

(soulful music)

- Let us pray. Oh God, will make us glad with the weak remembrance of the resurrection of thy son our Lord, give us this day such blessing through our worship of thee, that the days to come maybe spent in thy service, through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen. (choir sings harmoniously) To recognize the holiness and grace of almighty God, makes us also aware of our condition as persons. Let us offer unto God our confession, and let us do so, knowing that God's grace precedes, surrounds, and suckers us, let us pray. God be merciful to us for we are sinners, we are tired of concession with self, show us ways of finding you and of finding our brothers and sisters, and of finding ourselves more truly in worship of you and in service to all people. We are sick of the injustice and cruelty of which the whole world groans. We hear the cries of the oppressed and remember the desperate anxiety of those who face this year without employment, victims of the world's greed, give us wisdom and grace to establish justice between people. God be merciful to us for we are sinners. God has forgiven you, God has accepted you, lift up your hearts in gratitude and hope. (soft piano plays) (choir sings harmoniously)

- The first scripture lesson for today is from the 13th book of Romans, the first four verses, listen for the word of God. Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God. And those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore he who resists the authorities, resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who he in authority? Then do what is good and you will receive his approval for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. He is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer. The second scripture for today is the 13th chapter of Revelation, the first four verses, listen for the word of God. And I saw a beast rising out of the sea with 10 horns and seven heads, with 10 diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bears and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound but it's mortal wound was healed. And the whole earth followed the beast with wonder. Men worshiped the dragon for he had given his authority to the beast and they worshiped the beast saying, "Who is like the beast? And who can fight against it?" Here ends the readings for today. (soft piano plays) (choir sings harmoniously)

- Let us affirm together central elements of our faith. We are not alone, we live in God's world, we believe in God who has created and is creating, who has come in the true man, Jesus to reconcile and make new. Who works in us and others by his spirit. We trust him. He calls us to be his church, to celebrate his presence, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope, in life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone, thanks be to God. The Lord be with you.

- And with your spirit.

- Let us pray. Oh God, father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, hear our cry unto thee and renew our trust that we may live, move and be in the world with confidence. When we face cruelty, pain and suffering, our spirits falter and our hearts grow cold, we are fearful and desperate. Be thou, oh God, very near to us and to others who tremble, who hurt, and who cry. Comfort us and heal us of our afflictions, renew our strength, put the wings of the eagle to our spirits that we may fly to the presence and abide in thy company. And there let our trust be renewed and our hope rekindled. Let us offer prayers for our world, for the hungry, the hurt, and the lost. Oh Lord, be with those in need and help us to meet that need as individuals and as a nation. Let us offer prayers for peace. In a world which continues to pulsate with the ravages of inhuman strife, give to leaders a vision of peace for Vietnam, Cambodia, Peru, the near East, Ethiopia, oh God, we pray for mercy and peace and a reconstruction of life. Let us pray for the poor and those out of work. In a world where money is necessary for life, be thou with those who are without, those who are unemployed, those who lack the necessities of life. Help us to find policies and personal concern deep enough to alleviate this situation. And let us pray for ourselves. Dear God, make us sensitive to the needs of our world, make us good disciples of thy spirit, persons whose faith is renewed and whose mission is the extension of thy gracious love. And this we pray in the spirit, and in the name of Jesus, as we also pray the prayer which he taught us, our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, amen. We welcome to our pulpit today, Bishop James Armstrong of the Dakotas area of the United Methodist Church. It is with pleasure, with unusual anticipation, and prayerful support that we hear.

