



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER TO PRESIDENT'S CLUB AND HERITAGE CIRCLE DONORS
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SIMPLY CHRISTIAN

During recent weeks I've been reading a book by N.T. Wright, one of the leading contemporary Christian authors from England. He titled his book, *Simply Christian*. In this volume he identifies five ways to celebrate and honor what it means to be a faith community (a church): tell stories, act out rituals, create beauty, work in community, and think out beliefs.

When I read this my mind immediately leapt to North Park University and our life together in this educational community. Shouldn't we celebrate and honor what it means to be a Christian academic community in these same ways? I believe we do.

We tell stories—on the web home page, in the North Parker, and in student recruitment brochures. We observe certain rituals—as formal as each year's four commencement convocations and as informal as our annual Thanksgiving Dinner where we carve 30 or 40 turkeys. We create beauty—in recitals, in laboratories, and on athletic fields. We work together—in classrooms and offices, on each sidewalk, and throughout the city. We think out beliefs—through academic papers, in chapel, and on service trips.

Wright's five "acts" recently came together in a single event at North Park: Gathering Day. Traditionally we've hosted this faculty and staff event at the start of the academic year in August. This year we chose to expand this traditional practice (our ritual) and gather again at the beginning of the spring semester. We called this "Gathering Day 2.0." In this ritual gathering we told stories (in reflective comments by several members of the campus community), created beauty (with the Gospel Choir's traveling ensemble), celebrated our work together (by introducing new colleagues), and thought out beliefs (in community worship). We also ate together, which is story, ritual, beauty, work, and belief combined as one!

When you think of North Park—of your days here, or of the time your children studied here, or of your most recent visit to the campus—what are the stories, rituals, beauty, work, and beliefs which hold a prominent place in your memory? I invite you to share these with me.



CAMPAIGN NORTH PARK

Many readers of this newsletter are beginning to hear of Campaign North Park, the University's new fundraising campaign, through which we'll raise funds for a new Science and Community Life building and provide ongoing support for endowment and academic programs. This effort has been underway in a "quiet" phase for the past couple of years. We're now ready to speak more publicly about the campaign and increase in the scope of our fundraising.

During the spring months we'll advance the campaign on several levels. We held our first public presentation of the campaign at the annual stewardship dinner following the December Christmas concert. At this time a campaign video was previewed and I emphasized the pressing needs addressed by the campaign.

When faculty and staff came together for Gathering Day 2.0 we introduced the campaign to the campus community. Throughout the spring semester we will engage the campus community in an idea exchange and conversation and invite partnership with us in this effort.

Over four months, beginning in February, we will host a number of momentum-building donor events across the country which feature the campaign. These will be held in Florida, Massachusetts, Minnesota, California, and Washington. Additionally, our annual spring women's brunch in the Chicagoland area will feature the campaign. Smaller dinner events, often sponsored by members of our Board of Trustees, will be hosted in numerous locations.

Public launch of Campaign North Park is scheduled for June 4, and will be held on campus. I know you'll want to hear more of the campaign, and I'm very confident you'll want to participate in the campaign with us. I look forward to these conversations with you.

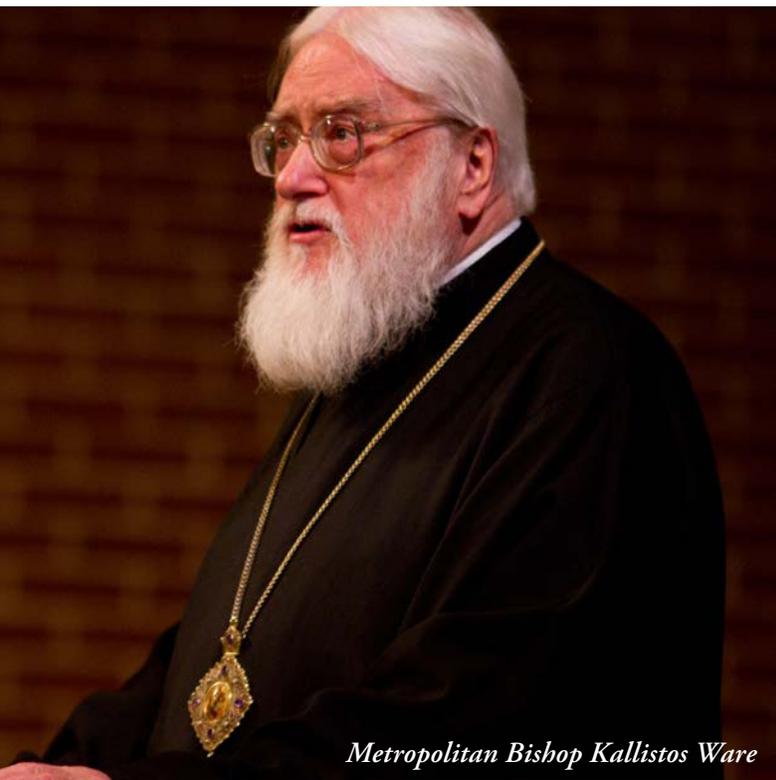


VOICES OF FAITH

An important aspect of our institutional identity is the commitment to be "distinctively Christian." This perspective on campus life is expressed in myriad ways, with most of these directed to students through curricular requirements and co-curricular activities and supported programs. We work hard to make this a central feature of campus life.

