us your wisdom – help us to find the resolve to implement measures of gun regulation that would help in keeping deadly weapons out of the hands of those who should not have them, and that would aid in the prevention of these tragedies ...

For the parents and family of Tyre Nichols, who lost his life due to violent and abusive use of force by the police. We repent of this kind of behavior – excessive use of force and violence by those who are pledged to serve and protect. And though we respect those who commit their lives to serve and protect, we recognize that accountability is necessary for justice in this world, a justice that you call us to live into. We pray for accountability, for justice, for all hearts and minds to be turned not only to those things, but to the recognition of each person as your beloved creation, and ultimately toward a spirit of love, compassion and grace that outweighs any inclination toward violence against our neighbors ...

For the Clancy family, who are living through a nightmare caused by postpartum psychosis. For the three children, whose lives were lost, we pray that their memories, their lights and spirits will continue to bring hope to all who remember them in love. We pray that the father, Patrick, is able to find meaning and purpose and love again, and that peace will meet him wherever he is along the journey. And for Lindsay Clancy, who will awaken from her illness faced with the realities and horror of her own actions, God surround her, as only you can, with your compassion. Somehow, may a peace, a grace, a love beyond our understanding find them all ...

††† Offer your own prayers for our community, nation, and world here. †††

For the moving of your Spirit in hope and healing throughout our world, praise God, from whom all blessings flow ... And for your enduring presence, justice, and mercy in our brokenness, Lord, in your mercy, hear my prayer...

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and hold all the prayers of our community...as I pray the prayer your son taught us saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our sins as we forgive
those who sin against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Announcements

Our **church office** is open for our Office Manager, Robin Bevilacqua. We are encouraging limited visits to the church building, and all who visit are required to mask, sign-in, and socially distance. **If you need to speak with Robin, please call ahead if you can.** Office voicemail and email are being checked regularly.

Creative Callings Year 4, Merging **ADMINISTRATION STEWARDSHIP** **& PASTORAL ACCOMPANIMENT *through* TRANSITION**

With a congregational vote on Sunday, June 27, 2021, the Administration Ministry was tasked with developing a plan for closing the church. Our Administration Ministry has been diligently meeting to develop a plan to bring before the congregation.

While our church continued to gather for worship, pray together, and navigate this time of transition, the Administration Ministry has all along been engaged in discernment with community partners and others in ministry around future possibilities for our resources and property. Throughout the discernment, we have been engaged with the hopes that our resources will continue to meet the needs of our Needham community and will continue to uphold and honor the legacy of First Baptist Church in Needham's ministry within the community.

Our exploration led to conversations with First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain about the potential for a merger of our assets and ministries. This has been a life-giving possibility to hold. On November 4, 2022, The First Baptist Church of Jamaica Plain voted unanimously at a

congregational meeting to engage in further discernment around the possibility of a merger between our congregations. On November 5, 2022, FBC Needham’s Administration Ministry unanimously approved a recommendation “to pursue a mutually agreeable partnership in whatever legal form would be agreeable with FBCJP and enter into discussions and negotiations with them.” On December 12, 2022, the Administration Ministry by unanimous consent, agreed with the Vision Statement proposed by First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain (previously shared, along with the motion to merge, in advance of the 2023 Annual Meeting for the congregation’s consideration). The Administration Ministry voted to recommend a merger with First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain to the congregation in the form of a formal motion at the Annual Business Meeting of First Baptist Church in Needham, held on January 22, 2023.

The Annual Meeting, held entirely on Zoom, was well attended and the motion presented. The motion to merge with First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain carried with overwhelming enthusiasm, with nine active members voting in favor of the motion. Two additional active members who were unable to join the call, connected with Pastor Daryn afterward to express their joy in the church’s decision to merge. We remain excited for the possibilities this merger of resources and mission will allow, and trust that as God has been ever present along this journey of discernment, God will continue to lead us as we move forward into new possibilities for ministry in Needham and beyond.

Some implications of this partnership are that it will allow for our building and property to continue to steward inclusive, creative and meaningful ministry for the arts, social justice mission, and the overall wellness of our Needham community. It will facilitate an ongoing relationship with some of our most valued community partners, and community’s social service providers, and will provide potential worship space for some of our neighboring Baptist and ecumenical colleagues who are in need of space for their ministries and the sharing of the Gospel – the good news of God’s love.

We look forward to a service held in celebration of our merger sometime this year.

