

Annual Report, Dean of the Chapel

21 June 1954

Boston, Mass.

President Harold Case

Dean Howard Thurman

Dear Mr. President:

It is a pleasure for me to submit to you, as my first annual report as Dean of the Chapel, a summary of the year's work and certain basic recommendations as we look to the future.

Sincerely yours,

Howard Thurman

Dean

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PUBLIC WORSHIP SERVICES

The first chapel service for the academic year 1953–54 was held on Sunday, September 20. This service marked the beginning of a new order of service, based upon the religious theory upon which the chapel would proceed under my leadership. I enclose as Exhibit A a sample of the order of service, with a copy of the previous order of service that the differences may be clearly seen.

The chapel has sought to provide an opportunity to the university community for the public worship of God and to create a climate in which such worship may take place without doing violence either to the intellectual integrity or to the personal religious context in which the individual worshiper finds meaning for his own life. In the development of this idea, the major insights inherent in the Judeo-Christian religion and the varied fruits of the disciplines of mind, spirit and character are made manifest through music, the spoken word and inspiring or sacred records.

The response to this approach during the first year was deeply gratifying. The average Sunday attendance throughout the academic year was 226. This figure covers a period from July 1953 through May, 1954. Services were held during all of the regular university holidays, despite the fact that dormitories were closed and students had gone home. The average attendance at these services was 125.

In addition to the regular Sunday morning services, there were held a Christmas vesper service on December 13, a Masonic service on May 9 and a Spring vesper service, when the choir, augmented by the Choral Arts Society, rendered Nathaniel Dett's "The Ordering of Moses". In addition to these services, an experimental mid-week meditation service was held in the little chapel for three weeks, on Wednesday evening of each week. My experience with these three meditation services was sufficiently encouraging to suggest that a regular service of that kind should be inaugurated during the next academic year.

The following persons occupied the pulpit of March Chapel during the regular school term:

November 1 - President Harold Case
January 10 - Rev. Thomas Trotter
“ 17 - Dr. Harold Ehrensperger
February 7 - Rabbi Samuel Perlman
“ 21 - Bishop Lewis Hartman
March 14 - Chancellor Daniel L. Marsh
May 2 - Muriel Lester
“ 23 - Dr. Edwin Booth
“ 30 - Dr. Amiya Chakravarty

This means that on a total of nine Sundays there were guest preachers and at all of the other services, beginning in September through Commencement, 1954, the Dean of the Chapel has been the preacher.

The collection from September 20 through June 20 is \$2,979.67 as contrasted with \$1,489.56 for the same period last year.

MUSIC

Professor Samuel Walter, University Organist, has rendered creative service as organist for all of the public worship. He set to music a special call to worship which was written by the Dean of the Chapel. The Dean of the Chapel has prepared several texts for music which will be written during the summer, so that at the beginning of the school year all of the choral responses

in the Sunday services will be original music and texts. In addition to this, two anthems are being prepared, one of which is a special Thanksgiving anthem and will be sung by the choir during the Thanksgiving season.

The chapel choir, under the leadership of Professor Lannom, has rendered enthusiastic and intelligent support for the Sunday service. Words of commendation cannot be too strong for the loyalty and devotion of both the choir and its director. It is no ordinary thing to be supported by a choir and its director. It is no ordinary thing to be supported by a choir that shares in the worship service as active participants as well as a choir that sings at a certain point in the service. It is our hope that next year the choir will be enlarged so that we will have a wider range of good voices.

The achievement in "The Ordering of Moses" was outstanding. It is of interest to note that there were four solo parts in that oratorio. One was taken by a guest soloist, a Chinese baritone from San Francisco, a Negro tenor, a Jewish contralto and a Protestant soprano. It is our plan next winter to have four music vespers given by the choir.

A plan is being developed for making an hour of music available in the late afternoon once a week in the chapel all during the school term.

COUNSELING

Perhaps the most significant opportunity available to the Dean of the Chapel is found in the privilege of personal counseling. From mid September until the end of June, the average

counseling load was eleven per week. Some of these were of longer than one hour's duration. There were undergraduates, faculty members, graduate students and persons from the wider university community. The demand was greater than time and energy to meet.

INTER-UNIVERSITY SERVICES

From the sixth of January to June 10, the Dean of the Chapel spoke for the following University groups:

Congregational Club

College of General Education

P.A.L.

School of Nursing Convocation

B.U. Women's Council

Sargent College – twice

School of Education

S.C.A. of C.B.A.

Charlesgate

Hillel

Medical School

The engagements outside the university, beginning January 1, I am submitting as Exhibit B.

GIFTS TO THE CHAPEL

In October the Claremore Fund of California made a gift of a professional Concertone tape recorder for the purpose of making a permanent tape record of all of the Sunday services. In addition to giving the recorder, a year's supply of tapes was also included. This gift has been a great blessing in the spirit of the ministry of the chapel because copies of the tapes have been sent regularly to southern California. Various ministers have been able to secure them for their own churches and occasionally opportunity has been provided for those persons who wanted to hear a service which they had missed or to get a repeat on a service which they had attended.

