

BOSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL



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Willie Bodrick II is senior pastor of the historic Twelfth Baptist Church as well as a law clerk at Brown Rudnick.

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'A man of vision and ideas'

Combining his passion for helping others through law and his ministry has been his aim for several years.

BY ANN MATICA
Special to the Journal

Editor's note: This is a regular feature profiling past winners of the Boston Business Journal's 40 Under 40

Willie Bodrick II has been a go-getter for as long as he can remember. Now he's using those skills to lift up the church he's dedicated the past 10 years to and give back to the community that helped shape him.

Originally from Atlanta, Bodrick grew up as the eldest of three boys. His father, the Rev. Willie Bodrick, is a pastor, while his mother, Anna, was an educator. From an early age, Bodrick said his parents instilled the importance of faith, family and community in him.

In 2010, Bodrick graduated from Georgetown University and shortly after enrolled in Harvard Divinity School to study ministry. While at Harvard, Bodrick took an introductory law class with esteemed professor Charles Ogletree, where he first met classmate (and now Boston mayor) Michelle Wu.

It was also during this period that the former senior pastor of the historic Twelfth Baptist Church in Roxbury, Rev. Arthur T. Gerald, Jr., witnessed Bodrick give a sermon during a class final and invited him to preach at one of the churches' youth services.

"To have that much love in a space makes you want to come back when you felt so detached from home and felt so alienated from all that you knew," Bodrick said. "I kept coming to the church after that."

Bodrick became a youth and young adult minister at the Twelfth Baptist Church after graduating from Harvard with a master of divinity degree in 2014. After serving in multiple positions over the years, Bodrick was elected senior pastor at age 32, earning him the title of the youngest pastor in 145 years at the church – and the second youngest in the last 181 years. Bodrick, who also received a juris doctor degree from Northeastern University in 2020, also works as a law clerk at Boston law firm Brown



GARY HIGGINS / BOSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

▲ *The Rev. Willie Bodrick II is senior pastor at the historic Twelfth Baptist Church and a law clerk at Brown Rudnick.*

WILLIE BODRICK II

Title: Senior Pastor, Twelfth Baptist Church

Age: 34

Education: Bachelor of Arts in English and Sociology, Georgetown University, 2010; Master of Divinity, Harvard Divinity School, 2014; Doctor of Law, Northeastern University, 2020

Residence: Roxbury

Rudnick.

Since stepping into the senior pastor position in January 2021, Bodrick has focused his efforts on helping his church, the Roxbury community, and the city of Boston battle through the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Before there was even a Covid, there were disproportionate impacts on communities of color," Bodrick said. "What Covid did was snatched a Band-Aid off and put a spotlight on how bad it is. We as a church knew that we needed to be very active in the sustainability of our community."

Bodrick partnered with Boston Medical Center, where his wife is an attending doctor, to create the Twelfth Baptist Church Vaccination Clinic, which has helped successfully vaccinate over 2,435 people in Boston to date.

Last year, the Twelfth Baptist Church food bank served over 15,000 people and has consistently provided food to over 200 families each week since the start of the pandemic.

In 2020, the Twelfth Baptist Church

received a \$1 million gift, the largest the church has ever received, from the King Boston Foundation. Bodrick said the funds will be used to help further build the church as an institution in Boston. Imari Paris Jeffries, the executive director of King Boston, first met Bodrick in 2011, when he was working for the nonprofit organization Boston Rising and Bodrick was studying at Harvard Divinity.

"He's always been a man of vision and ideas," Paris Jeffries said. "2030 is Boston's 400th anniversary as a city and when I think about who I want to see continue to lead by our 400th anniversary, eight years from now, Willie Bodrick is one of those folks."

Through his work, Bodrick said he hopes to further bring to light the rich Black history of Boston and the Twelfth Baptist Church.

"I want to help the Twelfth Baptist Church tell their story," Bodrick said. "I think that's one of the goals, for people to see the beauty of Boston beyond Beacon Hill. I want them to experience the richness of our community and I have a vision to make that happen."

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