

Jesus said,
“For mortals it is impossible
**WITH GOD
ALL THINGS ARE
POSSIBLE.”**

Matthew 19:26 (NRSV)

Connections essays
by President Joseph Jones, Ph.D.



Connecting FPU's Vision and Mission to the Cultures and Cities

The integration of faith and learning is at the core of the work of faculty, administrators and staff here at Fresno Pacific University. It is central to our mission to “develop students for leadership and service through excellence in Christian higher education” and our vision to be “a leading Christian university known for academic excellence, innovative programming and spiritual vitality.”

This commitment drew Yvette and I to this Christ-centered learning community, and this mission and vision have often guided my thinking during my first year as president, including as I write my contributions to *Connections*, the weekly blog to that community, on our five campuses and beyond. My call for all of us to “Engage the Cultures and Serve the Cities” is a way to broaden and deepen our mission and our vision so we can better do God's work in the lives of our students and in the world around us.

I hope you enjoy this collection of my writings in *Connections*, and it gives you some idea of where I see FPU headed. As we move forward, let us keep the words of Jesus in Matthew 26 in our minds and hearts: “For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.”



Joseph Jones, Ph.D.
President

Read the full versions of *Connections* by the President Jones, faculty and staff, at blogs.fresno.edu/connections



We Came Because

One of the most common questions Yvette and I hear from people who discover we are new to the area: Why did you come to Fresno? We usually tell them we came to serve at FPU. We remind ourselves that we did not come because we were invited, but we came because we were called. Calling to us means surrender. It is a stepping stone to dying. As followers of Jesus Christ, we live a life of dying: dying to our will, to our personal preferences and to our comforts. We constantly remind ourselves to follow Jesus' charge to deny ourselves and to take up our cross and follow him, a charge easily forgotten in our post-modern world. He sets the goals; he marks out the journey; he defines the success; and he receives the glory.

We first felt called to FPU when we found a confluence between our personal call to higher education and the *Fresno Pacific Idea*. Over a decade ago I began to pen out a personal mission statement that expressed this calling. I wrote, that our mission is: "To Extend the Influence of the Kingdom of God through Christian Higher Education." These words were drafted without any personal knowledge of the *Idea*, which preamble uses almost the same phrase. I might be a little dull in hearing the voice of God on occasion, but this type of incident rarely happens, even when seeking God's guidance. After reading the complete document, it was obvious that the *Idea* had already been our commitment to living in higher education: building Christian community that engages the world.

Yvette and I are honored to be part of the FPU family. We don't bring much in and of ourselves, but we live with the assurance that "all things are possible to those who believe." Living with expectations of the possible has privileged us to see God's hand move in ways that seemed impossible. Yvette and I have come to a place in our lives where we are recognizing that our courage, confidence and competence is in Christ Jesus our Lord. As missionaries in Pakistan, where servants are degraded and diminished, we internalized the Christian calling "to serve and not be served." We pray with you that the *Idea* will be fully realized in the years to come, and that the glory of Christ through FPU will be a witness to our region and to the world. 🏠

Pathway to the Future, Engaging the Culture, Serving the City; Realizing the Possibilities in the *Fresno Pacific Idea*

Some of Jesus' last words to his disciples are quite poignant in the life and future of FPU. Luke records an argument at the Last Supper among the disciples concerning who was the greatest among them. Our Lord, the peacemaker, confronts them with the reality of kingdom living: "the greatest of you should be the youngest and the one who rules, should be the servant" (Luke 22:24-27). The disciple John remembers an extension of Luke's narrative as he recounts the master disrobing and kneeling to wash the feet of this ambitious group. I have become more sensitive to dusty feet after living in Pakistan. Each day you need to clean your shoes or feet during the dry season. Anyone with status would not dare clean his/her own shoes, but would direct their servants to do the job. John records one disciple's resistant response and Jesus' retort: "you should wash one another's feet. I set before you an example that you should do as I have done to you" (John 13:13-15).

As a prophetic Christian community (*The Fresno Pacific Idea*) we were established to follow the example of Jesus. The strength of our future depends on applying this word to our work and relationships in and outside this community. The pathway and possibilities to our future are rooted in these words of our Lord: "be servants of all." The disciple John describes this act of Jesus as a demonstration of the extent of his love for the disciples. Jesus follows this demonstration with a new commandment: "to love as he has loved us" (John 13:34).

Sometimes we lose our way, our vision or veer off the pathway when we lose sight of our mission, vision and values. We are a community that is called to engage the culture, to encourage one another and to be a light in cities where we have established presence. The uniqueness of our education is not just that we are a Christian liberal arts university, but that we are an engaged, Christ-centered learning

community. The possibilities for our future are all over the cities of Fresno, Bakersfield, Visalia and Merced, which are an extension of our classrooms, laboratories, mission and our expression of love for God and neighbors. The possibilities are overwhelming if we ask, seek and knock for them. Let us not fool ourselves into thinking they will just come to us. We must be intentional about where we are going.

As we engage the cultures and serve these cities, the possibilities for educating our students will spring forth like living water. And we as a community of educators will also drink of this spring as Christ has promised in his words after washing their feet: "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them" (John 17:13). Our pathway for educating our students for their future is clear: engage the cultures, serve the cities and love one another. This is implicit in the *Fresno Pacific Idea*. 🏠

God's University

A little over a year ago, Yvette and I visited several South Korean Christian universities. Our university in Pakistan had developed partnerships with several of these institutions, and my job was to broaden opportunities for collaboration. Handong Global University was particularly impressive. Though all these institutions were Christian, we were stunned by a message that met us as we walked into the administration building: "God's University." No excuses, no explanation; a just bold expression of identity.