In addition to this gift, Mrs. Ralph Smith of Los Angeles contributed during the year an average of \$65.00 a month to the Discretionary Fund for the Dean of the Chapel's use in any special ways to enhance the work. There is a conditional promise that this amount will be given during the next academic year.

Under Exhibit C there will be a listing to indicate the wide use to which the chapel has been put.

RECOGNITIONS

The Dean of the Chapel gave the Merrick Lectures at Ohio Wesleyan University March 14–16 on the general topic "Religious Experience and the Social Witness". These lectures will be published by Harper and Brothers of New York City on November 15 in a volume titled "The Creative Encounter". On the occasion of the lectures, Ohio Wesleyan awarded the Dean of the Chapel the honorary degree Doctor of Humanities. On May 27, Allen University of Columbia, South Carolina awarded him the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters. On June 8, Lincoln

University awarded him the honorary degree Doctor of Divinity as a part of its centennial celebration.

Two of the most significant commencement activities were the delivery of the Baccalaureate sermon as a part of the centennial celebration of the Western College for Women at Oxford, Ohio, and the Baccalaureate sermon for Vassar College. On July 2, the Dean of the Chapel gives one of the lectures in the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the founding of Columbia University, as it will be observed in Santa Barbara, California.

On November 26 the Abingdon-Cokesbury Book Store held an Author's Tea in honor of the publishing of "Meditations of the Heart" by Harper and Brothers.

USE OF 184 BAY STATE ROAD

We have no record of the number of groups and the size of them that were guests at the residence of the Dean and Mrs. Thurman. It is a fair estimate to say that the average has been one group each week and often as many as three groups in a single week. Most of these were dinner or supper meetings. There has been a steady stream of traffic in the house which gave to the facilities very hard use. It will be necessary for reconditioning to be done, but this will appear as a separate memorandum. It is my considered judgment that the home at 184 Bay State Road is an indispensable and integral part of the fulfillment of Marsh Chapel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That plans be perfected for establishing some kind of religious fellowship in connection with the chapel, the details concerning which will be ready the first of September.
2. That some means be perfected for giving a sense of belonging and participating to the increasingly wide radio audience on Sunday morning.
3. That provisions be made and equipment secured for furnishing a parlor for informal meetings and discussions as a part of the ministry of the chapel. Details concerning this have already been submitted.
4. That suitable office space be devised for the Director of the United Ministry within the chapel building, inasmuch as this is an important aspect of the total religious program for students.

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE UNIVERSITY

It is recognized generally that we have not yet found a formula for integrating the religious life of the university. At the present time, work among Roman Catholic students, Jewish students and Orthodox students is the best organized and most effective. The denominational clubs touch only a very few students and, for the most part, are ineffective. The Student Christian Association, during the present year, involved about 300 students, which merely scratched the surface. The Brotherhood Council, which was created as an agent of cooperation at a student level among Protestants, Catholics and Jews, has limped along during the year.

The present plans for next year hold a great deal of promise. At the level of staff, the relations between the Catholic and Jewish chaplains, the Executive of the S.C.A., the Director of United

Ministry and the Dean of the Chapel have been very congenial. In no sense that is fundamental are Protestants, Catholics and Jews close together. The position of the chapel and the very nature of the case continues to be ambivalent.

In many people's minds, the chapel is the formal representative of Protestant Christianity on the campus. As such, it symbolizes a sectarian emphasis. The position of the Dean of the Chapel, however, continues to be, as it has been, that the ministry of the chapel, because it represents the formal intent of the university, with reference to the religious life of its constituency, should be devoted to developing a center for religious worship in the heart of the university to which any and all members of the university may come for spiritual renewal and regeneration. It remains to be seen whether such a position can survive in this climate. If it cannot survive, then the ministry of the chapel should become the official Protestant mouthpiece and hold its own on equal footing with the Jewish and the Catholic positions. The present Dean of the Chapel has no interest in that alternative.

With the coming of a matured and older person as the Director of the S.C.A. and with Dr. Deats continuing another year as Director of the United Ministry, it may be possible to evolve a plan and a strategy of integrating all of the religious activity among the students of the university. The ideal arrangement, perhaps, would be for the university to sponsor a single religious association open to all students. Within that association, ample provisions would be made for the denominational interests to be recognized and channeled to the local churches in the community to which the student groups would be officially related.

This would mean that, as far as work on the campus is concerned, during the week there would be a single united student religious organization exclusive of the Catholic and Jewish. On weekends, the various denominational groups will meet in the local church that has the residence sponsorship.

It is good to know that the climate is sufficiently yeasty and dynamic to make possible the widest possible experimentation on behalf of the creative ideal that is the gift of God to all of His children without regard to faith or creed, class or race.

A final word of appreciation to the administration and to the university community for the outstanding spirit of cooperation which has enveloped the chapel and its program on every hand.