- First, could I ask a moment's indulgence. Harold Bosley, intimately associated with this university, and this chapel across the years, within recent weeks, has died. He first came to my attention when I was a college student and he was the dean of this divinity school. He has inspired me across the years, I love the man, and would appreciate it because of his special relationship to you and all you represent, if we could have a moment of silent, grateful, remembrance, let us pray. Amen. We are moving through the eve of a bicentennial celebration. Already being exposed to, we face a certain onslaught of patriotic sermonizing, editorializing, opinionizing, in the gathering atmosphere of this celebration it is of tremendous importance I think that we go back to those roots of our beginnings and better understand the doctrine of the separation of church and state, which one famed American jurist of another generation called the greatest contribution the United States has offered the world. The word God does not appear in the constitution. John Adams in an impertinent moment said, "Let us not pretend that those who framed our government had had interviews with the gods or were inspired by heaven." It is altogether possible he overstated his case. From the beginning, most of those responsible for framing the constitution were persons of religious sobriety. An element of God consciousness has continued in public servant hood across the generations. Two presidents as different as Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Dwight D. Eisenhower could pray before the nation as they led it in conversation. Justice William O. Douglas, who has sat on the Supreme Court longer than any other, writing an opinion some 25 years ago said, "The institutions of our nation presuppose a divine being." But all of this being true, the fact remains that those who framed the government were sufficiently suspicious to create a doctrine of the separation of church and state, a phrase that does not appear in the constitution.

They insisted that a wall, albeit a porous wall of separation existed between the fundamental institutions of society, church and state, be erected permitting interaction between the two without domination of the one by the other. And all of this was based on a very healthy skepticism. On the one hand, they and sensitive spirits across the ages have understood that the state can be and has been an enemy of the free human spirit. Now there's confusion, contradiction, ambivalence in the Bible at this point, we found it in the reading of scripture just a few moments ago. Paul on the one hand insisted that all authority comes from God and therefore it is the responsibility of the citizen to yield to that authority come what may. On the other hand, John of Patmos writing from his prison isolation insisted that such authority, that such power, is identified with the beast and later he called a government, a particular government, his Roman government, the mother of harlots. Each overstated the case. Paul later appeared to modify his position, when arrested for civil disobedience, he rationalized his activities by appealing to the highest magistrate of his small land saying, "I have not been disobedient to the heavenly vision." Nor was the state as bestial as John suggested. It was an odd mixture as each of us is an odd mixture of good and evil. Carl Becker, the famed historian, helping us better understand our own traditions, reminded us that American people traditionally have not regarded the state as an enemy, exactly. Perhaps it's kind of a friendly enemy, made up of public servants chosen by us from our ranks to perform our tasks for us. But we built certain safeguards into the system so that we limit those serving us to terms of office, and he said, "We can always turn the Rascals out." We sometimes forget where we came from. This nation of ours was born in the cradle of a bloody revolution, a rebellion against the tyranny of an oppressive governor. George III was the villain. Most of us have read and some remembered the early lines of the declaration of independence. Few of us have pursued that declaration through its bill of particulars. To read the charges leveled against the King of England. This one who we said had plundered our seas, ravaged our coastline, burned our cities, and destroyed the lives of our people. The skepticism that seemed to come bubbling to the surface during the U-2 incident in the Bay of Pigs and the Bay of Tonkin Resolution and Watergate, is as old as the Republic is old. For we have known as others before us that power corrupts, that absolute power corrupts absolutely, and that when power is concentrated in few hands, it presents temptations difficult to withstand. The 20th century has underscored and italicized that fact. One afternoon, just a few months ago, my wife and I walked through Dachau, the heinous concentration camp of Nazi Germany. Went through the museum. Saw all those wall-sized, black and white photographic panels depicting the indescribable inhumanity of that era of our common life. The piles of the dead were there. We saw the places where prisoners had been hung or hang themselves, the places where they had been shot. We saw the shower stalls erected so that poison gas fumes could be poured upon the waiting victims. We saw the crematorium, the ovens, where persons living and dead were placed in a churning inferno, we saw the smoke stacks were wisps of yellow smoke, symbolizing all that remained of human bones and flesh rafted out across a city of 1 million people. It was government, a demonic state that did that. In this century, we have seen the most remarkable geo-political phenomena of human history. In half a century, communism has embraced half a globe. For too long this land burrowed its head in the sand and refused to acknowledge what was happening in the People's Republic of China. There has been massive land reform. Jobs, education have been provided, nearly 1 billion people plagued by seasonal ravages of starvation year after year have been pulled back from the brink of that ultimate physical disaster, and yet who among us would suggest that individual freedom as we think of individual freedom exists in the People's Republic? The Soviet Union was able to rest Mother Russia from the tyranny of the czars but there followed blood purges, slave labor camps, the rape of Eastern