As you walk around campus and notice mission and value statements, you never forget the importance of the community's identity with God. As I compared this with my experience at numerous Christian universities in the U.S.A., I became embarrassed by how sensitive we have become about offending others by who we are as Christian institutions. The boldness of Handong Global University's statement was supported by the campus' beauty, its innovation and excellence in curriculum and facilities, and a confidence that God was with this community because it dared to honor him in its identity and service.

All if not most Christian universities would suggest that they belong to God. Few have been so bold as to publish this affirmation. We reminded ourselves in coming to Fresno that FPU is also "God's University." We are all his students, these are his facilities and he has called us to serve one another. We so easily lose sight of our place as a community of his kingdom that is governed by our love for one another. Jesus says that the world around us will know about our identity with him by our love for one another (John 13:35).

Our future and our success rest in the conviction that we are "God's University." Yes, there are others all over the world, but our success is founded on our resolve that he not only is Lord of our community, but that FPU, including our seminary and regional campuses, are here for the glory of God and the extension of his kingdom.

We do not work for our own benefit, but for the glory and splendor of the owner. We are not here to exert our personal rights because we have offered ourselves up to the owner as "living sacrifices" (Romans 12:1) in service to our king and one another. Our call to this work is to follow the manager. He says to follow him we must "deny ourselves, and take up our cross (our kingdom responsibilities) and follow Him" (Luke 9:23).

Part of that responsibility is to trust in him wholly. To believe that he is more than able to empower us to be a beacon of light in the Valley and around the world. He is more than able to do that which concerns us if we would set aside unbelief, murmuring and complaints; and walk in appreciation for what he is doing in our lives.

Our success is not dependent on all our strategies. Our success is dependent on our "casting down every imagination that exalts itself against who we know God to be" (2 Corinthians 10:5). Our hope and our confidence is in him (Jeremiah 17:7). It is through that faith that he empowers us to do "far above all we can ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). Join with me in the spirit of thanksgiving, and you will see the glory of God in his university. 🏠

Coming Together to Honor God in Convocations

“**W**e have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.” Dorothy Day

“Healing is impossible in loneliness; it is the opposite of loneliness. Conviviality is healing.” Wendell Berry

Four times a year the university has the tradition of coming together—two commencement services and two convocations. All four events are important in the life of the community. They should be intended to celebrate the beginning of the semesters and the outcome of our service during the semester—graduation. These special times can serve to strengthen our resolve to live as a Christ-centered loving community of hope. They serve as a celebration of our corporate efforts, and the opportunity to be humbled by our dependence on one another in doing God’s will.

Starting this year, we are changing the format of our convocations. We will no longer gather for the President’s or Provost’s Convocation, but for our community’s Fall and Spring Convocations. These will be sacred times for us to come together in offering of thanksgiving and worship for the privilege of education, and the opportunity to serve the generations of the future.

If we seek biblical examples of this communion of honoring God, we see it in the holy convocations initiated by God for the community of Israel. The Hebrew for convocations is “miqra,” translated as rehearsal. These rehearsals were times “set-apart” or “sabbaths” to honor God. Each gathering had its purpose in unity and remembrance. Were these community rehearsals preparation for things to come? These prototypes in many ways express God’s heart for his people. A desire to see them worship in unity.

In the book of I Samuel (3:30), God says that “those who honor me, I will honor.” Were these special events opportunities to honor God? I think they were. At FPU we are committed to growing as a community that honors God. Therefore, at the beginning of each semester we will come together in a spirit of unity and love to celebrate God’s presence in our midst. This is our opportunity to offer thanksgiving for his gracious gift of community and all that we can expect in the future.

All offices will be closed and classes suspended for the one hour each semester where students, staff and faculty will come together to honor God. Faculty are not asked to wear regalia; no special seating or recognition for any group, and all welcomed as members of our diverse community. Details of our gathering will be posted shortly.

One of Jesus’ last prayers for us and his disciples was: “...may they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” Just as Dorothy Day and Wendell Berry suggest, “love comes with community” and “conviviality is healing.” As we mature as a community of hope we trust that all; students, faculty and staff will experience the love of Christ. We can be assured that this love heals our hopes and comforts our fears. 🏠

Presidential Priorities: Reframing Our Thinking

Fresno Pacific University has become a regional university of the San Joaquin Valley that extends its influence from Bakersfield to Merced through five campuses. It not only provides a Christ-centered education, but serves as a catalyst for change in spiritual development, social and cultural growth, economic development and education. To expand the influence of the kingdom, the university will excel in academic programs, create collaborative innovation and promote peace, justice and reconciliation. Our focus has expanded as the Christian liberal arts university and seminary of the Valley.

Our actions, operations and planning have not always kept up with our growth. Our enrollment reached 4,000 students this year because of the tenacious work of our admission staff. Our increase is not due to our traditional location here in Fresno, but because of the interest in our other locations. Now is the time to better plan and serve our students to empower them to become beacons of hope.

We have re-structured the President's Cabinet and activated a President's Council to ensure greater academic voice in planning and development. We have identified 10 strategic priorities that are foundational to our internal health, outreach and partnerships. I wanted to communicate these so that all would understand the context of our building for the future and stimulate a broader discussion in preparation for the numerous opportunities for engagement.

Our hope is these priorities will frame our work throughout the five locations. I will list all 10 priorities here, and address specifics in coming *Connections*'.

