

We Have Seen Miracles

KEVIN J WORTHEN

We have seen miracles happen in the work and preparations for this day. Maybe we used up our share of them before we got to the weather today, but I doubt it. The story of today's groundbreaking for Brigham Young University's new engineering building really is an example of how consecration happens and how it becomes contagious.

I could begin the story in a lot of different places, but I will begin more than 10 years ago. Back then there was not a Life Sciences Building, but there was a John A. Widtsoe Building and a Knight Mangum Building.

The university had done a lot of work to plan what could and should be done in the southeast quadrant of campus. The planning team included the visionary leadership of Jack R. Wheatley, a founding chair of the President's Leadership Council (PLC). Brother Wheatley not only helped envision what could happen and is happening here in the southeast quadrant, but he became the first major contributor to this building. I am so glad he is with us today.

About 10 years ago the process of getting ready to build this building started in earnest. The fundraising efforts started off a little slow, but, always at critical times, key contributions came along. It has probably taken longer than most of us thought it would. But the sum of those miracles and contributions is that we are here to break ground and that construction of the building will officially begin.

Generosity Just in Time

I want to mention the contributions of the Fritz B. Burns Foundation and welcome board member Cheryl Robinson. The sizable gift from the foundation came at a time when it seemed fundraising had stalled. The Burns Foundation donation was a jump start when we needed it.

And then, in the fall of 2014, when we were a little over halfway to the goal, it seemed as if we had arrived at another plateau. But more miraculous things began to happen. Dean Rodney J. Brown, who was then

the dean of the College of Life Sciences and who had helped oversee the construction of the wonderful Life Sciences Building, came forward. He knew that his building had been paid for by appropriated funds from the Church but that the new engineering building was to be paid for entirely with donations. He generously contributed some funds for the Engineering Building that were available to him.

Dean Brown and his faculty colleagues who made that happen set the tone for what came next. Vice president Sandra Rogers came to me to ask if the Division of Continuing Education could make a contribution to the Engineering Building. And they did. Dean Lee J. Glines and his staff made a major contribution. And then, a few days later, BYU's chief information officer, Kelly Flanagan, came in and said that Print and Mail Services had been looking at what resources were needed for the future, including improvements to their building, but concluded that they too would like to contribute to the construction of the Engineering Building.

Those of you familiar with higher education know that this doesn't happen very often, when one college comes forward and says, "What we would really like to do is use some of our funds to help construct a building for a different college on campus." There really is nothing like that, at least that I am aware of, in any other college or university in the world, with people coming forward to move along the overall work of the university by contributing to something from which they will never directly benefit.

As we knew they would, PLC members also came through at crucial times; we saw miracles here too. Ira A. Fulton sold his Provo home and donated the proceeds to the building. The Sorenson Legacy Foundation made a capstone gift that put the total amount raised at

Kevin J Worthen was president of Brigham Young University when the groundbreaking ceremony for the Engineering Building was held on May 9, 2016. This address is based on his remarks that day.

more than the original goal amount. We learned that consecration is not only contagious but also had become epidemic, as we saw in the fall of last year.

And so we have this wonderful day that we have been looking forward to. It really is remarkable.

Students Are the Reason

Now, just a word about what is going to happen in this building, because that is really what has driven the effort to get to this point. What is going to happen in the building and in the lives of the students who study here is why this building is important.

We are all familiar with the mission of the university. The first sentence reads, “The mission of Brigham Young University . . . is to assist individuals in their quest for perfection and eternal life.”¹ The last sentence states, “The earnest pursuit of this institutional mission . . . will greatly enlarge Brigham Young University’s influence in a world we wish to improve.”²

Now let’s think about those statements in relation to the college’s mission statement. The mission of the college is threefold:

To develop men and women of faith, character, and technical ability who will become outstanding leaders throughout the world.

To conduct creative work of consequence that contributes to solving the world’s problems and advances engineering and technology disciplines.

*To be an influence for good in the world.*³

Notice the outreach to the world. Three times the word *world* is used: we help develop “leaders throughout the world” who contribute “to solving the world’s problems” and who become “an influence for good in the world.”

That is what will happen as students learn here and go forth from here. It is already happening. We see it in the lives of graduates and students. We have seen examples of this over the years: merry-go-rounds that generate electricity and light, systems that bring life-sustaining water to people, and carts that allow villagers to transport goods to market. These seemingly small things have changed people’s lives for the better. But all of these and many more examples are really just a prelude to broader things that this college and its students will do for a world very much in need.

The ultimate purpose of this college is the good its students do. President Thomas S. Monson taught that people of faith and education do God’s will and work as they expand their knowledge and solve problems:

*God left the world unfinished for man to work his skill upon. He left the electricity in the cloud, the oil in the earth. He left the rivers unbridged and the forests unfelled and the cities unbuilt. God gives to [us] the challenge of raw materials, not the ease of finished things. He leaves the pictures unpainted and the music unsung and the problems unsolved, that [we] might know the joys and glories of creation.*⁴

That is what can happen in this building. Students will know the joys and glories of creation as they make discoveries while they help solve the world’s problems. As they become outstanding leaders throughout the world, they will be developing celestial skill sets that will enable them to realize their full potential as beloved spirit sons and daughters of heavenly parents. That is what you have contributed to, and that is what will occur here.

More Miracles to Come

I want to thank in particular Kelly Reeves, King Husein, and Alan R. Parkinson. Kelly Reeves of LDS Philanthropies coordinated the fundraising efforts for the building. As a volunteer and donor, King Husein led the charge in an inspiring and unrelenting manner. And Alan Parkinson, who has stayed on a little longer as dean and has probably given more than that in terms of his life’s energy, deserves our gratitude. This day and the building are monuments to his vision, his persistence, and his undying faith that this day would come.

So we will go forward. And we look forward to the building’s effect on campus and in students’ lives. I want to bear my witness that we have seen miracles in relation to this building, and I know that we will continue to see miracles—miracles that we may not fully understand the import of in this life, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. *The Mission of Brigham Young University and The Aims of a BYU Education* (Provo: BYU, 2014), 1; approved by the BYU Board of Trustees on November 4, 1981.

2. *Mission and Aims*, 2.

3. “Mission and Initiatives,” Ira A. Fulton College of Engineering and Technology, Brigham Young University, et.byu.edu/college/mission.

4. Thomas S. Monson, “First Presidency Message: In Quest of the Abundant Life,” *Ensign*, March 1988.