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**Gary Christenson, Mayor**

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**Community Preservation Committee  
Recommendation Letter**



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May 19, 2026

**To:** The Honorable Mayor Gary Christenson and the Malden City Council

**Applicant Name:** Paster Wayne Gadie, on behalf of Emmanuel Baptist Church

**Co-Applicant:** Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Kashawna Harling

**Applicant Address:** 20 Hillside Ave., Malden, MA 02148

**Project:** FY26\_0035\_Emanuel Baptist Church Restoration Project

**Overview**

The City of Malden Community Preservation Committee ("CPC") is pleased to inform you that on April 29, 2026 the CPC voted 5-0 to recommend for approval a total of \$100,000.00 to restore the roof of Emmanuel Baptist Church at 20 Hillside Ave., in Malden, MA. The Emmanuel Baptist Church Restoration Project was discussed at a Public Hearing held on December 17, 2025.

**Project Description**

The goal of this project is to restore the roof of Emmanuel Baptist Church.

Emmanuel Baptist Church can trace its roots back 125+ years as the preeminent congregation for people of color in Malden. Since its founding the Church has been a centerpiece of Malden's African American heritage and has served as an anchor for Black civic and religious leadership dating back to abolitionist activities and early freedom seekers in Malden. The site is thus associated with events and patterns of local history and is associated with significant people throughout Malden's history.

Since its founding in 1891 the church has changed names and locations, all while preserving and expanding its mission for public service. The Church was started by a small band of Black Christian believers who first met in member's homes. They first incorporated as St. Luke's Baptist Church, and after moving to a building on Centre Street in 1897, the name was changed to the Centre Street Baptist Church. In 1909, the Church's current property at Hillside Ave. was purchased from the American Unitarian Association and the congregation renamed itself Eastern Baptist Church. In 1945 they merged with Union Baptist Church and adopted the name that is used today: Emmanuel Baptist Church.

From 1909 to 1982 the Church operated out of a Victorian Gothic style building with a ground floor constructed of brick that supported a wooden structure with a hip and gable roof. When the building was entered into the State Register of Historic Places in 1976, the entry's author noted that alterations had been made to strip the trim so aluminum siding could be installed over the wooden clapboard façade. Because of these details, the report notes that "This ungainly structure, poorly designed for its sloping site, has been visually neutralized by stripping of its original architectural trim and materials. It may well be replaced in the future."



Three years later plans were made to replace the old structure, and in 1982 a new building was constructed in a parcel adjacent to the old one. Artifacts from the old building, such as its cornerstone, were embedded in the new building. The old building was subsequently demolished and replaced by a multistory parking structure adjacent to the Church building.

In 2009 Emmanuel Baptist Church hired Vaughn Associates, a design-build architecture firm, to design and construct major upgrades to their building. Complications with the ambitious design led to cost overruns, and when funds were exhausted, construction was halted while it was less than 50% complete. During construction, improvements began in areas of the building that are now unusable, whereas parts of the structure which would have been approaching their end of life (eg. the roof), were never addressed. The Church has since made a patchwork of repairs to create livable conditions inside the building, but has been unable to raise the additional funding needed to complete major restorations. Most pressing, the building's original membrane roof from 1982 is now failing, leading to multiple leaks that are visible from the interior.<sup>i</sup>

The Board of Trustees is currently pursuing multiple grant opportunities to stabilize the structure, and to generate plans for a prosperous future. Emmanuel Baptist Church is currently applying for additional sources of funding that could potentially use CPA Funds as a match to complete the repairs to the remaining portions of the building envelope and to connect the fire safety systems. Once these repairs are in place, Emmanuel Baptist can take on additional efforts to improve ADA accessibility, and to upgrade the interior to enhance the visitor experience and possibly provide space for a permanent daycare facility.

In the meantime, these essential and urgent repairs will preserve the structure and ensure that the congregation can continue to provide additional public benefits such as hosting Malden's annual MLK celebration, providing childcare to local families and serving as a food pantry multiple days of the week.

### Special Conditions

The Community Preservation Committee recommends this project with the following conditions:

- The appropriation is not to be used to repair or restore any item whose sole purpose is religious.
- A clawback clause be placed into the Grant Agreement to ensure that CPC may opt to recoup at least a portion of its investment if the building is sold within 30 years.

