

For this we stand . . .
**Values Underlying the
Mount Vernon Nazarene College
Faith Community**

Throughout the past few months I have been asking myself some fundamental questions: (1) What drives or motivates Mount Vernon Nazarene College as a Christian college of higher education? (2) What characterizes us at our best and convicts us at our worst? (3) What shapes the lifestyle - the words, action, and behavior - of a faith community? (4) What is foundational to our conviction that God calls all believers to a life of holiness? (5) What are the values for which we stand?

The biblical mandate for the holy life, I affirmed, is summed up in the scriptural commands to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself" (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37-40; Mark 12:30-31).

The one thing Spirit-filled Christians "will" to do is summarized in the holistic command and commitment to love God, respect others, and take responsibility for self with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

I concluded, after much prayer and reflection, that the values affirmed and foundational to the MVNC faith community (faculty, staff, and students) are grounded in the biblical mandate for the holy life, grounded in the rich Judeo-Christian tradition.

A. Affirmation #1, WE LOVE GOD. Therefore, we value and stand for...

1. A Worshiping Community

A Christian community is first and foremost a worshiping community of believers. Nothing more important ever happens on earth than the worship of God. Worship characterizes and identifies a faith community. It is the Christian's primary privilege and duty. Praise to the Lord is expressed when the community gathers for chapel services, in private devotional moments in dormitory or apartment rooms, or in small group settings. Read Psalm 95:6-9. We believe that both private and corporate worship are utterly necessary.

In one sense, worship is the only task of the Christian. That is to say, everything the believer does is an expression of worship.

Mount Vernon Nazarene College is first of all a "called out community of faith." Perhaps Maria Harris is right when she said in *Fashion Me A People*, "One Christian is not Christian; we go to God together or we do not go at all." Regardless of the form, manner, setting, or time, worship, for the followers of Jesus, is both first priority and magnificent obsession.

2. A Biblical Faith

Our faith is grounded in the Christ of scripture. Therefore, we take seriously the entire Bible, believing it to be the Word of God, the written revelation of our Heavenly Father. MVNC neither hesitates to affirm nor apologizes for its emphasis on the scriptures or the requirement that students take courses to better understand God's written revelation to His people.

The scriptures reveal to us the Living Word - Jesus Christ: His life, death, and resurrection; His relationship to the Father; and His relationship to us before our creation. They teach us to walk with Him daily and to anticipate life with Him eternally.

Our faith will not be shaped by embracing "false gods" or "world religions"; rather, we affirm with the scriptures that "there is only one God, and one mediator between God and man, the person, Christ Jesus." (I Timothy 2:5)

3. A Christlike Lifestyle

A biblical faith will result in Christian action. "They will know that we are Christians by our love" echoes the old chorus. Followers of Jesus increasingly seek to live like Jesus. Christlikeness should increasingly characterize the lives of those who profess faith in Him.

Jesus is remembered as one whose primary orientation was toward giving, not getting. In this He is our prototype. Read again the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 to catch a glimpse of the way Jesus intends for us to live. Jesus concludes, "But seek first his (God's) kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33).

Our attitudes regarding the sacredness of life (even of the unborn), the stewardship of our possessions, the perils of homosexuality, and the beauty of sex within the marriage bond are shaped by the teaching of Jesus.

His attitudes must increasingly become our attitudes - He loved, served, taught, confronted, and forgave. His actions must increasingly become our actions - He "came to do the will of His Heavenly Father." And Jesus said to His disciples, "As the Father has sent me, so send I you" (John 20:21).

4. **A Holiness Ethic**

A Christian "wholly" committed to loving God will follow a trail not traveled by non-Christians. Decisions will be made that flow from biblical convictions. The integration of faith and life becomes increasingly important to the maturing Christian.

Some things are done, others are not done;

Some words are spoken, others are not spoken;

Some actions are taken, others not, because of who we are as devoted followers of Jesus, because of what we stand for, because of scriptural commands we affirm, and because of prohibitions in scripture we avoid. The holiness ethic is both individual and social.

We oppose child abuse and molestation, alcohol, the use of tobacco, trafficking and consumption of illicit drugs, pornography, and the low level of moral values exalted by television and the movie industry.

