

From the President

Todd Parnell

A SACRED TRUST: RECONCILIATION, CHANGE AND HOPE

We are here today because 135 years ago a small band of people with a vision set out to change the world. Weary from the effects of war still visible on their land and lingering in their hearts, tired of the lost potential they saw in those considered unworthy of a good education, they determined to reconcile the past for a future hope. With shared conviction that education must be their instrument of change, they founded a college, and they called it Drury.

Drury's first president, Dr. Nathan J. Morrison, set in motion principles to guide the new school. In this place, he said, "children of Confederates and Unionists sit together in classes, while they amicably discuss the great questions of secession, slavery, and the negro about which 15 years ago their fathers were contending with arms on a hundred bloody fields. Here both parties come to know each other and to be mutually understood is to be reconciled."

Today you sit in the eye of this history as I stand in front of you in the field house of my youth, deeply honored to become the 16th President of Drury University...

Today is about Drury University, not us. This is about an institution that has and will long outlast us all. This is about a sacred trust established long ago between people of good will and a caring community which continues to today and beyond.

Dr. Morrison spoke often of **RECONCILIATION, CHANGE AND HOPE**. These themes have presented and re-presented themselves throughout the past 135 years and are woven into the fabric of Drury's long history. More consistent than profound, both grounding and inspiring, these themes define the core of this sacred trust between those who have gone before, we who gather today,

and those precious ones to come...

What does **RECONCILIATION** mean to you? To find peace? To discover harmony?

Dr. James Findley, Drury's longest tenured president, observed in 1940 that a liberal arts education "increased each student's ability to integrate himself with others... makes him generous in his judgments, slow to make condemnation...quick to give commendation." This is reconciliation.

Dr. Earnest Brandenburg, when faced with a cruel campus racial incident in 1965, challenged that "I pray the next generation will have better attitudes than today's...our task is to do all we can to speed the process." This is reconciliation.

Even today as we meet, just a block or so east of us in the Shewmaker Communications building, reconciliation of the highest order is occurring. A young Kenyan filmmaker, Patrick Muriethi, is putting the finishing touches on a documentary film titled ICYZERE: HOPE, a look at reconciliation between Tutsi and Hutu in Rwanda 14 years after the unspeakable tragedy of genocide.

Why is this film being completed on campus? Because of our technical capacity, to be sure. But more importantly, because it was here that Patrick could find students from Rwanda and Burundi, Tutsi and Hutu to translate hours of footage, a new generation of students who were not in Dr. Morrison's words "contending with arms on a hundred bloody fields," but coming together to help reconcile. This is a powerful metaphor for what our university is all about, what it can bring to the universal table, what it means to our community at large. Patrick's film was introduced at Rwanda's international film festival last month. Drury was in Kigali with Patrick and is actively supportive of this effort at international reconciliation, global engagement of the highest calling—135

years after Nathan Morrison's call to mutual understanding and reconciliation.

Today, as before, all corners of the Drury community come together to reconcile whatever ghosts linger from the past. It will take time and commitment to do so, and to move on, but move on we will. We will honor our own historical example and take these next steps of reconciliation together.

CHANGE. Change is not a neutral proposition. It is frightening and exhilarating. It creates new opportunities and carries risk. It requires commitment and accountability...

Nowhere will change be more pronounced at Drury than in the faces of our students. Last fall, at the urging of faculty, staff and previous administrators, the Board of Trustees approved a commitment to greater diversity on campus. Through the generosity of a donor, who has committed to help fund scholarships for 10 minority students per year into the future, Drury will have 40 new faces of color on campus within the next four years. If we do our job well, recruit the best and brightest, and provide an infrastructure in support of their success, we will literally change the face of Drury and offer our students and community a richer experience.

We will also change the way we view and teach consumption. In a world of diminishing resources amidst accelerating demand and price for them, Drury University will lead by example in reducing carbon impact and related operating costs. We will choose to spend our money on students, not energy. Students, not us, will find answers to the challenges of energy independence, global warming, water quality and supply. They will solve the problems our generation has left them. They will do so with native ingenuity, a good liberal arts education and entrepreneurial thinking.