We all are about to embark on a journey that will free our imaginative, creative and entrepreneurial spirits of collaboration to "Engage the Cultures and Serve the Cities" and affirm our vision "to be known for academic excellence, innovative programming and spiritual vitality."

Strategic Priorities for 2017-18

1. Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of academic & administrative governance (re-structure).
2. Plan for financial stability.
3. Develop a university-wide academic plan.
4. Strengthen the links between main and regional campuses (student identity).
5. Identify costs and a plan to address deferred maintenance.
6. Design and initiate a comprehensive capital campaign to include: a Cultural and Arts Center, endowments, scholarships, deferred maintenance, infrastructure/technology, professional development, athletics, seminary and regional campus facilities.
7. Strengthen collaborations between seminary and other academic programs.
8. Develop a collaborative governance model between faculty and staff.
9. The revision of position and appointment of a permanent provost/ senior vice president for academic affairs.
10. Identify funding priorities for 2018-19.

A more expanded list of the strategic priorities can be viewed at:
fpu.edu/about/our-mission/strategic-priorities 

Strategic Priorities II: Living Out the Vision

Fresno Pacific University's vision is "... to be known for its Academic Excellence, Innovative Programming and Spiritual Vitality." The *Fresno Pacific Idea* provides the framework for this vision. This semester we coined a phrase to direct its application: "Engage the Cultures and Serve the Cities."

To fulfill the vision, we must first strengthen a collaborative environment that integrates faith, scholarship, praxis and civic engagement. We must extend ourselves internationally and through online programming to broaden the influence of values we revere as sacred.

In the last *Connections* we listed 10 Strategic Priorities that empower the university in accomplishing its mission and vision. This week we will review the first two:

Increase the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Academic & Administrative Governance

I am impressed by the qualities and gifts that faculty and staff bring to FPU. There is little question of our commitment to serve our students, but we react to the immediate so often we lose sight of the important. Dwight D. Eisenhower said: "What is important is seldom urgent and what is urgent is seldom important."

We are therefore assessing our working culture to increase our productivity, clarify our policies and procedures, reexamine duplication of services and identify gaps in our operations. We have expanded and re-structured the President's Cabinet and activated a President's Council that includes academic deans, the IT director and chair of the Faculty Senate. These groups will identify the "important."

To nurture a more cohesive community, we have invited all faculty and staff to write *Connections*. In addition, Fall and Spring Convocations encourage community through worship and celebration.

As we build a more productive community, we can expect changes in policies, responsibilities, budgets and alignments. We will become more intentional about professional development, and create an accountable review system for individuals, departments and programs. Our strength is evident in the prayers of Jesus: "...that they may be

one as we (Father and Son) are one...so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:22-23).

Plan for Financial Stability

Herbert Hoover said: "By the time we make ends meet, someone moves the ends." We have addressed urgent or immediate needs and neglected the sustainability of the university.

Our work today will impact generations of students and individuals we will never meet. The finance/revenue strategies should sustain academic excellence, innovative programming and spiritual vitality. Vision does not happen because we write it down, nor is a strategic plan of value without strategic financing. We have been dreaming for a long time, but dreaming and hoping do not facilitate change. Strategic action with the long-view in mind is a step towards sustainability.

We will reframe our thinking about academic excellence. We will examine our regional campuses. We will restructure our fund development. We will build an endowment to secure the university's future and service to first-generation, low- and middle-income students.

Our facilities will testify to the glory of God. We will be strategic in technology, programing and partnerships. We will be faithful stewards of our gifts, and with integrity honor our donors and advance the kingdom.

Past difficulties have prepared us for this future. God has called us to "trust him with all our hearts and not to lean to our own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5,6). We were in the wilderness, but now our pathway is clear: "Engage the Cultures and Serve the Cities." This is our civic responsibility and our Christian mandate. 🏠

Strategic Priorities III: Serving the Lord with Gladness— Psalms 100:2

Scriptures encourage, sometimes command, us to “serve the Lord with gladness.” We can be so focused on our plans of action we forget the reason for the actions. We have developed strategic priorities not as a burden to push us, but to free us in our work together.

God said to Israel: “Because you did not serve the Lord your God joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity... He will put an iron yoke on your neck...” (Deuteronomy 28:47, 48). During his difficult times, Paul exhorts us to rejoice in the Lord always. Let’s encourage one another in the Scriptures, so we “serve the Lord with gladness as we work together to bring glory to his name.”

This week we conclude our review of our 10 Strategic Priorities.

Develop a University-wide Academic Plan

Our academic program is central to what we do. There are few weeks that have passed since my arrival when I have not met someone who comments on the quality of our graduates or the contributions of our alumni. Freshmen communicate very positive experiences in their first months at FPU. We are doing a good job. The question is can we define academic excellence, innovative programming and spiritual vitality, the drivers of our learning experiences.

With support from market research and assessment of regional need, we need to devise a plan to identify, support and launch appropriate programs. The academic plan pushes us to think about how we teach, what we teach and the outcomes we expect. We all should be able to clearly articulate what “academic excellence” means.

Strengthen the Links Between Main and Regional Campuses

We have been hearing from our regional campuses that they are a secondary thought. We have so focused on our work with traditional students we have not given equal energy to how we care for three-quarters of our students. We have an equal responsibility to all students. Our planning should include Merced, North Fresno, Visalia and Bakersfield.

Identify Costs and a Plan to Address Deferred Maintenance

There has been much talk about new facilities, which are desperately needed. We appreciate donors who have responded. We have discussed master plans, acquiring additional properties and the use of land already purchased. These are all important, but as we think about the future, we need to plan for the renewal and renovation of our current physical plant. This strategy is just common sense, but will be delayed unless we make it a priority.

