**KICK-OFF SPEECH 1997**

**The year our Kings die**

On the eve of an inevitable second world war, King George VI spoke to the people of the United Kingdom on a cold and frightful new year's eve. Gathered around radios that crackled and popped from the cold and the primitiveness of the technology, they heard their King declare in a strong voice,

> "I said to the man who stood at the gate of the new year, "give me a lamp that I may go forth into the unknown." And he said to me, "put your hand in the hand of God and that will be to you better than any lamp, and safer than any known way."

Tonight I see Belhaven College at the door of a new year which will lead us into new, unfamiliar, exciting, and to some, frightful territory. I am fully convinced that this year will not be business as usual. It will not be more of the same. We are not headed toward a year of normal College life.

Rather, I believe that the 1998 academic year will be the year that Belhaven College walks through a new door of opportunity to a higher level of effectiveness greater than we've ever enjoyed. Many initiatives are coming together this year, which will give us the tools we need to fulfill our vision for Christian Higher Education in the south. Let me give you a quick summary of the highlights of what God allowed us to do together this past year:

We completed the year with a small financial surplus, and have crafted a balanced budget for the coming year. Our annual fund increased from $116,000 raised a year ago to $520,000 raised this year. We have begun construction on the first new building built at Belhaven in over 25 years -- new 154 bed women's residence hall as well as a significant addition to our primary classroom building. We were able to finance these and other projects with a $10 million bond at very favorable terms with a 22 year term, allowing the residents of the new facility to pay for it over time. We have renovated three residence halls. Enrollment will be up again this year, although only slightly, making this the eleventh consecutive year of student population growth, while at the same time we have halted the awarding of huge scholarships. We have added a major in ballet this year, and have announced the addition of a major in theatre for 1998. We have added a Dean of Athletics and will also begin intercollegiate football in the fall of 1998, expecting that this cost effective program will add more than 100 students to our campus. We have added five new faculty positions this year, and with their coming, 91% of our faculty hold, or are completing, their terminal degree. We just completed a SACS accreditation review visit, and we've made a ton of significant improvements as a result of their evaluation. We have put into place a sweeping strategic planning process. We

have created an office of Institutional Effectiveness to assist us in ongoing evaluation and planning. We are automating the library, providing internet access for students and faculty, and have our UNIVERS, comprehensive computer system online. Our EXCEL program and MBA program in Jackson and Memphis continues to grow, and we are anticipating the launch of our branch campus in Orlando in the fall of 1998.

And all that is just the tip of the iceberg. Needless to say, this last year has been an important time for Belhaven, and we rejoice and give thanks to God for his blessings to us.

I can candidly say, that I doubt there is another small Christian College in the country that has as much going for it as does Belhaven. We have more opportunities, quality people, and creative approaches, than about any other institution -- and I wouldn't trade my job for anyone's right now.

But I believe last year is going to be pale in comparison to the year before us. As many of these fruits of the labor begin to be harvested, I believe we are ready to collectively broaden our institutional reach, lift our vision of Christian higher education, discover a complete intolerance for mediocrity, and seize new opportunities for service to the Church and society across Mississippi and the South.

Now don't let me be misunderstood -- in many departments, individuals, and various programs we are hitting the marks of quality and effectiveness, and have captured the fullness of our potential. Other areas still have some room to grow, and there are a few that need to get off the starting blocks.

But on the whole we are ready to take the steps which will allow us to build the cohesion and atmosphere which will propel us to the next level of effectiveness. For today we are ready to move from the visible to the invisible benchmarks of success.

Last year at this dinner (which was served on paper plates as you might remember), I shared with you the characteristics of top colleges. I talked that night about the visible signs of success which are characteristic of the best Colleges, and those continue to be our goals.

But to find genuine and lasting success, especially in an environment of evangelical Christian higher education, we must move past the easily visible, to create a campus climate Christ is at the core, and because of our desire to honor him, we are not satisfied with anything less than exceptional quality and service.

But if we are to walk though that door that leads to a much higher level of effectiveness, I would suggest to you there are at least four attributes we must possess. And as I begin tonight by very briefly sharing these with you as a backdrop, I think you'll see that

Belhaven is very close to realizing that potential in many areas, although the time has come for to us not just talk about what we know we should do, but to push on over the bar:

1) We must have a spirit of openness, energy, and anticipation that consumes the campus. Colleges who are reaching their potential are willing to consider all kinds of ideas. They are willing to focus on solving problems rather than following structure. And they accept change in stride, rather than cling to the security of the past. They are always fine tuning to become stronger, and never satisfied with anything less than excellence. And they have an optimism that creates a contagiously positive environment for learning. And at Belhaven we are getting there -- we're not there yet, for we have some old habits to break, we have some fears that need to be put aside, and we have some bridges that need to be built. We have some communication links which need to be strengthened. But from my vantage point, I believe we are making good progress in this critical area.