The basis for decision-making for the believer wholly committed to following Jesus will be radically different from the one whose faith is culturally or parentally passed on.

5. **A Global Mission**

"Red and yellow, black and white, all are precious in His sight" goes the chorus we often sing as children. And it is true. The world - the whole world - is the arena of God's love and concern.

To experience people of other cultures, individuals who differ from us in color, race, culture, and language, confronts us with the narrowness of our own cultural blinders. To affirm that God loves "them" as He does us is to broaden our vision of God's love and concern beyond "our" city, state, region, or country.

Individuals in the poorest of countries and farthest from us geographically are loved by God and in need of the gospel of forgiveness and grace.

Christian musician Steven Green reminds us that

"To love the Lord our God is the heartbeat of our mission,

The spring from which our service overflows,

Across the street and around the land, the mission's still the same,

Proclaim and live the truth in Jesus' name."

The mission of committed Christians gives focus to our activities, behavior, thoughts, and action. An evangelistic zeal drives us with passion to tell others of the saving grace of Jesus.

6. **A Creation Vision**

The scriptures affirm that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof" (Psalms 24:1). We are challenged and commanded in scripture to take care of God's creation.

In the past few years enormous changes have taken place in our thinking about environmental issues. We are increasingly aware of and concerned about conservation and protection. The Christian stewardship of creation begins with the affirmation that God has "loaned" the earth to us, and it is our responsibility to protect it for ourselves as well as for future generations.

Environmental protection may sound like a Washington DC bureaucratic agency, but for the Christian it should be very personal. Projects and programs that assist us in becoming better stewards of our earth's resources are being planned here at MVNC.

Recycling, waste management, energy conservation, and the protection of our natural resources may enable you to operate your home or business more effectively, but also they are efforts of the Christian to increasingly become better stewards of God's creation.

7. **A Spirit-Empowered Devotion**

To live with a focused mission demands that we set aside quality time each day to spend alone with God. The devotional life must be nurtured each day through prayer, scripture, words of Christian hymns, silence, and solitude.

Most of us need another individual to whom we can be accountable to insure that these sacred moments are not squeezed out by other "good" things. Use the hymnal, the written prayers of others, the Bible, a spiritual journal to focus attention daily on "God who was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."

Talk to God as you talk to your closest friend.

His very Spirit within us prompts and enables us to quiet our hearts before God each day - in your room, in chapel, in some corner, with others, or alone with God. Make time to nurture daily your growing relationship with God.

B. **Affirmation #2, WE RESPECT OTHERS. Therefore, we value and stand for...**

1. **A Magnanimous Spirit**

Committed Christians are big-spirited. They give others the benefit of the doubt. They recognize that mistakes can be made, even by themselves. They believe the best, not the worst, in others. They want others to succeed, not fail. They are happy when others receive attention, awards, and accolades. They don't "put people down" in order to build themselves up, or have a healthy self image. They freely forgive, even before forgiveness is asked.

Jesus taught us an unforgettable lesson about forgiveness. He said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." It's ironic. His "enemies" had not asked for forgiveness, nor did their behavior toward Jesus change when Jesus extended forgiveness to them. What difference, then, did forgiveness make? Not in outward circumstances, for sure. They continued to kill Him. However, His words of forgiveness made all the difference inwardly. He would not permit what others said or what they did to create anger, resentment, and bitterness within Him. His relationship to the Father was so much more important. Others' behavior toward Him would not be permitted to rupture the relationship with the Father. "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." A magnanimous, forgiving spirit. And this must be our spirit.

2. **A Servant Mentality**

A poem by Leonard Nimoy reads:

What mark will I leave behind?
 How will anyone ever know that I have been here?
 What sign will tell the future traveler that I've existed?
 Shall I carve it on the door?
 "I am here! Today, I exist."
 I believe the deepest impression is made
 In those moments when I can say, "I care, I love."

Christians embracing the lifestyle of holiness are challenged to find tangible, concrete ways to serve others in Jesus' name and say to fellow believers within the fellowship, "I love you. I care for you. You are my brother or sister in Christ."