Design and Initiate a Comprehensive Capital Campaign

Currently different university arms work in silos raising funds for various areas. We have worked on building a Cultural and Arts Center, a concession stand and restroom for our sports programs and various deferred maintenance projects. We also have many committed donors who support scholarships, equipment, centers and the seminary. We are grateful for the gifts that sustain the university.

We, like most private colleges and universities, are tuition-driven. A drop in Cal Grant support could handicap a significant number of our students’ ability to continue their education. About 54 percent of our traditional students come from families with incomes of \$40,000 or less. Serving them is who we are as a Christian university. Sustainability means growing an endowment that buffers the university against economic, political or social pressures.

A shift to a comprehensive capital campaign sets us on a trajectory that insures future students will have the opportunity to experience a quality Christian university education.

How do we approach this work? With joy. We serve the Lord with gladness. 🏠

Seeing the Possibilities: Doing the Common in Uncommon Ways

(Inauguration Speech)

Our branding theme this year is “Possible Happens Here.” In Matthew 19:26 Jesus says, “with God all things are possible.” So, this year we are looking forward to expanding the possibilities for our students and growing our engagement in Fresno and the Central Valley.

Years ago, I came across a saying by George Washington Carver: “When you do the common things in life in an uncommon way, you will command the attention of the world,” Voltaire said: “Common sense is not so common.” In some instances, doing the common with common sense becomes the uncommon way of doing things.

How do we take creative actions, now, that will influence the generations to come? We coined a phrase: “Engaging the Cultures and Serving the Cities.”

I understand that in the last census, the San Joaquin Valley was identified as the western Appalachia. Our Valley is a living laboratory, a place to awaken our faith and a context to nurture what Albert Einstein called a “holy curiosity.”

So how do we take the common and reframe it in uncommon ways to more effectively elevate learning? I would suggest three “disruptive strategies”:

Encouraging a Self-less Passion for Learning

The university has supported undocumented students when others were not considering the matter. We are committed to serving first-generation and underserved populations.

I suggest we infuse our compassionate environment with a selfless passion for learning which encourages loving God with our minds. The Book of Proverbs states: “Wisdom is the principle thing.”

Here is where we stretch ourselves. A selfless passion for learning grows out of the quest for wisdom, and in the pursuit of God.

Mother Theresa’s pursuit of God gave her a passion for the poorest of the poor. She said: “We can’t all do great things, but we can do small things with great love.” She took the common and served in an uncommon way.

Empowering a Spirit of Reconciliation and Peacemaking

Educator Ernest Boyer outlined six principles that should be characteristic of learning communities. He calls justice the “most urgent obligation of a learning community.”

As a just community, we have always respected and welcomed all students. Biblical justice is established to yield peace. Think about the difference it would make if our graduates were released into the world with the skills of peacemakers and reconcilers. Jesus said: “Blessed are the peacemakers.”


Nelson Mandela said: “If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.”

Inspiring Courageous Innovation

Courage has not been evident in higher education. We teach change, but fear making change. We fear one another, which results in lack of trust. We fear engaging in innovation, because it risks failure.

People often ask Yvette and I if we were afraid in Pakistan. Our confidence in the call and presence of God was a buffer from fear. As the Psalmist stated: “what do I have to fear if God is with me?”

How do we find new possibilities? We do it through awakening ourselves to what Jesus said, “with man it might be impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Many of you may question my common sense. But I would ask you: what is God doing when he brings an African American couple from Asia, to serve at a Christian Hispanic Serving institution in a part of California not known to us? Maybe God is preparing us all for an uncommon journey of faith. To “Engage the Cultures and Serve the Cities.” 

An Engaged Presence

God sends his gift of love to the earth in the form of a child so we may understand God's heart for relationship with all mankind. In the same way the son sacrifices himself so we might become children of God. This season should only remind us of what we celebrate every day: the precious gift of God through Jesus Christ. "He who knew no sin, became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus" (I Corinthians 5:21).

The FPU President's Cabinet and President's Council established 10 strategic priorities to "Engage the Cultures and Serve the Cities" in the Central Valley. We should remind ourselves that the model for all we do is our Lord Jesus Christ, who came to serve and not to be served.

We graduated about 480 students this month. We hope they will be engaged in their homes, on their jobs and throughout the Central Valley. We trust they will carry a torch of hope into our communities. We pray their lives will demonstrate wisdom, knowledge and service.

The strategic priorities provide a roadmap to an engaged presence. In previous Connections we shared the first six. In this edition before the Christmas break, we review briefly the last four. Here are the priorities, with the last four highlighted:

1. Increase efficiency and effectiveness of academic & administrative governance (re-structure).
2. Plan for financial stability.
3. Develop a university-wide academic plan.
4. Strengthen the links between main and satellite campuses (student identity).
5. Identify costs and a plan to address deferred maintenance.
6. Design and initiate a comprehensive capital campaign to include: a Cultural and Arts Center, endowments, scholarships, deferred maintenance, infrastructure/technology, professional development, athletics, seminary and regional campus facilities.

7. Strengthen collaborations between the seminary and other academic programs.

Since the embedding of the seminary into the university, there has been some collaborative work, but less intentional design to ensure a robust synergy. We anticipate collaborative efforts in operations, fund development and curricular innovation. An embedded seminary can open opportunities for innovative programming and enhance the spiritual vitality of the university. Our challenge will be to maintain the distinctiveness of the seminary while broadening its integration.