2) We must be willing to shed the unproductive. Colleges today cannot afford to do what they've always done, simply because they have always done it. Institutional missions must be razor sharp, marketing tightly focused, every employee vital to success, and activities centered on what it is we do best. Positions and programs which do not contribute directly to the vision of the institution, cannot be carried as they have always been in the past. And disproportionate investments of people and money must be made in the activities which can most effectively propel the entire College forward. This willingness to prune must be an ongoing process at Belhaven, and for like Charlie Rugg's roses, in order to grow to championship quality, pruning must be accepted as a regular pattern of business.

3) We must welcome continuous evaluation and be responsive to the analysis. Some things I know about running a college come from my genes, as a third generation college president; some things I know from my training and experience of being on a campus almost continually for 27 years so that I can anticipate the problems . And the same is true for you in your discipline or program. You know lots about your area of expertise at the College because you've had preparation, experience, some failures and many successes. But there are a host of things we could do significantly better if effective evaluations would allow us to discover the hard cold facts, and then make decisions based on realities rather than intuition. For Belhaven to be a College of realized potential, we must outline our priorities which we have done through our strategic plan. But then, we must measure them and adjust accordingly. We must appreciate the continuous evaluation that makes us better, not just tolerate analysis; and we must be willing to be responsive to the scrutiny rather than to defend the status-quo.

4) We must offer our faculty and staff opportunities to learn, grow, and change. If we want to put that in a theological framework, it means that this must be a place of

forgiveness. My dream for Belhaven is not simply a set of buildings, enrollment targets, or endowments, but a college where the standard of excellence is high and unwavering, and the path to success lined with people who support and encourage, rather than gloat or complain. You and I can't learn and grow if we don't make some mistakes. And we can never change if we're not willing to take risks -- all of which won't come out well. So a healthy working environment has to be a place where we can stretch for the best, with the understanding that if our idea or project doesn't work as we'd envisioned, we need not be discouraged. As a very wise business leader told me a few days ago, "the first error is not called a mistake, it is called a lesson. It is the second error for the same thing that is called a mistake, and the third is called unemployment." I would hope that the dynamic of this place, the spirit of support we have for each other, our shared vision, and the quality of people with whom we associate, would so energize us that we will find endless satisfaction in our work.

As I think through these marks of a college which has moved past potential to realized potential, I believe it all comes down to the attitudes, vision, and style of the faculty and staff, rather than the achievements we report to the newspaper -- for achievements will follow when the correct environment for quality is created. I'm convinced that the right results on our campus will not simply spring from crafting programs which are more innovative than other colleges, creating a stronger administrative structure than the competition, or storing away more money than we could ever use. For Belhaven's business is not building a product or even providing a service, but our task is discipleship, vision setting, and fulfilling the longings of the human spirit. Thus, the effectiveness of a College must be built on a foundation of the right spirit of the faculty and staff if we are to achieve such lofty ends. And only our clear vision, forward focus, and commitment to serving God though serving his people, will bring us lasting success.
I'm convinced that for a Christ-centered College, our potential is realized when there is a change inside each of us that allows us to work with a spirit which desires for God to be glorified through the College, rather than for us to be personally honored.

It is amazing to me that King George, on the eve of the war did not make a speech lifting up his ability to help and lead the people during the time of trouble. He didn't rally the troops to say, "follow me to victory." No, in essence the king died, so that God could reign in the hearts and minds of the people.

> "I said to the man who stood at the gate of the new year, "give me a lamp that I may go forth into the unknown." And he said to me, "put your hand in the hand of God and that will be to you better than a lamp, and safer than any known way."

This transformation is essentially what happened to Isaiah when his leader and King, Uzziah died. For we read in the sixth chapter of Isaiah that it wasn't until the King died, that Isaiah finally saw the Lord clearly -- on the throne -- high, exalted, and lifted up -- with the train of his robe filling the temple. And it was this critical series of events

which allowed Isaiah to then respond to God with the words, which are our verse of the year: "Here am I. Send me!"

You see, before Isaiah could see the Lord in all his glory, the king in his life first had to die, for not until that happened could Isaiah become totally and completely dependent on God. And when his king died, and he could see the majesty of the Lord, it was then his heart melted and he was ready to be fully used of God.