In its briefest and most general understanding, ministry is service to others in Jesus' name. Certain words help us understand the various dimensions of Christian ministry - words like caring, sharing, growing, relating, teaching, and confronting. Ministry in New Testament perspective takes the form of holding the hand of a person engulfed in fear,

listening intently to a person in trouble, crying with a person who is hurt, or embracing the individual who is grieving. It may include taking friends to the store for groceries, sharing your talents with others, or confronting in love the lack of discipline or careless habits. Ministry encompasses the sharing of the Christian faith or a verse of scripture with another in time of need.

Christian ministry is the extension of Jesus in our world, incarnating the healing, guiding, sustaining, reconciling work of Jesus in the lives of those with whom we work and live. If you are a Christian, you are called to Christian ministry. From a biblical perspective the MVNC motto is on target -- "To seek to learn is to seek to serve."

Ministry understood in this broadest sense is the context for our specific ministry. We may be specifically called and gifted for pastoral ministry, teaching ministry, evangelism ministry, music ministry, or leadership ministry. But it is futile and self-defeating to seek to function within our particular calling while ignoring the broader calling to serve others in Jesus' name.

3. A Trustworthy Character

"Character is what you are," someone said, "when no one is looking at you." Character is the sum total of our values, priorities, commitments, and decisions. Increasingly, spirit-filled Christians develop a Christlike character as they grow and mature in Christ.

Ephesians 4:25 exhorts us not to lie. "Put off falsehood" one translation states. The specific reference is to "speaking the truth" within the body of Christ, the fellowship of believers. But do Christians lie to one another?

I choose to believe that we don't lie to one another on purpose. Christians do, however, sometimes ignore other believers with whom their differences have created barriers. Conversation is therefore superficial. Discussion, if any, focuses on everything but the issue dividing the Christians. Is this lying?

Increasingly, our word must become our bond. What people "see" is what they should "get." Our lives should assume an authentic, transparent, and genuine nature. Our character is trustworthy, even in the academic arena. The College's code of academic integrity affirms our truthfulness in the exams taken on campus and the assignments submitted to teachers. Academic integrity is an essential component of MVNC.

We want people with whom we live, work, and study to see us as honest, not just with facts, dates, and figures, but with our emotions - particularly negative emotions that tend to divide and separate the Christian fellowship.

4. A Positive Influence

Have you ever been around someone that, when you left their presence, you felt about 3 inches tall? Some people act as if the only way to build themselves up is to put other people down.

Likewise, you have been around other people that, when you left their presence, you felt big, strong, and confident. You believed that with God and you, you could make a difference, overcome the obstacle, or succeed where you had failed.

"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful to others, that it may benefit those who listen." This admonition in Ephesians 4:29 puts most of us under conviction. Our words tend to be self-serving rather than for others.

Sanctified Christians increasingly make a positive rather than a negative difference in the people with whom they associate and in the situation wherein they find themselves.

A good question to ask is this: Do people with whom I associate feel better or worse about themselves, their work, MVNC, life, and God as a result of my involvement with them? Determine to be a positive, rather than a negative, Christian, someone who builds up others instead of tearing them down, a person whose words "benefit" those who listen, not undermines, belittles, or destroys them.

As Christians mature in Christ, the focus must be on building up others, not tearing them down; on encouragement, not discouragement; on supporting, not undermining; on healing, not hurting; on caring, not indifference; on others, not on ourselves.

5. A Courteous Response

The way of holiness is a path whereby committed Christians "are being renewed in the attitude of their minds." The Ephesians 4:23 passage is given in the context of a contrast between ways Christians and non-Christians live their lives and respond to others.

Attitudes of the heart that should increasingly characterize Spirit-filled Christians include the following:

- I love you - you are my brother/sister in Christ;
- I need you - you have strengths and gifts I do not have;
- I accept you - you are being changed by Christ as I am being changed;
- I respect you - you are different, yet we are one in Christ;
- I trust you - you desire to serve the same Christ as I;
- I serve you - I want to minister grace to you.

These attitudes of the heart enable us to respond courteously to others, even within the Christian fellowship, who do not reflect the same attitudes and behavior towards us.

"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

6. A Giving Motivation

The biblical reference to giving we have heard throughout our lives: "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). And the usual context in which we focus this admonition is in reference to money.

Money, for sure, must be included in the discussion. Another equally strong biblical principle states, "to whom much is given, much is required" (Luke 12:48 b).