Europe, the oppression or suppression of dissent, the persecution of Soviet Jews. Nor do we in this nation, with the memory of the incineration of 100,000 persons in Hiroshima and Indochina and Watergate, have any right to cluck in self-righteousness. A few more than 100 years ago it was a south Carolinian who coined the phrase manifest destiny, suggesting that the United States of America was to be a God appointed political Messiah for the remainder of the world. The Monroe doctrine simply claim this hemisphere is our very special province. Following World War II, we were convinced that we had every right to police the world to impose our peculiar values on the remainder of the world, to evaluate every other system of thought and governmental structure on the basis of our commitments, and we were very religious about it all. And there emerged as vividly as at any time past, a form of civil religion that still reigns among us. It was assumed and is by many still assumed that a plethora of congressional prayer breakfasts and governors' prayer breakfasts and pious petitions addressed to the almighty from distant spaceships proved our holiness. It was assumed that worship services in the White House proved our goodness. It was felt that hands placed upon Bibles when oaths of office were taken, and sacred words inscribed on coinage, and pious phrases inserted in state oaths of allegiance, one nation under God proved our holiness. And yet all the while, minorities struggle for their rights, pockets of poverty haunt the land, welfare policies and programs humiliate and pauperize the unfortunate in our midst. Decisions made on Wall Street and in Washington further separate the haves from the have-nots as the unprincipled and unethical receive favors as the victims are more victimized. National priorities are awry, as we are told we must take in our belts and develop new lifestyles but at the same time must provide this year another \$300 million for continuing insanity in Indochina. And we the taxpayers without any voice in the matter, are told we must continue to arm virtually every side in every conflict around the world. George Orwell's 1984, with its vision of a big brother looking down over our shoulders, with electronic surveillance and an omniscient government is present grim possibility. How grateful we can be that those who came before us said the Congress of the United States shall not establish any religion or prohibit the free exercise thereof, that we shall have freedom of speech and press and assembly, there shall be governmental responsibility and redress. For in this insistence upon checks and balances and the free expression of the human spirit, we at least have certain implicit guarantees against tyranny. But you see the skepticism wasn't reserved to government alone. It was understood by them and sensitive spirits before and since that the church as well can be, has been an enemy of the free human spirit. Medieval popes with their armies and intrigues and criminal alliances, with their holy wars and unholy inquisitions sought to impose their interpretation of the truth upon all surrounding person and territory. The reformers were little, if any better some of them. Martin Luther's statements against the Jews fed the flames of antisemitism in Hitler's third right. He once said, "My conscience is bound to the word of God." But his rebellion against authority was limited almost exclusively to the religious sphere, so that during the Peasants' Revolt, he turned his back up on the peasants and said, "The princes are God, the people are Satan. I would rather side with the princes if wrong than the people if right." John Calvin, iron-fisted dictator of Geneva, burned heretical ideas in the person of Servetus at the stake, and so that you will know of my complete objectivity, John Wesley was a Tory through and through who took the dimmest possible view of the American revolution. Our forefathers came to these shores seeking religious liberty and then soon forgot why they come. So Boston had its laws against the Quakers and Salem had its witch hunts, Anne Hutchinson, Roger Williams, William Penn, were unusual because they were exceptions. They believe that the tolerance, the freedom, the individual liberty they claimed for themselves should be extended to each and all alike. It would be grand if we could say that following the

