

April 26, 1960

Dean Stephen J. England
The Graduate Seminary
Phillips University
Enid, Oklahoma

Dear Dean England,

Thank you for the helpful telephone conversation we had last Saturday. It cleared my mind on several important issues. I think I am now in a much better position to make an adequate judgment on the matters about which we have corresponded.

Let me first recapitulate my understanding of the offer as it has thus far been set forth, and then clarify my response to it.

I understand that I would be serving as Associate Professor of Theology and Pastoral Care, with primary teaching responsibilities in the fields of pastoral counseling and Christian ethics. The normal teaching load is ten hours and the maximum is twelve hours per semester. I would anticipate carrying a load of student counseling in due time which, as it developed or varied would be figured into my teaching load. I understand that this offer, as it is now being presented, is being extended for one year as a temporary position, pending a policy decision to be made by the Graduate Seminary Council. I understand that members of the faculty have clearly expressed their desire to transform this visiting relationship to a regular relationship upon approval by the Seminary Council. I understand that this determination of policy is to be made without unnecessary delay. I further understand that the Seminary hopes and intends in the next several years to reach out more and more toward performing an ecumenical vocation in theological education for Protestant churches in Oklahoma, consonant with the historical interest of Disciples in ecumenicity, while maintaining a responsible relationship of service to the supporting Christian Churches. I would understand that an incidental part of my servicability to the institution would be to act as a mentor of Methodist students at the seminary toward preparing them for Methodist ordination and conference relationship.

I heartily approve of everything in this proposal except the temporary status. The reasons I can hardly bring myself to accept the visiting status are, as I have indicated to you earlier, that it would involve no visible improvement over my present situation, and that I do not want to get the reputation of jumping from one visiting post to another.

In your letter of April 19 you said, "If your situation were to remain open beyond that day [May 13], I would like to have the privilege of presenting your name and asking for a determination of policy which might open the way for you to come here as a teacher...This would be my preference if the way is open from your viewpoint."

April 20, 1960

Dear Professor J. Hastings
The Graduate Seminary
Theological University
Oxford, Mississippi

Dear Dean Hastings,

Thank you for the helpful telephone conversation we had last Saturday. It cleared my mind on several important issues. I think I am now in a much better position to make an adequate judgment on the matters about which we have corresponded.

Let me first reemphasize my endorsement of the offer as it has thus far been set forth, and then clarify my response to it.

I understand that I would be acting as Associate Professor of Theology and Pastoral Care, with primary teaching responsibilities in the fields of pastoral counseling and Christian ethics. The normal teaching load is ten hours and the lecture is one hour per semester. I would anticipate carrying a load of student counseling in the time which is developed or vacated would be figured into my teaching load. I understand that this offer as it is now being presented, is being extended for one year as a temporary position, pending a policy decision to be made by the Graduate Seminary Council. I understand that members of the faculty have clearly expressed their desire to maintain this existing relationship to a regular relationship upon approval by the Seminary Council. I understand that this determination of policy is to be made without unnecessary delay. I further understand that the Seminary does not intend in the next several years to recruit more and more toward working an academic position in theological education for Protestant churches in Oklahoma, consistent with the distinct interest of the Seminary in emergency, while maintaining a responsible relationship of service to the Protestant Christian Churches. I would understand that an incidental part of my responsibility as the faculty would be to act as a mentor of Methodist students at the Seminary, beyond providing them for Methodist ordination and conference relationships.

I heartily approve of everything in this proposal except the temporary status. The reason I can heartily approve is that the status is a trial one, and as I have indicated to you earlier, that it would involve no financial involvement over my present situation, and that I do not want to see the continuation of twenty years from one situation to another.

In your letter of April 15 you said, "If your situation were to remain open beyond that day [May 15], I would like to have the privilege of reopening your case and seeing for a re-examination of policy which might open the way for you to come here as a teacher.... This would be my preference if the way is open from your viewpoint."

WILLIAM HASTINGS

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I have decided to follow the alternative you suggested in that letter and allow you to bring the matter up for a policy determination in May, before I make any final judgment about your proposal.

I was pleased that you affirmed in our phone conversation that you would not hesitate to request a policy determination in May, even though according to the best prudential calculation it might not be the best time to have it considered. I am quite aware that there may be good reasons. The reason this delay would be uncomfortable for us however is that we would not know about our status for such a painfully long time, perhaps October or February. We would not know how to make plans, buy a home, etc., until the matter were settled. It is easy for an onlooker to just say "be patient," but as you know this would be a matter of great concern and anxiety on our part. So, after thinking the matter over carefully, I have arrived at the feeling that if the matter is considered of real importance to the seminary, then I think it should not be delayed. And it would be more encouraging to me to see the matter dealt with honestly, fearlessly, frankly and without delay, than for it to be handled with kid gloves. It certainly is a clear issue which the seminary has to face: whether the seminary will have an ecumenical faculty or not.