### Rationale

In reaching their decision, the CPC found that the project meets eligibility requirements and aligns with the priorities stated in Malden's Community Preservation Plan because of the following reasons:

1. **The structure that is recommended to be restored with CPA funds meets the CPA's definition of an historic resource** (MGL Part I, Title VII, Chapter 44B, Section 2). "Historic Resources" as defined by MGL 44B, Section 2, includes buildings that have been "listed on the state register of historic places or has been determined by the local historic preservation commission to be significant in the history, archeology, architecture or culture of a city or town." In a letter dated October 21, 2025, Michelle Romero, Malden City Planner and Clerk to the Historical Commission notified Emmanuel Baptist Church that in its meeting on October 16, 2025, the Malden Historical Commission determined that the Emmanuel Baptist Church property at 20 Hillside Ave. is a Significant Building, thereby making the property eligible to receive CPA Funds.
2. **The award does not conflict with the Massachusetts Anti-Aid Amendment** (Article XVIII, later Amend. Art. 46, § 2, as amended by Art. 103) CPA Funds are recommended to go towards preserving the physical historic structure at 20 Hillside Ave. (not including any explicitly religious components), regardless of the organization inside. The First Amendment guarantees that religious organizations that operate historic structures cannot be denied funding because of their speech.
3. **This building is in need of urgent repairs.** In 2025 Emmanuel Baptist Church hired GRLA architects, a qualified architecture firm that specializes in historic rehabilitation to conduct a building conditions assessment. The most urgent exterior repair identified in the report was to replace the building's original roof to stop it from leaking.
4. **The award will help preserve the historic character of Malden.** The installation of a new roof will stabilize the building, thereby preserving the historic artifacts from the old building as well as the building's historic character, culture and community. Once the envelope is sealed, the Church can continue to raise funds from other sources to make improvements to the interior.
5. **CPC is comfortable with scope of the project and believes that the organization has the capacity to carry out the work in a timely manner.** During the application process, the Church successfully engaged GRLA to conduct a Building Conditions Assessment, and worked with its Board of Trustees to coordinate with the design professionals. CPC's recommended award amount is above the estimated construction cost of the roof replacement so that the Church can

hire an independent consultant (unaffiliated with the Church) to serve as their owner’s representative to oversee the construction process and to regularly report to CPC and the Historical Commission.

6. **The project excellently meets two additional elements of CPC’s evaluation criteria:** 1) The project creates Benefit(s) to the City, including an agreement (in keeping with its current practice) to make quality, affordable space available for civic and community group use. CPC finds this to be a meaningful contribution to the public, especially at this time when the city’s budget cannot support the provision of similar space to civic groups. 2) The project will not place an undue burden on the City. Emmanuel Baptist is committed to raising funds from other sources so that in the future CPC will not be the sole funder of additional improvements.
7. **This award was made on a case-by-case basis.** The recommended restoration work is for the exterior of the building and CPA Funds will not be used to repair any item whose sole purpose is religious.

**Recommended Award Details**

CPA Project Funding Recommendation: FY26 Application		
Category: Historic Preservation	Recommendation Funding Source	Amount
Emmanuel Baptist Church Restoration	Historic Reserve	\$100,000.00

**Project Funding Sources**

First Parish Restoration Project Funding Sources				
Total Project Cost	\$103,640.00	CPA Funds Requested	Cost Share Amount	Cost Share Percent
		\$100,000.00	\$3,640.00	4%
Cost Share Funding Sources		Secured Y/N	Amount	Type
Emmanuel Baptist Church		Y	\$3,640.00	Cash

**Additional Information**

The FY26 full Application as well as the supporting attachments may be found at:

[https://www.cityofmalden.org/DocumentCenter/View/10792/FY26\\_0035\\_Emanuel-Baptist-Restore-App-Attach\\_3](https://www.cityofmalden.org/DocumentCenter/View/10792/FY26_0035_Emanuel-Baptist-Restore-App-Attach_3)

The 2025 Emmanuel Baptist Assessment Report by GRLA can be found at:

<https://www.cityofmalden.org/DocumentCenter/View/11620/Emmanuel-Baptist-Church--Assessment-Report-12-17-2025>

<sup>i</sup> The roof has not been altered since the building was constructed in 1982. Although the structure is less than 50 years old, it has been deemed as “Historically significant” by the Malden Historical Commission, a designation which qualifies the building as an “Historic resource,” according to MGL Chapter 44B Section 2.