



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

26 East Market Street, Iowa City, Iowa 52240

Phone 351-2660

October 13, 1971

Willard L. Boyd, President
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

Dear President Boyd:

We are pleased to have your correspondence of September 15, 1971, regarding the acquisition of our church property as this provides an excellent opportunity for us to give you complete and official information regarding the congregational thinking which has brought us to this point.

Since your letter is comprehensive, and generally follows the evolution of our own thinking, we will reply to your points in the order in which they were raised.

1. The improving and expanding of our church facilities has been a matter of serious study by our church through elected and appointed committees as well as the congregation-at-large since early in 1963. Certainly at the outset, and for a period of five and one half years following, no thought was given to the relocation of the church. Neither would it be our desire to relocate at this time if this were not the best alternative open to us.

During the development of reconstruction plans in the 1963-1968 period, it became painfully apparent that any new or rehabilitation schemes were going to contain serious compromises as to function. These compromises, which were mainly a result of site limitations, struck at the heart of all portions of our mission and rendered it impossible for us to develop plans at this site which the Congregation would approve and support.

At the Congregational Meeting of October 6, 1968, plans were rejected by a vote of 56 yes, 158 no. At the same meeting, it

was suggested that the Session explore the possibility of another site, which suggestion was supported by a strong show of hands.

The next official discussion occurred at a joint meeting of the Session and the Board of Trustees September 9, 1970, at which time the Trustees reported that the building was in need of major and extensive repair.

The matter was thoroughly discussed and the outcome was a resolution by the Session calling a Congregational Meeting for the purpose of presenting the Session's recommendation that the church be put up for sale. A special Congregational Meeting was held September 27, 1970, and a motion "that the church property be put up for sale" was approved by secret ballot 143 yes, 94 no.

While it is perhaps true that the University and church land uses have been "highly compatible" in years past, we would respectfully observe that, from our point of view, this compatibility has declined in the immediate past few years.

Our difficulties due to the small size of our property were articulated in the previous paragraphs and we were not able to improve the situation.

One of our first steps in the early stages of planning was to approach the University to explore the possibility of acquiring all or part of the property to our immediate west, and failing this, to explore a possible land exchange. These negotiations were not fruitful.

We certainly can appreciate the University's position, but we are left, if we remain where we are, with the prospect of improving a too-small site with all of the inherent problems and subsequently finding a multi-story face-on-line institutional structure built immediately to our west.

In these days of environmental concerns, the setting in which one places a costly church should be as fitting as possible, and our present setting has no prospect of improving, to the best of our knowledge.

And then there is the important matter of the student ministry. In 1963, our records show that we were ministering to 200-300 students each Sunday. At present, our student attendance is a small fraction of (perhaps 1/8) the 1963 level and we understand this to be a national trend. We sincerely believe we can serve this, or even a greatly expanded group at any given location where a viable program can be offered.

2. Another congregation, after purchasing our church would find exactly the same problems of function and condition to correct as those which have dictated our present course of action. In addition, the new congregation would have assumed the obligation of the purchase price. We do not believe that purchase by another congregation is a realistic expectation.
3. We also would be pleased to sell the church to an organization dedicated to the preservation of "historical landmarks" provided that a responsible offer were made. However, it is our judgment that the likelihood of any such responsible offer is indeed remote if not non-existent.
4. Our decision has been made. By authority of the Congregational Meeting, September 27, 1970, the property is listed for sale on the open market. Mr. Duncan and Mr. Fred Roberson are our agents. However, for a number of reasons, we are offering you first opportunity to purchase this property, if you want it; and we have done and are doing all we can to make this as simple as possible.
 - a. We understand you have secured two appraisals of your own and are in possession of the contents of the two appraisals which we have secured. We would invite you to tender us a proposal which you would deem to be fair to both parties and is within the framework of the appraisals. You may be assured that such an offer will receive our serious and open attention and consideration.
 - b. This sale will have to be approved by the Presbytery of Southeast Iowa. Based on our past experience and observation; and based upon the fact that all official actions relating to this matter have been carried out decently and in order, we anticipate no particular difficulty in obtaining Presbytery approval. The Board of Trustees is beginning immediate negotiation with the Strategy Committee of the Presbytery. Should anything contrary to this assurance appear, we will advise you forthwith. Other than this approval, there are no encumbrances to our title, and we know of no difficulty in giving a marketable title.
 - c. We have no thought that it would be your desire or your obligation to maintain the present sanctuary as a historical monument. We recognize that the maintenance or disposal of the sanctuary is our own obligation and we are prepared to meet it. At a special Congregational Meeting, March 14, 1971, the Congregation approved the

Session's recommendation that "the church property be listed for sale with the stipulation that the sanctuary could be razed prior to the sale." This motion was passed by a secret ballot, a vote of 123 yes, 87 no. Part of our final negotiation will be the determination of the condition of the site at the time that you assume possession. We have the Congregational authority to raze the sanctuary for any buyer as a condition of sale.

- d. The points covered in c. speak to our attitude regarding any restoration or preservation of the sanctuary. Beyond this, we are willing to maintain as much flexibility as possible in coming to a final agreement so long as we do not abrogate our responsibilities to our Congregation.

We will see that the contents of your letter are transmitted to our congregation so that every member may indeed be appraised of your attitude. There is no particular reason for a Congregation Meeting at this time as there are no new decisions for it to make. When our negotiations are finalized, these will then be subject to the approval of the Session, the Congregation, the Board of Trustees and the Corporation. For your further information, a copy of a summary entitled "Building Progress Report" (July 26, 1962 - March 14, 1971) First Presbyterian Church, Iowa City, Iowa, is enclosed.

The contents of this letter have been approved by the Session and the Board of Trustees at a joint meeting held October 12, 1971, as attested by the signatures of the appropriate officials of each body. The representation of our interests during the ensuing negotiations will continue to be vested in Mr. Duncan and Mr. Roberson.

Very truly yours,

Noel W. Willis
Chairman
Negotiation Committee

Approved

For the Session _____

Kenneth Donelson, Clerk

For Board of Trustees _____

Robert Sierk, President

Enclosure: 1