Thank you, Jim, for your service as chair of the Board of Trustees, succeeding Dave Hosler, who served the College so well for many years. And thank you, to everyone here at the College who has welcomed my wife Gail and me here to Elizabethtown, from the students who baked us cookies when we were unpacking, to the staff members who brought over sandwiches the week we arrived, and to the many alumni, faculty and community members who have shown us such kind hospitality over the last three months.

I want to also say a special thank you to those family members and friends who’ve come here this weekend to celebrate a milestone in my life. My sister Laurel and her husband Ken, with their daughter, my niece, Rev. Jessica Bratt, my brother Tom and his wife Donna, my daughter Laurna who continues to teach her parents more each passing year, my sisters-and brothers-in-law Joan and Dan, and Marilyn and Paul, are all here. Many friends from the years which my wife Gail and I spent at Calvin College, the University of Kansas, and the College of William and Mary are also here. Anna-Margaret, Ben, Peter and Donna, Claudia, Nick and Claire, Liz, Sue and Heather, thank you all for sharing this day with us.

Special thanks go to someone very special. Forty years ago this month, a rather scruffy looking sophomore wandered into a Sociology class at a small college in Michigan. There he met a brilliant first year student who, despite all the unpromising material she had to work with, has never given up trying
to improve both his appearance and his character. Gail, thanks for your commitment to sharing a life together, especially through many trying times, and for your example of tough-mindedness, strong love, and deep faith.

While this is a milestone in my life, it is, more importantly, a milestone in the life of a great institution, Elizabethtown College. This weekend celebrates the creativity and community which are at the heart of this college. On Thursday evening, 40 students presented a dazzling display of projects in which they and their faculty mentors have done original research. The fields ranged from bio-engineering to creative writing, occupational therapy, sociology, literature, and psychology. Last night’s concert by the music faculty and the discussions this morning by faculty on globalization and on peace, justice, and conflict resolution reminded me, along with the student research presentations, why I wanted to be president of this college. Intellectual rigor, artistic creativity, and collaborative learning make up the soul of Elizabethtown College. This inauguration and my presidency are two more steps in an inspiring journey.

That journey began over a hundred years ago. Elizabethtown College was created by people who possessed profound beliefs about high education. J.G. Francis, George Falkenstein, Jesse Ziegler, and their co-workers believed two profound truths. Education should be rooted in a moral vision. And, those who were educated should use that education to serve others, in order to create a better world. In over a century since our founding, much has changed. In its size and complexity, Elizabethtown College has grown far beyond what its founders envisioned. From a small school in a single building on the hill over there it has become the much larger, more scholarly, comprehensive institution of today. Yet other things have not changed. The founders’ profound truths, of a moral vision and of service to society, have remained. Those truths have guided us through immense changes. We owe a great debt to our founders. We also owe a great debt to those who took their vision and continued to re-create
the college in order to meet new challenges. We are here today because the men and women of Elizabethtown College chose to meet challenges in every decade by changing the College in important ways. In order to meet the challenges of this century, we will have to change still more. In seeking how to build Elizabethtown College so that it flourishes into another century, we must look, I believe, at both the enduring truths given to us by our founders and the lessons of constant innovation throughout the more than a century of our existence.

What are the challenges we face? They are, first, to make higher education relevant in a rapidly changing digital world; second, to reach out to a society in need; and, third, to create leaders for a global world. When information on any subject can be obtained almost instantly anywhere, why should one obtain a college degree? When society has such pressing needs, with high unemployment and hard pressed social services, do colleges serve others besides themselves? And, finally, when young people today will inherit the most-inter-connected planet that human civilization has ever seen, how do we teach this generation to live globally? The relevance of education, human need, and globalization: these are our challenges. How will Elizabethtown College answer these challenges? What are our values and our goals?

We serve. That is the simple touchstone for all of what we do. How do we serve? Because we at this College have been given the special gift of learning, our service must be deeply involved with the intellectual mission which has been entrusted to us. We serve our students and society, first of all, by pursuing excellence in everything we do.

