

May 2009

Next Steps: A Progress Report From the BA Trustees

Dear Friend:

We wrote to you last December that Chestnut Hill Benevolent Association had come to a defining moment. Faced with severe financial challenges, we told you that decisions had to be made that would determine the future course of the BA. So many of you responded with your prayers, words of encouragement, and donations. More than \$1.5 million in gifts and legacies have been received since December, and we are deeply grateful for this outpouring.

That letter also announced our goal to develop by this month a comprehensive financial framework that would sustain our mission over the long term. We are writing now to let you know the details of that plan, as well as some of the information that helped shape the decisions we have made—what we have learned in an in-depth review of our operations, including our programs, our costs, and the use of our assets, particularly our real estate.

The Starting Point: “God’s Love for His Flock”

The BA as we know it today builds on the demonstration of previous generations: those who were first charged with fulfilling Mary Baker Eddy’s request to establish a refuge for healing and proper care of the sick, those who have tenderly ministered with Christian Science nursing through the decades, and those who have worked to establish and strengthen the BA’s operations and finances. We of this generation hold the BA in trust, not only for all who are seeking this healing refuge and care today, but for those who will call on Christian Science nursing in the future, including those who may not yet know anything of the healing Christ.

As we have pondered how to best safeguard the BA for the future, we have turned to divine Love to guide us, as it was Love that brought forth the idea that is manifest as the BA. It is Love that heals and shelters and comforts. “...God’s love for His flock is manifest in His care,” our Leader writes in *Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896* (p. 154). We witness tender expressions of the Father’s care each day in the progress and healings of those calling on our Christian Science nursing services. And we know that same care also provides for and blesses the BA itself.

As we described in our December letter, the challenges facing the BA are longstanding and appear quite complex, but we trust Love's shepherding care to lead us through them, step by step. The plan outlined here will require demonstration and steady, humble listening as we move forward. We hope that all who value Christian Science nursing and the pivotal role it can play in Christian Science healing will join us in prayer as we work to establish the BA on a sound footing for generations to come.

Developing Our Plan

Much work has gone on since we wrote to you in December. Last year, the Board of Trustees of Chestnut Hill Benevolent Association engaged a leading real-estate consulting firm to conduct a four-month review of the BA's assets and their potential uses. With their assistance, we gained a comprehensive understanding of our options regarding our property and buildings. These ranged from staying in our current configuration, to developing and/or selling a section of the property, to selling the entire property and rebuilding elsewhere. At the same time, we conducted an in-depth re-evaluation of our business model and programs. We have reduced expenses by \$1.7 million, allowing us to project a balanced budget for 2009, and we have developed a new financial plan for the next five years.

Taking into consideration all that we learned through these reviews, and after much prayer and thoughtful consideration, we have come to a strong consensus:

We are firmly committed to staying in our current location in Chestnut Hill, maintaining both of our buildings, and continuing to provide our full range of programs: Christian Science nursing (including light Christian Science nursing), Christian Science nurses training, Rest & Study, and Independent Living. In order to do this, it is urgent that we pay off the \$15 million loan against the property as soon as possible, while maintaining a balanced budget, strengthening and growing our programs, building cash reserves, and over time, establishing an endowment.

The rest of this letter offers further details on the information gathered in the course of our reviews and describes how we envision implementing this plan.

The BA's Property

The BA's 24-acre site on Rt. 9 in Chestnut Hill is our most valuable asset. It is a prime piece of real estate, one of the few undeveloped tracts of land left in the area. Buildings on the property include our Christian Science nursing building, our Original Building, the Carriage House (apartments for Christian Science nurses), and a power house. While we have investigated various options regarding the property, we feel strongly that the BA should continue operations on its current site. The reasons for continuing on this property are many. They include:

