
Levi Pennington

People

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Levi Pennington To the Board and Faculty of Pacific College, March 14, 1940

Levi T. Pennington
George Fox University

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Pacific College
Newberg, Oregon
March 22, 1940

Dear Folks:-

I'm just home from a joint meeting of the Pacific College Board and faculty, a meeting that was important at least to the Oregon Penningtons. I've been suggesting to some of you that there might be some news to tell you in the near future. Well, this is it.

This business meeting was called in connection with a dinner in honor of Mary C. Sutton, the first teacher I ever recommended for the faculty after I became president. She has been here over 25 years, and we just had a lovely time, eating a fine dinner and then telling her how nice she was and how much we appreciate her long and efficient service for the college. We had one toast (mine) from the standpoint of the administration, one from the board, one from the faculty, one from the church, one from the student body, and one from the alumni, with good music interspersed.

Then came a meeting of the college board, with the faculty invited to "sit in" with them.

And then I presented to them the matter that I have had in mind for some time. I presented it in the form of a letter, copy of which I am enclosing. And that you may understand the business that they faced right then, perhaps you'd better read the letter. Here it is:

March 14, 1940

To the Board and Faculty of Pacific College.

Dear Friends:-

Some of you know that for years I have been looking forward to the time when I could relinquish the more active leadership of the college to which I have given the best years of my life. I have hoped that when the time came for this change, it could be made under conditions which would be entirely satisfactory and advantageous to the college, and would offer some measure of economic security to my wife and myself, whether we can still give years of service to the institution or whether conditions should become such that there could be little more service which we could give to the college before our service on earth shall end.

It seems to me that the time is rapidly approaching when we should all look forward to this change, planning it for the near future. I have had this matter in mind in arrangements already made for next year. I have recommended some additions to the teaching force in contemplation of suggesting my own absence from the campus for at least a part of the year, and with the thought that in any case I should be free from actual teaching duties. And there are a number of other things that have been done in preparation for the suggestions which I am now making,

2.

First, that I be excused from all teaching for the college year 1940-41, and be free to serve the college in whatever way seems best to me with your counsel, whether on the campus, on the Pacific Coast, in the east, or in a combination of all three.

Second, that you begin the search for a president to take my place, with the hope of securing him by June of 1941.

This, as it seems to me, would be an exceptionally appropriate time for this change in the presidency of the college. June, 1941, will mark the end of the 50th year of the college, and of the 30th year of my service as president.

I am sure that I need only mention to you the fact that after 30 years of service which my wife and I have rendered to the college, we have no economic security except such as the college itself may provide. I shall hope that freedom from active campus duties may enable me to aid in building up the college's finances, so that from the financial standpoint I may be more valuable to the institution than ever before. Any efforts I should make to raise money would be far more likely to succeed if I could say that these efforts are not at all in my own interests, as I was already provided for. But apart from this consideration I hope that it may be possible and may seem to you both just and wise that you should make adequate provision for us or for the survivor of us, whatever the future may have in store for us.

I cannot tell you with what feelings I look forward to the change I have suggested. It seemed to me, as I first faced it as a possibility for the near future, that it would be like giving up those I love and surrendering life itself. But I shall hope that the change may be brought about happily for all concerned, and that all proper adjustments may be made in the spirit of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. I shall hope to aid my successor in any way I can, and to keep out of his way when he has no need for my help. I shall hope and pray for his success in accomplishing many things that I have never been able even to begin, and in bringing to successful completion some of the things which I have begun in cooperation with you with whom I have shared this enterprise.

Sincerely your friend,

Levi T. Pennington
President Pacific College

LTP:DV

Well, after this I talked a bit, reviewing the past 29 years, remarking as I did so that only one member of the faculty was present who had been on the force when I came, and only one man was still on the board who was a member of that body when I came, and he has been ill for months and was not at the board meeting. I spoke of the way I came to the college, of what I found, of what has been done

since, and of what I hoped might be my service for the college in the years ahead if I am spared for further service.

Well, sometimes it has seemed that the Board has not been too vocal in expressions of appreciation. But last night both Board and faculty really let themselves out. They said a lot of nice things that weren't at all hard to listen to, except as one might hope he deserved them and fear that he didn't.

Then came action, in the form of a resolution, passed unanimously. Here it is:

Resolution.

