New Leadership for New Times
Grace College and Seminary Inaugural Address
William J. Katip - November 1, 2013

Members of the board, former presidents Kent, Davis and Manahan, faculty and staff colleagues, faculty emeriti, students, distinguished guests from other institutions and from the community, and friends: Thanks for being here today.

The day is more special because of your presence.

When Dr. Custer talked with me about becoming the president of Grace College and Seminary, I said I would like time to pray about this, and I needed to talk with Debbie. I did pray, and I am pleased to tell you today that I firmly believe the Lord directed me to this position.

And, Debbie and I both want you to know that she is “all in.” I would never have accepted this responsibility without my life partner of 39 years being right here with me.

Debbie, I love you, and thank you for sharing your life and this responsibility with me.

It is both a tremendous privilege and a heavy responsibility to be the one selected to help guide Grace College & Seminary into the next phase of its ministry, now well into its 76th year.

While I’m grateful for the opportunity, I am also humbled and sobered by the challenges that face higher education institutions in general, and this evangelical liberal arts college and theological seminary in particular.

In my Fall 2013 Convocation Address, we identified several important trends and societal realities that could affect us in the near future.

These issues include, but are not limited to depressed family incomes, the escalating costs of higher education, state and federal budget reductions, increased governmental regulation, and a general loss of public confidence in higher education.

I said in that convocation address that if we handle them properly, we should be able to steer away from harm and should be able to take advantage of opportunities that will strengthen and grow Grace as a key player in Christian higher education. I am more convinced of this than ever!

You might ask why I am so convinced that we these so-called obstacles can become opportunities. There are two reasons: First, we are not in this alone. This institution belongs to our Lord and He is in control.

Second, we have a faculty and staff who care deeply about our students and excellence, but they also understand that we must make changes as an institution. The unity we have experienced on this campus in the midst of significant changes over the past several years is nothing short of miraculous. I thank you, our faculty and staff, for your willingness to change and for your support of me as your leader.

A change of presidents means a change of leadership. And in our case, with the addition of three new senior administrators in the areas of finance, advancement and academic leadership, there is significant change in the team that administers and implements the vision of Grace Schools.

I have been thinking a lot about leadership lately. Although the emergence of leadership theory and scholarship as an academic field is relatively recent—primarily since about 1950—leadership is not a new
concept at all. The *Oxford English Dictionary* notes the appearance of the word “leader” in the English language as early as the year 1300.\(^1\)

The recent acceleration of interest and scholarship on leadership has been remarkable. Last weekend I typed the word “leadership” into the keyword search box of Amazon.com, and to my amazement, it indicated there are currently 114,852 books available with the word “leadership” in the title.

But the key concepts in leadership studies are not new at all. They are as old as the Scriptures themselves.

Adam and Eve were created in the image of God and were delegated the authority to rule the earth. The young Daniel, when forced into a compromising position, showed leadership when he remained diplomatic and courteous as he searched for a course of action that would avoid protest and confrontation.

Judges 4 and 5 record the exceptional leadership skills of Deborah, who in her support of Barak arose like a mother in Israel, watching over God’s people with maternal care.

Esther’s self-sacrificing actions modeled a leader who uses resources to rescue and to develop those under their charge. She was the quintessential steward-leader.

And Moses, of course, worn to a frazzle by the demands of the people he led, was taught by his father-in-law Jethro the important lessons of delegation as we read in Exodus chapter 18.

But perhaps my favorite model of leadership in the Bible was Joshua, who became Israel’s leader at one of the most difficult times in its history. My friend Jim Boelkins read about the words our Lord gave Joshua earlier in this service.

Almost immediately upon assuming the office, Joshua led his nation across the Jordan River into hostile territory and set out to conquer enemies, divide, and settle the land.

Joshua had an excellent mentor in his predecessor, Moses, whom the scriptures say had a “tent of meeting” where he prepared Joshua to lead the tribes of Israel. The Lord has also prepared me for my presidency through mentors and I am so thankful for these men and women.