8. Develop a collaborative governance model between faculty and staff.

Collaborative governance is a paradigm of partnership where all bodies maintain a respect for the expertise of each. Clarifying the decision-making roles of administration, staff and faculty is essential. Governance is more an issue of the heart than a division of power. Our focus will always be our students, and our efforts will be to their benefit.

9. The revision of position and appointment of a permanent provost/senior vice president for academic affairs.

Provost/senior vice president for academic affairs Deborah Gayle Copeland, Ph.D. Copeland will begin her tenure in February. We are delighted to welcome this experienced provost and talented administrator who has lived and worked in the Valley, and is also committed to Christian higher education.

10. Identify funding priorities for 2018-19.

The university is shifting its fiscal year to begin July 1. The budgetary process will be launched much earlier and the cabinet will set university-wide priorities based on the 10 strategic priorities. We ask departments to prepare their budgets with these priorities in mind.

FPU can cultivate and bolster an "engaged presence" in the Central Valley. We must be deliberate, purposeful and resolute. In honor of God's precious gift of Jesus, let us flourish in the good work of love, so that when others experience the fruit of our labor they will glorify the father in heaven. 🏠

Be Careful Not to Forget the Lord Your God

In the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy Moses reminds the people of the promise and vision of God for their future. He also reminds them of the laws, statutes, ceremonies and traditions, so that they will be “careful not to forget the Lord their God” in their work and prosperity. Three times in this chapter the Lord gives his word through Moses.

When the Israelites first arrived at the edge of the promised land they lost sight of God. Death of the vision became the death of that community.

The same vision was passed to their children: “Be careful not to forget the Lord your God.” Israel’s success was based on their commitment to honor God in their congregation.

Generations later we follow the history of the Israelites in captivity and exile. The prophet Jeremiah, on behalf of God, asked: “What fault did you find in me, that you strayed so far from me?” We are amazed at their loss of sight, especially to a people set apart to honor God. Maybe there is a lesson for us as a community of Christ-followers.

If we are not careful, our daily activities can lure us away from recognizing the presence of God in our workplace, even when that work is Christian service. In losing sight of his presence, we are vulnerable to building images of God as our servant. We forget the awe of God which compels us to live in service to him. This new image is a servant to our comforts and ambitions, a protector of our preferences and a convenience to our availability.

As our sight dims of God’s presence, we lose connection, fall into silos and miss the essential interdependence required to realize God’s fulness for his people. The ceremonies and traditions given to Israel invited them to recognize God in community. These events stirred their memories of his exaltation: “be careful not to forget the Lord your God.”

At FPU we are working to strengthen our vision of community in the context of honoring God. We started this year with our fall convocation; a tradition to honor God. We continue to follow this tradition as we gather with faculty, staff and students in a concert of worship in the spring convocation on February 21. These convocations will not only occur on the main campus, but also at our regional campuses where alumni and friends are welcome.

We encourage faculty and staff participation in College Hour on Fridays in the Special Events Center. Our students are always encouraged to see faculty and staff make the effort to worship alongside them. An additional opportunity to join in this Christ-centered community building is seminary chapel on Wednesdays in North Hall on the main campus. These chapels are shifting slightly to accommodate participation of staff and faculty across campus.

We as a community are here in the service of Jesus Christ. As with Israel, we can easily be seduced to forget the presence of God in our work because we are so committed to getting things done.

As a community of Christ-followers we are refreshing the *Fresno Pacific Idea* through the mantra: “Engaging the Cultures and Serving the Cities.” Vision guides our work and commitments. Any community that has conflicting visions or conflicting approaches will rarely realize a vision.

“Be careful not to forget the Lord your God”—we remind ourselves and each other as we gather in community to worship that the Lord our God is ever-present, and we are his servants. 🙏

Envisioning the Future: *The Fresno Pacific Idea—* "Engaging the Cultures and Serving the Cities"

Over the last few years the university has adopted Matthew 19:26 ("...with God all things are possible") as a corporate reminder of the person and power of God in the life of our community. Earlier in the book of Matthew (17:17-21), Jesus answered a question from his disciples when they failed to perform a miracle. Jesus tells them it was their lack of faith that prevented their seeing the hand of God. He told them that they only needed a very small amount of faith in God to witness the impossible.

This reminds me of another event when others could not see the future God had in store for them. Faith is all about envisioning that which has not manifested itself. Moses led Israel to the edge of the promised land and selected 12 leaders from each tribe to spy out the land God had given them. Somewhere along the way 10 of the 12 lost sight of what God had promised. Through the lenses of fear and doubt they could only see what they deemed as practical, rational and reasonable. They forgot that "with God all things are possible."

We at FPU have started a journey to revitalize the *Fresno Pacific Idea* for the 21st century. Our clarion call is to: "Engage the Cultures and Serve the Cities." In that context I suggested during the inauguration three stratagems to consider for integration in our work and service to students. They were: encouraging a self-less passion for learning; empowering a spirit of reconciliation and peacemaking; and inspiring courageous innovation.

Our strategic plan and the strategic priorities for this year only help to guide areas we need to address. Those documents neither provide a corporate vision of what we are becoming, nor define the influence we will have in the region and the world. The envisioning process does not

change our mission, values or Christ-centered commitment. It does provide clearer lenses for why and how we accomplish our goals. The FPU of today is quite different from the FPU of 10 years ago. We did not necessarily plan or prepare for these changes. We, like most Christian colleges and universities, reacted to the external changes in our country with hope just to survive the numerous crises we had no plans to address.