expression of the declaration of independence and the guarantee of the bill of rights, the church had not been an oppressive presence in this country, that cannot be said. For 175 years or so, people like me and most of you rode very high in the saddle. Ours was a nation dominated by white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, the Know-Nothing Party of the 1850s, the Ku Klux Klan, and many other movements and moods reflecting that which they represented believed that blacks and Catholics and foreigners should be kept in their respective places. From the beginning, there was a close tie between evangelical Protestantism and public education, so that the celebrations and the festivals of the religious community we know best became the common festivals and celebrations of public education. We saw no inconsistencies and that certainly no wrong because we were not Jewish, we were not Hindu, we were not Muslim, we were not non-believers. And then the Supreme Court, offered its judgements with reference to particular kinds of prayers in the public schools and there arose an immediate den and hue and cry, because many of us did not fully understand that freedom of religion means exactly that, and that one group does not have a right to impose its judgements upon all others. The faith statements and the festivals of every religious community in this country are not only tolerated but are encouraged by law. But, that same law insists that the faith statements and festivals of any particular religious group dare not be considered the normative standard for all others, and that's what the separation is all about. Some of you here can remember the poisonous venom that was spewed into the national psyche during the presidential election of 1928. It was not until 1960 that a Roman Catholic could be elected president of the United States. During the early years of this century, a band of militant Protestants in the name of an enlightened approach to personal behavior and public responsibility, made possible the passage of the 18th Amendment and Prohibition. Prohibition failed because one group cannot impose its moral standards upon the whole. Now the abortion debate rages. Will the metaphysical, philosophical view of the personal life of the unborn fetus held by a particular religious community be imposed upon the rest of the nation as a whole? An executive director of the US Catholic has said, "No religious group, no matter how powerful, no matter how numerous, has a right to apply its political muscle to all other persons in the land." It is only right and natural that persons have high ethical commitment and ideal seek to persuade their surroundings to adopt their commitments and ideals, we would be less than committed if we did not seek to do that. But this kind of advocacy must within the framework of responsibility ever be faithful to the limitations imposed by a bill of rights on the one hand and the spirit of the faith we proclaim on the other. What then should our stance be in a nation honored for the separation of church and state? Well, what is the biblical standard? Must there be an absolute divorce? There has not been, there cannot be, the wall is a porous wall permitting interaction between the two. Joseph was the prime minister of Egypt. Moses stood before the mightiest monarch of his day and cried, "You let my people go." And when the cry fell on deaf ear, he went back to those people in bondage and he organized them and he led them in their slave revolt. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, cried out against war crimes and atrocities against carrying vanquished enemies off into slavery, against selling the poor for a pair of shoes, against the corruption and the opulent lifestyle of the nouveau riche, against courts that were unrighteous and princes that were pampered. They on some occasions, some of them shared in decisions of state craft, but they always stood in the name of God where they stood to pronounce their judgments upon policies and patterns of behavior that seemed to violate his absolute holiness. From the beginning, clergy and those of from religious conscience in this land have participated in the evolution of the Republic. They were present in the framing of the Mayflower Compact, preachers joined pamphleteers and patriots in preparing the soil of the colonies for revolution. John Witherspoon, Presbyterian minister,