Upon consultation with several of my colleagues here at Perkins, I have decided that it would be best for me to await the report of that May 13 meeting before proceeding further, even though for me this involves the risk of losing other opportunities. I need not tell you that it is because I am deeply interested in Phillips and the job to be done there that I am taking this risk and awaiting the development of your situation until May 13. It is because I can visualize such a meaningful teaching and counseling ministry at Phillips that I am so concerned to want to try to work this thing out, even with the risks involved.

If the Seminary Council should decide to delay the determination of this matter of policy on May 13, even though you and the administration urgently sought their counsel on the matter, then what would I do? I would have to decide at that time what to do. That would confront me with a difficult decision. I suppose I would either go ahead and accept your offer for visiting status, or, on the other hand, terminate our conversations at that time and accept another position. Due to my uncertainty about how long these other options may remain before me, I cannot pre-judge that issue.

When I first engaged in conversations with you, I was not at all aware that my coming on a regular basis would hinge on a major policy decision by the Seminary officials. It was not until some weeks after our conversations had begun, even after I had visited, that it became clear to me that my coming would be a new departure for your seminary. Of course we at Perkins have a Disciple on our Methodist seminary faculty (Herndon Wagers, who is one of our outstanding teachers), and I had just assumed that your situation was similar.

I would never have wanted to become the subject of a debate or controversy on this policy matter, and certainly hope that I would never be the

cause of deviousness either in your faculty community or supporting constituents, but it is conceivable that regardless of the outcome of our conversations, it may in the long run be a healthy thing for your seminary to be confronted with a decision such as that for which I have unknowingly been the occasion. After you have asked for a determination of this matter in May, then I think we can resume our conversations from a vantage point that will be clearer for us both.

On the matter of income, about which we talked in our conversation last week, I want to agree with you that the psychological factor in standardized base salaries for faculty members is an important consideration. I am glad that your school has regulated ranks and salaries on an equitable scale. I would not want to be the source of dissension for any reason, and especially on this issue. So, if your suggestion (that the \$500/year additional income, which would ordinarily be provided in three years under ordinary circumstances, could be advanced, and then bypassed three years hence) were not unanimously acceptable to all who would know about it, I would not consider accepting the additional income. If there were any hint of hesitation or restraint, I would not want this to become a divisive point (since the matter of permanent status is a much more crucial one to me). But, if it were the unanimous judgment of all involved that this arrangement would be appropriate beyond question, and would not overthrow the present structure of rank and salary programming, then it would make the decision to come to Phillips Graduate Seminary much less difficult for us, for reasons which I have spelled out clearly to you already. Does this mean that I probably would not come if this advanced increment arrangement would not work out smoothly? I would not say that the \$6000 salary is impossible for us to consider, but it would make the decision to come to Phillips more difficult, needless to say. The fact that I would like to come to Phillips and am excited about the opportunity there and would like to work through these problems is doubtless evident from the fact that in coming there I would be rejecting an opportunity with considerably more income and increment at a splendid University, which merely points up and dramatizes my project^{ed} enthusiasm for the work to be done at Phillips.

In closing this lengthy letter, I would like to acknowledge my healthy respect for the denominational tradition your seminary serves, to voice my appreciation for many Disciples friends I have known in the past, and my confidence that I would be perfectly at home in the context of your seminary. Needless to say, if I come I would prefer to be thought of not as an outsider but from the beginning as one who intends to set himself single-mindedly to the task of serving the church in a teaching and counseling ministry. Of course I would not want to conceal or diminish my Methodist ordination in affirming my new relation to a respected and loved sister Protestant denomination, -- and I am sure you would have it that way. I would hope that a real contribution could be made to the cause of ecumenicity by my presence at Phillips, and that Phillips would contribute to my developing ecumenical consciousness. If I should come to Phillips I would want to learn more about the historical self-understanding and tradition of the Disciples, and to incorporate this into my own churchmanship.

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Having said all this, I will add one thing more. If the judgment of the Seminary Council is favorable to the encouraging of an ecumenical faculty, you may be assured that I will then accept an offer of a regular full-time teaching position if it is extended. This is said in order that you would not have the anxiety of going through all this prolegomena without the positive assurance that I would come. I will come, be assured of that, if the single reservation I have, about which I have spoken, is amended.

With all good wishes I remain,

Yours respectfully,

Thomas C. Oden

TCO:jbs

