



DALIA A. PALCHIK
PROVIDENCE SUPERVISOR

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
COUNTY OF FAIRFAX
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA

Suite 218
3001 VADEN DRIVE
FAIRFAX, VA 22031

TELEPHONE 703-560-6946
FAX 703- 207-3541

providence@fairfaxcounty.gov

October 19, 2021

Joint Board Matter with Chairman McKay

First Baptist Church of Merrifield's 151st Anniversary

Members of the Board,

On September 18th 2021, First Baptist celebrated its 151st homecoming anniversary celebration weekend, marking 151 years of providing spiritual leadership, generous community outreach, and opportunities for joyful worship in the Baptist tradition to residents of Fairfax County, and to mark the next step in the church's current and future capital improvements.

The history of First Baptist began in 1871, when the Church members, together with other churches, met in a log cabin between Graham Road and Seven Corners. In 1891, First Baptist Church of Merrifield found their permanent home when a plot of land in Merrifield was purchased by church trustees John E. Coates, Joshua Ball, and Joshua Pearson for the sum of five dollars.

The first church structure was built with lumber transported by horse drawn wagons from the Alexandria docks. Before it was completed, the structure was destroyed by a severe storm. In an extraordinary display of perseverance, the community was able to rebuild the Church in just three additional years.

First Baptist Church of Merrifield is characterized by its impressive leadership and passionate ministry. During the 32-year tenure of Pastor Charles Parker, the Church added a youth department; established a college scholarship fund; added deacons, deaconesses, and completed a new church building. In 1983, Pastor Lenwood

Graham, Sr., led First Baptist Church of Merrifield through a period of expansion as the church increased its membership, became more active in foreign and domestic missionary work, and established the Merrifield Child Development Center.

Today, First Baptist Church of Merrifield is led by the Reverend Dr. Paul A. Sheppard, offering worship services every Sunday and Bible study classes and other ministries during the week. Rev. Sheppard is rooted in the Merrifield community, with his grandfather having been part of the first class of Luther Jackson High School.

Pastor Sheppard has continued to position First Baptist Church of Merrifield as a vital part of the community, partnering with surrounding neighbors both before and during COVID-19. The Church has partnered with the Greater Merrifield Business Association and the Merrifield community to hold Merrifield festivals, free food, gift card giveaways, and seminars on anxiety and grief, among other outreach efforts. First Baptist is a valued and longtime beacon of the Merrifield community.

Therefore, we move, without objection, that the Office of Public Affairs prepare a proclamation to be presented outside the board room to recognize and honor First Baptist Church of Merrifield's 151st anniversary, faith-based leadership, and to share our appreciation for their continued contributions to the greater Merrifield and Fairfax County communities.