mentor of James Madison signed the declaration of independence. Bishop Matthew Simpson was friend, confidant, advisor of and to president Abraham Lincoln. They have been there from the beginning as reformers, abolitionists, voices for temperance, prophets of a new day, seeking to reflect the will of God as they understood that will in the midst of distress and the crisis of a real world. It was in 1970 that 16 members of the clergy ran for national office of one sort or another, that was a new wrinkle. Andrew Young, uniquely gifted United Church of Christ clergyman from Atlanta was defeated that year, was elected two years later. Father Robert J. Drinan, Jesuit priest, former Dean of the Boston College Law School was elected that year. You saw him serving on the judiciary committee as youthful followers carried big banners on the night of his victory that read, "Our father who art in Congress." In 1972, Bill Hudnut, Presbyterian friend was elected Republican Congressman from the 11th district of Indiana, he was defeated in 1974. But much more important than this kind of personal involvement in the body politic itself, is the commitment of all of us, as Christian citizens to improve the quality of life of our time in our land. I've been involved in this sort of thing for a long time. Remember when I was a very, very young preacher in Florida, George Smathers and Claude Pepper were contesting one another for the senatorial nomination of their party, and Congressman Smathers was saying one thing about race in the cosmopolitan county of Dade on the Gold Coast and quite another thing in Lake County and Orange County in Central and Northern Florida. I wrote him a stinging letter and got a response saying, "I am surprised that you would write such a letter on the letterhead of your church." In 1954, when the Supreme Court handed down its desegregation decision, the combined civic clubs of Jacksonville, Florida wanted three points of view presented, the extreme point of view, segregation, the moderate point of view, and the pro-Supreme Court point of view. They found a former gubernatorial candidate who was more than willing to present the extreme point of view, and the state attorney general was available to present the moderate point of view, but they couldn't find anyone until they got to the very bottom of the barrel and found an associate pastor on the staff of a downtown church to present a pro-Supreme Court point of view, and oh, the mail that followed. "You ain't fit to be no Methodist preacher, run this niger lover out, out quick." One of the gentle missive suggested. In Indiana, where I was privileged to serve for more than 10 years, I was on the mayor's committee on human rights, on housing, on the community relations service council, on the platform committee for the state of Indiana of my party, was involved in reform politics at the municipal level that led eventually to the election of Richard Lugar as mayor, who was one of the keynoters of the 1972 Republican National Convention. And since going to the Dakotas I've continued an involvement in public life that led just a few months ago to partisan efforts on behalf of our senior senator in his reelection campaign. And I addressed the state convention, and was seen on certain TV slots in the company of the senator and his wife here and there, the largest church in the area had a group of indignant members who felt that I was completely out of line and they met one evening while I was in Europe attending a peace conference, and 125 of them signed a petition suggesting that I returned to what they called the normal behavior of a churchman and stop my activities in what they called political and other secular affairs. And I came back and attempted to address the situation by going to the church and meeting with them and talking with them. By issuing a statement suggesting that a clergyman does not surrender his citizenship at the moment of his ordination, by reminding them and others that the United Methodist Church is a free church, the United States of America is a free land, and that I would continue as I prayed they would continue to exercise that freedom as prayerfully and responsibly as I knew how. There must be interaction between our communities and disciplines if the land as a whole is to prosper. But how grateful we can be that a wall has been thrust down between the two institutions, so that

one cannot dominate, cannot silence the other. We're on the eve of a bicentennial celebration. We must understand that both church and state can be tyrannical. We must forswear any approach to political utopianism on the one hand or ecclesiastical triumphalism on the other, but rather rejoice in the fact that we are God's colony in man's world, that as free spirits with consciences bound to the word of God we can try to address both church and state in the name of humanity. That righteousness and justice might prevail, and that this land and all of the lands of the earth might be fairer, brighter places, as God's will is done in our midst, even as it is in realms beyond.

- Let us pray. God help us to be Christian citizens, patriotic without apology, but loyal to thy living word above all other allegiances of life. These things we pray in the name of Christ, who died for the least among us, amen. (soft piano plays) (choir sings harmoniously)

- Oh God, most merciful and gracious, of whose bounty we have all received, accept this offering of thy people. Remember in thy love those we've brought it and those for whom it is given. And so follow it with high blessing that it may promote peace and goodwill among men, and advance the kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, amen. (soft piano plays) (choir sings harmoniously) Dismiss us now oh Lord, with thy blessing and accompany us ever with thy grace, that we may henceforth live in peace, love and holiness through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen. ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ (bell chimes) (soft piano plays)