

On the PHILIPPINE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY- UNION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (PCU-UES) Issue

By Bishop Jaime R. Moriles

The issue concerning the transfer of PCU-UES to another location that is circulating anew on facebook posts was a recommendation coming from the Buildings and Grounds Committee of the PCU Board of Trustees. I want to amplify my impression on the role of this committee on the matter. I had a feeling that among members of the PCU BOT, the transfer did not come as an issue of site deprivation thereby a property concern that would likely compromise its educational mission, otherwise, the matter could have been lodged at or tackled by the Property Committee- a committee usually responsible to develop and resolve property issues. What I know, based from my experience, Buildings and Grounds Committee is usually expected to work on the aesthetic aspect of future campus site development, where to properly position a building, its maintenance, beautification and cleanliness. I have to advance this observation to support what I know the rationale behind the transfer.

Said issue of UES relocation could have been effected several decades back if only the UCCP leadership had in her mind plan to utilize said property where UES is located. This property is situated 2 blocks away from the Philippine Christian University (PCU) main campus along Taft Avenue. It is standing at the corner of Vasquez and Malvar streets adjacent to UCCP Shalom Center. This area was part of UCCP's contribution, among others, to put up the Philippine Christian College (PCC), now known as Philippine Christian University (PCU), an educational institution run by the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) and the United Methodist Church (UMC) to pursue the Church's educational mission. Part of UMC's contribution to this partnership could have been Harris Memorial College, Mary Johnston College of Nursing, among others, but ever since this arrangement was reached these two institutions have never been integrated with PCC. Over time, talks were rife from the UCCP side (prominent were Bishop Erme Camba, Bishop Estanislao Abainza) that since reciprocity from our counterpart (UMC side) was wanting, the UCCP might as well take back part of its contribution to the College. The property the UCCP referred to is the site where UES, beside UCCP Shalom Center, is located. The UMC, perhaps, found no reason to oppose. An action was made to the effect that said property will revert back to UCCP.

In 2017, the UCCP made known its intention to utilize said property. The allegation that the UCCP is veering away from its mission is certainly absurd. I am an alumnus of PCU-UTS who graduated in mid 80s. In those years, the Dasmariñas campus can only be identified with the Salakot chapel, two buildings that house the faculty offices, library, classrooms for the seminary and Liberal Arts students, 2 dormitories, refectory, Mc Lennan Cottages and faculty houses. When I went back recently, I cannot imagine the complete transformation that PCU-UTS went through over the years, from the PCU-UTS I described above. Judging from the structures alone, apart from excellent academic programs, no one could ever say that the UCCP is betraying its commitment to mission. It has, in fact, maximized its effort to develop every aspect of resource generation to not compromise its educational mission.

But the propriety of the issue at hand rests with the Board of Trustees of PCU not with UCCP. Since the strong collaborative effort between the UCCP and the UMC was given life through the merger between PCU and UTS that created the Philippine Christian Center for Learning (PCCL)

in 1978, the interest, relevance, strategy and future direction of this educational institution are discussed, explicated, amplified, debated, resolved in the boardroom among members of the Board of Trustees of said institution. As UES relocation is a PCU Board matter, attendant questions or clarification should have been brought and raised there not with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. They are the right body who can help elucidate the facts involved and resolve the matter if, indeed, a resolution is necessary.

However, consistent with my understanding of historical record, what could have been a blatant display of greed, abuse of episcopal prerogative over UCCP General Secretary's letter addressed to PCU Board requesting transfer of UES from where it is now located, was simply an act purely ministerial anchored on what was originally the action of PCU Board to revert back that piece of property to UCCP where UES is located. Put differently, the action will find no substance if no actual transfer is effected because the building will continue to embody the original set-up as if there is no claim of the UCCP to talk about in the first place. The United Methodist Church, the PCU Board, knew this long ago that such reconveyance implies physical transfer of the school building. Currently, however, there is actual plan underway to address the matter.

Certain that the issue is not a property question it made sense to me why the matter was simply brought to the attention of the Buildings and Grounds committee. However, it is best that the PCU Board itself would issue a statement that would, once and for all, explain the heart of the matter for they owe us an explanation that could help douse suspicion against recent move of the UCCP national leadership that sullied its respectability and became once again fodder of loose talks.