

SarSpecial Meeting of Session on Bridges to Bateyes (B2B)

Sunday, December 7, 2025, 12:15 p.m.

Fairmount Chapel

Minutes

The December Special Session Meeting of Fairmount Presbyterian Church took place on Sunday, December 7 at 12:15 pm in the Fairmount Presbyterian Church Chapel.

THE ROLL

Elders: Rev Ryan Wallace, Senior Pastor; Lindsay Harren-Lewis, Ian Cameron, Jim Crosby, Vicki Mentrek, Peter Scheid, Ben Sperry, Sarah Stone, Steve Chapman, Nancy Gillombardo, Jerry Parker, Ruth Wasem, Susan Wherley, Peg Zitzner

Moderator: Rev. Ryan Wallace, Senior Pastor

Co-chairs: Ryan Wallace and Peg Zitzner

Clerk of Session: Sarah Stone

Guests: Rev. Andrew Genszler.

Incoming elders Carol Adrine, Jesse Bassett, Timothy Cuff. Clerk-elect Ginger Van Wagenen.

Bridges to Batey Committee members not listed above: Denise Benton, Dave Bosler, Vanessa Whiting, Brad Zitzner, John Zitzner

Via Zoom: David Goose, Rebecca Rubenstein Brendan Pham, Katie Weatherbee

Absent: Tori Mills

The moderator Rev. Wallace called the meeting to order at 12 :23 pm He referred to the agenda and reviewed the docket and goals for the meeting. He asked whether there were questions or revisions; hearing none, the agenda was approved. Rev. Wallace called for a motion to give guests privileges of voice. The motion was unanimously approved.

Rev. Wallace opened the meeting with prayer. He then asked participants to introduce themselves and asked to share aspects of the Bridges to Batey (B2B) program for which they were grateful.

Rev. Wallace summarized the process over the last year to discuss the future of B2B. Session formed a Bridges to Batey Task Force of elders and BTB Committee (B2B) members one year ago to look back over the last 10 years and to look forward to the future. The Task Force began in early spring, met regularly, surveyed the congregation,

and interviewed Batey 105 residents. It issued its report in August and, at its October meeting, Session, reviewed various pathways forward. Following much discussion between members of the Task Force and Session, at its November meeting, Session suggested this joint meeting to discuss the three most viable pathways: keep the current structure; move B2B under the umbrella of another nonprofit; and create a separate 501(c)3 for B2B in which Fairmount would be a financial and advisory partner. Over the past several weeks, as conversations continued the Bridges to Batey Committee indicated a preference for exploring the creation of a 501(c)3.

Before moving on, Rev. Wallace asked meeting co-moderator Peg Zitzner if she had anything to add. She did not.

Dave Bosler, representing the Bridges to Batey Committee, then presented findings from the committee and Task Force, explaining that they are looking at a 501(c)3 as the primary option, believing it is less dichotomous and more of a graduated modification. He stated that creating a 501(c)3c will not preclude B2B from seeking a partner; indeed, they anticipate that partnerships will be a key part of the process. He indicated B2B does not see B2B moving away from FPC; they want to maintain and even strengthen that relationship;. They see FPC playing a role as a founding partner and serving on the 501(c)3 Board of Directors because that would ensure ongoing partnership. Dave said B2B would develop a cadence where it is reporting to FPC on a mutually agreed schedule so FPC leadership is informed of the status of the mission work.

Regarding finance, Dave said that B2B envisions that the reserve account targeted to B2B would be transferred to the new nonprofit in full upon successful formation of the 501(c)3 and that the annual commitment currently paid by FPC would similarly be paid in full each year. Financial reports from B2B to FPC would be an ongoing requirement.

He added that from B2B's perspective, this is simply an exploration at this point and it expects to come back to Session with progress reports as a part of this journey. If the 501(c)3 does not work out, B2B's fallback option would be FPC retaining its current governance role as a fall-back option. Both options are described in Appendix A, attached.

Dave asked if any members of the task force or B2B committee had any additional comments. Hearing none, Rev. Wallace then asked for questions and comments from Session.

Ben Sperry asked whether B2B would be doing outside fundraising in addition to funding from FPC? Dave Bosler said yes; that is one of the potential advantages of the 501(c)3 option - it would allow FPC to be a partner, not sole funder. B2B has been concerned about fundraising in the past and see many opportunities that might open up with this new structure. Clerk Sarah Stone added her endorsement and noted that this is less a separation from FPC and more of an evolution of the relationship.

