



BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM OF ART

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April 7, 2022

Alabama Arts Alliance
Attn: Impact Award Selection Committee
400 South Union St., Suite 325
Montgomery, AL 36106

To the Members of the Selection Committee:

It is a pleasure to write in support of the 16th Street Baptist Church's nomination for the 2022 Impact Award. The name of the 16th Street Baptist Church is indelibly etched in the minds of people throughout this nation due to the horrific bombing that occurred there on September 15, 1963, taking the lives of four young girls. The tragedy of that day was a pivotal turning point for the Civil Rights Movement, and the church soon became regarded as a place of pilgrimage, reflection, and remembrance. Although it is often regarded as hallowed ground, it is important to remember that the 16th Street Baptist Church is not fixed in time, but is an active and thriving church with a congregation deeply committed to serving the Birmingham community, as well as the thousands of tourists who visit each year.

The 16th Street Baptist Church is especially committed to sharing its story with children. To that end, it has redesigned its educational spaces to create a multi-media experience for young visitors, focusing not only the bombing and its aftermath, but also on the aesthetic significance of the Church as work by Wallace Augustus Rayfield (1874 – 1941), the second formally educated practicing African American architect in the United States.

The 16th Street Baptist Church has also become a venue for educational arts programming including hosting a landmark concert (captured in an award-winning film), in which internationally known violinist and Birmingham native Caitlin Edwards played one of the "Violins of Hope," a violin previously owned by a Jewish survivor of the Auschwitz death camp. Just last month, the 16th Street Baptist Church partnered with Red Mountain Theater to present the musical drama "Memorial" in the historic church's sanctuary, which examined the atrocity of lynching in Jefferson County, Alabama from the late 19th to the early 20th century.

I believe that the 16th Street Baptist Church continues to imagine exciting and innovative ways to reach young audiences and demonstrate its "outstanding commitment and dedication to children and the arts" through its programs and presentations. Thank you for giving this important organization your full consideration for the 2022 Impact Award.

Sincerely yours,

Graham C. Boettcher, Ph.D.
The R. Hugh Daniel Director & CEO

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