If we are to take this critical process and bring it to our work together at Belhaven College, we must ask ourselves, what kings must die for us to move to the level where God will allow us to fully realize our potential as an institution? What kings in our work need to die so that we will have the humble spirit which will enable us to impact our students like never before? What kings in our attitudes need to die if God is to glorified though our work, and the beauty of his love is to be seen in all we do? What kings must die if Belhaven College is to collectively say, "here are we, send us?"

And, if we will allow our kings to die, where is God likely to send us?

Tonight, let me suggest to you four Kings that should die, and if they did, the four places to where God may send us. This is surely not an exhaustive list, but what a difference it would make in the lives of our students if these kings would die, and be replaced by Christ's destination.

**First, I believe God would send us to a CALLING, if we will let <u>die</u> the King called CAREER.**

It has been accurately observed that in the beginning the Church was a fellowship of men and women centered in Jesus Christ. Then the Church moved to Greece, and it became a philosophy. Then it moved to Rome and became an institution. Then it moved to Europe and became a culture. Then it moved to the United States and became an enterprise.

And that enterprise of the Church has dimmed the mirror which allows us to see, understand, and stay focused on our <u>calling</u> rather than on our <u>career</u>. The message we need to hear, and the message we need to model for our students, is to let go of career as the driving factor of our lives, and pick up the mantle of calling to God's work.

This difference is much more than semantics. It is much more than spiritualizing our professional life. Rather, it is a deliberate commitment to allow God to be the first priority of our working objectives, not the title under our name, or the list of credits in the alumni magazine. Such a shift goes against the grain of American culture, and even of the Church where Christian resume building has all the same characteristics as it does in the secular world. But folks, as long as our career is most important to us, we will never

capture the joy and fulfillment of being called of God to do his work on our campus.

Careers are always looking inward for recognition and power, while callings are looking outward in service and humility. At the outward appearance a career and a calling may look alike, but when it comes to effectiveness and usefulness to God's Kingdom, they are in stark contrast.

When God chose human parents for his Son he chose a humble couple from a small village. We he selected a birthplace for the Messiah, he picked a rock hewn, cold, exposed stable. When he announced the birth of the future King, he went to peasant shepherds watching their flocks on a cheerless winter's eve. Like the birth of our savior, God's most important work often happens in humble circumstance with people who are not seeking recognition, but from those who are available for service.

I think each of us must wrestle with this question of career and calling. The answers are not simple and they may be as different as the number of people in this room. But to assume they are one in the same is a huge mistake, for until the King called Career dies, it is impossible to see the fullness of our calling.

Here is one description of a life which is characterized by calling rather than career. It may not be what God has for you, but it is worthy of deliberation. It comes from an unknown source, but fortunately the wisdom has been saved and reproduced. It reads like this:

> If God has called you to be truly like Jesus, he will draw you into a life of crucifixion and humility, and put on you demands of obedience that sometimes will not allow you to follow other Christians. In many ways he will seem to let other good people do things he will not let you do. Other Christians may push themselves, pull strings, and work schemes to carry out their plans, but you cannot do these things. And if you attempt them, you will meet with such failure and rebuke from the Lord as to make you sorely penitent. Others can brag about themselves, about their work, about their success, about their writings, but the Holy Spirit will not allow you to do any such thing; and if you begin bragging, he will lead you into some deep modification that will make you despise yourself and all your good works.
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> Others may be allowed to succeed in making great sums of money, or having a legacy left to them, or in having luxuries, but God may only supply you daily, because he wants you to have something far better than gold -- a helpless dependence on him -- that he may have the privilege of providing your needs daily out of the unseen treasury. The Lord may let others be honored and keep you hidden away in obscurity, because he wants to produce some choice, fragrant fruit for his coming glory which can only be produced in the shade.

> God will let others be great, but keep you small. He will let others do a work for him, and get the credit for it, but He will make you work and toil without knowing how much you are doing. And then to make you work still more precious, He will let others get the credit for the work which you have done, and this will make your reward ten times greater when Jesus comes.
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> So make up your mind that God is an infinite Sovereign who has a right to do as he pleases with his own, and needs not explain to you a thousand things which may puzzle your reason in his dealings with you. Now, when you are so possessed with the living God that you are, in your secret heart, pleased and delighted over this peculiar, personal, private, jealous guardianship and management of the Holy Spirit over your life, you will have found the vestibule of heaven.

May our king of career die, so that we may see the fullness of God's calling in our lives, which just may lead us to the vestibule of heaven.