It is the pursuit of excellence that has enabled the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies to educate Americans and others around the world, Christians and non-Christians alike, about religious history, and most recently, the meaning of forgiveness. It is the pursuit of excellence that enables our
scientists, engineers, and psychology and occupational therapy faculty to win grants from the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes for Health, and other agencies and foundations and to teach their student through research. It is the pursuit of excellence that drives our historians, musicologists, political scientists, and literary scholars to publish, edit, and translate and to bring both new insights to the wider world and to their students working alongside them. It is the pursuit of excellence that drives our students to win Goldwater, Rhodes, and Truman scholarships, entrance to graduate programs, places in medical and law school, and important positions in companies and agencies.

Our teaching, our scholarship, our science, our creativity, our information technology, our student services, indeed, everything that enriches and supports the sacred task of learning must strive for excellence. The success of our athletic teams as tremendous competitors and great teammates demonstrates our commitment to excellence. The staff members who maintain our buildings, provide food, manage the finances, and carry out countless other tasks make this a great institution through their dedication to the highest quality and soundest management. We should never accept less than the very best that we can achieve. Excellence—hard work, disciplined achievement, rigorous thinking, the push to both understand and to innovate—this is what we have done at our best and what we must continually strive for. Aiming at excellence is not about individual achievement on its own. Excellence is almost always the product of a team effort. At our best, we have made the entire College a learning environment—athletic teams, student activities, residence halls, the offices in which students are employed, as well as seminar rooms, art studios, laboratories, theatres, and the library. Indeed, we demonstrate at Elizabethtown College why college is so important even in an age when information is instantly available. Education here is not about passing on information. Education at Elizabethtown College is about learning to excel together. Here, individuals develop their talents the most that they can—through working with others and for the purpose of serving others. Our motto, educate for
service, captures the collaborative and purposeful pursuit of excellence that higher education everywhere so desperately needs. In the future, in order to make higher education relevant in a digital age, we will make education here even more focused on collaborative learning around research, on learning in all areas of campus life, and on engagement with the rest of society. If we strive to give every Elizabethtown College student an internship or service learning experience, one which is both intellectually rigorous and deeply engaged in practice, and give every student the experience of collaborative research, we will serve our society well.

We serve. And, in serving, we lead. Service is not about taking a back seat or being self-effacing for its own sake. Serving others can mean being a leader. If one comes to leadership through service, one leads not by seeking power but by employing one’s talents to help others lead the best lives they can. Leadership that comes from service means that one is a servant leader. Elizabethtown College has long trained leaders who served. Hartmut von Hentig, a veteran of the German army, came as an international student to Elizabethtown College after the Second World War and graduated in 1950. Here, he became deeply influenced by our teaching on peace-making and service. He went on to become an educational reformer in Germany and a leading voice at the University of Bielefeld, one of the country’s most innovative universities. Laura Schanz, a Continuing Education graduate from 2006, has worked in the insurance industry for many years, run her own consulting firm, and now is the Chief Operating Officer of Horizon Initiative, dedicated to building schools and businesses in poor countries. Her organization’s work in Kenya is a model for economic development. Paul Weaver, class of 1968, became Vice Chairman of PricewaterhouseCoopers and is now Chairman of the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, helping to preserve these landmarks of American history. As Weaver has said, at “In this nation, almost anyone can achieve great things. This is a gift of incredible opportunity—one that we should first appreciate and respond by giving back.”
In the paths trod by von Hentig, Schanz, Weaver, and countless others, we at Elizabethtown College can re-dedicate ourselves to meeting the economic and social challenges facing our world. We can meet these challenges both by the education we offer and the service we do. The United States was once the world leader in the percentage of young people completing college. Now, we are 14th. The challenge is not access to college but students completing degrees. Meanwhile, businesses need skills and skilled workers. Elizabethtown College leads in meeting these challenges. At few private colleges is it true that 40 percent of the students are first generation college students. In this year’s entering class, 50 percent are first generation college students. We offer employment on campus to 60 percent of our students in order to help them graduate. Over 80 percent of our first year students graduate from Elizabethtown College which puts us among the top level in the nation. The College not only teaches our students to serve, we model how to serve. In our Continuing Education program, almost 700 working adults, like Laura Schanz, are studying to complete their college degree. We sponsor the Music at Gretna festival and the Wheatland Chorale and enrich the arts for the larger community. The High Center for Family Business advises family firms across our region. Elizabethtown College leads through the education we give and the service we offer.

