



**Fifteenth Avenue**  
**BAPTIST CHURCH**  
REV. DR. DAVID G. LATIMORE

**Monday, September 7, 2020**

The Trustees and Pastor of the Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church (**Church**) recommend that our congregation dissolve our relationship with the Fifteenth Avenue Baptist CDC (**CDC**).

**What does this mean?**

The dissolution of the relationship with the CDC means the following:

- ***End to the formal relationship between the Church and the CDC.*** The most important aspect of this is the end of the required Pastor and Trustee representation on the CDC Board. This will not impact the ability of any member of the Church to participate on the board if mutually agreed to by the Church member and the CDC Board.
- ***Termination of annual financial support from the Church to the CDC.*** Financial support of the CDC from the Church would no longer be automatically included in the Church's budget. This does not mean that the Church cannot consider providing financial support in any future year and at any level as the Church can do for any non-profit. This means that the CDC is no longer a privileged recipient of the Church's financial support.
- ***Public acknowledgment of the Termination of the relationship.*** The Church would ensure that the community is informed that no formal or informal relationship remains between the Church and the CDC. This would be publicly communicated to remove any implication that the CDC's actions (and, more importantly, potential liabilities) create any financial obligations for the Church.
- ***Request for the CDC to continue with the necessary changes to its Bylaws.*** In a board meeting in early 2020, the CDC board voted to change the organization's name to the William Buchanan CDC. While we believe that this decision was both imprudent and in violation of the CDC's Bylaws (because there was no required trustee representation on the board at the time), if the Church chooses to dissolve this relationship, we would request that the necessary changes in the organization's name and changes to its Bylaws be implemented.

**Why have we arrived at this point?**

We take no joy in the fact that we have arrived at this decision point. We recognize the CDC is dear to many of our congregants' hearts. The CDC was established with the expectation that it would be a transformative presence in Nashville. The following are the objectives of the CDC, based on its organizing Charter dated March 31, 1999.

- Development of Affordable Housing for ownership by low and moderate income households.



**Fifteenth Avenue**  
**BAPTIST CHURCH**  
REV. DR. DAVID G. LATIMORE

- Foster economic development initiatives promoting self-sufficiency of low-income persons, including:
  - Employment Programs
  - Job Skills Training Programs
  - Literacy programs.
- Develop services in partnership with other service providers.
- Generate funds to provide financial assistance to students through loans, grants, and scholarships.
- Develop social action ministries, including but not limited to, economic development, employment, housing, social services, and other ministries that facilitate a positive social change for disadvantaged persons and groups in the Nashville community

All of these purposes are consistent with the mission of the Church and worthy of our support. However, the unfortunate reality is that the CDC has consistently underperformed achievement of any significant progress on any of these purposes. This lack of progress is not a new development, but has been a consistent reality for the CDC for many years. (Also, notice the use of the language of ministry used in the founding documents. This is one of the many indications that it was always the intent of the founders that the CDC serve as an extension of the Church.)

***Consider for a moment, over the last five years:***

- How many affordable houses have been created?
- What concrete programs exist through the CDC impacting employment of low income persons in Nashville?
- How many individuals have participated in job skills programs through the CDC?
- How many individuals have participated or benefitted from literacy programs?
- How many individuals have participated or benefitted from homeownership and financial counseling?

Now, your response to the questions above might be, “I don’t know the answers to these questions because the information has not been provided to the Church?” Then ask yourself, “Why, over this five-year period, have the usual stewardship reports, that would be automatically provided by any non-profit to its donors and grantors, not been provided by the CDC to answer these questions?”

This points to two critical problems that exist with the CDC. The CDC has not been successful in accomplishing its mission, and has been unsuccessful in keeping the Church informed of its progress (or problems) for several years. Over the last five years, a disappointing low number of individuals have been positively impacted by the actions and programs of the CDC.



**Fifteenth Avenue**  
**BAPTIST CHURCH**  
REV. DR. DAVID G. LATIMORE

An objective review of the CDC's record demonstrates that, in many of these areas there has been significant activity in Nashville,; yet, the CDC has not participated in those efforts to any substantial degree and has not had the sustained impact that was the Church's expectation at the CDC's creation.

Now, in fairness to the CDC, all of these objectives are complex and difficult to accomplish. They require both significant resources and intense and sustained effort. However, in the absence of significant resources, success requires creative, critical, and constant evaluation of an organization's programs and performance. This has been the greatest sustained shortcoming of the management and board of the CDC.

