



**Frequently Asked Questions about  
the United Parish in Brookline joining  
the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO)  
from the Stretching into Justice Ministry Team**

You can learn more by watching part or all of our informational video [here](#).

**1. What is GBIO, and why should United Parish join?**

Joining GBIO is a perfect and timely opportunity for United Parish to strengthen its commitment to justice work. Since its founding in the late 1990s, GBIO has worked, in the words of its mission statement, “to make greater Boston a better place to live, work and raise a family.” It does this by developing local leadership through its 60 member organizations — churches, synagogues, mosques and other organizations representing 107,000 people — to build grass-roots power to impact state policies on matters of justice and equity. As a member, United Parish will gain the organizational tools and strategies for making change, in relationship with the diverse group of GBIO members in the region. Together, we are stronger, and it makes justice work a lot more fun, interesting and effective.

**2. How does GBIO determine what justice issues to work on?**

This is a grassroots process. Every 2-3 years, GBIO engages in “listening campaigns” to hear from their people what social justice barriers “keep them up at night”. A process of discernment across the organization develops specific targets to work on. Right now, a series of nine regional caucuses (June 12-26) held across Greater Boston will lead to a GBIO assembly on June 29, where three or four problem areas will be ratified. Once we have joined, any United Parish members can attend these caucuses to share their thoughts and concerns about how big problems show up for us, and if there is appetite for particular local action. The Brookline listening session is June 14. With the selection of the problem areas completed at the June 29 assembly, GBIO will assemble “issue teams” to research opportunities for change in those problem areas, which can also include issues of local concern. It all culminates in a final GBIO assembly on August 29 to ratify the top 3-4 issues and launch actions to get underway in the fall.

**3. Why join a collective effort instead of stepping out on our own?**

The more that we are connected to each other in our communities and across communities, the more we're able to get things done. We will learn of concerns across greater Boston by hearing from the other 60 GBIO member communities, and then collectively we can leverage the power of all the GBIO member organizations and the thousands of people they represent to enact change and work towards justice. United Parish has never had this type of opportunity to join in a larger effort for social change.

**4. What can we do with GBIO without joining?**

United Parish cannot participate as a church without being a member. Individuals can participate in GBIO actions, and some UP members have done so. But GBIO is an “organization of organizations” because they have discovered the strength of its impact on policy-makers that comes with numbers. Also, membership brings us into GBIO’s process for identifying issues for their action campaigns, affords us the chance to gain GBIO support of local issues we care about, and gives us access to their trainings in issue advocacy and community organizing.

## 5. What is the demonstrated impact of GBIO's actions?

Four examples from its 2020 activity, showing state and local level results:

1. Police reform: sustained lobbying with the legislature resulting in the adoption of the police reform bill last summer; GBIO's efforts included 1500 calls to the Speaker's office on Beacon Hill, to offset the impact of the police unions. The result was a bill with real teeth, especially through the new civilian-led Police Officers' Standards and Training Board. This was a GBIO state-wide action, following on past successes in Criminal Justice Reform, Affordable and Accessible Healthcare, and Affordable Housing.

Local actions have included:

2. Education in Boston: \$73 million committed to the Dearborn School in Roxbury (grades 6-12) with state-of-the-art facilities for STEM education.
3. Recreation facilities in Boston; \$600k committed to renovating Jeep Jones Park near Nubian Square in Roxbury, from a campaign organized by a group of Somali immigrant mothers, members of the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center, a GBIO member organization.
4. Services for the homeless: lobbying for the construction of winter shelter and public bathrooms for the homeless in Waltham and Cambridge.

## 6. How does GBIO spend its money?

About 68% of its \$450,000 budget is spent on its small staff of four organizers, two support staff, and GBIO's support for the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), the national network of multi-faith citizen organizations with which GBIO is affiliated. The remainder covers the necessary administrative costs related to its daily operations and its trainings.

## 7. What is our financial commitment involved in GBIO membership?

1% of our total budget, paid each year. In our case, that's about \$9,000. We recommend including that amount as a part of our overall Missions Giving for the first year of membership. You can learn more about how our Treasurer and Missions Giving Team have considered this on [this video](#).

## 8. What would being a formal member of GBIO require of United Parish members?

Each GBIO organization has two liaisons, who participate in trainings, meet and work together with liaisons from other GBIO organizations, and provide a conduit for information between the member organization and the wider GBIO. Our liaisons would commit to supporting UP's participation in the listening sessions, assemblies and legislative actions. Beyond that, we need to assemble a core team of 5-10 members to help support the work. The identification of the two liaisons would occur in the 6-8 weeks after membership is in place. The liaisons will receive training from GBIO professional organizers for their internal organizing activities and participation in external advocacy with legislators and other political leaders. **Any United Parish members who are interested to contact Stretching convener Sarah Spencer at [stretching@upbrookline.org](mailto:stretching@upbrookline.org) and/or our Pastors.**

## 9. How would GBIO membership impact our existing social justice activities?

While some might worry that GBIO membership would distract us from our existing social justice activities like the Thanksgiving dinner, support of the Brookline Food Pantry and Walk for Hunger, and engagement on affordable housing issues in Brookline, the member organizations already with GBIO report that membership generated new interest from more members in social justice work. United Parish's involvement in community affairs is likely to grow from membership, not stay the same or decrease.