In serving and leading, we inspire. Elizabethtown College has tremendous power to influence the world. We have done so in the past. We are doing it now. And we have much greater heights to reach.

Challenged by gifted faculty to take on large tasks, our graduates have influenced the world. Charles Coates Walker, class of 1941, was a staff member of the American Friends Service Committee when it won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947. He arranged for one of the leading theorists of non-violence, A.J. Muste, to speak at Crozier Seminary where Martin Luther King, Jr. was studying and later worked alongside King in the civil rights movement. Ernest Lefever, class of 1942, helped rehabilitate German POW’s after World War Two, advised the U.S. Government on counter-terrorism and peacekeeping, and
founded the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C. One of the daughters of Elizabethtown College, Judy Ware, Class of 1968 and her husband Paul, have helped educate thousands at the College and in our region by creating the Ware Colloquium on Global Citizenship and Peacemaking which has brought Nobel Peace Prize winners Jody Williams, F.W. De Clerk, and Sirin Ebadi here to speak. As that great American philosopher Will Rogers put it, war “won’t stop until there is as much brains and scientific study put to aid peace as there is to promote war.” Thanks to the work of many people associated with Elizabethtown College we study peace here and teach how to build a more peaceful world.

These stories teach us much. Elizabethtown College must both hold to the best of the past and it must move forward. We serve, first of all, by doing best what we are best suited for: promoting learning and academic excellence. As we move into the future, our faculty must be equipped to carry out research and scholarship as fully as possible so that they can bring their students along on the voyage of creative discovery. We must recreate college education in order that service learning, internships, and learning through research are the hallmarks of an Elizabethtown experience. As a teacher, I have loved guiding my students through research projects. Watching them struggle through the difficult process of testing hypotheses, slogging through reams of information, and finally seeing insights arise in their minds has been as rich a reward as any teacher could have. If I had needed any vindication of why I am proud of becoming the president of Elizabethtown College, the students I met at the research symposium Thursday night would have provided it. They inspired me. I want all our students here to have that same experience.

Elizabethtown College has also served and we have led by making an impact on the world. We have long had international students here and taught our students to engage with a global world. Now the challenge is to weave internationalization into the core of Elizabethtown College. I know, first hand,
that studying abroad and gaining an understanding of the complex global world we live in can be life changing experiences for students. My career has been dedicated to providing those life changing experiences. Elizabethtown College must, I believe, expand our study of foreign languages and our students’ participation in study abroad. As much as possible, we must make study abroad focused on faculty and student research. Our International Business Program, with its emphasis on foreign language study and internships, and our relationship with our study abroad consortium, BCA, with international programs focused on peace and social justice, point us in the direction we should go. We must explore creating joint degree programs with international institutions. We need to help all of our students to become a bigger part of the world. We want to equip them as best we possibly can to help make this a better world.

To inspire others, we will need to become even more conscious of our college as a moral community. As our founders knew well, the goal of education is not knowledge, or skills, or new experiences, or even employment, as important as those are. The goal of a college education is to use one’s talents for good, to make this a better world. For a society that too often seems morally adrift, our students, who are taught to see the ethical dimensions of all the domains we study, are a precious asset. The “Called to Lead” Program which helps over 300 students discern how they should live is a model for higher education. Over the last nine months since I accepted the position here as president, I have been struck by how many times the alumni I meet have been asked by the businesses in which they work to take leadership positions, to train new employees, and to help set ethical policies by their firms and co-workers. Our alumni live out our founders’ moral vision. Elizabethtown College has inspired its alumni to do great things and to influence the world around them in powerful ways. We must re-dedicate ourselves to making service through moral leadership one of the most important ways we inspire our students and our alumni.
We have a rich history. We educate to serve. Education, at its best, is rooted in a moral vision. Despite the economic challenges we face and which American society faces, we have great resources in the dedication of this College community to excellence in all things. Together, students, staff members, faculty, alumni, and all supporters of Elizabethtown College, we can do great things. Thanks to your support, your dedication, and your shared vision, I can take on this new task with pride. Thanks to your support, dedication, and shared vision, I look forward to the future with confidence. Together, we can serve, lead, and inspire. Thank you very much.