

Lafayette
Avenue
Presbyterian
Church

THE OPENING DOORS CAMPAIGN

Ensuring the Future of Our Inclusive Community

OPENING DOORS CAMPAIGN: Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church

Brooklyn, NY, 2022 — Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church (LAPC) is a beacon of hope and justice that has been creating and providing a community hub for social justice and advocacy for our members, neighbors, the broader community, and the world.

We are a **dynamic multi-racial, multi-cultural church** nestled in the center of Brooklyn's historic Fort Greene neighborhood. Since our **founding on principles of equity and inclusion in 1857**, LAPC has been a welcoming place to all, and opening doors has always been central to who we are.

At LAPC, we see our intellectual selves and our spiritual selves as compatible with each other. Our church community attracts people from all faith traditions, people who have no particular faith tradition, people who are struggling with their faith, and people who are just seeking answers about their place in the



world. All of them are welcome at LAPC, because we believe that being a person of faith means engaging all of ourselves, including our powers of reason and discernment, in the service of God. It means questioning, wondering, and critiquing, as Jesus did. It means thinking through how the church's teachings, and our examination of them, should inform the way we live, and the way we serve.

LAPC's Contribution to Fort Greene and the Surrounding Communities

A recently commissioned study of LAPC's impact on the economy of Fort Greene and greater Brooklyn estimates that a wide variety of church-related on-site activities contribute nearly \$2.54 million annually to our surrounding community! Areas of outreach and programming include providing affordable space to nonprofits to carry out their activities, hosting events, performances, and forums, supporting community-oriented programs, and intervening in individual lives in a positive way, as well as direct spending on operations, salaries, and building maintenance.

Nonprofits that call our church home include **The Fort Greene Park Conservancy**, which spearheads preservation efforts in the park and hosts numerous events and volunteer efforts toward its maintenance. **The Irondale Theater Center** performs original works, has youth programs which engage local police in a dialog, and brings works and performers from across the country. **The Business Outreach Center** provides annual support to hundreds of minority and women owned businesses throughout the metropolitan area. **The Clinton Hill-Fort Greene Parent**

LAPC is "the revered 'Town Hall' of Fort Greene, where LAPC hosts numerous community forums, workshops, social justice action activities, and acts as a venue for performing arts events each year. LAPC truly serves as a community hub and landmark for civic efforts within Central Brooklyn, which is rapidly changing through gentrification."

— UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN,
HAKEEM JEFFRIES

Cooperative Playgroup provides daily activities for toddlers from **55 local families** and the **Audre Lorde Project** provides a safe space for dialog and activism for the LGBTQ+ community.

We Urgently Need Your Help to Keep Fort Greene's Landmark Vibrant

Our beloved landmark church building—the home and foundation for all our mission activities and community service—is in **urgent need of restoration work to maintain its structural integrity**. We are inviting members of the LAPC congregation, friends and residents of the surrounding

community and beyond, and all who rely upon our church as their "Town Hall" and performance space, to support our Opening Doors Campaign. It is of vital importance that LAPC's many stakeholders come together to preserve and strengthen this community asset for future generations.

This Is What Needs To Be Done Now

LAPC's **Opening Doors Capital Campaign** is the latest phase in a 25-year project to restore our building's exterior: the roof and gutters, brownstone façades, cornices, and stained glass. Over the next two years, the following renovations will be addressed:

- **Urgent repair to address the structural deterioration is needed.** Water is running down the north façade and penetrating through the front step area. It has undermined the front basement walls and brick piers which support the Narthex causing major settling of the study tower and splitting of the proscenium arch above the balcony with further cracking at the bases of the arch and is threatening the "Clouds of Witness" mural.
- The restoration will address the source of water by redirecting roof water to interior downspouts, waterproofing the exterior of the foundation walls, pointing the rubble walls and brick piers thus stabilizing and halting further movement.
- **Refurbish and restore the front entrance doors** to be fully operable, **ADA-compliant and add a ramp** to better serve all who use our building as a "Town Hall," a performance space, and a place of reflection and worship.



Structural damage to the proscenium arch

- **Repair the monumental 1893 Tiffany-stained glass triptych** located in the front of the church. These are the final windows in the sanctuary to be restored which suffer from camming and bowing of the glass and flaking lacquer.
- **Restore and clean the front brownstone façade and the 75-foot study tower**, and exterior ornamental woodwork, including cornices and window surrounds.

The total project cost is estimated to be \$1,975,000, which we must raise in these next two to three years. We will divide the work in two phases with an initial goal of **\$1.1M** in order to commence construction on stabilization efforts by July 2022.

