

July 23, 1999

To: Members, Site Selection and Building Program Committee  
(SS&BPC)

From: Paul Deisler, Chair (Pro Tempore), SS&BPC

Subject: Next meeting of the SS&BPC.

**The next meeting of the SS&BPC will be on Thursday, August 5, 1999, at 7:30 p.m., at the Church.** We have much to review and decisions to make: please be present if at all possible.

The enclosed account of the joint meeting of the Coordinating Council and the Relocation Oversight Committee with Rev. Mark Miller, Minister, South Central Conference, UCC is sent to you as partial preparation for the next meeting. The next meeting of the SS&BPC has been set to follow the next Coordinating Council meeting (scheduled for August 2, 1999) so as to take advantage of feedback from that meeting in our own meeting.

Because of the high cost of land in the "preferred", central regions of Austin, our realtor has been asked to broaden his search to include other possible areas within the Austin City limits. He has located several, additional, possible properties not yet posted for sale and is in the process of obtaining needed data on them before showing them to us. The properties are on (1) South Congress Avenue (between Ben white and Stassney), (2) near the intersection of Ed Bluestein and Webberville Road, and (3) near the Travis State School on Webberville Road. My wife and I have traveled to these areas to obtain some sense of what the areas are like.

My wife and I have also visited other areas (Braker Lane from Jolleyville Road to Dessau, Dessau to West Anderson Lane, Webberville Road into town, the Riverside area (starting at the Town Lake dam and going west), Oltorf between South Congress and South First, and South First north toward the city center. We have compiled a list of 16 properties, mostly posted for sale, which were of apparently sufficient size to be of interest. Our realtor will obtain the details on price, etc. In the areas surveyed there were also a number of additional properties not posted for sale but of possible interest. All the properties discussed above were on main thoroughfares and very visible.

A property at 720 W. 34th St. (corner of W. 34th St and West St.) has been investigated initially by the realtor. The location is aesthetically attractive, accessible, and on a much traveled street which acts as a main connector between Guadalupe and Lamar. The property is of 1.77 acres with a building (part one-story, part two-story: a former set of physicians' offices) of some 10,000 ft<sup>2</sup> and with an approximately 1,700 ft<sup>2</sup> separate building; the property has 56 parking places. The main building might be convertible into

a church, though a major change in our "master plan" and changes in the eventual future church size would be required, overall, to squeeze onto it. The price, land and buildings, is \$1,500,000. Although listed as "for sale", the property is currently under a contract which expires in mid-August. If, then, the property is not sold, it will be further investigated. It is an example of what might be found in Central Austin within a price range possibly accessible to us, though conversion costs, possible immediate utilization, etc... are yet to be determined.

Paul P.

July 23, 1999

To: John Moore, Moderator, The Congregational Church of Austin

From: Paul Deisler

Subject: Meeting with Rev. Mark Miller, Minister, South Central Conference, UCC

At the joint meeting of the Coordinating Council and the Relocation Oversight Committee on July 15, 1999 you asked anyone who had taken notes during the meeting to please send them to you. I took no notes but thought I would set down my principal recollections and send them to you anyway.

The origin, history and status of the relocation project, including the two, divergent directions being pursued (relocation to a new site with a rebuilt or new building, and relocation to a different site by partnering with another congregation already established there), were first described. The major difficulties and quandaries, internal, external, procedural and financial, that we have encountered were described as were the results of the congregational meeting of June 6, 1999 at which the Congregation mandated continued pursuit of both paths.

The following are the highlights of Rev. Miller's statements during the meeting (you might want to review these with Rev. Miller to be sure I have captured his statements correctly and have left nothing important out):

1. Whatever he may say at various times, we should remember that he is, firmly, our advocate.
2. He prefers a move with retention of our unique UCC identity to partnering; he sees the latter as leading, ultimately, to loss of the UCC identity.
3. Given our present and likely future situation, he thinks we need to relocate to be viable in the longer term. He noted that one of his most painful duties is closing down a church; he would not want to see the day when the headquarters of the South Central Conference is located in an Austin with no UCC church.
4. He has a vision for the UCC in Austin: a total, ultimately, of four UCC-related churches in different parts of Austin of which this Church should be one. Further to this: we should continue to seek sites, dividing the City up into regions where we might find adequate sites. The "centrality" of a site is not of the level of importance we have given it, in his view. (Note: It was reported that the Site Selection and Building Program Committee has already begun to seek sites outside of the two, more-or-less-concentric,

"preferred", central areas because of the high cost of land in the "preferred" areas and to have a comparison available for decision by the Congregation).

Rev. Miller noted that the United Christian Church (UCC/Disciples) has preempted one region (centered at their new site at Parmer Lane and MoPac) so that we need to look elsewhere.

5. He warned against finding ourselves in the middle of a move at the time that Yoshi Kaneda retires (in ca. 18 months). Bringing in a new pastor before Yoshi's retirement with, say, a two-month overlap can help (in any case) but delaying the most painful parts of the move until after a new pastor is established is the best course. The most painful parts of the move occur for a congregation when it has no permanent building for worship, etc.: when the previous one has been sold, the new one is not ready for occupancy, and a congregation is housed in some kind of temporary way. At that time, firm, established pastoral leadership is essential. Bearing the debt and other financial burdens are also painful.

6. He liked our Vision Statement very much. However, he warned that he perceives us as without a consensus on what we should do and, very specifically, that we have developed no clear goal for implementing our vision which will carry us through, and point the direction for, a relocation. Of first importance is the development of a goal the Congregation will subscribe to. He warned against the endless exploration of alternatives.

In this regard, he also noted that, to accomplish a goal, the Congregation needs to have "fire in the belly", as he put it.

(Note: discussions during the meeting amply illustrated our lack of a goal for implementing our vision and which would help us in our relocation. For example, after discussions with the Boards and Committees of the Church, plans for a church having significant Sunday School facilities were devised and reviewed with contacts from the Boards and Committees. At this meeting, it was suggested that a congregation might seek to perform other forms of service and that Sunday School instruction might not need to be a major emphasis at all. Our thinking is clearly not as yet aiming toward one goal):

7. He made no specific answers to questions raised about the uncertainties involved in applying for and getting a loan for land purchase and the need for timing to fit the loan-approval schedules and the time between finding and closing on a property. (Note: the difficulties we have had in contacting Cleveland about our uncertainties and questions were described for him).

8. He said that we should keep him well informed on our project, however it may progress. He expressed his appreciation for the meeting and his willingness to help us wherever possible. Too, any loan application would have to be seen by him.

After discussion, the Coordinating Council and the

Relocation Oversight Committee concluded that we must continue to pursue our tasks as mandated by the Congregation on June 6, 1999 as best we can.

The Coordinating Council will meet at 7:00 p.m. on August 2, 1999 to consider the status of the dual project in the light of the questions Rev. Miller's advice raised.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paul D.", with a horizontal line underneath the name.