But "giving" on the MVNC campus for most of us, if it relates only to money, permits us to get off the hook and allows us to miss the principle.

A commodity just as rare as money on campus is time. And the giving of our time is included in the biblical injunction.

Time is needed to greet students on campus, to get acquainted with them, assist them in adjusting to a new, if not strange, environment, bring them into our friendship loop, invite them to walk with us to class, to chapel, to Boost. Remember your first days on campus? Anxiety? Fear? Homesickness? Freedom? Outsider? Rejected? Pain?

Find someone who is new to campus and spend some time with them. Just because it is right and it should be done.

Look around for some students from outside the United States. The number is growing. Don't panic out of a lack of knowledge of their first language or their culture. What they need is a friend, someone to help them. Ask them (and others) these questions:

1. How are you doing?
2. How are you coming along with...(a specific problem, project, etc.)?
3. How can I help you in...? (Be as specific as possible.)

These are good questions to ask visitors you spot on campus or prospective students who "invade" the campus (and sometimes your rooms!) on big days for student recruitment.

"Christ died while we were yet sinners." We did not deserve the gift of eternal life He gave to us. Look around, often, and see people in need of something you can give. You give, like Christ, not because the other person "deserves" the gift necessarily, but because you desire to love others as Christ loved us.

7. An Appreciative Attitude

The contemporary song asks the question, "How can I say thanks for the things You have done for me - things so undeserved ... the voices of a thousand angels cannot express my gratitude. All that I am, or ever hope to be, I owe it all to You." The refrain of the song continues with thanksgiving to God for all that He has done.

Holiness people are grateful people. Grateful to God, through His unmerited grace, for saving, sanctifying, and establishing them firmly in the way of holiness. A spirit of thanksgiving must be the continuous response of the committed Christian to the goodness of God in his/her life.

Yet, our expressions of appreciation should extend to others who help us along the journey. This includes other students, roommates, teachers, and ... yes, even administrators!

Song writer and musician Ray Boltz was on campus several years ago for a concert. During the concert, he shared the background for writing one of his top hits at that time. He wrote the song for Pastor's Appreciation Day in his local church. The heart of the song expresses gratitude to his pastor. "Thank you for giving to the Lord, I'm a life that's been changed...Jesus took the gift you gave. That's why I'm here today."

In addition to expressing praise and thanksgiving to God, find another person, daily, to whom you can say - honestly and genuinely -

I thank you.

I'm grateful to you.

I appreciate you.

And be as specific as you can in expressing your gratitude to the other person. You may have to look hard each day for someone to whom you can express gratitude. But keep looking...you will find someone.

The Swedish family therapist, Swen Walroos, in his outstanding text, Family Communication, concluded from his extensive work with troubled families that the ratio of criticism to compliments in dysfunctional families was 7 or 8 to 1; that is, there were seven or eight criticisms to every one compliment. He states, "My goal in family therapy is to reverse the ratio; that is, to help families give seven to eight compliments to every one criticism."

I'm concerned when the pervasive mood or conversation of a campus, dorm, a "clique" or group, a family, or an individual is overwhelmingly negative. Something is fundamentally wrong with that individual, group, or institution. Usually we can find what we look for if we're looking for the negative in others or in this institution. Likewise, if you focus on the positive in others or in this institution, you will find it.

And when you find it...discipline yourself to express appreciation. Develop an appreciative attitude. It is healthy for you physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Find someone each day to whom you can say...

I thank you.

I'm grateful to you.

I appreciate you.

C. Affirmation #3, WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OURSELVES. Therefore, we value and stand for...

1. An Inquisitive Mind

"Truth will ultimately prevail" is often quoted. And this is true if committed Christians believe that God is the Source of all truth. If this be so, seekers after truth have no fear in pursuing questions about God, humankind, life, death, or eternity.

"The mind is a terrible thing to waste" is another oft-quoted statement. And, again, it is true. To always let other people think for you is a terrible indictment of anyone.

Read good books, journals, magazines. Obsessively read them. Invest in them. At the same time, with John Wesley, determine to be a "man (or woman) of one book - the Bible."

"...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things." (Philippians 4:8 NIV)

What a life verse!

MVNC at its best is a faith community of learners.