IMPORTANT DATES to REMEMBER:

Wednesday, February 22, Lent Begins

Sunday, April 2, Palm Sunday

Sunday, April 9, Easter

Upcoming Administration Ministry Meetings:

Monday, February 20 @ 6:30pm

Monday, March 20 @ 6:30pm

Watch for the next Prayer Resource due mid-March

DINNER CHURCH

First Sunday Dinner Church will be postponed for February and March.

We will keep you posted on future possibilities as we move through the season of Lent. In lieu of our regular first Sunday dinner church meetings, please consider visiting First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain for worship on Sunday mornings at 11am.

First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain
633 Centre Street
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

Lent Begins on Ash Wednesday February 22

Pastor Daryn will hold space for imposition of ashes at noon. FBCJP will hold an Ash Wednesday service on the evening of the 22nd. Time TBD. Call the church office for more information about this offering.

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. - Matthew 6:21

Dear family and friends of First Baptist Church in Needham,

Please consider a financial contribution toward the restoration of our historic front porch. The town of Needham has contributed \$90,200 toward the project as a Community Preservation initiative. We are grateful for their support and enthusiasm! With the gift from the town, First Baptist will shoulder upwards of \$350,000 in costs toward the Front Porch Restoration, ensuring a visible marker of our legacy, and preserving this beautiful resource for our Needham community. I thank you for considering a significant gift toward our capital fund in addition to your regular giving. What a beautiful way to offer a piece of your heart toward the future life and witness of this historic and beloved monument.

With gratitude,
Rev. Daryn Stylianopoulos, Pastor



Feb 1, 2023 – The front porch is completed for now; there are a few places that need to be touched up, and painting and railings will be completed when weather permits.

Offering

Your continued financial support of the daily work and ministries of FBC Needham is vital, particularly as we move through this time of transition. We encourage each member of our community to continue in your regular giving toward the support of our continued ministry throughout our time of transition and the future ministries of our FBC Needham/FBCJP collaborative ministry. Offerings can be turned in during worship, through the church website online, or via mail. May the act of giving be a spiritual practice that accompanies your daily prayer and worship.

Mail Checks to:

First Baptist Church in Needham
858 Great Plain Avenue,
Needham MA 02492

Online:

Go to <https://www.fbcneedham.org>
Click the **Take Action** link & follow the directions.

Make checks payable to: First Baptist Church in Needham.

Please indicate it is your offering or pledge on the check. If it is an offering toward the capital fund, please indicate that intention on the memo line.

Pertinent Materials related to the decision to merge:

Dear FBC Needham Community:

By vote of the congregation at a specially called meeting held June 27, 2021, First Baptist Church in Needham tasked the Administration Ministry with developing a plan for closing:

That First Baptist Church in Needham (hereinafter the “Church”) develop a plan for closing, and that the Administration Ministry of the Church shall be authorized to take such steps and actions as are appropriate and/or necessary to develop the closing plan, which would include the disposition of any and all property of the Church, real or personal, upon such terms and conditions as the Administration Ministry may deem appropriate. The plan would be developed in accordance with such laws and regulations as may govern or be applicable to such dissolution. The closing plan and the recommendations developed by the Administrative Ministry will be presented to the Church for approval.

As the Administration Ministry considered possibilities in developing this closing plan, we were hopeful that our building and assets would continue to serve the community of Needham in life-giving ways, and that the remaining members of the congregation would have continued pastoral care and be accompanied along their path toward new church homes for worship and community. It was also a priority of our team that the entity ultimately entrusted with our assets would share in common our core values for inclusive ministry and care of neighbor and community, rooted in the Christian tradition.

After much consideration and discernment, the Administration Ministry is unanimously proposing the following closing plan:

That First Baptist Church in Needham (FBCN) merge with a partner American Baptist Church in Massachusetts, The First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain (FBCJP).

Their vision for ministry and mission, their care for community and neighbor, and inclusive, Christ-centered witness in the world are in alignment with our own. There is a great deal of synergy in our hopes for our property and resources; we trust that they will steward these toward life-giving goodness for our community and beyond.

For further information or questions about our process of discernment, please feel free to connect with Rev. Daryn Stylianopoulos, pastordaryn@fbcneedham.org, or call the church office 781-400-5867.

