

Chicago Theological Seminary, New Building Dedication Ceremony ~ October 21, 2011

I am Alice Hunt, President of the Chicago Theological Seminary, and it is my pleasure and honor to welcome you to this day of celebration as we officially open and dedicate the building that will be our home for our next 100 years.

I accepted the position of President of CTS a little over three years ago because of my sense that extraordinary things were about to happen at this place where extraordinary things have been happening for over 150 years. A new building, new leadership, new programs, new opportunities to reach a wider audience with the deep and creative thinking and learning that happens here every day, building on the legacy of innovation and passion that is the DNA of CTS and grounded in our relationships both local and global to communities of faith and people of no faith at all who do justice and seek mercy and tell good news.

In the floor of the new building, quotes from scripture are in-laid. I trust you will enjoy discovering them as you wander about after the ceremony. The one by the back door is taken from the book of the prophet Jeremiah and enjoins us to seek the welfare of the city in which we dwell. We are not in exile, we have not moved to a new city, but we are entering a new community—the Woodlawn community—and we pledge to seek not just our own welfare but the welfare of our community and our neighbors. We pledge to forge new relationships and to be about our work in mutual relation to those who struggle here to survive and

thrive—for this will ground us anew, even as our concerns for breaking the yoke of oppression and setting free those who find themselves bound stretches across nation and globe. It is on behalf of the least of these that CTS exists and takes the bold step of moving--among other bold steps--to survive and thrive ourselves as a place where critical inquiry and passionate commitment to the welfare of all people are pursued.

Now for some more specific words of welcome.

Many of you enjoyed, as I did, the extraordinary concert last night. Please join me in expressing our gratitude to the members of Sweet Honey In The Rock for a wonderful evening and for joining us again this afternoon to minister to us and to lead us in song during our service. Thank you for being here.

And to all of you present, thank you for your presence, for your support, and for your participation with us in our continuing journey that is our mission to provide quality theological education; to contribute to the theological conversation with a distinctive, progressive voice; and to prepare women and men to be leaders in church and society in ways that increase justice and mercy. I welcome in particular (and ask each group to stand and be recognized):

- o our inspiring faculty and our devoted staff (please stand);
- o representatives of other seminaries of the United Church of Christ (please stand);

- o representatives of other seminaries in Association of Chicago Theological Schools (please stand);
- o representatives of the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ, (please stand); the Chicago Metropolitan Association of the Illinois Conference, (please stand); and other United Church of Christ conferences and associations (please stand);
- o pastors and members of supporting congregations in the Chicago area and from further afield (please stand);
- o our generous donors and, in particular, those who have made significant gifts to the New Building Initiative and to last evening's scholarship benefit concert (please stand);

Finally, I would offer a particular welcome to some of our special guests (please stand as I call your name):

-our Alderman Willie Cochran is here;

-other members of the Woodlawn Community;

-members of our Visiting Committee;

-Members of our Board of Trustees, our Life Trustees, and any former Trustees who are present;

-finally, our alum, Rev. Jesse Jackson is here as well.

Thank you all for your presence and support and, once again, welcome!

Now it is my pleasure to welcome, the chair of our Board, Don Clark, to the podium. Don's contributions to the present health and future welfare of CTS are incalculable. His generosity is unmatched. And for his wise counsel and leadership, I, and I know many of you, are deeply grateful.