Jerry Parker requested more information about other potential partners. Dave Bosler responded that FPC would be a mission partner, but B2B might link with another group to manage affairs. B2B plans to explore the mission needs, gain some introspection to identify areas where things are going well, and others where it might need a partner. Dave identified IPM and Mango Tree missions as potential partners; Peg Zitzner agreed that both might be involved. Brad Zitzner added that there are also potential church partners.

Rebecca Rubenstein explained that IPM concentrates on gender equity in international work. Andy Wilson of Mango Tree Ministries could contribute local knowledge and community relationships. Bosler confirmed that self sustainability for Batey 105 is a goal and allowed that the mission team has not given that goal sufficient focus. Perhaps IPM could advise on this.

Steve Chapman confirmed that Andy Wilson is from Mango Tree Ministries. Rev. Wallace explained that Wilson was a former FPC associate pastor. Jerry Parker asked for details about Mango Tree Ministries. Brad Zitzner responded that Mango Tree is located in very close proximity to Batey 105 and Andy is there 50% of the time. Its mission is to help churches accomplish their goals in La Romano and it hosts groups who want to do work in that area. Mango Tree Ministries is working to hire Dominican and American interns for three-year terms.

Susan Wherley spoke about the evolution of B2B's long-term goals and suggested that the 501(c)3 structure would facilitate achievement of those goals since B2B could connect with multiple potential partners, including FPC.

Vicki Mentrek asked whether B2B would continue to sponsor youth trips. Dave Bosler said yes, B2B and the task force conceptually see involvement of FPC youth as pivotal to the future. He agreed that Fairmount youth trips could be better aligned in the future under the broader umbrella of the 501(c)3 relationship.

Rev. Wallace summarized that B2B would welcome Fairmount youth. Bosler added that robust engagement with the congregation is an important goal of the B2B committee. He

acknowledged that they've been focused on the mission work and that their communications with the congregation could be better.

Rev. Wallace then asked if there were any concerns among Elders about the 501(c)3 path. Jerry Parker reiterated his question about the reserve fund donation and whether it would be transferred in full; Bosler confirmed that expectation. Clerk Sarah Stone said that the emphasis at this point should be on exploring the process to transition to a 501(c)3.

Brad Zitzner explained that the goal is to create a 501(c)3 but there are many unanswered questions: who will run it, who will do the accounting. In fact, one of B2B's initial concerns was to safeguard the reserve funds in the event a new partner goes out of business; the 501(c)3 would protect those funds. The purpose of the 501(c)3 is to help select the right partners and have a vehicle for donations.

Vanessa Whiting advised that it will be important to determine the mission of the 501(c)3 and related questions. This will be a volunteer organization so B2B must consider who will be on the board; who will be running the organization. Is it a funding organization or will it actually carry out the mission of the Batey?

Rev. Wallace summarized that answering these important questions will be the work of the B2B committee, including what are all the components of moving this idea forward? What are partner responsibilities, what is the mission, what is needed from FPC?

Rev. Genszler endorsed the BTB mission and offered support to the exploration process. He is familiar with a partnership of 12-15 congregations doing work in Haiti who joined forces, hired staff, and formed boards from constituents. Susan Wherley mentioned that Dougbe River School is completely run by volunteers in Western Reserve Presbytery.

Ruth Wasem suggested that B2B contact the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences to see if it has grad students to assist. Similarly, Carol Adrine believes the Weatherhead School of Management is willing to provide information to groups starting businesses.

Rev. Wallace summarized, seeing broad support for exploring this path forward although there remain questions about financial support, FPC youth involvement, and FPC future involvement. He also noted the wisdom, expertise and offers of support.

Jerry Parker asked about potential nonprofit partners. Dave Bosler reiterated Brad Zitzner's comments about IPM, Mango Tree and potential church partners. Steve

Chapman noted that IPM's focus on gender equity might make it a harder fit so it might be better for Batey group to have its own mission.

Rev. Wallace reminded us that we are at the early stages of exploration. B2B may report back on a partner structure that looks sound but another scenario might be that one of the other solutions is more viable. No final decision is required today.

Ben Sperry asked who will do the exploratory work. Dave Bosler said that will be the focus of the B2B ministry team. Brad Zitzner said they would start by interviewing potential nonprofit and church partners.

Rev. Wallace asked what B2B needs from FPC in the near term. Brad Zitzner suggested a streamlined process for dialogue with staff so they get good fast feedback as they learn more about the 501(c)3 pathway. It was suggested that Sarah Stone be the single point of contact for FPC, so she is (for now).