Whereas Levi T. Pennington will be completing his thirtieth year as president of Pacific College with the close of the college year 1940-41, which will also mark the close of the fiftieth year of the college; and

Whereas Rebecca Pennington, his wife, has helped him faithfully in his service for the college, and has given very valuable service also through the Woman's Auxiliary, which she has served as president for more than a quarter of a century; and

Whereas Levi T. Pennington has asked that we look toward his release from the active duties of the presidency and the selection of his successor; therefore be it

Resolved, That we release Levi T. Pennington from active teaching for the year 1940-41, leaving him free to serve the college, either on or off the campus, in whatever way seems best to him in consultation with the board and faculty; and be it further

Resolved, That with commencement of 1941 he become president emeritus, freed from the active duties of the presidency, and at liberty to serve Pacific College, the Society of Friends and the Kingdom of God as he sees fit and is able, with a guaranteed salary of not less than \$2,000.00 per year, from the proceeds of the Pennington Foundation or other funds of the college, for the rest of his life, and if Rebecca Pennington, his wife, should survive him, for the rest of her life.

Well, that's about all, except a few words of appreciation from me and the greetings after the adjournment, from Board and faculty. I'll not go into that.

You'll want to know what it all means, and if I knew, I think I'd tell you. Part of it is plain enough. I'm not to teach next year, and after next year I'm to be president emeritus, my duties as active head of the institution to end in June of 1941, the 30th anniversary of my arrival on the campus as president.

From the standpoint of the Pennington family it means some economic security we've never known before. Two thousand dollars a year wouldn't be fabulous wealth to the Rockefellers, not to Penningtons. But it does mean that Rebecca will be cared for if I should drop off before she does, and it means that if I should become unable to work at all, I'd not have to think of a lost job, nothing coming in, and the folks getting more and more in debt because of me.

Just what it means in the way of my future activities remains to be seen. For most of 1940-41 I'll be in the Pacific Northwest, I suppose, working, more leisurely than has been my habit in the past, on such projects as the securing of pledges and cash for college maintenance, from alumni, Oregon Yearly Meeting Friends, and others, getting into the local meetings of the Yearly Meeting, to promote their interest in the college, getting before High Schools, etc. Whether we shall get to the Five Years Meeting or not next fall remains to be seen.

After next year, or perhaps even before the year ends, there is hope that I may work in the east among Friends who have helped the college in the past, though some of them are not nearly so able as they used to be. (I've secured over \$50,000.00 of endowment from one woman, \$37,500.00 from one family, \$32,000.00 from another, \$25,000.00 from a Portland man, \$25,000.00 from a man in Los Angeles (formerly in Seattle), \$10,000.00 from a New York woman, and sums from \$1,000.00 to \$5,000.00 from a string of folks from Oregon to England. It's not the intention for me to do the sort of rush solicitation I have done in the past, but to do some more leisurely cultivation of those who might help us financially.

Of course this is all purely tentative. A "flu" bug or a heart attack or an auto accident or any one of a thousand things might put any plan now in mind completely into discard. But nobody can know what it means to have the institution which I have served since 1911 provide out of what I have helped to secure a measure of economic security for Rebecca and me -- especially Rebecca.

For I'm sure I don't need to tell you that whatever I have been able to do for Pacific College would have been impossible without her. It was she who made it possible for me to attend college, by caring for the girls and keeping up the work in my pastorate at Knightstown while I was off at Earlham. (She did everything for the people there but marry 'em and bury 'em.) And ever since we came here she has headed the Women's Auxiliary, and I don't know how we'd have lived without that organization. In my talk last night I mentioned some of their activities, building walks and drives, remodeling buildings, providing furniture, dishes, bedding, fruit for the dormitories, lawn and shrubs and trees and flowers for the campus, giving thousands of dollars to college endowment, helping in the

5.

rebuilding of our present women's dormitory and raising already some thousands of dollars for the proposed \$30,000.00 unit of the women's housing plan for the future.

March 23, 8:00 A.M.

Well, it's time to go to work. I'll do a lot of writing today (I've got to get some statement of this action off to the papers.) Then I'll preach at the union Easter service early tomorrow morning, attend the morning service at the church, eat dinner here at home, listen to the Easter cantata in the afternoon, and then we'll all three be off to the coast Monday for the week of vacation -- and we need^x

Always lovingly,

LTP:DV