On December 12, 2022, the Administration Ministry of First Baptist Church in Needham reached unanimous consensus around this vision for a merger, proposed by The First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain:

First Baptist JP is excited to accept the merger proposal of First Baptist Needham. As FBCN has discerned its path forward in a time of transition, the church's leadership has a strong vision for the future of the resources they possess. It is a faithful vision that continues their legacy of Christian ministry and commitment. This mission to use the building/land for the betterment of the community in Needham and beyond is one we support wholeheartedly. FBCJP was an accompanying congregation through the Creative Callings discernment process; we witnessed FBCN reach an ideal solution that would allow a community partner in Needham - that shares the desire to serve the neighborhood - to purchase the building and property in order to meet the needs of the community. FBCJP believes in the promise of that vision. Therefore, until an appropriate community partner/opportunity is found, FBCJP believes that our shared gospel values of love, justice and inclusivity will allow us to steward the property for ministry for such a time as this and beyond toward a life-giving future.

We imagine that the process might look as follows:

With assistance from our lawyers, FBC Needham will merge into FBCJP. The membership of FBC Needham will become members of FBCJP and FBCN's campus and resources will become part of and be managed by FBCJP.

FBCJP would commit to facilitating the use and care of the FBCN property, renting it out as a benefit to the community until a suitable partner that shares our mission could buy the building/land. FBCJP would never sell to a developer only seeking to make money or build condos. FBCJP members who were previously FBCN members would be specifically invited to weigh in on this process whenever it should occur. Specific Needham community members may also be invited to participate. Proceeds from the sale of the FBCN building/land would be used to facilitate the construction of FBCJP second floor sanctuary

space that will also serve as a community hub. FBCN would be visibly recognized in the space. Additionally we would like to see a portion of the funds set aside to serve as a FBCN grant that would highlight the legacy of FBCN and offer support to churches in need. We would be honored to facilitate such a grant process. Finally, FBCJP would fulfill the wishes of FBCN in making a financial contribution to TABCOM and local charity partners.

In the time prior to any sale of the property, FBCJP would run the building as a community center. We would continue to rent to the Needham Children's Center and other current tenants for as long as possible, assuming continued good relations and responsibility (eg. paying rent). We would also seek out other organizations that provide community benefit to rent out the space. Organizations might include:

Other churches for worship ● Outside groups for performances ● YMCA for programming ● Charles River Ballet ● Community groups for collaboration space ● Performance groups for rehearsal space ● Highland Glee Club for music storage ● weddings/funerals/life events ● Opportunities for events centered around social justice, interfaith dialogue, holistic wellness, meditation/mindfulness, denominational gatherings, etc.

Our plan to make this happen would be to keep on Rev. Daryn Stylianopoulos for 10 hours per week in order to continue pastoral care ministry and also to represent the mission for use of the facility around Needham. Additionally we would like to employ a building manager (perhaps FBCN's current office manager) 20 hours a week to assist in the administration of rentals and building upkeep. Finally, we would discuss working with the current bookkeeper at FBCN as seems appropriate. All financials would be merged and used according to FBCJP guidelines.

