

## **DEDICATION OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH APARTMENTS**

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From the Gospel according to St. Matthew, we hear these words: “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me. And they will say, Lord when did we do these things for you? And He will say to them: Whatever you did for one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did for me.” And today, as we dedicate First Presbyterian Church Apartments, we could add “For I was in need of shelter and you gave me a home – whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me.”

These words from Matthew embrace the mission and ministry of First Presbyterian Church in its commitment and service to downtown Lexington – spiritually and physically feeding, welcoming, clothing and caring for our brothers and sisters. Our steeple, illuminated at night, symbolizes the beacon of hope that this congregation has strived to become through its programs over the years – our former Day Care Center that served lower income families for years; Just Lunch; food for the homeless; involvement in the Hope Center; participation in Habitat for Humanity; partnership in Central Music Academy for inner city children and now a new mission – First Presbyterian Church Apartments – providing housing for those on fixed and limited incomes.

Lewis Mumford, noted author and urban sociologist, once said, “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof: this statement is no longer a dictum of religion but a directive for economic action toward human brotherhood.” First Church has responded to this “directive for economic action toward human brotherhood” as we dedicate these apartments today. As a member of this church, as a resident of downtown Lexington, as an architect and member of the preservation community and as a teacher of architecture and preservation at UK, it is a privilege for me to be part of this celebration as our church embarks on this new avenue of service and mission – the opening of First Presbyterian Church Apartments. “For I was in need of shelter and you gave me a home – whatever you did for one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did for me.”

But these apartments are also symbolic of another commitment by our church to Lexington – and that is to be a good steward of our built environment through preservation and conservation of the rich architectural heritage of our city. First Church and its 1872 Sanctuary have been an integral part of the skyline and streetscape of our city for generations. Rather than to abandon our facilities in downtown Lexington, and rather than to tear down and build anew, we have chosen to be stewards of what we already have. Renovation, restoration and new construction projects, such as our historic sanctuary, the Henry Clay Law office, our Market Street classroom buildings, this chapel in which we are assembled today, and now the First Church Apartments all herald our commitment to downtown Lexington as we seek to be faithful in our mission to this our community. Thus, the renovation of these apartment buildings on Market Street can be seen as one more example of our stewardship of our architectural heritage as well as stewardship of our environmental resources.

I often say that historic preservation is as much about the future as it is about the past.

Preservation has always been about moving forward, building on our past. Preservation is about sustainability, is about green architecture, is about energy conservation and is about good stewardship of this planet and our resources – not wasting, not consuming.

One of the apartment buildings, known as The Colonial, stands, as it has over the past century, still serving its original purpose as one of our city’s earliest apartment dwellings with its beautiful façade replete with ornamental brick and stone work and projecting bay windows. The other apartment building, known as 185 Market Street, despite alterations to its façade some 50 years ago, was actually constructed over a century ago as the servant quarters and carriage house for the house on the north end of the street to which it is attached. Both buildings are similar to the size and scale of other historic buildings on the block built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century – three stories in height with brick façades, all of which sit directly on the street. Together with other buildings on Market Street, they form, in the words of architect Louis Kahn, “a room in the city by common agreement,” making Market Street a unique place in the urban fabric and urban history of our city.

A recent article in Architecture Magazine, entitled “The Future of the Past,” states that preservation isn’t just about grey haired old ladies (and, I might add, balding old men) making house museum shrines. It is about sustainability and the viability of the built environment for future generations. In the article, Susan Piedmont Paladino, curator of the National Building Museum in Washington DC, states, “Preservation is the avant-garde of sustainability. It was the preservationists who first ventured the radical thought that there might be other criteria for value in the built environment other than pure utility and economic return; that buildings and neighborhoods might be valuable because they have received generations of human energy and care.” And, in the same article, Architect Stephen Kieran of Kieran Timberlake Architects, responsible for the beautifully renovated historic dormitories at Yale and Princeton, states, “Our greatest responsibility is not to make new things – it’s to rethink the things we still have. If we really want to change energy and reduce consumption quickly, then we all have an ethical responsibility to improve the performance of what we have already brought into this world.”

The First Presbyterian Apartments will sustain the life and viability of downtown Lexington and Market Street with its new tenants while maintaining the historic streetscape and integrity of our urban core. The First Presbyterian Church Apartments project is the result of re-imagining and rethinking the things we still have, responsibly improving the performance of what we have already brought into this world, thereby conserving and sustaining our environmental resources.

I offer AU Associates, S+A Architecture, Central Bank and First Presbyterian Church my sincere appreciation and congratulations for envisioning and bringing to realization this significant contribution to our city. Because of this project – economic action translated in to love and service toward human brotherhood, First Presbyterian Church’s steeple will shine even brighter as a beacon of hope tonight and for generations to come.

“For I was in need of shelter and you gave me a home – whatever you did for one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did for me.”

May it be so both now and forever.