I think of Pastor Bob Messner and Nancy from my home church in Pontiac, Michigan; I think of Ron Henry, Lee Jenkins, Miriam Uphouse Christianson and Jerry Franks from my early years here at Grace; I think of Dr. Jim Grier from Cornerstone University; I think of Dr. John Balyo and Dr. Rich Rollins from Corban University; I think of Dr. John White and Dr. Jim Boelkins from Geneva College; and I think of Dr. Ed Nicholson from Robert Morris University. I am so honored that many of these men and women are here today.

And, I am so thankful that my predecessor, Dr. Ron Manahan, has agreed to stay on, continuing to mentor me for a time as Senior Advisor to the President, so that we all may benefit from his wisdom and his years of experience.

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Among Joshua’s many admirable qualities were that he had a hunger for God, he had a commitment to obey God, and he was a man of integrity and character that inspired and gave confidence to those he led.

He clung to, and he believed God’s promise to him in Joshua 1:9 where God said, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua formed a good pattern for those who would undertake major leadership responsibility.

The mentors I have had over the last 50 years have taught me these leadership qualities…not only by word, but especially by deed.

I am especially grateful for the leadership given by the five Grace Presidents who have preceded me. I have known them all personally, except for Dr. McClain (and Debbie’s dad knew and had him as his professor).

Over the course of the past few months, I have spent time with my three immediate predecessors to seek their advice, counsel, wisdom, and prayers.

Mordecai suggested to Queen Esther in Esther 4:14 that she might have been brought to the kingdom “for such a time as this.” Each of the previous presidents of this institution has brought his particular skills and leadership style to deal with the challenges of his day.

Dr. Alva J. McClain, our founding president, might be considered a model of the “great man” leadership theory, in which innovative founders are characterized by a number of traits.

Some of those traits include—and we see these in McClain’s life—a drive for task completion, vigor and persistence in pursuit of goals, risk-taking and originality in problem-solving, willingness to accept consequences of decision and action, and much more.²

The courage and determination it took to get this institution going after the denominational difficulties in the mid-1930s have been well documented by two of our late alumni historians—Dr. David Plaster and Dr. Todd Scoles. Like the Brethren founder Alexander Mack so many years before him, McClain and his associates had to “count the cost” (Luke 14:28) before launching their courageous venture.

Grace’s second president, Dr. Herman A. Hoyt, had quite a different set of challenges facing him. The institution Hoyt inherited in 1962 after the 25-year presidency of McClain now included a four-year liberal arts college.

He faced the issues of building facilities to meet the growing institution’s needs, the challenge of achieving regional accreditation for the college, and the unexpected windfall of having all the facilities of the Winona Christian Assembly—along with its half-million dollars of debt—given to Grace.

Dr. Hoyt, with his paternalistic, forceful style, pushed the young institution along through the turbulent 60s and into the 70s.

Dr. Hoyt was much like the Old Testament leader Abraham who, though modest in his beginnings and self-confidence, was used by God to lead a tremendous expansion and direction-finding operation. James 2:23 tells us that earned for Abraham the title of “God’s friend.”

Dr. Homer A. Kent, Jr.’s ten-year presidency from 1976 until 1986 was marked by some of the greatest years of Grace Theological Seminary’s size and impact.

Dr. Kent’s calm, methodical style had a steadying influence on the institution.

While he served faithfully and admirably as president, Dr. Kent’s deep love for teaching, for the Word of God, and for the Greek language allowed him to return to his first love in the classroom in 1986.

Just this past Sunday, I had the privilege of sitting under Dr. Kent’s instruction as he taught us from the book of Galatians at the Winona Lake Grace Brethren Church. What a joy this was!

Dr. John J. Davis, like Joseph and Daniel in the Old Testament, had to deal with some extremely difficult problems during his tenure from 1986 until 1993. Renaissance man that he is, John Davis was pressed to the limit when turbulent times and internal conflicts called for great wisdom to keep the ship steady and moving ahead. Serving courageously and at great personal self-sacrifice, Dr. Davis kept the institution moving forward, readying it for the fifth president. I am so thankful that Dr. Davis continues to teach for us in the Seminary.

My immediate predecessor, Dr. Ron Manahan, was president for 20 years, from 1994 until May of 2013, though he had earlier held other positions as a faculty member and administrator. The great debt we owe Dr. Manahan is his ability, like Nehemiah of old, to assemble the resources needed for growth and to be a consummate bridge-builder with the Warsaw-Winona Lake community.