Most research on managing non-profits of the CDC's size and scope suggests that one of the most impactful ingredients of success is an active board providing critical assessment and support. This is what has been most absent at the CDC. What we have witnessed is a board that serves only to affirm the actions of the Executive Director (**ED**) without the appropriate levels of assessment and critical feedback required for improvement.

**What steps did the Church take to address these concerns?**

***Addressing Transparency***

When the CDC faced the potential loss of the building at 942 Jefferson Street (**942**), the Church purchased 942 for its outstanding indebtedness from the Housing Fund. The Church paid one million, thirty-nine thousand, eight-hundred and ninety six dollars in cash (\$1,039, 896.19). The Church took out a loan for five-hundred and seventy thousand dollars (\$570,000) to complete the purchase. This transaction reflects the following realities:

- **Management of the CDC:** The circumstances surrounding the potential loss of 942 and the lack of communication from the CDC leading up to this unfortunate circumstance reflects negatively on the CDC board and management. Also, at the time of this purchase, the CDC continued to represent that it had the financial resources to purchase 942. So, the Church entered into an agreement to allow the CDC to purchase 942 from the Church within a few months of the Church's closing on the property. The CDC never followed through on this commitment.
- **Poor Communication between the CDC and the Church:** The Church's learned of the potential loss of 942 inadvertently and at the last possible moment. During discussions between the CDC and the Church regarding the Church's purchase of 942, a commitment was made by the CDC to provide ongoing organizational updates and financial reports to the Trustees of the Church. Over the ensuing years, the CDC routinely failed to provide this information to the Church.
- The CDC has often annually appeared before the Church and provided some updates to the congregation. However, these appearances were not designed to



**Fifteenth Avenue**  
**BAPTIST CHURCH**  
REV. DR. DAVID G. LATIMORE

keep the congregation fully and regularly informed, but rather to increase or sustain the Church's financial support. The CDC has desired the Church's financial support without committing to regularly keeping the Church informed.

- **Lost Opportunity for the Church:** The Church's use of \$1,039,896.19 in cash reserves and the burden of servicing \$570,000 in debt to purchase 942 means that equally important work by the Church could not be done. Over the last five years, the Church has invested an additional two hundred and ninety-three thousand, seven hundred and seven dollars (\$293,707) in the CDC.
  - As a result, these funds were not available to invest in expanding services to youth or seniors. It means these resources were not available to invest in strengthening the relationship with students on the surrounding college campuses. These funds were unavailable to expand the services of the Church to address the important issues of homelessness, affordable housing, support of Buena Vista Elementary, and other social justice concerns facing this community. The Church was deprived of the resources needed to invest in its own operations. No one should believe that the investment into the CDC did not have real consequences for the Church. These were sacrifices the Church was willing to make assuming that the CDC would produce the results justifying this investment. The failure of the CDC to do so, its resistance to reasonable oversight by the Church, and the CDC board and management's inability to produce results represents a real harm to this Church and this community.

***Lack of Proper Oversight: Church's Representation on the board***

The CDC has avoided critical oversight by the Church through its failure to honor its commitment to have representation by the Church's Trustees on the board. The CDC's Bylaws require that three Trustees and the Pastor of the Church serve on the CDC board at all times. (This is in addition to members of the Church who might also serve on the board.) The CDC's Bylaws also require that when a vacancy occurs in one of the Trustee positions on the board, that vacancy be filled within fifteen days. This was to ensure that the Church's voice was represented on the board at all times.

The following individuals from the Church were serving on the CDC board in 2018:

- Nettie Barnes
- Barrington Gist
- Richard Jackson
- Audrey Buchanan
- **LaDonna Tatum Williams**
- **Loretta Weeden**

The following must be noted.

- Only two members of the CDC board were also Trustees of the Church. (**Bold above.**) However, these individuals were never selected by the Church to represent the Church on the board. The Church was not afforded the opportunity



**Fifteenth Avenue**  
**BAPTIST CHURCH**  
REV. DR. DAVID G. LATIMORE

to offer Trustees of its choosing to serve on the board, which means there has always been three Trustee vacancies on the CDC Board.