The official vision of the university is: "Fresno Pacific is a leading Christian University known for Academic Excellence, Innovative Programming, and Spiritual Vitality." These are all commendable aspirations but need work on how we define in uncommon ways what is included in academic excellence, innovative programming and spiritual vitality.

We all should be reminded that defining the mission, values and vision of this university is the responsibility of the FPU Board of Trustees. Our responsibility as staff and faculty are to develop plans on how the vision is actualized. We do have the opportunity to provide input in how the three areas should appear in their maturing stages. We will therefore convene four town halls in the coming weeks designated as "Envisioning the Future" in four areas: 1) Students, 2) Faculty and staff, 3) Community/internal -external, 4) Facilities/infrastructure. We will use this time to review our strategic plan, our current progress and discuss possible strategic priorities for the 2018-19 school year. These town halls will be an open forum for discussing the possibilities. We as a community should come to these forums with the conviction that "with God all things are possible." 🏠

What's Christian Higher Education Worth? How about \$60 billion

The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) issued an economic study of its 142 members in the United States, which includes Fresno Pacific University. All these institutions provide environments where students can freely integrate their Christian faith with cognitive development.

The report highlights the economic value of these institutions, particularly the 16 in California. FPU is the only university of this nature in the Central Valley, providing educational options for traditional, non-traditional and graduate students. The university has the highest graduation rate in the Valley and is a Hispanic-Serving Institution.

The CCCU study, released March 26, 2018, shows its members have a national economic impact of \$60 billion each year. That's \$166 million per day. This mirrors a similar study of California private colleges and universities by the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU). These 79 colleges and universities, including FPU, employ 88,800 Californians and provide a \$26 billion+ economic contribution to the state. They produce 22 percent of the bachelor's degrees, 52 percent of the master's degrees and 54 percent of the doctoral degrees in California (AICCU Fact book: aiccu.edu).

A few key findings of the CCCU study:

- For every \$1 in federal grant money a student receives, CCCU institutions provide \$5 through grants and scholarships.
- The student loan default rate for graduates from CCCU institutions (6.3 percent) is nearly half the national average (11.5 percent).
- Although tax exempt, CCCU institutions generate \$9.7 billion in federal tax revenue each year. For every \$1 in federal grant money a student receives, CCCU institutions generate more than \$20 in federal tax revenue.
- One in three CCCU students are first-generation college students.

- 50 percent of CCCU students come from families earning less than \$50,000 per year.
- While approximately one in four college students across the country volunteer, more than one in three CCCU students participate in community service.

Comparing FPU to these institutions and other independent colleges reveals:

- 49 percent of FPU students are the first in their families to attend college or university, rather than one in three, and these students graduate at the same rate as our students in general.
- 56 percent of FPU students come from families who earn \$40,000 or less annually, rather than 50 percent of students coming from families who earn less than \$50,000.
- FPU's student default rate is 4.4 percent, below the CCCU average of 6.3 percent.
- All our traditional undergraduate students perform community service.
- In addition, 44 percent of FPU students identify themselves as Latinx. These students also graduate at the same rate as our students in general.

In all, California CCCU institutions spend \$1.8 billion annually, enroll over 60,000 students, employ more than 10,000 people, support more than 45,000 other jobs, attract more than \$500 million in ancillary student spending and generate \$370 million in state tax revenues. Their more than 220,000 alumni earning an extra \$2.8 billion a year due to the education they received. Nationwide, CCCU schools educate 445,000 students, employ 72,000 faculty and staff and serve 3.5 million alumni.

But the success institutions like FPU is more than dollars and cents. Our success is defined by the ways we produce effective graduates. Our spiritual and ethical commitment to the Central Valley reflects our commitment to Christ. Our mantra is to "Engage the Cultures and Serve the Cities" in the Valley. We are privileged to join with others to serve the economic wellbeing. We look forward to partnering with others so committed.

For the full report, visit cccu.org/economic-impact/ 

Prayer with Consistent Purpose

Yvette and I knew that our journey to Pakistan would change our lives. We also anticipated a change in our relationship to God. We were entering an environment not conducive to Christianity, and in some places very dangerous to live. Prayer was always a principal in our relationship, but there it became critical to our survival. Over the years we carved out sacred places in our homes to meet with God. These were centers of peace, confidence and assurance. There was nothing special about the physical space, it was just a quiet place to remind ourselves of the omnipresence of God.

We were not alone in this practice. Early mornings before sunrise as we walked around campus, it was not unusual to see several women kneeling at the foot of a cross outside of the chapel to offer prayers for their family. We could not imagine the difficulties that drove them to these early morning meetings, but we were confident that their time in this place served as a staple for the survival and safety of their families.

In our lifetime, most of us will find ourselves in periods of desperation. Prayer is natural during those times. Our greatest struggles are persistence or maybe, as the book of James states: an “effective fervent prayer.” Our prayer life is driven by circumstances instead of a relationship with God. We get so easily distracted by all our commitments that prayer becomes only a breath to exhale in moments of convenience. “The effective fervent prayer that avails much” is a prayer of intention, not convenience.

In our consistency we find wisdom and peace through our fellowship with the Lord.

As a Christ-centered community we hold to the importance of prayer as a community and the integration of Scripture into our work together. Some of our greatest challenges are finding time to pray together or individually throughout the day. Corrie ten Boom, a concentration camp survivor, asked a question we all should consider—“Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?” The honest answer is revealed in our practices.