However, our "distinctively Christian" identity is also an ideal to be expressed publicly, to audiences far beyond the campus community, and a number of these public expressions have been notable in recent months.

In December Scot McKnight's most recent book *One Life: Jesus Calls, We Follow* was released. Books written by Professor McKnight are read widely within the church community, both across America and abroad, and he is internationally recognized as a dynamic speaker to church audiences. Through his ministry of teaching and writing, Professor McKnight has discovered Jesus' call as he described it in a recent blog, "to be the sort of professor who walks the bridge from the academy to



Metropolitan Bishop Kallistos Ware

to theologian Miroslav Volf of Yale University, from Al Tizon of Evangelicals for Social Action in Philadelphia to Ray Johnston of Bayside Church in Sacramento to Alize Berrymore and Darrell Griffin as pastors from Chicago. Additionally our campus pastor Judy Peterson is tremendously effective in guiding and advancing the faith of students, faculty, and staff through her public ministry among us.

The first of our seven educational ideals (which frame the education we provide through each academic program—undergraduate, graduate, and seminary) notes that at North Park University we provide an education that “is rooted in and committed to the Christian faith and its sacred text, the Bible.” These “voices of faith” are numbered among the many expressions of this ideal throughout the University’s curricular and co-curricular programs.

We remain faithful—and faith-filled.

LEARNING EXCHANGE — CHINA AND NORTH PARK

During the first two weeks of January Linda and I traveled to China to formally sign Memos of Collaborative Understanding with five universities. These agreements were articulated over the past two years through a number of faculty exchanges between our universities. In the process of knowing one another we’ve discovered we collectively have much to offer.

China is now the second of the world’s largest economies and the country’s universities have developed in very impressive ways in recent years. English is studied by every student, beginning in kindergarten and continuing through university study. Increasingly Chinese students study on a short-term basis in the United States (including 81,000 this year). American students are beginning to reciprocate. Chinese is now the second most popular language for study in middle schools, high schools,

the church on a constant basis.” He further notes, “In some ways this book is the result of 27 years of teaching students in academic settings [namely North Park!], but in other ways it’s the result of speaking in churches and listening to the heartbeat of lay folks and pastors.” Jesus called; Professor McKnight has followed.

Over the past 24 months a team of faculty members from the seminary have written a new book based on the central theological affirmations of the Evangelical Covenant Church. Titled *Living Faith: Reflections on Covenant Affirmations*, this volume was released at the Mid-Winter Conference for ECC pastors in early February here in Chicago. This gift of scholarship, offered by North Park to the Church, will prove to be a good resource for both the clergy and lay communities within the church. It supports and promotes a widespread understanding and embrace of the central commitments of the church even in the midst of the wonderful and growing “mosaic” which is the Covenant Church.

Guest “voices of faith” are also frequent at North Park. This semester these have extended from Metropolitan Bishop Kallistos Ware of the Greek Orthodox Church



and colleges across America, and China is the fifth most popular country for American students abroad, with 11,000 U.S. university students studying there this year.

In January the Wall Street Journal reported that demand in U.S. businesses for employees who speak foreign languages—especially Spanish and Chinese—will increase over the next decade. The article indicated that “42% of employers expect business proficiency in Chinese to be in moderate or high demand in a decade” with employers placing “a premium on bilingual job candidates.” Perhaps it’s time for us to introduce courses in Chinese language at North Park University.

North Park’s location in Chicago also supports this collaborative initiative. During the past two years Chicago has been numbered six in a ranking of “global cities” and number two in a ranking of the best cities worldwide in which to earn a college degree. We can host students and faculty from China because our home is in Chicago!

North Park University is strategically positioned to feature programs of study in collaboration with Chinese universities. Such programs will enhance the learning opportunities available to our students and prepare these graduates for a world in which dialogue and exchange are required and valued ideals.

COMPASSION ON OUR WEAKNESS

I love my work at North Park—there’s no place I’d rather be. But here’s a second truth: I find leading North Park to be a great challenge. The wisdom required to lead a university—this University—extends far beyond my reach.

So what am I to do? I’ve found great comfort, and more than a small share of guidance, in a prayer I pray often and which I prayed together with members of our Board of Trustees at our winter meeting. I leave it with you, at the end of this newsletter, along with a request that you support all of us who teach and lead at North Park University by praying for us each day.

Almighty God,

the fountain of all wisdom,

you know our necessities before we ask

and our ignorance in asking:

have compassion on our weakness,

and mercifully give us those things

which for our unworthiness we dare not,

and for our blindness we cannot ask;

through the worthiness of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Lives of Significance and Service
**NORTH PARK
UNIVERSITY**
CHICAGO