2. A Disciplined Schedule

"Begin with the end in mind" is habit #2 in Steven Covey's book *Seven Habits of Highly Successful People*. This statement can refer to a lifetime, a project, or a daily schedule. We tend to accomplish more if we begin the day (or project or life) with a sense of perspective of what the end result should be and a plan of action to guide us step by step in the process.

Elaborate "time planners" are available - and some of them are very expensive! But you do not need to purchase a "system" to organize yourself for the day, week, or month.

Your faculty advisor, the Director of Retention, or staff members in the Personal Counseling Center can assist you in preparing a schedule for your busy week.

Good calendars are available. You can be creative and create your own time management system.

Some students could benefit from the consultant many years ago who earned \$25,000 after advising the CEO of a major company to organize his days in the following manner:

1. Each evening identify the six most important things to be accomplished the next day.
2. Number the six in order of priority.
3. The next morning begin the day by starting with the first priority and staying with it until it is finished.
4. Then go to the next priority.
5. Continue this process throughout the day.
6. At the end of the day, repeat #1.

Most students, however, need to manage multiple priorities simultaneously. Students need to so schedule study time that they devote some time to each of their courses every day. Talk to Dr. Joseph Lechner about the time planner he distributes annually to his freshmen students. Balance your "precious" free time. Choose wisely between the numerous good programs and projects available to you on campus. Don't let the options available in athletics, clubs, and social activities work at cross-purposes with your education mission.

Plan your work. Work your plan. Sounds simplistic. But it works.

3. A Modest Attire

Modesty has long been affirmed as a standard within the holiness churches. In fact, modesty, neatness, and cleanliness form a three-legged stool on which rests much of the MVNC Student Life Handbook and lifestyle guidelines. But defining modesty is difficult. It seems as if everyone has his or her own opinion regarding the nature of modesty. There are extreme examples of clothes and appearance, and advocates of both extremes strongly - and sometimes loudly - proclaim "their" view is the right view.

Most Christians affirm the principle of modesty; yet few agree on the details. This makes it particularly difficult for a Christian institution like MVNC, which affirms the principle of modesty, to find a standard acceptable to all. In fact, it can't be done to the satisfaction of everyone - believe me! We ask you, however, to accept the MVNC guidelines, even if you don't agree with every one of them.

Whatever modesty is or is not, the Spirit-filled Christian (or institution) seeks to look and live in a way that is qualitatively different than individuals (and institutions) who do not profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. Our appearance, including the clothes we wear, should be...

appealing, but not seductive,
attractive, but not revealing,
appropriate, but not offensive or extreme.

The big question for the Christian, male or female, growing in Christlikeness, is not, "How far can I go and get away with it?" but, "How can I dress in such a way as to bring honor and glory to God and strengthen my friends in the faith who may not be as strong spiritually as I?"

In talking about living together as Christians in the Body of Christ, Paul says: The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you." On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other (I Corinthians 12:21-25 NIV).

4. **A Balanced Diet**

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? ...Therefore honor God with your body" (I Corinthians 6:19-20).

What we eat - or don't eat - can build us up or break us down. When we eat a balanced diet, we feel better, look better, sleep better - we are better physically!

Learn about fat grams, carbohydrates, calories, vitamins, food supplements, and nutrition.

The key word is *balanced*. Since each individual is different, what *balanced* means to you will differ from that of your roommate, friend, or spouse. Talk with your parents or knowledgeable friends. Check with your physician. Visit the school nurse - when you are healthy! Read books on health and nutrition from the MVNC library. And don't overlook the Food Service personnel. They are committed to providing a balanced diet.

The undergraduate required course, "Physical Education for Life," is an important part of the MVNC curriculum. The course includes a very strong emphasis on health and nutrition.

Students who do not give attention to their diet are weakest physically at the time in the semester when they should be strongest. You guessed it - exam time!

And one final word. Don't skip meals. Remember, the key word is *balanced*.

5. **A Physical Fitness Commitment**

We've heard the admonition from so many experts that we ought to believe it. Exercise for at least thirty minutes three times a week. Walking to class is not usually considered part of the exercise program - but it is superior to driving a car to class or to various buildings on campus.