But we will set an example, a Stone Chapel kind of example where the oldest stone building in the community has the most modern and energy efficient heating and cooling system available, an O'Reilly Family Event Center Silver LEED rating kind of example. We will bring into all of our classrooms the environmental challenges of the future and raise the questions our students will answer.

This is change, change for the better. We will not fear change. We will embrace it, we will lead it, we will learn from it, we will grow from it. Unlike some, our institution can accommodate change, because our traditions and culture are deeply rooted. Change must sprout from this 135-year-old root stock, or we will risk withering and stagnation.

Reconciliation, Change and now **HOPE**. Some will say hope is an overused word, particularly in the context of the current political season. I say not. Dr. David Orr, Oberlin College, proclaims "hope is a verb with its sleeves rolled up." I stand in front of you today with a heart full of hope. This hope springs from four generations of familial experience, from having spent four years on campus 40 years ago, from having met my wife Betty here, from having two sons enter their professions of choice with a big boost from Drury, and most recently from having spent the past year with our students, faculty, staff, trustees, alums, parents and community. Drury is blessed within each constituency. There is great hope in that.

There is hope in the empty chair behind me. Those who attended Marcia Cooper's commencement in her room at St. John's hospital last July just an hour before she passed away were forever changed by her hope. Her hope could not be contained, constrained or buried by death. Her hope was fulfilled when she received the MBA she had worked

so hard for to set an example for her children and grandchildren as to the importance of education. Just as surely, that chair will soon be filled by another who too will be filled with hope—sacred trust fulfilled.

There is hope in striving, there is hope in Drury's historical sense of right and wrong, there is hope in Drury's undying commitment to intellectual freedom and personal growth... hope has always prevailed at Drury University.

RECONCILIATION, CHANGE AND HOPE are at the heart of our shared vision for Drury's future.

Our **VISION** is simple, understandable, challenging. And yes, it is hopeful. It is consistent with the hard work of faculty and staff over the past few years as they prepared a strategic plan approved by Trustees last fall.

We envision:

- A Drury that is regionally focused, nationally respected and globally engaged.
- A Drury that is student-centered, faculty-inspired and community oriented.
- A Drury that is financially and environmentally sustainable.
- A Drury that is ethnically and culturally diverse to the enrichment of our campus, our community and our region.
- A Drury community that thinks entrepreneurially, is not afraid to take risks, not afraid to make decisions, not afraid to stray from the herd.
- A Drury that prizes her history and traditions, but does not fear change.
- A Drury that continues to do what she has done best for so long:
 - Compete for and attract the best, the brightest, the most motivated students from our community, our region and niches abroad...
 - place them in classrooms with gifted, dynamic and caring faculty...

- who will provide them with personal and individual attention and accessibility...
- that they may realize their full potential,
- and go forth into the world to make it a better place.

We envision a Drury that will celebrate her 150th birthday in 2023 in the best fiscal, mental, emotional and moral health ever.

This is a vision for Drury we can embrace in both heart and mind. This is a vision that honors our past and frames our future. This is a vision for Drury we will pursue while I am here.

As one of my trusted colleagues has challenged: "Take risks. Take a stand. Show the community what is possible. Be brave." It is time to get at it.

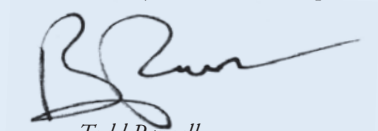
As we follow our students out the doors of Weiser Gymnasium today into a world they will seek to change for the better...

As we follow our faculty and staff in search of new minds and hearts to inspire, and our neighbors and friends through these doors as they return to the noble task of improving our community...

Let passion and dreams carry this day as they did 135 years ago when a small band of people with a vision decided to change the world by reconciling a difficult past, risking present change and creating future hope. This was their Drury. This is our Drury.

It is a season of reconciliation, change and hope at Drury University, sacred trust intact.

Please join me in the work of reconciliation, in embracing change. "Roll up your sleeves" and join me in this hope!



—Todd Parnell

Inauguration Address
April 20, 2008