He used his quiet, persistent negotiating skills to accomplish marvelous transformations in old facilities such as Westminster Hall and Mount Memorial. He envisioned and brought to life the gleaming new Manahan Orthopaedic Capital Center where we sit today. And he grew the schools with a variety of new degrees and programs that are market-sensitive and yet are within the scope of the school’s original vision and mission.

So today we stand on the foundation built by these great leaders, to whom I extend my appreciation and great respect.

Now, what kind of leadership does Grace need in this time in its history?

My leadership will not be exactly like any of these previous presidents—for I am me, not them.

Former Medtronic CEO, Bill George, in his book True North, says we all need to lead according to our passions if we are to be authentic and effective.

And it was Oscar Wilde who said, “Be yourself. Everybody else is taken!”

In his insightful book on leadership entitled CERTAIN TRUMPETS: The Call of Leaders, the distinguished scholar Gary Wills describes different styles of leadership.
He observes that historically, certain leaders have had unusually high impact because their particular style of leadership meshed perfectly with a specific need in society.

Wills offers this definition: "The leader is one who mobilizes others toward a goal shared by leader and followers. . . . Leaders, followers, and goals make up the three necessary supports for leadership."

Rather than dwelling on my personal leadership style, I would like to focus on the goals we have selected as we move into the future.

By talking about our vision and what I see as strategic priorities moving forward, I think you will get a glimpse into what makes me tick!

Our Brethren founders have always been people of the book. It was their understanding of New Testament teachings that led Alexander Mack and his seven associates to stand up in defiance of the state church.

They knew that capital punishment might be the result. But they courageously took the actions they believed scripture commanded of a New Testament-style church.

We want to be an institution that not only promotes, but that actually lives out, complete dependence on the Word of God as absolute truth.

Colossians 3:2, as expressed in The Message paraphrase, says this:

“Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ—that's where the action is. See things from his perspective.”

So, grounded in the Word of God and seeking to see life from the perspective of Christ, who is the all-wise one, our vision for the future of Grace College & Seminary is built on six primary goals:

1. **We want to value, sustain, and serve an expanding menu of people groups.**

   We need to recognize that there are many people groups beyond our traditional constituency who need our product.

   The U.S. has a growing Hispanic community.

   Our Weber schools in Detroit, Fort Wayne and Indianapolis position us much better to work with African-American and urban populations than we have previously.

   We have a wonderful partnership with Detroit Bible Institute, an institution serving primarily African American churches in the city, and we are in discussions with three other historically Black Bible Institutes.
And there are many adults to serve—both in degree-completion programs and in the introduction of market-sensitive new programs such as our master’s degrees in orthopaedic regulatory and clinical affairs, nonprofit management, and higher education.

Some of these adult students will be right here in the Warsaw/Winona Lake area, and many will live around the country or world and study for their degrees online.

2. **Goal number 2. We want to ensure financial growth so we can invest in quality academic programming and campus facilities** that will allow us to reach our strategic goals.

   We not only want to balance the budget each year, but we absolutely must commit significant dollars to innovation and exploring new initiatives.

   Like the sower by the Sea of Galilee whose story is found in Matthew 13, Mark 4 and Luke 8, we must intentionally sow the seeds of innovation and financial strength so that we may, in due time, reap the rewards.

3. **Goal number 3. We want to creatively address the institution’s facilities to maximize all that we have.**

   Our record setting enrollments require more student housing. Our athletics, science, math, and several other academic areas need updated and improved facilities.

   We are preparing a case statement now for the eventual announcement of a comprehensive campaign to come within the next few years.

   Our big theme must be “affordable faith-based education with excellence.” That will demand facilities that will enable us to fulfill that vision.

   But, we must not over-build or over-extend ourselves with capital investment at the cost of ever increasing student tuition and fees.

4. **Our fourth goal is that we want to continue to pursue innovative partnerships.**

   We must promote constituency relationships with those whose affinity with Grace will enhance and extend our mission.

   It is good stewardship to partner where possible.