- It has been mentioned that the ED (Sis. Rollins) should be considered a Trustee representative on the CDC board. The ED is not a member of the CDC board. (This mirrors our Church where the Pastor is not a member of the Trustee board.) So, the ED is unable to serve as a Trustee on a board of which she is not a member.
- However, for the sake of argument, let's entertain the CDC's position that Sis. Williams and Sis. Weeden partially satisfied the CDC's requirement for Trustee representatives.
  - Sis Tatum Williams left the Church mid-year 2019. Sis. Weeden resigned from the Trustee board in May of 2020. This also created three Trustee vacancies on the CDC board. The Church Trustees presented three Trustee representatives and these Trustee representatives have still not been appointed to the CDC board, and no substantive reason for this failure to seat these Trustees provided. This is in violation of the CDC's Bylaws to fill vacancies of Trustees to the CDC board within fifteen days.

### ***Insufficient Accountability***

The issues above have resulted in insufficient accountability of the board and management of the CDC. The board repeatedly failed to provide the ED with clear performance objectives and annual performance reviews for several years. The failure to provide annual performance goals and performance evaluations further facilitated the CDC's underperformance.

### **Church's Efforts to Impact the CDC's Performance**

Beginning in March of 2019, the Church had several meetings and a series of written communications with the CDC board chairman, ED, and board members. We expressed the following concerns:

- The need for an update of the Bylaws.
- The need to honor the Church's representation on the CDC board.
- The need for a performance review and performance goals for the ED.
- The need for regular communication and updates to the Church.

It was explained that the Church could not, as stewards of the Church's resources, continue to invest in the CDC if we did not witness progress on these issues. Regrettably, except for some progress on the Bylaws, no significant progress was made on these issues. As a result, the Church suspended financial contributions in January of 2020. It was hoped that this would be a temporary suspension that prompted the CDC to take the Church's concerns seriously. Regrettably, that was not the case.



**Fifteenth Avenue**  
**BAPTIST CHURCH**  
REV. DR. DAVID G. LATIMORE

### **Why was the CDC unable to respond to these concerns?**

The CDC has counted on the continued financial support from the Church while not allowing the voice of the Church to be represented and not being fully responsive to the concerns raised by the Church regarding its operation. Instead, the CDC has understood itself as not accountable to the Church. However, a non-profit is always accountable to organizations and individuals that provide it with funding. In addition to the debt the Church assumed because of its relationship with the CDC, the Church has significantly funded the CDC (and this does not count the tremendous generosity of Church members who have also contributed to the CDC). The Church and its members have a right to input in the CDC's operations and to hold the CDC accountable to its mission.

This lack of accountability and the CDC's resistance to the Church's involvement is evident recent actions of the CDC board. Particularly telling was the CDC board's decision to change the CDC's name to the William Buchanan CDC. The CDC board had the right to make this decision but the CDC board was asked to postpone this decision until the Church's representatives to the CDC board were in place. While the inclusion of the Trustees on the CDC board might not have changed the board's decision on the organization's name, it would have been evidence that the CDC at least honored the role of the Church to be fully represented in the CDC's decisions. This is one of many examples that can be cited of the CDC's desire to operate without the Church's essential voice in their decision making.

### **What should we now do?**

The initial mission of the CDC was aligned with the mission of the Church and worthy of our support. However, the CDC has not lived up to its mission. Additionally, the CDC has been resistant to any voice that might hold the ED, the CDC, or its board accountable to its Bylaws and to making tangible progress on its mission. The CDC has consistently resisted the inclusion of the Church's representatives (Trustees) in its decisions and refused its obligation to provide the Church with critical and consistent information regarding the CDC's performance.

The CDC's mission is needed today more than ever. However, as good stewards of the resources God has blessed this Church with, we cannot continue to invest in an effort that has not yielded significant results for several years. Some will argue that the CDC requires a renewed effort by the Church to change the organization's fortunes. Given the history of the Church with the CDC, and what the Pastor has personally witnessed over these last two years, neither the Pastor nor the Trustees see any evidence that things will change with the CDC. We believe, at this time, the best thing, for both the Church and the CDC, is to allow the CDC the independence it desires and to dissolve the relationship.



**Fifteenth Avenue**  
**BAPTIST CHURCH**  
REV. DR. DAVID G. LATIMORE

**Recommendation:**

The Church will vote yea or nay on the following recommendation:

**The Trustees and Pastor of Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church (Church) recommend that our congregation dissolve of the relationship with the Fifteenth Avenue Baptist CDC (CDC).**

We ask each of you to be prayerful and seek God's will in this matter.

Humbly Submitted by,

Pastor David Latimore

On behalf of himself and the Trustees of the Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church