



AT THE INTERSECTION
OF HERITAGE, FAITH,
& COMMUNITY

Partners for Sacred Places

November 10, 2014

Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund Grant Program
Massachusetts Cultural Council
10 St. James Avenue, 3rd Floor
Boston, MA 02116-3803

To Whom it May Concern:

On behalf of Partners for Sacred Places, I am most pleased to write this letter to strongly support the application being submitted by Saint James Place for a capital grant that would repair and renovate its historic buildings into a new cultural center housing and supporting the arts in Great Barrington. Partners has been working to encourage and support the preservation and active use of sacred places for 25 years, and we've been honored to work with Saint James Place on this project.

In preparing a market study, through the technical assistance grant awarded to Saint James Place by the Mass Cultural Council in 2013-14, Partners interviewed an array of performing arts organizations in the Berkshires. The study found a critical mass of small to mid size arts organizations that want to make a home in Saint James Place. Given the quality of the spaces Saint James Place has to offer, the location on Main Street in the heart of an historic district, and the enthusiastic response of arts leaders, we believe the opportunity this restoration presents would have a transformative effect on Great Barrington and dramatically benefit cultural tourism in the Berkshires.

As you may know, Partners pioneered its *Making Homes for the Arts in Sacred Places (AiSP)* program several years ago, and AiSP has been highly successful in matching arts groups with vacant church spaces across the nation. We have learned that theatre, dance and music groups love the intimacy, historic character, acoustics and size of these spaces.

What is significant and worthy about Saint James Place is that it was incorporated at a moment when the St. James parish seriously considered demolition of its historic church. The newly formed St.

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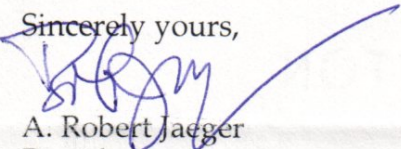
James Place purchased the buildings with a clear intent to reuse them as a center for the arts and cultural activities in a way that contributes to the economic health of Great Barrington.

Saint James Place's board is ready to build on the grant requested from the Cultural Facilities Fund, and we believe that the organization will be able to raise funds from other sources that care about the cultural life of the region and the preservation of this important historic building. Having worked with national funders of capital projects, such as Kresge and Knight, we are confident that a Cultural Facilities Fund grant will be significantly supplemented by other donors, and that the project will be completed quickly.

I have been so persuaded of the national merit of Saint James Place that I agreed to serve as a founding member of its Board of Directors. We see this project as a national model that can point the way to creatively preserving the community value of sacred places no longer used by the congregations who built them. Both institutionally and personally, I am committed to the success of this project, and strongly urge the Massachusetts Cultural Council to support this grant request made by Saint James Place.

Thank you,

Sincerely yours,



A. Robert Jaeger
President