



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER TO PRESIDENT'S CLUB AND HERITAGE CIRCLE DONORS
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Why did we stop in October to break ground for the Johnson Center? To hallow this new construction; to mark this new building as holy, and to claim as holy the act of learning.

REMEMBERING TO STOP

I'm intrigued by how some passages of Scripture with which I'm most familiar keep teaching me something new after all these years.

In the second chapter of his gospel, Luke gets down to business. It takes him only 20 short verses to introduce a decree from Emperor Augustus, a journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the birth of a baby, and an announcement that startles shepherds in the middle of the night and sends them rushing off to find "the child lying in the manger." That's pretty much it in these 20 verses, except for one small thing. Almost as an afterthought, Luke notes that Mary "ponders" all of this in her heart.

In much the same way in the first chapter of Genesis it takes just 30 verses or so for the writer to cover the whole of creation—light introduced where there had been only darkness, water on previously dry land which gives birth to plants with vegetables and fruit, animals who live on the plants, birds who fly in the air, fish who swim in the seas, and finally people created in God's likeness. That's pretty much it in these 30 verses, except for one small thing. Almost as an afterthought, the writer tells us that when creation was finished, God stopped and rested.

I'm intrigued by these "afterthoughts." Why stop? Why ponder? Why not keep creating? Why not just start raising the little one?

Luke doesn't answer my questions, but the writer in Genesis does. And since these are both creation stories, perhaps what is true for one might be true for the other as well.

Earlier this year I read a book by Judith Shulevitz, a short work she titles *The Sabbath World: Glimpses of a Different Order of Time*. Near the end of her book she asks and then answers my question:

Consider the mystery surrounding God's first Sabbath. Why did God stop, anyway? . . . God stopped to show us that what we create becomes meaningful only once we stop creating it and start remembering why it was worth creating in the first place.

Here we have it. Why did God choose to rest on the seventh day of creation? To hallow it; to claim the act of creation as holy, and to claim as holy all that had been created.



Why did Mary choose to stop after the birth of Jesus and the visit by the shepherds? I think for the very same reason: to hallow the birth; to claim the birth of this infant as holy, and to claim as holy all births of boys and girls before this time, and forever after.

Shulevitz ends her book with a penetrating single sentence, one well-worth committing to memory and then acting on. She writes:

We have to remember to stop because we have to stop to remember.

We have to stop.

To stop to remember.

To stop to ponder.

To stop to make holy.

Earlier this school year we held a great celebration when we broke ground for a wonderful new building on our campus. That day, when I spoke with our Trustees just a couple of hours prior to the groundbreaking, I pondered with them this ideal of a Sabbath stop. I told them this groundbreaking day was a day of divine stopping.

During groundbreaking for the Johnson Center we gathered to declare holy:

... the generous gifts of many given to Campaign North Park

... the creativity of architects and the skill of builders

... the razing of three-flats on Christiana Avenue to make room for a new building

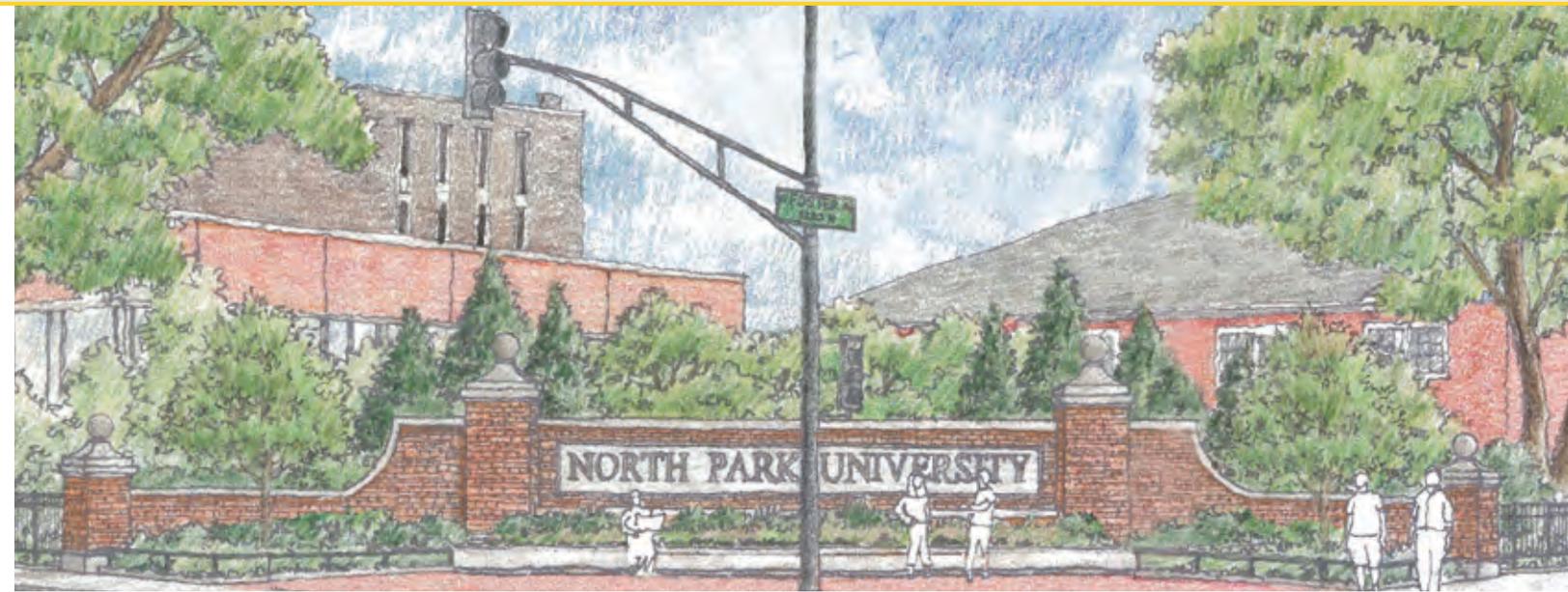
... the temporary disruption of the central campus green