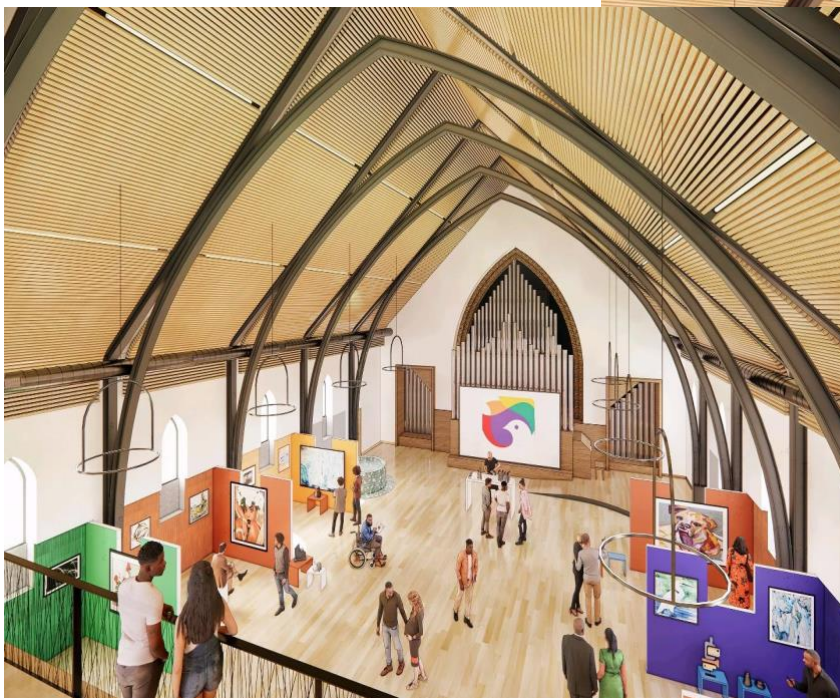
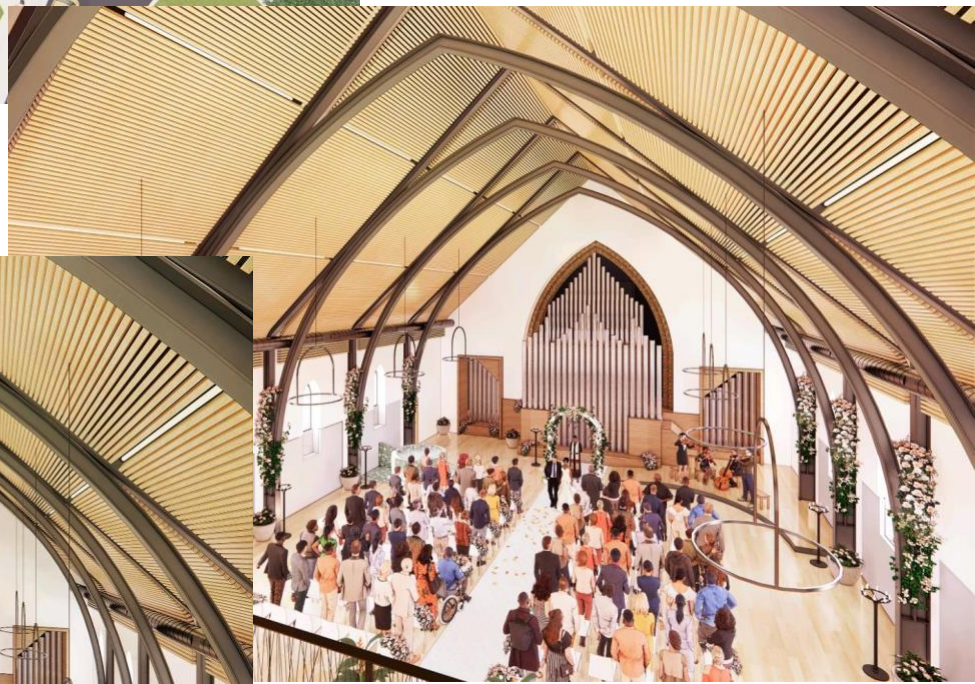
All financial resources will be transferred to accounts owned by FBCJP.

FBCN designated funds would still be used according to donor instructions at FBCJP.

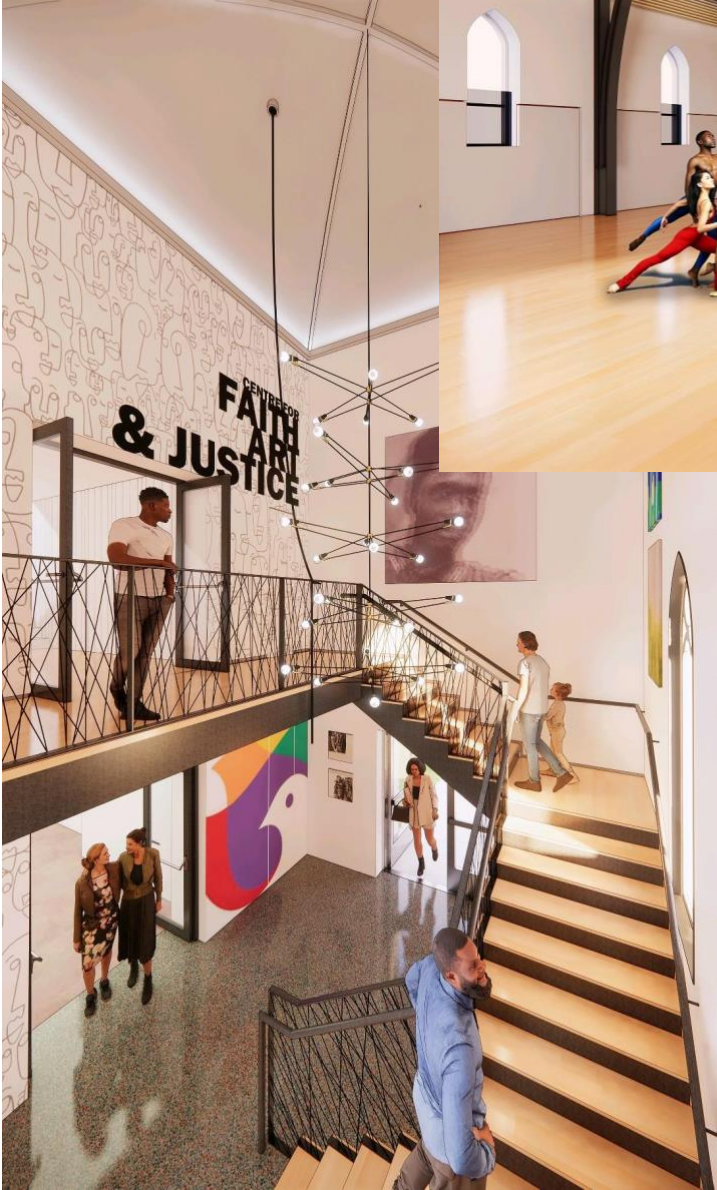
The First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain endured a fire in 2005 that completely destroyed their building. In 2010 they completed the first phase of their rebuilding effort that allowed for the use of the downstairs of their building: community room (space for worship, life events, community gatherings, daycare, and commercial kitchen). As of now, the church does not have occupancy of their upstairs space - that project will require additional fundraising of \$4 million dollars. The following images are representations of how The First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain's building could be used once their upstairs is completed. As a part of their Centre for Faith, Art, and Justice, FBCJP envisioned their building and property used as a multi-purpose space for community use and worship. This was very much in line with how the Administration Ministry hoped our building and resources would continue to serve our Needham community. FBCJP envisions stewarding our building toward similar ministry and engagement with the community of Needham - a bustling hub of inclusive community programming, meaningful worship and