Get involved in an intramural or physical fitness program. The issue isn't how good or bad you are at athletics -- the issue is exercise...and fun. You are needed on some intramural basketball, volleyball, soccer, softball, or other team. You will feel better and be better for the effort.

Find some friends with whom you can walk or jog around campus regularly. Some students like to bike for so many miles each week. Dr. Cubie - yes, Dr. David Cubie - enjoys roller blading regularly on the Kokosing Gap Trail not far from campus.

Dr. Mike Clyburn is working with a group to develop a jogging path around the entire campus. Volunteer to help him. (Talk about disciplined walkers - just try to keep up with Dr. and Mrs. Clyburn!)

Faculty members play basketball or jog early each weekday morning. Dr. Cronk bikes around Mount Vernon, Ohio - the United States - the world! Students are involved regularly in aerobic or exercise classes. Others play basketball every night. Yes, every night.

A special word to students. Speaking of nights (or early mornings), determine to get a good night's rest each evening. Sounds crazy or impossible, doesn't it? Negotiate with your roommate or apartment mates regarding an appropriate time to "cool it" so that you can get some sleep. There is a strong correlation between a good night's rest and physical fitness. By the way, the entire resident community needs to respect the common quiet hours in the dorms designated for study. Respect the "quiet" guidelines for others' sake as well as your own.

Whatever is right for you, make a commitment or a renewal pledge to a plan - a systematic schedule - of physical fitness. Your long life and health may depend on it!

6. **A Reliable Word**

Be known as a person who keeps her/his word. God's answer to the prophet's complaint in Jeremiah 12:6 is, "Do not trust them, though they speak well of you." No more pathetic words can be spoken of a person than these - you can't trust her/him. What an indictment!

Conversely, one of the greatest compliments a person can give to another is this: You can trust her/him. Our word, our integrity, our credibility are ultimately so much more

important and long lasting than popularity, fame, or fortune. These can and do pass. But our word remains.

Therefore, by God's Spirit within you, be honest, trustworthy, truthful. Speak with others in such a way that when they hear you, they trust you. Adhere to Jesus' words when He said, "Let your yes be yes, and your no, no." Don't say one thing and mean another. Don't deceive or mislead others. Shoot "straight" with them. Your personal integrity and credibility is intrinsically linked to a reliable word. Protect your integrity and credibility with a passion.

7. **A Lifelong Learning and Growth Perspective**

Your years at Mount Vernon Nazarene College should instill within you a desire for a lifelong pursuit for personal and professional growth. It is folly to believe that in such a brief span of time all that needs to be known will be grasped. Just the opposite should occur. The more you know about a subject, the more you find there is to know. This relates to your vocational choice, and to your walk with God.

Let us hope that the MVNC experience will ignite a spirit of inquiry that will last a lifetime. You should at least know the right questions to ask. You should be pointed in the right direction. You should be forever committed to a quest for truth and righteousness. Increasingly, we desire the integration of faith and learning.

Paul could say while in prison near the end of his lifetime, "Not that I have already obtained... but I press on.... Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on..." (Phil. 3:12-14).

And this should be our perspective. Regardless of where we are in the journey of life, we will never be content with where we are in our growth we will "press on." After completion of your MVNC academic program, continue your personal development through seminars, workshops, graduate programs, short-term institutes, attending cultural events, and reading. Cultivate your insatiable desire to learn and grow.

Conclusion

Do we always live by the values we affirm? Unfortunately, not always. But for the Spirit-filled Christian, increasingly these values flowing from the foundational principles of the biblical mandate to live a holy life will "mark" or characterize and challenge us.

Holiness is a way of life - a lifestyle. In reality, this means that throughout our relationship with Christ, we will continue to grow and mature in the Christian faith and in our walk with the Lord.

A gospel song has as its theme, "It was all because of God's amazing grace." And it's true. God's grace extended to us -- though undeserved -- empowers and enables us through faith in Jesus to live the holy life to which we have been called. It's not by our efforts. The scriptures remind us that "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

May your experiences at Mount Vernon Nazarene College strengthen you in the values you have begun to affirm. The greatest compliment MVNC can receive from a graduate of this institution is that he or she is much stronger and more developed in mind, body, and spirit than when he or she enrolled at the College.

May it be so for you at MVNC! Amen!

-- E. LeBron Fairbanks, President