1. **The historical link of the property to Mary Baker Eddy’s expressed desire to establish a refuge where those depending on Christian Science could receive skilled care from Christian Science nurses.** In 1906, Mrs. Eddy wrote to Mary Beecher Longyear about the possibility of establishing a “Sanatorium” where “invalids [could] . . . go and recruit”—gather new strength and find healing. Her vision included a provision for instruction in practical care of the sick in accord with Christian Science. Mrs. Eddy later decided that founding such an institution was the purview of the Christian Science Board of Directors, and in 1909, she asked them to adopt the following by-law: “The Mother Church shall establish and maintain a Christian Science resort for the so-called sick.” The Directors did adopt the by-law, but later, when they were not able to see their way to move forward with plans, they repealed it with Mrs. Eddy’s consent (she instructed her secretary to write to them that she was willing to “let the matter rest for the present”). However, after her passing, the Board did fulfill what it called “its obligation” to establish this refuge for healing, and Mrs. Longyear donated the land in Chestnut Hill on which the Benevolent Association was built. The rightness of the BA’s location—as well as the need for its refuge and services—has been proven through the decades.
2. **Existing buildings that are ideally suited for the needed growth in Christian Science nursing worldwide.** Across our movement, there is a profound need for more Christian Science nurses to provide care with skill, spiritual-mindedness, and Christly compassion. These dedicated workers are needed throughout the world, in facilities and visiting Christian Science nursing services, private homes, and schools and camps. It is our deep desire to be an active part of meeting these needs with our Christian Science Nursing Arts training program begun in 2002. This growing program, which has already seen approximately 200 Christian Science nurses pass through its various courses, requires space. The classrooms in the good-sized training wing in our nursing building are sometimes filled to capacity; we are already taking advantage of the classroom expansion possibilities that the Original Building provides. In addition, Christian Science nurses from around the world come to the BA for training—some from other facilities for six-week classes, some for the duration of their three-year training. We need to be able to provide ample and affordable housing for those coming for classes. (There are few options for affordable housing close to the BA in Chestnut Hill.)
3. **An accessible, yet sheltered location.** Our facility sits at the top of a wooded, quiet hill, in a peaceful surrounding for prayer, tender care, and healing. However, it is a short drive from downtown Boston and The Mother Church and is not far from Logan International Airport. It is accessible by public transportation and is situated minutes from major highways. The location in Chestnut Hill is as ideal for serving metropolitan Boston and its large concentration of Christian Scientists as it is for traveling to the seven-state New England region covered by our visiting Christian Science nursing service.

4. **Proximity to The Mother Church.** Christian Scientists from around the globe come to Boston on a regular basis—to work at or visit The Mother Church. We have been grateful to be able to provide support to these individuals. Our current location, only four miles from the Church Center, has allowed us to be readily available to meet nursing needs there. In addition, because we are so close to The Mother Church, many visitors have found a haven in our Rest & Study program.

5. **Buildings with space for an Independent Living program for senior Christian Scientists.** Our Original Building is large enough to embrace a wonderful range of activities: our administrative operations, the Rest & Study program, housing for Christian Science nurses (both those here for classes and those on the BA staff), and our Independent Living program. They make the building an active place, where all of these functions work together harmoniously and enliven one another. The Independent Living program, which has grown and blossomed over the last few years, meets a clear need in the Field and has proved compatible with and supportive to our core mission of Christian Science nursing. We have been blessed by having a group of seasoned, working Christian Scientists in our midst, and they have been supported by living in this community of fellow church members. Because of the BA's location, residents have been able to serve at The Mother Church as local members and at area branches. They have also taken advantage of cultural and educational opportunities in the Boston area.

As you may be able to tell from these descriptions, our property and buildings are full of activity, with many visitors coming and going each day. Last year, we served nearly 1,400 people from around the world, ranging from those calling on our Christian Science nursing services to nurses in our training program to residents and Rest & Study guests. It is our desire, however, to broaden our ministry's embrace, in order to meet additional needs. We increasingly have the Christian Science nursing staff to do this, and we already have the space. The section below, titled "Details of Our New Financial Plan," describes our vision for increasing the activity in all of our programs and widening the circle of our service.

We are frequently asked whether selling a portion of our property might bring a solution to some of the BA's financial challenges. Our real-estate consultants have investigated that question thoroughly, and we have learned that under current economic conditions the sale of a portion of the property is not a viable or wise option. Because our property is one of the few large parcels of undeveloped land in the area, we have been advised that selling off portions of it would greatly diminish its value. It is highly unlikely that the proceeds of a partial sale would recoup the value of the whole that would be lost in any economic climate, let alone in this one. In addition, we have learned that there is very little real-estate development going on in our area at this time—with one exception: medical office buildings and facilities. We do not believe it would be right to develop a portion of the BA land for medical usage.

We are grateful to come out of this period of review of our real-estate assets far more knowledgeable than before. We have a comprehensive understanding of the value of the land, different types of development options, rezoning procedures, and outside resources available in the real-estate arena—all of which we could call on in the future if there were a need.

Details of Our New Financial Plan

Our in-depth re-evaluation of our business model and programs has made it clear that long-term financial sustainability will require considerable changes going forward. The new financial plan includes expansion of our ministry and key programs to better meet needs, substantial reduction of expenses, elimination of the \$15 million loan, and building of significant cash reserves and endowments. Since our communication with you in December, a number of steps have been taken toward meeting these goals.

Expansion of Programs: Over the last few years, we have been grateful to support so many individuals answering the call to serve their fellow man as Christian Science nurses. As they progress through the training program, we are naturally able to expand our ministry to more fully meet the needs of those calling on Christian Science nursing care. One particular focus right now is light Christian Science nursing. For some time, many of you have expressed a deep yearning for care for individuals who need minimal assistance as they work for healing, and we have quietly been cherishing ways to provide more of this care, as well. We are pleased to now expand that service, as well as our already-active skilled nursing program.

Over the next year, we plan to work closely with Christian Science practitioners, branch churches, care committees, and others to clarify the wide range of Christian Science nursing services offered at the BA. We also want to address concerns that may prevent individuals from calling for care. The BA is a refuge for *healing*, and we hope all who are in need can find assistance through our services.

