PRESIDENT'S OCCASIONAL CAMPUS COMMUNIQUÉ

December 1, 2010

The President's Perspective - A Brief Essay

The third of North Park's seven educational ideals commits us to providing <u>an education</u> that "embraces all people and celebrates the richness of cultural difference."

All.

A simple word. Two different letters, the second one repeated.

Other words have an approximate meaning – whole, entire, every, each, complete, full, aggregate, total. None is so clear and straightforward, however, as "all." The word is so simple and the concept so basic it claims no reference in a thesaurus.

All people. This two-word statement is more involved, yet this phrase still is simple and straightforward, unencumbered by complexity. We understand what is meant. All people . . . everyone . . . no exceptions.

Yet our educational ideal poses a real challenge. We are social beings; we enjoy the presence of others, especially those who are of our clan, of our liking. But to "embrace" all people and to celebrate the life of each one . . . this is more tangled, more difficult. Some days it is seemingly impossible.

As a university, however, and as North Park University specifically, we are well-positioned to reach this ideal. We can reach toward, we can attain this ideal, because we are Christian and urban.

We are Christian. Two concepts are foundational to Christian theology: the embrace of God's love and the inclusivity of the gospel. God created all. Christ died for all. All people. All cultures. We "embrace all people and celebrate the richness of cultural difference" because we are Christian.

We are urban. 60625. These five numeric digits identify our place in Chicago. The campus of North Park University is located in what is widely regarded as the most diverse zip code in America, a neighborhood as complex as the world itself. Our campus neighbors are Latino, Native American, Asian, African, European, Middle Eastern, and beyond. One-half of the residents of our immediate neighborhoods are foreign-born. The people who live in this zip code speak over 150 languages. We embrace . . . we celebrate . . . we are urban.

We are privileged at North Park because in our zip code students, faculty, and staff engage a complex array of languages and cultures. In these neighborhoods we see and know the world, we rub shoulders with human and cultural difference. And in this place, in the midst of this human and cultural complexity, we have opportunity to recognize and embrace, indeed to celebrate, the image of God in others. In our very neighborhood we encounter God, the one who is revealed across the human spectrum, not just in those who are Jewish, male, or free, nor only in those who are Gentile, female, or slave.

Walk along any street in 60625 and we see, we come into intimate contact with, the richness of cultural difference. Walk along any street in 60625 and we see, we come into intimate contact with, the wondrously stunning image of God.

The Word became	flesh and now	dwells among	us.	
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Accreditation Visit

As I noted in a special message to faculty and staff on November 17 our visit with the accreditation team from the Higher Learning Commission went very well. Informal word from the team during their exit interview with the University's senior leadership team provided an encouraging report. However, we will not receive official notification regarding our re-accreditation until the full commission completes its work during the spring semester. At that time the commission will notify us of the term of continued reaccreditation and any associated requirements.

Though I mentioned these in my earlier communication with the campus community I want to repeat here the short, partial list of complementary notes the visiting team made during the exit interview. These specifically included (a) the commitment of the University's faculty and staff to our students, (b) the strong and clear sense of mission, the extent to which the mission is recognized and embraced by all who work here, and the manner it is embedded in our academic and co-curricular programs and in our print and electronic communication; (c) our engagement with the immediate community and the city at-large; (d) the beauty and functionality of our physical campus and facilities; and (e) the open channels of communication between the administrative team and faculty and staff.

We have prepared for more than a year for this visit, and this work would not have been successfully completed without the dedication of many members of our faculty and staff. Notable among these are (a) Joe Jones, Robert Stanley, and Elizabeth Ritt who cochaired the self-study process, and (b) Rich Johnson, Laura Burt, Charles Peterson, and Andrea Nevels who chaired the three subcommittees assigned to prepare the self-study report. Additionally, over 35 faculty, staff, and trustees were members of one or more sub-committees as well as the self-study executive committee. Beyond this, a large portion of our faculty and staff had contact with one or more members of the

visiting team during their time on campus through individual visits, group meetings, and occasional smiles when passing along the sidewalk.

I've said it before, and I'll repeat it here: thank you to each person who contributed in ways both large and small to the success of this visit. Our collective dedication to this task speaks well of our commitment to North Park and will serve our students very well during the years to come. Thank you.

In Case You Missed the Announcement

As previously announced, effective January 1, 2011 we will provide a 3% wage and salary increase for all full-time faculty and staff. In addition, a small reserve will be used for selective faculty and staff equity adjustments (made on recommendation of the respective supervisor) and for adjustments made on August 16, 2010 for faculty promoted by action of the Board of Trustees in May 2010. These combined salary adjustments total approximately \$1 million in annual payroll expenses.

With this announcement I also express my deep appreciation, as well as that of the Board of Trustees and the University's senior leadership team, for your commitment to the mission of North Park and the sacred vocation to which we have been called. Thank you for your love of North Park, your dedication to the welfare of each student entrusted to our care, and your commitment to excel in the responsibilities assigned to your respective role in this community.

New Vice President

As announced a few weeks ago, Mr. Nate Mouttet joins the campus community today as our new vice president for enrollment and marketing. In this capacity he will work closely with our admissions and enrollment office, personnel in external relations, and all who are part of our athletics program. Nate's office will be located in Old Main. On Tuesday, December 7, at 3:30 p.m., we'll host a reception in Brorson Lounge to welcome Nate to the North Park community. Please drop by.

