



Office of the City Clerk

City Hall
121 N. LaSalle St.
Room 107
Chicago, IL 60602
www.chicityclerk.com

Legislation Text

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RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The First Baptist Church of Chicago (FBCC) was organized by 15 believers on October 19, 1833. While it was not the first church in the city, it was the site of the city's first baptism, performed by Reverend Allen Freeman, on January 12, 1834; and

WHEREAS, The Chicago City Council has been informed of the First Baptist Church's contributions to Chicago by Alderman Sophia King; and

WHEREAS, During the first 40 years after its organization, First Baptist moved between several downtown locations before making the transition to the South Side, eventually moving to their current -day location of 935 East 50th Street in 1919; and

WHEREAS, First Baptist has always been focused on church planting and education. The Calvary Baptist Church in the South Shore neighborhood is one of many churches organized by members of FBCC. Members of FBCC in 1857 were instrumental in forming the first chapter of the Young Men's Christian Association in Chicago. The women of First Baptist helped to form the Baptist Missionary Training School for women, which merged with Colgate Rochester Seminary in 1961. Members of FBCC formed the old University of Chicago and the Baptist Theological Union now known as the University of Chicago Divinity School; and

WHEREAS, First Baptist has taken an active role in growing educational opportunities, opening Chicago's first free kindergarten at its prior location of 31st Street and King Drive. Additionally, First Baptist has supported their partner schools, Reavis Elementary and Shoesmith Elementary, with scholarships for students with improved grades and high attendance; and

WHEREAS, First Baptist played a significant role in the resettlement of Japanese Americans in Hyde Park and Kenwood at the conclusion of World War II. Reverend Jitsuo Morikawa was called to serve as assistant pastor and later became the first Japanese American to serve as pastor of a Euro-American congregation. Reverend Morikawa also welcomed the first African American members of the First Baptist Church. The City would go on to recognize the church for its diversity in 1954; and

WHEREAS, First Baptist has been recognized for its willingness to open its building to the community and work in partnership with other groups. Over the years, they have opened their doors to the Susan Duncan Children's Center, the Asanteman, the Drexel Boulevard Townhouse Association, the 8th Church of Christian Science, and the Zomi Bethel Church of Chicago. They also support the ministries of the food pantry and soup kitchen of the Hyde Park Kenwood Interfaith Council; and

WHEREAS, FBCC has a longstanding commitment to the incarcerated and their families

in our state's prison system. Through the Prison Fellowship Angel Tree program, they provide holiday gifts to children of the incarcerated, and through the New Life Ministry, the church has visited and conducted services for inmates at Pontiac Prison, the Chicago Metropolitan Correctional Facility, Warrenville Girls Facility and Cook County Jail; and

WHEREAS; First Baptist has ministered to the senior citizens and the chronically ill for over fifty years. First at the Mark Howard Home on Drexel Boulevard, later at the Dawson Home, which became the All Saints Pavilion and now at the Park Shore Nursing Home. The church's vision for the care of seniors and the chronically ill also includes providing assistance in locating nursing homes, health education events, financial support, and further advocacy for their aging membership and community; and

WHEREAS, First Baptist's partnerships extend beyond the boundaries of this city, state and country. The formation of a partnership between the Ghana Baptist Convention (GBC) and the American Baptist Churches of metro Chicago began at First Baptist. The church financially supported the GBC's Vocational Training Center and now the Resurrection Baptist Church of Takorida, Ghana. Through a partnership with the Community Church of Wilmette, First Baptist went to Montezuma Creek, Arizona to conduct Vacation Bible School. From that first trip in 2000, the youth and adults of FBCC have been on mission trips to West Virginia, Alaska, Cuba, Bahamas, Costa Rica and Jamaica; and

WHEREAS, First Baptist has been in the forefront of making Chicago a city for all of its people. From the 1950's, when their members fought against the City's effort to demolish the homes of the poor, to the marches and rallies of Dr. Martin Luther King, and then later the protests of Reverend Jesse Jackson. First Baptist was there and is still there, opening its doors to the Black Contractors Association, and through their significant involvement with Rainbow PUSH, they have registered countless people to vote, opened their doors to local and state politicians, and have assisted the Department of Commerce representatives in the census count; and

WHEREAS, First Baptist Church has always been on the cutting edge of ministry. In 1980, FBCC invited the late Reverend Dr. Brenda Little as a candidate to be the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Chicago. Since that historic moment, First Baptist has licensed to preach nine women in their membership, of which, seven have been ordained. Three of their sisters have been installed as pastors of churches in the Chicago metropolitan area; and

WHEREAS, the First Baptist Church of Chicago has been known for its ministry to children and youth through Sunday school, scouting, music camp, camping, Vacation Bible School, youth group, children's choir, and praise dance; and

WHEREAS, the First Baptist Church of Chicago has been served by its Pastor the Reverend Dr. Jesse M. Brown since 1980 and he will be celebrating his 39th year on

December 10th as the pastor of this great ministry in the Hyde Park Kenwood neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, the First Baptist Church of Chicago gave its great history from 1833 to the 1970's to the Chicago History Museum so that this great treasure of pictures, meeting minutes, church directories, reports, baptisms, marriage records, and church history books might be shared with people everywhere; and

WHEREAS, the First Baptist Church of Chicago celebrated 186 years of continuous ministry on October 13th from the beginning of the city of Chicago, to the Civil War, to the great Chicago Fire, to the Columbian Exposition, to two great World Wars, from segregation to integration and the inauguration of Barack Obama as President of the United States of America. First Baptist has remained steadfast to our God and to this city; and

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, assembled this twenty-sixth day of November, 2019, do hereby extend our heartfelt best wishes Reverend Dr. Jesse M. Brown and the First Baptist Church family; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution are presented to the First Baptist Church of Chicago a sign of our honor, gratitude, and respect.