We are embarking on a series of forums to think about envisioning the future, despite all the challenges of the past, present and future. We believe God has purpose for our community that none of us has

yet to fully realize. We can be easily distracted from this purpose if our focus is only on the challenges. It is in prayer that our hearts are knitted together to realize our place in this God-given purpose, and the significance of our interdependence in realizing that role. Oswald Chambers assigned a truth to the importance of prayer that we should consider. He said that “prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work.”

I would therefore invite our community to join me in persistent prayer for our envisioning the future, serving our students and engaging the cities throughout the Central Valley. Warkentin Prayer Chapel is one of those sacred places on campus. It symbolizes the importance of prayer in our journey together.

I invite you for the month of April, which starts with the celebration of our Lord's resurrection, to stop by the Prayer Chapel before work or during your coffee breaks; before or after lunch, or near the end of the day. A consistent 10 or 15 minutes each day interceding for our students (future and present), your colleagues, our alumni and our friends will significantly impact the influence of the university throughout the region. Come join us in this privilege of prayer. 🏠

Envisioning the Future: Academic Excellence

“Teach the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning” (Proverbs 9:9).

“The wise will hear and increase in learning; and a person of understanding will acquire wise counsel” (Proverbs 9:1).

Over the past few weeks we have conducted several forums entitled: “Envisioning the Future.” We appreciate the participation of our staff, faculty and students in these discussions. Our objective was to encourage the community to imagine or reimagine the future of the university in the context of its vision: “to be known for academic excellence, innovative programming and spiritual vitality.” We are processing your feedback and will provide for similar discussions with the FPU Board of Trustees.

Albert Einstein said, “imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited; imagination encircles the world.” Envisioning the future stretches our imagination beyond the present and moves us into the possibilities of the future. We say to our students: “Possible happens here.” So, our definition of academic excellence should include the integration of faith, reason and innovation, which all generate new possibilities in the minds and hearts of our students. Integration of faith guides the use of knowledge; this is a pathway to wisdom. Reason matures the ability to analyze, comprehend and cultivate an informed judgement. Innovation searches for new knowledge which emboldens our creativity and strengthens our courage.

Excellence has always been central to our vision. I trust we will consider what this means for the 21st century. I was reluctant to share my thoughts during the forums so as not to influence the direction of the discussions. I now take the time to provide some of my musings.

We all assume we agree on the characterization of academic excellence within our community. As I have given this some thought it appears to me that academic excellence that integrates faith and learning (spiritual vitality) and encourages creativity (innovative programming) is academic excellence that matures wisdom and stimulates the imagination. I see five areas that we should consider

envisioning or reimagining that are intrinsic to academic excellence. I think we need to explore how to be more intentional about infusing these elements into our learning environment. We can find evidence of all these areas in some place in our educational experience. The real question is, how do these distinctives flourish at FPU? I would suggest we consider more deliberately the following:

1. Grow additional models of intellectually engaging student-centered learning.
2. Increase opportunities for open inquiry, including undergraduate research, collaborative scholarship and innovative use of curricular technology.
3. Design a diversity of reflective and experiential opportunities for service learning.
4. Create or identify leadership development (conflict resolution skills, personal finance management) in our common learning.
5. Expand global and domestic cultural engagement opportunities (study, travel).

We expect to communicate more of these ideas as they emerge from the forums. The diverse perspectives we received are our strength, our faith is our courage and God's promises are our hope.

Proverbs tells us “the wise will hear and increase in learning...” I trust we all will listen to each other as we continue the dialogue on imagining the university's vision for the future. We are all proud of our graduates and the education we provide. Jim Collins said: “Good is the enemy of great. And that is one of the key reasons why we have so little that becomes great.” We are very good at what we do, but with God's help we have the *possibility* of becoming exceptional. 🏠

Living Under the Bond of Peace (Eph. 4:3, 1 Col 2:12) “Me” or “We” With God

When asked about the end of the age, Jesus described a future of utter chaos: Wars and rumors of wars, nation against nation; hearts would grow cold, despite an increase in knowledge (Matthew 25). We have always talked about peace, but seldom achieved it. Even within Christianity, established by the Prince of Peace, we find it difficult to look beyond our own needs. We are still mostly segregated, suspicious and comfortable to be divided.

Even our worship is fraught with “me,” “I” and “my.” We have lost the sense of body life which includes “we,” “us” and “our.”

The Apostle Paul encourages us to be a collective light and mirror of the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus said: “By your love for one another, the world will know that you are my disciples.”

But is this what we experience? Jesus made it clear our testimony of commitment to God is based on our relationship with each other. Take a moment in the day to tell someone: I need you to become all that God wants me to be.

James knew why consistent effective prayer is so difficult: “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have because when you ask God, you ask with the wrong motives” (James 4:1-3).

Principles of Prayer

Jesus knew human nature. We see it in his most trying time in the garden. He asked the disciples to pray with him. When the inevitable happened, they did not act in unity, they panicked and dispersed.

Let me suggest three principles to help strengthen the bond of peace or unity:

1. Pray that we grow in humility St. Augustine frames humility in this way: “it was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes us angels.” Jesus frames it for all of humanity: “If you want to be great, then learn to be the servant of all.”

2. Seek God’s Will in your Prayers Paul in Romans 12: “Be transformed by the renewal of your thinking ... that you might know what is the good, acceptable and perfect will of God.” Our prayer life should include what we can do for God and others. Charles Spurgeon called prayer a “spiritual transaction with the Creator.” Corrie ten Boom asked: “Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?”

3. Love God, love your neighbor When Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment, he answered, “to love God, and love your neighbor. All the Law and Prophets are based on these two commands.” The Apostle John reminded us: “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God and everyone that loves is born of God.” (1 John 4:7).

