

Dear Reality Family,

Reality Church Boston was birthed in the fall of 2012 in Boston's South End. A year earlier, when the church planters toured Boston, we distinctly felt connected to the South End. The racial, economic, and educational mixture was a significant pull. Each of the Reality church planters on that trip bore witness to this sense of call. In July 2012, when it came time to search for a venue, we knocked on 70+ doors in the city. All said, "no" except for two—both of which in the South End. One of those venues, the Villa Victoria, instantly felt like home for our new church. We negotiated a lease and held our first gathering on September 16, 2012.

Over time we helped to renovate the building—bringing beauty and advancing joy into the neighborhood we felt called. It wasn't easy, but we felt a sense of kinship with the multi-cultural management and neighborhood. We have helped paint, renovate and install new sound systems into the building. The building was old with plenty of blemishes. But in a peculiar way, it's represented who we were as a church community.

Due to construction to the building in April 2017, we were forced to hold our gatherings outdoors. We worshipped amongst the neighbors. It was challenging but faith shaping. Our church seemed to really resonate, and so did the neighbors. Moving into summer we knew we needed to find space indoors while our building was being renovated. We found an incredible building in Cambridge. The Dante Alighieri became our temporary home. In many ways, Mario—Dante's house manager, became a member of the Reality family. He was incredible. We felt so taken care of as a church, and people began to attend from around the Cambridge area.

Summer gave way to winter, and we found ourselves with a difficult decision: Move back to the Villa in the South End, or stay in the Dante in Cambridge? Countless meetings and countless prayers were made in effort to follow God's leading. It was by no means a slam-dunk decision. Dante's excellent care, church members who live in Cambridge, and 24+ free parking spots only added to the difficulty.

But, after months of prayerful consideration, we again feel the tug back to the South End. We plan to move back to the Villa Victoria the first Sunday of March 2018. The Villa Victoria management has both heard us, and helped to meet almost all of our many requests for a more quality rental experience. There are still many blemishes to the building, but our staff and elders unanimously believes that the reasons for returning outweigh its many warts. Here are just a few of the reasons that staff and some of our leadership have voiced.

- **Missionally/Evangelistically:** The South End neighborhood feels more missionally aligned with RCB's values. It is a culturally and ethnically diverse/blended socio-economic population. It stirs us to stand for justice amongst those who are disadvantaged in the city, which is usually people of color. Also, outdoor gatherings may have been our most organically and exciting form of community outreach to date. We've negotiated the option to hold outdoor gatherings again in the accommodating seasons. Indoor Baptisms are more conducive at the Villa. Interestingly, our church office is also in the South End.

- **Ownership:** The Villa allows us to have more ownership over the space. In many ways the Villa has felt like our own. This ownership and responsibility will require greater contribution from RCB members—much like family. We have a unique opportunity to help beautify the building and help serve the neighborhood.
- **Kids Ministry:** While the preschool is not always ideally located or perfectly suited for our age groups, it allows more space to grow, play, dream, and flourish as a ministry. We plan to create more direct routes to the classrooms from inside the building. Teachers and children will also be less concerned about sound bleeding into main hall.
- **Stage/Sound/Tech:** The musical worship team has more stage space therefore can grow as a band. The sound situation is also more ideal. Our projectors also seem to work better at the Villa.
- **Space/Aesthetics:** The Villa's seating is more conducive to corporate worship. At the Dante, those sitting under the wings cannot see the screens. The Villa can legally host over 400 people whereas the Dante can only hold about half of that. We have freedom to create our own sacred space at Villa, while being somewhat limited at the Dante.

One of our leaders voiced the following: “In some ways moving back to the Villa almost feels like the scarier and more risky choice, however, I don't want comfort to get in the way of God's mission for us and I *think* that's in the South End.” In the end, God will guide His church whether in the South End or Cambridge. In fact, we are open to planting a church in Cambridge someday. But that time doesn't seem to be now, as we hope to cultivate even more intentional apprenticeship to Jesus as a community in order to advance Joy in Boston and beyond.

Surprisingly, our church didn't decrease when we moved across the water to Cambridge—spiritually or numerically. We actually grew, in passion and in people! Members of our church are truly on mission. A move didn't derail you. And for that, we are in awe—in awe of your faith and in awe of God's faithfulness. And we pray that when we move back to the Villa Victoria the first Sunday in March, we will again advance joy and again be in awe of God's presence in and through His people.

Together for the Gospel,

Al Abdulla