   We have done this with Bethel College in nursing, with Trine University in engineering, with Ivy Tech for our GOAL program, and we are currently talking with several other colleges and universities about potential partnerships that promise to be mutually beneficial.

   We partner with Matthew Parker and the Institute for Black Family Studies for our Weber School.
We partner with the orthopaedic community in the fields of regulatory affairs, quality, and we are now working on a new program in medical reimbursements.

We partner with Sodexo, Aramark, BrandPoet, Harmony Press and others for many on-campus services and to provide student employment.

We partner with The Learning House and Ambassador Enterprises in online education.

In the seminary we have several excellent Korean partners for our doctoral of missiology program.

We are in the final stages of implementing our African Doctor of Ministry program in partnership with Encompass World Partners.

If our seminary is to remain financially viable and relevant in ministry preparation, we must continue to find creative, and effective ways to partner with local churches.

Staff positions at local churches are so often being hired from within and we must continue our recent efforts to take theological education off campus.

Finally, if Grace Schools is to remain strong and vibrant, I believe we must reinforce our relationship and partnership with the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches. We need the FGBC; and the FGBC needs us!

5. **Our fifth goal is to better communicate the Grace “brand” to all our constituents.**

   We want to be clearly defined as a campus that “lives our mission.”

   To some extent, we are still one of the best-hidden secrets among groups that are important to us.

   We want to study the potential impact of moving to university status, taking care to ensure that such a move would not cause us to lose our distinctive character.

   Social media will become a much more vital part of our media mix. **Thanks to all you students who are helping me learn Facebook and Twitter!!**

   We especially want to engage some of our younger alumni to enhance recruiting, job placement, and our financial donor base.

6. **Our sixth and final goal is to infuse into all our academic and student life programming the aspects of the institution’s mission, vision and values that provide a distinctive Christ-centered, student-oriented collegiate experience.**
We are instituting a number of reviews and assessments of our programs, both academic and non-academic.

These reviews involve asking keys questions about all programs and services such as do they fit our mission, and do they provide return on investment?

We believe that being a first-class Christian liberal arts institution and meeting the needs of the work and employment world are not mutually exclusive.

We want our students to emerge from this institution with both a strong liberal arts understanding AND transferrable skills that are valuable in the employment market.

Grace College’s innovative integration of academic and student affairs programing, along with our requirement that each Grace College graduate have 12 credit hours of applied learning is an example of implementation of that model.

Our retention and graduation rates are the envy of many institutions and we want to maintain and improve these ratios.

In conclusion, as we begin this new administration, I’m reminded of the retiring college president who left three sealed envelopes in his desk for his successor to open when he would get into a crisis.

After only a few months the new president was mired deep in a crisis situation so he opened the first envelope and the note said, “Reorganize.” This seemed like sensible advice, so he reorganized his administration and it resulted in new energy, creativity, and success.

However, a year or two later, the college was struggling again, so he opened the second envelope.

It, too, said “Reorganize” and so there was a major overhaul among all the direct reports and things began moving forward again.

Pleased with his actions, the president led his institution with confidence, until he once again felt stuck. He was reluctant to open the final envelope because he was pretty sure what it would say.

But he opened it and was surprised to read, “Prepare three envelopes.”

Well, there will be times when this administration will feel stuck and the solution is probably NEITHER reorganization nor retirement.

Rather, as we enter into a new phase of the growth and development of Grace College and Seminary, it must be with a clear sense of dependence on God.

As we ask for wisdom as offered to us in James 1, we must also remember to wait patiently for the Lord’s timing as we were reminded from our Psalm 37 passage that Dr. Boelkens read earlier.
After 75 years of faithfulness to the mission and fidelity to God’s Word, Grace College & Seminary has much to be thankful for as we look back at the leaders and events that have brought us to today.

But even more exciting—and based on the promise of Psalm 32:8 that God will guide us going forward—we can confidently step into the future knowing that a Sovereign God has brought us this far and will, by His grace, sustain and guide us until our mission is complete or until He decides to close this chapter by His return for His people.

Thank you for being here today and for allowing me to share.

Students, I especially thank you for your attendance at this important event in the life of our campus.

Dr. Manahan, will you please come and conclude our service with the benediction?