celebrations of life, and creative collaboration. If ever our building is sold to a like-minded community partner, the profit could allow for the completion of FBCJP's ministry hub - a proliferation of life-giving goodness in Needham, Jamaica Plain and beyond.

Images on this page (top to bottom): Multi-purpose/simultaneous use facility; life celebrations and worship



Images on this page (top to bottom):
Dance performance space; Art gallery; Community meeting space



Motion approved by vote of FBC Needham congregation at our Annual Meeting on January 22, 2023:

Vote of the First Baptist Church in Needham

Whereas, at a meeting duly called and held on June 27, 2021, The First Baptist Church in Needham (hereinafter the “Church”) voted to develop a plan for closing, and to authorize the Administration Ministry of the Church to take such steps and actions as are appropriate and/or necessary to develop the closing plan, and

Whereas, the Church is a Massachusetts charitable corporation, and

Whereas, in furtherance of that vote the Administration Ministry of the Church entered into discussions with The First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain (hereinafter the “JP Church”), a Massachusetts charitable corporation which is a partner American Baptist Church in Massachusetts, with a view toward accomplishing the closing of the Church by partnering with the JP Church, through sale or merger or other means, and

Whereas, the JP Church presented the Administration Ministry of the Church with a written vision (hereinafter the “Vision Statement”) for a merger of the Church into the JP Church, a copy of which is to be attached the minutes of this meeting, and

Whereas, on December 12, 2022, the Administration Ministry of the Church by unanimous consensus agreed with the Vision Statement and agreed to propose to the Church that it merge into the JP Church upon terms substantially set forth in the Vision Statement,

Now, therefore it is hereby:

VOTED, that the First Baptist Church in Needham merge into the First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain, a Massachusetts charitable corporation which is a partner American Baptist Church, and it is further

VOTED, that the Administration Ministry of the Church is hereby authorized to take such actions and to negotiate and approve such documents, including without limitation a merger agreement with the JP Church, which the Administration Ministry of the Church, in its discretion, deems necessary and appropriate to effectuate such merger, and which the Administration Ministry of the Church, in its discretion, finds to be in substantial compliance with the Vision Statement, and it is further

VOTED, that the Moderators of the Church, acting singly and/or jointly, be and hereby are authorized, empowered, and directed to execute and deliver, on behalf of the Church, a merger agreement and an Articles of Merger as approved by the Administration Ministry of the Church, and such other documents as the Administration Ministry of the Church deems necessary and appropriate to effectuate the merger into the JP Church, the Church’s authorization therefor to be conclusively evidenced by the Moderators’ or a Moderator’s execution and delivery thereof, and to perform or cause the Church to perform each and every one of its agreements, conditions, covenants, and obligations pursuant thereto.