**Second, I believe God would send us to CONSECRATION, if we will let <u>die</u> the King called CONTROL.**

I was sitting on an airplane last week thinking about how to express this idea of how important it is that we let the king of control die, but how difficult it is to live a life which is not in our total control. I was glad to be on that plane, for I'd made a close connection in Dallas, headed toward Salt Lake, and on to Montana for the first fly fishing trip to Yellowstone National Park which I've had in five years.

Just as I was thinking that letting the king of control die, comes down to accepting the unexpected in life, and meeting those detours with joy and thankfulness to God, the pilot interrupted the in-flight movie to say, "Ladies and Gentlemen, we are running into a bit of weather and we are going to need to divert in order to refuel." The word "divert" is the most hated word in the traveling world. I can take delay and cancel, but divert is the worst nightmare.

And with the airport in view in Salt Lake, and my plane, which would take me onto Billing, sitting just a few miles away, we made a hard turn to fly to Las Vegas. We arrived there about 30 minutes after the last plane for Billing had left Las Vegas or Salt Lake. Well, since I hadn't eaten since noon, I was at least looking forward to getting out of the plane to find something to call dinner. From 10:00 pm to 1:00 am we sat on the runway, waiting to be refueled, for five other diverted planes had arrived at the gas pumps before us. And since we couldn't get off the plane, the flight attendants gave us free peanuts and another bad movie.

At 2:00 am we finally arrived in Salt Lake, and I was ready to get my free hotel room and get some sleep, but we quickly were told that every hotel in town was booked for the big

sporting goods convention. So I made my way to the ticket counter hoping to quickly rebook and then catch a crack of dawn flight on to Billings. But there were 200 people in line in front of me to rebook tickets. So taking back just a bit of control, and knowing a few flying tricks, I went to a phone to rebook rather than stand in line, but found the next flight to Billings didn't leave until 11:00 am the next morning. So I used some frequent flier talk telling the Delta agent that she needed to apply "rule 240" which demands that she rebook me on another airline if the wait would be more than four hours, but then discovered that no other airlines flew to Montana from Salt Lake.

So after reserving a seat on the only flight possible, I called the rental car company to tell them I missed my flight, but found out they canceled my reservation when I didn't show up, and that there were no cars available in Billings for the next day. The next morning they were able to find a car for me, although when I got there, the four wheel drive vehicle I'd reserved was not available -- but that was okay, for the first rule of fly fishing is that ANY rental car is four wheel drive! So, having still not eaten since lunch, I went to find something to eat, but at 3:00 am everything is closed in the airport. So Delta brought out some old turkey sandwiches which were left over from earlier flights, and I finished one off with a room temperature Pepsi.

Well it was going to be a long night, but thankful I was a member of the Delta Crown room I headed there for a soft chair, but they didn't open until 6 am. So, I found a small carpeted area in the Salt Lake City visitor center area, and under a huge back-lit picture of the Mormon Tabernacle choir, I laid out a makeshift bed, tied my belongings to my leg like I'd seen the homeless in New York do with their possessions, and drifted off to sleep as every 45 seconds the airport loudspeaker reminded the happy travelers; "do not leave your luggage unattended -- remove all vehicles from the upper level or they will be immediately towed -- and, the Utah clean air act make this airport a smoke free zone. Ah, this is the glamorous part of travel that's not in the advertisements.

It is difficult to let the king of control die in our lives. We like to stay in charge of where we are headed. We don't like the detours, especially when they make us miss the things we have decided are important.

And on a campus, there is a terrible danger in allowing the king of control to reign supreme, for it separates us from the very people we are here to help. How can we genuinely consecrate our students to God, and be the Lord's instrument to equip our students, if we allow the King of control to reign? To be God's hand in their lives we will need to have endless detours, interruptions, and changes in plans if we are to truly consecrate each one of them to God; because no matter how much it makes our job harder, students are not going to neatly fit into our prescribed plans for them. Oh, the best ones probably will -- the ones with the exceptional ACTs who come from strong families will get many of our awards for they do fit into our plan of how we are going to control our lives. But it is all the others -- who aren't as well prepared, who need extra

help, who don't have an internal motivation engine, who need guidance time and time again. And they will always blow apart our program, stretch the seams of our administrative system, and push against the grain of every syllabus. But they are just the ones who need us the most and we will never be able to effectively reach them if we don't allow the king of control to die, so that we can consecrate each one of them to God.

