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PRESIDENT ROCK JONES' 9/11 COMMEMORATION REMARKS

Sunday, September 11, 2011

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We are brought together this evening by our memories of the horrific events of ten years ago. Most of us remember with astonishing detail where we were when we first heard the news of the morning of September 11, 2001. We remember the shock, the horror, the terror. We remember the images projected on television screens, and we remember the voices of those who began to emerge and tell the stories of their experiences of that day—those who were able to escape, families of those who died, including first responders who gave their lives that others might live. And we remember the families whose lives were changed forever as the death toll became clear and the names of those who died became known. We gather in solemn remembrance of the terrible events of that day and of the lives that were lost.

But in the aftermath of 9/11, there is more to remember. We remember how people from all walks of life, all corners of the globe, all paths of religious faith and cultural tradition came together to stand as one. For in the aftermath of 9/11, a day that is a marker in history for the potential for evil wrought by human beings against one another, there is another story. It is a story of hope. It is a story of good will. It is a story of the profound potential for good in the human race.

Ten years later, there is far greater interfaith understanding and collaboration than a decade ago. Ten years later, there is a far greater desire to build bridges among the diverse cultures woven into the magnificent tapestry of humankind. Ten years later, countless homes have been constructed, schools have been opened, and people have been served, all in memory of those whose lives were lost in the senseless acts of 9/11. The Cherry family, joined by OWU alumni who were classmates of Doug Cherry, has built dozens of homes in Mexico. I know a family whose son and brother were on one of the planes that crashed into the World Trade Center. This family has built a school for girls in Afghanistan as a memorial to Peter, believing that education, and in particular the education of women in this region, is critical to the future of our civilization. Ten years later, while the grief is still profound, we see the deep reservoir of goodness that marks the life we share together on this precious planet.

So tonight as we gather to remember, we must never forget. But as we remember the horror of that day, let us hold tight to the more lasting impression of the goodness of the human condition and the hope that defines the human spirit. As others gather in cities and hamlets in this country and around the world, we come together in our place, on the campus of Ohio Wesleyan University, in the city of Delaware, in the state of Ohio, in the United States of America, on the planet where each of us bears the privilege and responsibility of a global citizen. We gather to acknowledge that we are one people, bound together by our common humanity, created by the One who is known by so many different names and acknowledged in a rich variety of modes of worship, prayer, and service, but in Whose One image all of humankind is made; we gather as one people to proclaim the resilience of the human spirit and to share our resolve to stand tall for the dignity of every human being and the blessing of every human life.

We remember ten years ago, and we remember the acts of hatred, violence, and war that have followed; we remember, with “sighs too deep for words.” At the same time, we affirm the “hope that does not disappoint us; for the love of the divine has been poured into our hearts.”

May we be blessed by this time together, and may each of us strengthen our resolve to become advocates for the things that make for peace, now and always.

Thank you.