How do you love those who do not love you, who maybe even hate you? We think of love as an emotion, or an affinity for a person. The love Jesus suggested to his disciples was a commitment to serve. We love God by serving him; we love our neighbors by serving them.

Let us pray for the humility to value others; God will certainly humble us. Let us pray for his will; God will certainly reveal that to us. Let us pray for love for our brothers and sisters; God will show us how to serve. 🙏

To Serve or Be Served? Matthew 20:28

Each day most of us unconsciously question whether we should serve or be served. We are seldom aware of this dialogue, but our thought patterns and actions reveal what lingers in our hearts. Here at FPU our mission includes preparing students for “leadership and service.” We define leadership as an act of service. So, it is easy for us to assume that we have a service-oriented work culture. But do we ever ask what motivates us? No one can read our minds or hearts, but if we are honest, our motives for service are not always pure.

Jesus makes it clear he came to serve and not to be served. Given our natural inclination to protect personal rights, avoid the inconvenient and be praised, we lean toward *self-seeking service*. Are we not amazed that the one who created us all would lower himself to serve that which he created? This expression of God’s love for us encourages us to share this love with others. Jesus’ commission to his disciples was “to love in the same way that he loved them” (John 15:12). His expectation of us is to love or serve as we have been served.

Several months ago I shared a story of our experience in Pakistan concerning the person we hired as a cook in our home. One day he noticed me cleaning the dust from my shoes before heading off to work. He was appalled that I would stoop to clean my own shoes, and immediately wrestled them from me to complete the task. Later my wife and I noticed him sitting under a tree cleaning all my shoes so that I would not attempt to clean them again. This was not part of his responsibility, but he served out of gratefulness for a job that helped him to literally feed his family. Each day he served with joy, finding tasks that were not expected. His service became an expression of his appreciation.

The young man modeled for me the joy of service which comes as we reflect on the goodness of God and his gift to us. Some days we are intentional about going out of our way, reminding ourselves that our work is not about us, but about our students, our colleagues and the Central Valley. We educate, mentor, model and manage our time as an expression of love for God and our neighbors.

The feedback we received from the “envisioning forums” in which many of you participated included a campus service day and a corporate beautification effort. The president’s council discussed these possibilities and thought this summer would be a good opportunity for a campus-wide beautification initiative. We consulted with our maintenance staff and decided to dedicate a Friday morning towards these efforts, which will end with lunch. An announcement will be made as to the best date. We will list the projects for sign-up and request that departments with additional beautification ideas submit them to the president’s office. These will be vetted with our maintenance staff before a full list is posted.

This is a small way we can serve our new students and parents as they arrive on campus this fall. Our regional campuses are encouraged to participate with projects as well. Alumni and friends are welcome to join us.

Mother Theresa said: “We can’t all do great things, but we can do small things with great love.” Let’s find small things in our daily routines to remind us that we are here to serve and not to be served. 🏠

The Challenge of Leadership

I heard or read somewhere years ago a statement that has remained with me: “everyone who wants to be a leader doesn’t want to lead.” So many of us want the position, but not the responsibilities. As Christians we forget that our Lord came to serve and not to be served. On one occasion Jesus’ disciples lobbied for key positions in his kingdom. He told them that to be great in God’s Kingdom, you needed to be the servant of all. There is so little personal attraction in serving without recognition or praise from others. The accolades we receive are temporal, but we still seek them.

Jesus gives his disciples direction into leadership. He says: “love your enemies, bless those that curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” He goes further: “Do not take revenge and give to those who ask of you.” Our visceral response is that he didn’t mean what I think he said. We have been told that a leader is one who sets direction, provides guidance, sets the pace and gets things done. We do not think of leaders as those who sacrifice themselves for the benefit of others. Those are martyrs, not leaders, or are they?

Over a year ago I served at a Christian university in Pakistan during the campaigns for the American presidential election. I was continuously queried about my opinion, and the very nature of campaign strategies. Individuals would jest about how they perceived our candidates. They suggested our divisive strategies bore resemblance to the elections in their country. Our leaders in their eyes were Christians who behaved no differently than their countrymen.

Our behavior and speech produce fruit that is consistent with our hearts. We forget the real challenge that Jesus gives us—serve rather than be served. We find his words in Luke chapter 6:27-37, which reflect the heart and behavior of a leader that follows him. The challenge requires a surrender that most are not willing to make.

Jesus sets the pace for influential leadership. He says: “love your enemies, do good to those who curse you and pray for those who mistreat you.” If that is not enough, he goes on to say: “do to others as you would have them do to you,” deny yourself, take your responsibility to sacrifice yourself (the cross) daily, and follow me.” Jesus would challenge those who would compete for status in his kingdom to sacrifice themselves for others.

We seldom see this in our society. I am not sure we can say this is the norm for the church or Christian leadership. The *Fresno Pacific Idea* encourages us to extend the influence of the kingdom through the preparation of our students for leadership and service in the church and society. We should periodically ask ourselves if we are modelling that which we expect from the maturing of our students.

We are about to embark on one of the most exciting times in the history of the university. Our enrollment is growing, and many in the Fresno and the Central Valley are inviting us to partnerships that will impact communities all around us. As we “Engage the Cultures and Serve the Cities,” let’s remind ourselves who we represent, and the type of leadership we model. With the same grace measured to us, we should grant grace to others. We will encourage before we criticize; we will serve before we are served; and we will love when we are not loved. We will become lights to our community and servants of the most high God. 🏠



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