*To describe this work, **LAPC produced this video** with our architect, Walter Sedovic, pointing out the structural issues in the front foundation walls which make this restoration and capital campaign so necessary.*

LAPC's Commitment to the Liberation of All People



A section of the 300-foot "Mighty Cloud of Witnesses" mural created by Hank Prussing in 1978

Founded as a beacon of the abolitionist movement amidst the chaos of the Civil War, LAPC has carried on its forward-leaning legacy. Its commitment to the liberation of all people has consistently been found at the point where spirituality and activism converge. LAPC **welcomed the first woman to preach** in a Presbyterian church in America and played a **vital role during the 1960s Civil Rights movement** by activating hope through street ministry and providing a home for the nascent institution that became today's **Medgar Evers College**.

Most recently, **LAPC joined a caravan of faith leaders to the San Ysidro Border** in January 2019, where we facilitated the release

of a family and an individual from detention. They are now living in sustainable housing and the home of a church family, with the church continuing to support their effort at obtaining asylum and starting safer, happier, and productive lives.

The pandemic has had devastating effects in our neighborhood, across our city and around the world. LAPC stepped up its commitment to be present and supportive to all. A Mutual Aid Network of volunteers reached out to members and friends "checking in" on their welfare with food, transportation, legal, and technical support.



Members of LAPC and the Fort Greene community contributed to a Black Lives Matter Protest chalkboard outside the church building



LAPC Social Justice Committee Coat Drive

Black Lives Matter: LAPC members organized a cross-generational protest, hanging up banners memorializing Black persons murdered by police violence and calling justice into action through an outdoor community chalkboard. We distributed free water and supplies to marchers in the summer of 2020 and offered meeting space to host and support community action work.

NYC COVID Bail Out project: LAPC joined a city-wide effort to release those awaiting trial which facilitated the release of 62 persons from Rikers.

Coat & Food Drives: Over the past two years, LAPC has collected and distributed over 300 coats and a substantial amount of food to persons recently released from Rikers and other NYC prisons.

Voter Action Coalition: The LAPC Voter Action Coalition is engaged in work to oppose the amplified threat to voter rights, voter access and non-partisan vote counting.

LAPC's Support of Music and the Arts

Our sanctuary, whose entrance will be restored during this project, has been a **home to the arts of music, theater, dance, and poetry** since hosting the Jubilee Singers in the 1870s and home to Cultural Crossroads in the 1970-90s, which featured the Eubie Blake awards supporting young jazz artists such as Herbie Hancock. Today, performances by the **Brooklyn Jazz Consortium, The Brooklyn Jazz Orchestra, and our Jazz Vespers services** featuring local and national talent continue that tradition of music and spoken word.

For 25 years LAPC was home to **Brooklyn Friends of Chamber Music** which hosted young classical musicians in up to 8 concerts annually. The church is also home to the **Brooklyn Contemporary Chorus** and **Lafayette Inspirational Ensemble** as well as the **Lafayette Choir**, which enhance our worship services and perform for the local community. LAPC has also supported original theatrical works and operatic performances by our members and friends from the community.

We are blessed with a legacy of works of art adorning our sanctuary and shared with the community.

- **16 magnificent stained-glass windows** created and installed by Louis Comfort Tiffany Studios in the 1890s and the original “Creation” window that was created in 1921. There are similar “Creation” windows created by Tiffany Studios, one of which is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art entitled, “Magnolias and Irises.”
- **A 300-foot “Mighty Cloud of Witnesses” mural**—now threatened by cracks—wraps around our sanctuary. Hank Prussing, a young artist from Pratt Institute created the painting in 1978. By bringing the community of “Witnesses” into the sanctuary, the mural reflects the diversity in our neighborhood and church community .
- **The church’s organ**, an impressive instrument, was built by the Austin Organ Company in 1910.



Carla Cook and Janis Russell lead a performance at Jazz Vespers, a musical service attended by the Fort Greene community

There Are Many Ways to Support LAPC's Opening Doors Campaign

You can make a **three-year financial pledge or a one-time donation.**

Whether large or small, your gifts are needed and appreciated to make this project a reality. All donations to the Opening Doors Campaign will be restricted solely for the purposes of that campaign.

Please contact us at openingdoors@lapcbrooklyn.org.

Increase Your Impact Today!

LAPC is honored to be one of 16 houses of worship selected nation-wide to receive the 2020 National Fund for Sacred Places matching grant that provides us with the opportunity to kick off our Opening Doors Campaign.

For every two dollars that we raise as cash and pledges, the National Fund for Sacred Places will donate an additional dollar, up to \$250,000.

To reach the full potential of this matching grant, LAPC must raise \$500,000 by summer of 2022, which will get us half of the way to our initial project goal of \$1.1 Million. Please help us get there and give today!

The Opening Doors Campaign wishes to thank the National Fund for Sacred Places, the NY Landmarks Conservancy's Sacred Sites Program and the staff of Partners for Sacred Places as well as members and friends who have already pledged or given to the campaign!



A program of Partners for Sacred Places
in collaboration with the
National Trust for Historic Preservation



AT THE INTERSECTION
OF HERITAGE, FAITH,
& COMMUNITY

Partners for Sacred Places