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March 9, 1953

TO: Board of Trustees and
Members of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples

FROM: Howard Thurman

A few weeks ago, I presented to the Board a memorandum to the effect that I had been invited to the position of Dean of the Chapel of Boston University.

This request came as a result of Boston University's desire to pioneer in the field of religion and education by establishing a program for its new gothic chapel that will cut across all lines of separateness and weld university and community together in organized religious worship.

The program which we have been able to develop at Fellowship Church in the last few years was a decisive factor in the university's decision to undertake a broader but similar program in the city of Boston.

In the light of my own religious commitment, I feel compelled to give this invitation favorable consideration. The university has a student body of some 26,000, with 16 colleges in the system, including a School of Theology with 411 students from more than 200 American colleges and 15 foreign countries.

We have been distressed, all of us in Fellowship Church, that the young theologians coming out of the seminaries today have no special training in developing churches that can break through the intercultural-interracial barriers in religion. The opportunity to "pastor" the university, to take leadership in developing a church there and, at the same time, to offer courses in the School of Theology, is the most crucial challenge inherent in this invitation.

I am convinced, also, that the close relationship between our program here and the one to be developed there should make all of us feel a direct and personal connection with this larger projection of the Fellowship Dream. Whether or not the foundation of the creative adventure which we are, has been securely laid, will be determined by the way in which we rise to meet this new challenge which is presented to us.

In the light of these convictions, I am requesting that the church grant me a leave of absence, beginning August 1, 1953, that I may spend the necessary time helping Boston University develop a strategic blueprint for this most extraordinary venture that has taken place in American university life.

It would be my plan to return to San Francisco during the summer months, sharing in the work of the church in any ways that seemed useful and also to maintain as much contact with the development here as would be conducive to growth and responsibility. I would like it clearly understood that San Francisco is home, and the church, into which nine crucial years have been put, must continue to be a part of whatever I may undertake in the future.

In a few days, the Chairman of the Board will call a meeting of the congregation for the purpose of making plans that will guide us in the adjustment necessary to deal affectively with this new challenge. You will give this your best thought and personal prayers that the thing that is done may be as God wills it.

HT:r