... the study of science, the preparation for careers, the service of others, the sharing of food, the meeting of friends—all which will happen time and again, year after year, in this new building.

How do we declare such things as these to be holy? By stopping, by breaking ground, by pausing to remember.

In this stopping I've discovered in new ways that this is a holy time at North Park. I have come to the deep conviction that North Park was established more than 120 years ago for this very time, and for the very people who study at North Park this year. Certainly there have been other times like this in our history, and there will be similar times in our future. But for today, for this year, for this season in the history of North Park, we have a profound responsibility. This is the moment in the history of North Park assigned to us.

- Why did God choose to stop on the seventh day of creation? To hallow it; to claim the act of creation as holy, and to claim as holy all that had been created.



- Why did Mary choose to stop after the birth of Jesus and the visit by the shepherds? To hallow the birth; to claim the birth of this infant as holy, and to claim as holy all births of boys and girls before this time, and forever after.
- Why did we stop in October to break ground? To hallow this new construction; to mark this new building as holy, and to claim as holy the act of learning.
- Why do you stop from time to time to pray for North Park and to make a gift to this school? To mark as holy the preparation of students for lives of significance and service.

God has filled our University community with beauty. May we open our eyes to behold God's gracious hand among us. May we learn to serve God with gladness, and declare as holy the generous labor of God's people in this place.

NEW FRONT ON FOSTER

As excited as we are on campus about construction of the Johnson Center, we also anticipate completion of another project along Foster Avenue. We're improving the front edge of the campus with new landscaping and fencing between Anderson Chapel and Kedzie Avenue.

The two cornerstones to this project are a new gate in front of Old Main and a major new sign at the corner intersection (Foster and Kedzie) to mark North Park's presence in the neighborhood.

The best way to envision these improvements while construction is underway is to view the architectural renderings for the project. I suspect the renderings above grabbed your attention in this letter even before you began to read my message. This will be a truly impressive improvement to the front yard of our campus.

But there's a second part to the project which will make it even better. In collaboration with the city, a new streetscape is planned for Kedzie Avenue extending from Kimball Avenue (at the Shell station) to the water channel on the east edge of Holmgren Athletic Complex. This involves new curbs, sidewalks, light poles, and trees, as well as planters and other amenities. The project is scheduled to begin in the spring and likely will extend into the summer.

Once completed (and we are hopeful this will be by the beginning of the fall semester 2013), these two complementary projects will greatly enhance our campus front along Foster Avenue.

BY THE NUMBERS

This past spring semester we asked our first-year and senior undergraduates to complete a national survey on the student experience. The highly regarded National Survey of Student Engagement instrument is designed to assist colleges and universities to better understand the student experience and identify those areas of engagement through which students may be achieving their most effective learning.

We have a lot to learn from the abundant data provided through the NSSE survey, both about our students directly and about how the student experience at North Park compares with the experience of students on other campuses. I can't write about all we learned, but here is a short list of items you might find interesting.

- 77 percent of first-year students feel North Park places substantial emphasis on academics and 57 percent work harder than they thought they could to meet faculty expectations.
- By their senior year, 74 percent of North Park undergraduates participate in some form of practicum, internship, field experience, or clinical assignment.
- 86 percent of first-year students say their faculty are available and helpful out of class.
- 94 percent of seniors have discussed career plans with faculty.
- 63 percent of first-year students have frequent serious conversations with students who are different from themselves in terms of their religious, political, or personal beliefs.
- By senior year, 74 percent of students participate in community service.

These are “good numbers” and represent great news for our students—for those who study with us today and for those who will enroll here next year and in succeeding years.

It's important to note that student success depends on the work of our faculty and staff, or as I often say, on our commitment to “walk alongside our students.” Our students succeed at North Park in large measure because of the many people who have dedicated their professional lives to serving students at North Park.

STOP TO REMEMBER

I end this letter with a simple request. Would you hold this letter in your hands for just a few moments longer, and as you do, stop to remember.

Stop to remember one of the people who had an important formative impact on your life when you were a student.

Stop to remember one or more students currently at North Park you may know personally, and place them in God's special care right now.

Stop to remember all those who walk alongside our students at North Park and pray for their special attentiveness to students today.

Stop to remember the last gift you made to North Park and celebrate the joy of giving.

Stop to mark as holy the preparation of students for lives of significance and service.

Winter blessings,



David L. Parkyn
President