Lessons and Carols

Tradition has it that in 1880 Edward White Benson, an English pastor, gathered his congregation in a small wooden shed used occasionally as their parish church for a special service on Christmas Eve. In this service Pastor Benson combined readings from scripture and the singing of Advent hymns and Christmas carols to tell the story of Jesus—the fall of humanity, the promise of a Messiah, the birth of Jesus, and the visit of the magi. It doesn't take much to imagine what this service might have been like—a small group of English Christians, shivering in the winter night, perhaps gathered round a bucket of coals to keep the least bit warm. Scripture passages were read with some

hesitation, stumbling over words of ancient text. Carols were sung both on-tune and off, in harmony and with dissonance. Yet it was Christmas Eve, so all was well in 1880.

Over the following decades this humble tradition has become known around the world. Adopted by the English church the Festival Service of Lessons and Carols is broadcast each year on Christmas Eve from King's College, Cambridge featuring carols sung by the famous Choir of King's College.

It also is a tradition adopted by North Park University. Singing in harmony and always on tune, the students of North Park celebrate the beginning of the Advent season with a Festival Service of Nine Lessons and Carols. The setting is not a wooden shed but rather the sanctuary of Our Lady of Mercy Church, just south from the University in the Albany Park neighborhood. The carols are both familiar and new; English, Swedish, and from around the world. The scripture passages tell the celebrated story from Genesis through Revelation. The audience includes students, their parents, donor friends of North Park, parishioners from Our Lady of Mercy Church, and others from our Chicago neighborhood.

The audience should also include many from our faculty and staff, and our immediate families. To encourage our collective participation the cost of tickets to the program has been waived for faculty and staff, their families or guest. Free tickets to the concert program can be picked up this week from Karen Dickelman in her office in Wilson Hall.

The details:

A Festival Lesson of Nine Lessons and Carols
Our Lady of Mercy Church – 4432 N Troy Ave, Chicago
(approximately a mile south of campus, just east of Kedzie Avenue)
December 5 and 4:00 p.m.

This is a special season at North Park. The end of the semester approaches, final exams await, yet Advent is here. Even as Mary and Joseph found their way to Bethlehem, we make our way to Albany Park. As the star shone brightly over the manger, the twinkle of a million lights makes this city a grand and sacred place to celebrate the birth of the Christ-child. As the magi gathered from far and distant places, immigrant families from around the world join us to adore the newborn Christ.

Celebrating Christmas

Two mid-December events mark times when North Park's faculty and staff come together to celebrate Christmas. Invitations have been distributed for each of these; please mark your calendars and join us for these celebrations.

• Tuesday, December 14 – Faculty and Staff Christmas Luncheon

We gather at 11:30 for lunch and Christmas music, as well as recognition of five-year, ten-year, fifteen-year, and more anniversaries of service at North Park.

 Wednesday and Thursday evenings, December 15 and 16 – Open House at Hawkinson House hosted by David and Linda Parkyn. Two evenings (beginning at 7:00 p.m.) to gather with colleagues from work, along with spouses and guests, to enjoy good food, beautiful music presented by North Park students, and conversation with friends.

An RSVP is requested for both events; please contact Karen Mears at extension 5710 or kmears@northpark.edu.

Gathering Day 2.0

In January we will pilot an event which could become a new tradition for faculty and staff at North Park.

Gathering Day in August is our familiar way of starting the school year—a time to greet people we haven't seen during the summer, meet new faculty and staff hired over the past year, hear the president's State of the University address, worship as a gathered community, and then enjoy lunch together.

Gathering Day 2.0 is a variation on this theme. On Monday, January 24 (the first Monday of classes in the spring semester) we'll all meet in Anderson Chapel at 10:30. This will allow for an update from the president, introductions of new staff members hired during the fall semester, and worship. Our worship will feature three members of our faculty and staff, each commenting from their own experience on one of North Park's institutional distinctives. Immediately following, we'll enjoy lunch and a time of fellowship—a winter menu on this occasion, something to warm the body as well as the soul.

We realize, of course, that a few faculty members will miss the lunch gathering due to a conflict with scheduled classes. This is unfortunate but difficult to avoid, short of holding this event on a day before the official beginning of the spring semester.

Please mark your calendars – Monday, January 24 – Gathering Day 2.0 at 10:30 a.m.

Closing Thought

Throughout this semester I have periodically reflected on words taken from a general thanksgiving written centuries ago by a now anonymous Christian liturgist. In the middle of this prayer of thanksgiving are these words:

We thank you for setting us to tasks which demand our best efforts and for leading us to accomplishments which satisfy and delight us.

These words ring true for me when I think of my place at North Park; I pray they ring true for you as well. God calls us to this time and place, sets before us important tasks and invites us to bring to them our best efforts, and promises accomplishments which will satisfy and delight our souls.

The road is long, yet I rejoice we travel together. May God bless each of us—in our respective places on campus, in our individual vocations, and in our collective life within this community. Thank you for your dedication to the students of North Park University.

Advent blessings to each of you.