Our plan also includes expansion of our Independent Living program. We intend to welcome additional senior Christian Scientists and continue to support them in active lives committed to prayer and demonstration. We are also expanding our short-term housing opportunities, which have been available to employees of The Mother Church and Longyear Museum. We expect other Christian Scientists actively engaged in church work will be interested in this housing opportunity. By expanding the availability of our Christian Science nursing services and Independent Living program, utilization of our buildings will increase significantly.

Substantially Reduced Expenses: Last year, we were able to make significant reductions in our expenses—\$1.7 million—which allowed us to project a balanced budget for 2009. These reductions included elimination of capital projects, reduction in utility costs, and lower food-service costs. We also felt the need to temporarily reduce wages and benefits. A limited number of employees were laid off, and some staff members have reduced their hours. With

this “bare bones” budget in place, we are projecting very modest increases in expenses over the next five years. These modest growth assumptions appear reasonable since total expenses for the last five years only increased an average of 3.4% per year. With very modest increases in expenses and minimal capital expenditures, we expect to have a balanced budget over the next five years, barring unforeseen events that could impact revenues or expenses.

\$15 Million Loan: Our analysis made it clear that in order for the BA to achieve long-term financial stability, the \$15 million loan must be eliminated as soon as possible. Currently \$1.1 million is devoted to debt service each year. Should the debt be eliminated, those funds would be available for operating or building reserves. This would have a significant positive impact on our finances. Therefore, we have set a goal to pay off this loan by 2013. We realize that paying off this debt within five years might seem aggressive; however, we believe it is essential to establishing the BA on a sound financial basis. We want to leave the BA to future generations free of debt.

Building Cash Reserves and Endowments: Once the debt is eliminated, we plan to begin building cash reserves to weather unexpected financial challenges such as were experienced in 2007 and 2008. Our final step will be to begin building an endowment to ensure a strong financial foundation for the future.

We will keep you posted as we move forward. Our 2009 budget requires that we raise \$154,000 a month through the end of the year in order to keep our finances on target. (As with most nonprofits, our budgeted revenues include charitable contributions made by individuals, churches, associations, and foundations.)

Join Us in Supporting Healing

The BA is here to minister to all who are relying on Christian Science for healing—but we need the support of those who cherish this Science and our Leader’s provisions for proper, compassionate care of the sick. There are many ways you can help:

1. **Join us in prayer** to see Love’s healing embrace of all calling on the BA’s services and of the BA itself—impelling, protecting, and sustaining all of our activities.
2. **Help us share information** about the services the BA provides and how they support healing.
3. **Send us testimonies of healing** that you’ve experienced while calling on the BA’s services. (We’re compiling a collection to share with the Field.)
4. **Continue to provide financial support** by participating in our new matching challenge. Thanks to the generosity of a friend of the BA, every contribution you make by August 31, 2009, for general operating needs will be matched dollar for dollar, up to \$100,000.

Looking Forward

Throughout this challenging period at the BA, all of us—Board and staff—have felt “God’s love for His flock” and have seen how it has been manifested in His care. We have witnessed it in lives regenerated. We have felt it in prayer at all hours of the day and night; in guidance that has led us to the right resources and the next steps to take; and in renewed strength and courage to go forward when things seemed very difficult. We have experienced it in the outpouring of support and encouragement that we have received from so many of you. Assured by these expressions of God’s unwavering care, we look at this institution that we all cherish and can see it emerging from this period, like the prisoner in Mrs. Eddy’s allegorical trial in *Science and Health*, “regenerated, strong, free” (p. 442).

With deep gratitude,

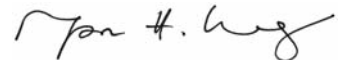
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P.S. NEW MATCHING CHALLENGE. Please consider participating in our new Matching Challenge. Every gift you make by August 31, 2009, to support general operating will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$100,000.

Matching Challenge Contribution Form

(Please turn the page for the front side of the contribution form.)

Credit Card Information

Visa MasterCard Amex Discover

I authorize:

- A one-time charge of \$ _____
 Monthly contributions of \$ _____
starting (mm/yy) _____ ending (mm/yy) _____

Credit Card # _____

Exp. Date _____ Card Verification Code _____

(back of card: last 3 digits on signature line)

Name on Credit Card _____

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To contribute online,
visit our secure website at
www.chbenevolent.org

CONTRIBUTION FORM



Yes, I want to participate in the Matching Challenge!

I want to make a gift of \$ _____

I want to be a Sustaining Circle member (\$1,000 or more)

____ Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$ _____

____ I would like to make a monthly gift of \$84.00 a month
for 12 months. *(complete reverse side)*

Please make your check payable to **Chestnut Hill Benevolent Association**.

To charge your gift, see reverse. Online gifts may be made on our secure website, www.chbenevolent.org

Thank you for your support!

Your gift to Chestnut Hill Benevolent Association is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.