

Sherman Center and Wagner Chapel Dedication

Remarks by President Robert Duffett

Dakota Wesleyan University

September 2004

Bricks, mortar and buildings do not educate people or create Christian community. But, bricks and mortar, wire and pipes in the skilled hands of the people of Puetz Construction, Muth Electric and Krohmer Plumbing can create a building that is a means to an end. And it is to this end that this building is both dedicated and consecrated.

The end for which the Sherman Center and Wagner Chapel was built is to point the DWU community and our region toward God. Indeed the first gathering in this building was a worship service. Additionally, the purpose of this building is to inspire creativity in art, music and theater. The DWU community, along with the author of the first book of the Bible, underscores the importance of all creative expression. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." And, "God looked upon all the created world and said it is very good."

There is a third end for this building as well. Within these walls the Dakota Wesleyan University community and our region will be confronted with new ideas. We shall gladly discuss, debate, disagree and be challenged and inspired by speakers from throughout the world. No idea or topic important to our common life as a university or as a South Dakota community will be excluded from consideration. We affirm both the power and importance of ideas. So, as we dedicate this building of bricks and mortar, fashioned together in such a beautiful way, we today are making a clear statement about the vision, mission and values of Dakota Wesleyan University.

The cross on the outside of the building, which is one of the highest points on campus and may be seen from the Interstate, symbolizes our mission, identity and hope. We recommit ourselves to be a university of the church. Specifically, we are a university of the United Methodist Church. As such, we value faith and reason so long divided across the ages. We also affirm the importance of creative expression sometimes at odds with both faith and reason. But today is a day of dreams and inclusion, not separation and suspicion. The Sherman Center and Wagner Chapel bring together a long awaited dream of integration, in one building, of faith, reason and creative expression. This dream is already being realized. Within the next few weeks we will analyze in both a critical and constructive way George McGovern's political and social legacy. The music of Christmas will waft throughout the campus and Mitchell community. And barbershop quartets will lift our spirits.

Today is more than a dedication. The Sherman Center and Wagner Chapel, and most importantly what will go on inside this building for the generations to come, beckons us to recommit ourselves to the enduring values of Dakota Wesleyan University. With boldness of purpose and driven by our vision and values of learning, leadership, faith and service, I present to you assembled here and to the generations of students to come, the Sherman Center and Wagner Chapel. We dedicate this building this day to the service of God and to all people.