



MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH
5119 River Road • Bethesda, Maryland 20816



Reverend (Dr.) Sterling King, Jr. Pastor
Reverend (Dr.) Segun Adebayo, Assistant Pastor

March 20, 2018

Mike Riley
Director, Department of Parks
9500 Brunett Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20901

Dear Mr. Riley

For more than 15 months, members of our church and community have engaged in a struggle to obtain respect and secure honor for the legacy and life of first generation freed formerly enslaved Africans and their descendants that lived on and developed River Road. Many of them were also the pioneers of the Macedonia Baptist Church.

It has come to our attention that the parcel of land 177 has been donated to the Parks Department and plans are underway to plan a park on this parcel of land. Please note that the cemetery that holds many of our deceased ancestors occupies Parcels 175 and 177. It has come to our attention that you and members of the Park Department have been in meetings with organizations such as Little Fall Falls Watershed Alliance to discuss the disposition of the Moses Cemetery that have excluded the only surviving descendant institution, Macedonia Baptist Church. We are dismayed and alarmed that no effort has been made to include us in the planning process.

I write to request that Macedonia Baptist Church is included in all further meetings regarding the future of Parcel 177, which includes the Moses African Cemetery. Macedonia Baptist Church, started by freed Africans who provided free labor on the plantations on River Road and surrounding areas, will celebrate its 100th anniversary in two years. It will be unconscionable if we are denied a place, again, at the decision making table. We take solace in your core value of integrity to operate with a honest and balanced perspective.

It is our fervent hope that rumors making round in our community that your department has entered into an agreement or arrangement to assign Little Falls Watershed Alliance management responsibility over the burial grounds of our ancestors are untrue. Furthermore, the plan to memorialize the life of these heroes of our community with a plaque is an insult and affront to our ancestors and our community. Please be advised that this is unacceptable.

We are requesting to meet with you to share our vision of this parcel of land with you. We believe the only way to avoid future misunderstandings and to provide the dignity and respect that the descendant community deserves is to assure complete transparency by inviting Macedonia Baptist Church to meetings regarding the disposition of the Moses African Cemetery on Parcel 177.

Marcel Uter, Chairman, Deacon Board
Virginia Davis, Church Clerk
Minister Aaron C. King, Chairman, Trustee Board
Church: 301-656-0994 • Pastor: 301-649-6626

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Segun Adebayo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and a long, sweeping underline.

Reverend Dr. Segun Adebayo

Pastor