



**CENTRAL ATLANTIC CONFERENCE**  
FRANCIS X. PIRAZZINI, CONFERENCE MINISTER

June 3, 1970

Mr. J. Albert Fader, Sr., President  
The Church Council  
United Evangelical Church  
United Church of Christ  
East Avenue and Dillon Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21224

Dear Mr. Fader:

We have delayed responding to the Petition from United Evangelical Church regarding the scheduling of Conference meetings on Sunday and particularly on the first Sunday of the month until we knew what the recommendations would be of the Conference Committee on the 1971 Annual Meeting.

The Committee on the 1971 Annual Meeting now has reported to the Board of Directors of the Conference. The report recommends that the meeting in 1971 be held from suppertime Friday, June 11, to midafternoon, June 13, at Loyola College in Baltimore. The Board of Directors has accepted the recommendation and in turn will make this recommendation to the Delegates attending the Annual Meeting this coming weekend, June 5-7, in Dover, Delaware.

One of the reasons for selecting a place in Baltimore for the 1971 meeting is that this city is more nearly geographically central to the Conference than either Frederick, Maryland or Dover, Delaware, where previous Annual Meetings have been held.

Your petition is concerned with when Conference meetings are held, however, and not with where they are held. Let me, therefore, share with you a word on this score. Last year was the first of the five Conference Annual Meetings to be held on a weekend. Ever since 1965, when the Conference was formed, there has been pressure on the Conference Board of Directors to experiment with an annual meeting on a weekend. This pressure has come from various ministers in behalf of laymen and youth and from various laymen in behalf of themselves. The argument has been that if the Conference expects laymen other than retired men, elderly ladies, and independent professional business men, to attend the Annual Meeting of Conference, then it should hold that meeting on a weekend. Certainly, continued the argument, if the Conference expects youth and young adults to attend, it should not hold such a meeting during the week. Even mothers and homemakers wrote and complained that they had declined the nominations as a delegate to the annual meeting from their respective congregations because it was held during the week when they could not easily get away.

One reason for not experimenting with a weekend meeting until 1969 was that the Conference could not secure an adequate place for a meeting in June which it could afford. Finally, Wesley College in Dover, Delaware, was learned about and secured. The results were gratifying. On Saturday, June 14, 1969, the total attendance soared well above 400 persons. At the four previous annual meetings the total attendance never reached 400. (let me hasten to add that this increase in attendance may have been affected by location as well as by time - for Dover, Delaware, is more central to all of the churches of the Conference than is Frederick, Maryland. This is particularly true for our churches in New Jersey.) In addition, the average age of the delegates obviously dropped. A characteristic of the meeting was the large number of young married couples. Further, we had a significant number of youth in attendance. It is true that a number of ministers departed on Saturday evening and were not present on Sunday.

Given the above results, the Conference Committee on the 1971 meeting recommended a weekend again in 1971 and, as I have noted above, the Conference Board of Directors accepted the recommendation. No pastor on the Conference Board of Directors opposed the recommendation. We do know already from the registrations received for this coming 1970 Annual Meeting that a number of ministers are not staying through Sunday. In some cases this is due to a wedding or some other function which cannot easily be re-scheduled. In other cases the pastor feels he cannot be absent from his pulpit. This is a situation which merits continuing attention. At the moment, however, the Conference Board of Directors agrees with the committee it appointed to study the situation and make a recommendation for 1971, namely, that if the weekend results in the improvement of participation from laymen and youth then the meeting should be held again on the weekend in 1971.

Permit me a personal word. I live with the hope that increasingly our congregations will come to see the Association and the Conference as parts of the total structure of the Church along with local congregations. In a sense the Association and the Conference in formal assembly are "congregations" of the larger Church. The petition troubles me in that it is predicated on the belief in the supremacy of the local church. To believe that the local church is the basic building block of the Church is one thing. To believe in the supremacy of the local church and that no other structure of the Church should infringe upon its prerogatives is another.

My family and I are members of Christ Congregational Church in Silver Spring. I am pleased to see that all three of the ordained ministers of the church and staff are to be in attendance at the annual meeting and that the two morning services this coming Sunday will be conducted by Deacons of the congregation and the sermon will be delivered by our student minister.

Mr. J. Albert Fader

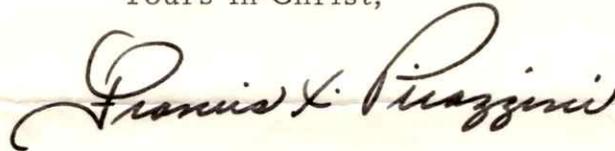
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In any case, the Board of Directors of the Conference is remaining concerned about the time and place of the annual meeting and intends to keep the matter under constant review. Your petition will be a major piece of datum in the decision making process with regard to the 1972 Annual Meeting.

Thank you for your thoughtful action.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Francis X. Pirazzini". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Francis X. Pirazzini

FXP:hpb

cc: Rev. Paul A. Rasche  
Mr. W. Fletcher Lutz