MEMORANDUM

TO Philadelphia Historical Commission

FROM Christ’s United Presbyterian Church (the “Owner”)

DATE September 1, 2022

RE Nomination of 1010 S. 10th Street, Philadelphia, PA (the “Church”)

As you are aware, the Bella Vista Neighbors Association (“BVNA”) nominated the Church for listing on Philadelphia’s Register of Historic Places on January 9, 2021. On July 21, 2021, the Committee on Historic Designation, a committee of Philadelphia’s Historical Commission (the “Commission”), voted to recommend inclusion of the Church on the Register of Historic Places. The Commission is scheduled to vote on the nomination (the “Nomination”) on September 9, 2022.

The Owner’s Board (the “Board”) shares BVNA’s desire to preserve portions of the Church that contain the building’s character-defining historic features. While the Board seeks to maintain the character-defining features, it believes that the Nomination as currently written is too broad and includes portions of the Church that are not character-defining.

With this in mind, the Board, with BVNA’s support, respectfully requests that the Commission agree to accept the parties’ agreement to limit the scope of the Nomination to the primary, historic character-defining portions of the Church. This memorandum outlines the proposed amendment to the Nomination, as well as recent Commission precedent for such an amendment.

I. Character-Defining Features of the Church

As shown in the Nomination prepared by BVNA, the character-defining features of the Church are along S. 10th Street and Kimball Street (specifically, from the vestibule door on Kimball Street to the corner of S. 10th Street). This section of the building displays two dominant stained-glass windows on the front and side façades, along with two ornate gables. This portion of the building also contains the main entrance that features a marble surround with pediment. These elements encompass the significant, character-defining portions of the Church.

The Owner did not receive notice of the Committee on Historic Designation meeting and did not attend the meeting. The Owner reserves its right to request an additional meeting with the Committee on Historic Designation if the Commission were to decide not to accept the amendment to the Nomination proposed in this memorandum.
building. Further, many of the photos provided in the Nomination focus on this portion of the Church as seen from the corner of Kimball Street and S. 10th Street. See images below.

Figure 1. View looking southwest, from corner of S. 10th Street and Kimball Street (source: Nomination)

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2 Note that, as documented in the Nomination, the Church no longer contains its original bell tower.
Figure 2. Undated illustration of Church (source: Nomination)

Figure 3. View looking west from S. 10th Street (source: Nomination)
Notably, the character-defining portions of the Church described above, alone, contain the sanctuary, which continues to be a place of worship and includes many original architectural elements (although the interior of the Church is not the subject of the Nomination).

Given that the character-defining portions of the building are encompassed by the portion of the Church fronting on S. 10th Street and Kimball Street, the parties have agreed to modify the scope of the Nomination to include only that section of the building, as outlined in blue in the below images. Figure 4 is an aerial image of the Church, and Figure 5 is a sketch floor plan of the Church.

Figure 4. Aerial view of Church with proposed Nomination boundaries (background source: atlas.phila.gov)
II. Recent Historical Commission Precedent

In April 2022, the Historical Commission considered the nomination of a building located at 225-31 N. 15th Street, known as the Klahr Auditorium-Hahnemann Medical College 1938 Building. The Keeping Society of Philadelphia nominated the entire building for inclusion on Philadelphia’s Register of Historic Places. After conversations between the Property Owner and The Keeping Society, the parties agreed on a compromise to limit the designation to the front portions of the building that contain its historic, character-defining features. The parties presented this compromise to the Commission and articulated that the “proposal [would] allow for the historically significant section of the building to be preserved.” Members of the Commission accepted this proposal and designated only the front volume of the building encased by the front and side façades. The Commission came to this conclusion after finding that the front portion of the building contained the character-defining elements and that the “Commission has designated parts and portions of properties and buildings in the past.”
Given this precedent, we request that the Commission accept the above-described compromise to amend the scope of the Nomination, similar to the nomination for 225-31 N. 15th Street, as the amended scope of the Nomination allows for the preservation of the historically significant section of the Church.