

MY NAME SHALL BE THERE

1 Kings 8: 22-30 Glenda K. Corrigan Health Sciences Center

1 Peter 2: 4-10 August 28, 2013

John 14: 15-17

Grace and peace to you from God our Creator and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a profound joy to come to the historic moment, the dedication of the Glenda k. Corrigan Health Sciences Center. My heart overflows with gratitude for God's abundant blessing of the Dakota Wesleyan University community and for those who have dedicated their talents and treasure to the building of a state-of-the-art health sciences center at DWU. Don't you love it when a dream and a plan comes together.

I especially want to express my sincere gratitude to all of the donors and patrons, most notably Fitz and Glenda Corrigan, and Paul and Donna Christen and to the dedicated trustees, servant leaders and

staff of Dakota Wesleyan led and inspired by former president Bob Duffet and our newly minted president, Amy Novak.

I am proud that “Wesleyan” is in the name of Dakota Wesleyan University. It is not a proprietary label. It is a statement of mission and ministry. From the beginning of the “Wesleyan” or “Methodist” movement in mid-eighteenth century England, the Methodist peoples, with well over 100 million adherents worldwide, today, have always made healing and healthcare and education priorities of their ministry. In many places in the developing world, where I am privileged to travel on behalf of the United Methodist Church, Methodist clinics and hospitals, schools and universities are the only healthcare and education available. That was often true in the frontier communities of this country as well – even places like Mitchell, South Dakota. It is entirely fitting that the Corrigan Health Sciences Center is the centerpiece of a Methodist institution. The Center’s unique and state-of-the-art design will launch DWU and the Methodist movement into a new era of health science education in South Dakota and, indeed, the entire Great Plains region.

As we gather to dedicate the Glenda K. Corrigan Health Sciences Center, it is appropriate to draw our inspiration from one of the great prayers of dedication recorded for us in the Hebrew scriptures.

God first gave King David a vision for building the temple in Jerusalem. But it was left to his son, Solomon, to fulfill the vision. When the time came to dedicate the temple to God's glory, the scriptures tell us that Solomon stood before the alter of the Lord and spread out his hands to heaven. And then he prayed. Andrew just read a portion of that prayer from II Chronicles. This prayer is also recorded in I Kings, chapter 8. Solomon's prayer builds to a crescendo – a plea that “God's eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which God said, ‘My name shall be there.’”

Is this not our prayer as well? Is this not our prayer as we gather on this day of celebration to dedicate this new temple of learning, this new center of science, of education, and of leadership? As so we pray: Oh gracious most holy God, we pray that your eyes may be open night and day toward this place of learning, this place of

exploration, this place of research, this place of science, this place of hope and healing. Amen.

But, I am most intrigued by the second portion of Solomon's prayer in I Kings. It is a reminder to God. I pray like that all the time – reminding God of what God has already promised, as if God might forget if I didn't remember for God. Am I alone here? But we pray this way, not so much to remind God of promises made, but to rehearse for ourselves once again who God is and how God acts. So Solomon prays, rehearsing God's promise that the temple would be the place of which God said, "My name shall be there!" God has promised that God would reside in the temple; that God would be present; that the Spirit of God would be encountered, experienced, felt in that place. Solomon was rehearsing for the people that the Spirit of God would come to the people in that place – it would be a house of Pentecost, a place in which the Spirit comes, a place in which the Spirit of God resides.

And so our prayer this days continues: Most gracious and holy God may your name, your word, your presence, your very spirit of love

and compassion, learning and transformation be here. May this be, O God, a center of Pentecost – a place where your Spirit is welcomed and alive, inspiring and challenging, forming students and faculty alike.

Theologian John McIntyre speaks of the Holy Spirit as the “wholehearted expression of the unlimited imagination of God.” That is a great image. The Holy Spirit is an experience, let loose in the Church and in the world, of the unlimited imagination of God. That is what happened at Pentecost as Jews from all over the world were gathered for the Feast of Weeks, described for us in the second chapter of Acts. God gave them, and all who believe in Jesus Christ, the gift of God’s presence. God gave them and us his unlimited imagination. And this gift, this unlimited imagination, is forever (John 14: 16b). This gift prevails, in every place, in every culture, in every age. God gave us the gift of his constant, unwavering availability.

Today, in this very moment, this historic moment, in this moment of dedication, in this moment of affirming God’s blessings, we celebrate the triumph of God’s unlimited imagination.

We are here today because at some point, several years ago now, persons like Bob Duffet and Amy Novak and the Corrigan's and the Christens reminded the Board of Trustees of the unlimited imagination of God; reminded the entire DWU community and the city of Mitchell of the power of the Holy Spirit; reminded all of us that God was in the house. We are here today because at some point, and at many points along the way, the unlimited imagination of a state-of-the-art Health Sciences Center of the Dakotas prairie overwhelmed all skepticism, all scarcity thinking, all obstacles and objections and even the Great Recession. That is the power of God's constant grace upon his people. That is the power of God's unlimited imagination. I can't wait to see where God's unlimited imagination leads DWU next!

Peter's first letter is instructive to us on this historic occasion and as we dedicate and open the Glenda K. Corrigan Health Sciences Center. Peter's letter was originally written to exiled Christians in a number of small congregations throughout Asia Minor. His letter was intended to remind them of who they were in the midst of a hostile

environment and urge them to remain a holy witness, a holy nation, a spiritual house. His language is poetic:

“Come to him, a living stone,
though rejected by mortals
yet chosen and precious in God’s sight,
and like living stones,
let yourselves be built into a spiritual house,
to be a holy priesthood,
to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God
through Jesus Christ.”

(I Peter 2:5)

The Health Sciences Center is a remarkably beautiful facility, built with stone and concrete, steel and wires, plaster and paint. But, it is ultimately a symbol of you – each of you – because you are the living stones God is using to build the true spirit of the center, the true soul of DWU, the true heart of the Center’s mission.

Peter makes it clear it is the people, not the building that is the true spiritual house – the true place that God resides. Peter’s letter continues, and I quote:

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood,
a holy nation, God’s own people
in order that you may proclaim
the mighty acts of him who called you
out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

(I Peter 2:9)

“In order that...” Always pay attention to such phrases in the scriptures. It means God is about to tell us our purpose, our ministry, our call, our mission. Dear friends in Christ, God’s unlimited imagination called fourth the vision of the Glenda K. Corrigan Health Sciences Center ‘in order that we may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.’ God’s unlimited imagination gave rise to this beautiful Health Sciences Center as a tool for calling persons out of darkness into intellectual curiosity, ethical integrity, academic rigor, vocations of healing and

hope. God has chosen each of you to be living stones, the spiritual foundation, God's own people "in order that the vision and building we dedicate today lives as a testimony to the Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven."

And so, on this glorious day, we raise our arms to have just as King Solomon did and we pray to God:

May your eyes, O God, be open
night and day toward the
Glenda K. Corrigan Health Sciences Center,
and may your name, your work your Spirit presence
always be in that place.

Holy God, gaze upon us night and day,
keep us in your sight,
that we might be formed
into the very image of Christ,
in order that we may proclaim his marvelous light.

Gracious God, write your name
on the hearts of the generations of students and faculty

that will benefit from the Center;
make your home in them
so that your unlimited imagination
may be awakened in each yearning mind and soul.
Marvelous, awesome God,
build us, as your living stones,
into a spiritual house
as beautiful as this Center which,
this day we dedicate to your purposes and glory.
We pray in the name of the Spirit and Risen Christ. Amen.

Bishop Bruce R. Ough

Dakotas – Minnesota Area