Dave Bostler asked about funding the B2B mission in the interim, during this exploratory phase. Peg Zitzner followed up with a question about costs for setting up the 501(c)3 since B2B wants to ensure that its FPC funds go to mission, not administration. Sarah Stone responded that B2B should submit its proposal to Serve Council for any funding from reserve funds beyond the \$12000 budget line which has been approved for 2026.

This provoked an extended conversation about funding sources, timing of fund allocation (Susan Wherley), how B2B would be situated vis-a-vis other entities seeking funding from Serve Council (Ben Sperry and Brad Zitzner), FPC's role if any in Dougbe River School (Vanessa Whiting), the participation by FPC youth (Susan Wherley); and the nature of FPC's long-term commitment (Dave Bosler).

In response, Vanessa Whiting expressed confidence that there were several models with which she is familiar through her service as Board Chair of the United Way. Ian Cameron reiterated that Dougbe River School could be a good model for us.

In response to Ginger Van Wagenen's question about the spend rate for the reserve fund (currently a balance of \$45,700) and future fundraising plans, Dave Bosler agreed to include a summary of those plans in BwB's progress reports. This also led to discussion of fundraising ideas, including a gala to launch the new 501(c)3 and to celebrate all that B2B has accomplished (Ruth Wasem); a silent auction like that hosted to support Dougbe River School (Susan Wherley); individuals ready and willing to pledge to B2B (Peg Zitzner); and past mission trip participants who should be invited to the gala or other event, timed

over the holidays to permit their attendance (David Goose, Dave Bosler, Steve Chapman). David Goose, Steve Chapman and Vanessa Whiting spoke eloquently about the impact this mission experience has on participants, a “religious experience” as Vanessa characterized it.

Rev. Wallace turned us to the question of communicating with B2B and the congregation. This raised the question of the extent and terms of FPC’s commitment to Batey 105. Dave Bosler said FPC has a commitment to Batey 105 through 2039 and asked if FPC feels that commitment will continue. John Zitzner said he wanted FPC to state clearly that it is committed to its 25-year commitment and is working to strengthen it. Tim Cuff noted that, if FPC has members on the 501(c)3 board, that role would necessarily include support, both advisory and financial.

Discussion followed. Jerry Parker and Jim Crosby advanced the idea that Session is not comfortable making a 15-year commitment it cannot keep and thereby obligating future Sessions, a policy it has avoided. Rev. Wallace and Sarah Stone recommended that communication to B2B and the congregation should focus on the evolving ministry and a potential reinterpretation of it, with the possibility of a change in governance via a 501(c)3 organization. Steve Chapman volunteered to write the communication with Peg Zitzner and then send it to B2B for review. Vicki Mentrek reminded them that many people in the congregation are not familiar with this ministry so the communication should lay out the history. Carol Adrine agreed.

Rev. Wallace again summarized next steps, urging B2B to move forward in its exploration, focusing on identifying potential partners and investigating the viability of a 501(c)3, noting the many offers of support from those in the room. He indicated that Session will await BTB’s results in exploring the 501(c)3 and recognized that this first-choice model may have to be adjusted as the exploration continues.

Rev. Wallace adjourned the meeting at 2:09 pm with a blessing.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Stone, Clerk

APPENDIX A

Outline of Separate Nonprofit Governance Option

B2B establishes new, separate governance (either forming a new 501(c)(3) or becoming a project under the umbrella of an existing organization.) Fairmount's role shifts from governance to supporting partner.

- a. The B2B Committee would explore different options/partners/models of governance and notify Session (the B2B Committee would make the decision);
 - i. During this exploration/transition period, we would need to determine responsibility for the restricted funds;
- b. Once a new governing organization was identified, together we would need to discuss/determine:
 - i. The transfer of the restricted funds to the governing organization;
 - ii. The future/ongoing commitment of Fairmount to B2B and Batey105

Fall-Back Option

B2B remains a ministry within Fairmount and Fairmount contracts with an outside mission partner to help develop and facilitate the mission strategy alongside us.

1. Fairmount would keep fiduciary and governing responsibility for B2B;
2. Session and the B2B Committee would collectively develop a process to draft an RFP for potential mission partners (at the conclusion of the process, Session would vote to engage a contractor);
3. Once an outside mission partner was chosen, all stakeholders (Session, Serve, B2B Committee, contracted mission partner, and Fairmount staff) would need to work together on a plan to determine the scope, strategy, and priorities of the mission moving forward, as well as clear roles and responsibilities.