Mother Teresa says that God's greatest gift to her is the poor people, for through them she has an opportunity to be with Jesus all day. And our students, especially the ones who are the most difficult to deal with, are God's gift to us. But we will need to give up control as our highest priority; for they won't always fit into the path we have carved out. We'll have to deviate from our plans to meet their needs, and they won't often be responsive on our first 10 or 20 attempts to help. But IF we will treat them with the care that Christ treats us, we will find the joy of being with Jesus all day.

An old story out of Mother Teresa's county tells of an old mediator who was sitting on the bank of the Ganges River and saw a scorpion who had been blown into the water struggle for its life. The old man reached into the water to save the poisonous creature and as he scooped it into his hand it stung him. But he reached again, and again it stung his hand...then a third time. A passerby asked the man, "why do you try to save him, don't you know he is going to sting you?" "Yes," said the mediator, "but just because it is the scorpions nature to sting, it doesn't change my nature to save."

Students will sometimes sting. And sting again, and again and again. And if control is the king of our lives, we will run from the loss of control caused by those stings. But if we have consecrated those students to God, then it will be our nature to always save, no matter how often they disrupt our plans.

Although difficult, painful, and ancillary to control, I hope we will take care of every individual student in such a way as to assure that each of them develops their full potential while in our care. For as my dentist said to me when I was complaining about taking the time to floss each individual tooth in the way he prescribes, he said, "that's okay, just floss the ones you want to keep." I hope we want to keep every student in order to help them become God's person.

**Third, I believe God would send us to a CALM, if we will let <u>die</u> the King called COMPARISONS.**

I believe that the King called Comparisons is killing American Higher Education. Harvard announces a $1 billion fund raising goal, so Yale announces one for $1.2 billion. One school offers an academic program so everyone else in town follows suit. Scholarships go up at one college and they go up at all schools to keep pace for students have learned how to compare as much as have administrators, faculty, and boards.

But this comparison spiral has destroyed the calm which used to be a hallmark of campuses, for everything from library holdings, to salaries, to teaching load, to student life programming, to campus amenities is being driven by comparisons.

You know I believe in benchmarking and the importance of evaluating best practices and studying the comparative data from similar institutions. But it is not good research and evaluation I'm talking about. No, rather the king of comparisons goes to the heart of our motivation, not our practice of the information we consider. It is a "keeping up with Millsaps, MC, and Wheaton, for the sake of ego that will keep us from the calm of Christ."

Now I'm not naive enough to believe we can ignore the society and market and just do our thing in our way no matter what anyone else is doing. Out students don't live in a bubble unfamiliar with what is available at other institutions, and I'm not sure we would want to work with them if they were <u>that</u> isolated.

In 1986 I had the opportunity of leading the first major fund drive in the Christian world which was built around a process where every donor received a video tape. That is a common marketing practice now, but then it was unique. Over 20,000 videos were sent to selected people to in our effort to raise $12 million for the Lausanne Congress in Manila. One of those was sent to a potential donor in the far north to Port Dover, Ontario Canada. We mailed the video cassette in a box with an introductory letter about Lausanne, expecting that they would watch it, and hopefully send a gift.

Instead, in a few weeks I received this letter and the video in return mail. It said: Dear Friends. Thank you for sending me, whatever it is. I have never seen a machine like this and my wife has not either. When we opened your envelope, out came this machine! My wife said she never used a machine like then when she is making clothes. I showed it to the mailman and he said he never has seen a machine like that. He said, "If I was you, I would be very careful. First I thought it would fit on the power take-off of the tractor, but it doesn't do that. Whatever it is, we have kept it very careful in the cupboard of the kitchen, and now we send it back to you. Hope it will still be in good shape. We will send a cheque for your trouble, but we did not send it in this envelope. Maybe it would get lost. Thanks again, yours.

No, our students know what a video is. They know colleges are supposed to have internet access in the residence halls. They know what it takes to manipulate a transcript assessment or the financial aid office. They know if one campus has planted lots of flowers and the other has the sidewalks edged. They know how new the buildings are. They know good professors from bad professors. They live in a world which is driven by the king of comparisons.

But I am convinced that for you and for me, God cannot lead us into his calm and stable

future unless we first allow the King called Comparisons to die. Let's move past that shallow level of living and into the quality of life which the Lord has for us.

**Finally, I believe God would send us to a COURAGE, if we will let <u>die</u> the King called COMFORT.**

It is comfortable to do what we know we can do well, and what we've done in the past. But staying where the King called Comfort reigns never allows us to have the courage to climb to the heights God has prepared for us.

I pray that during this year, when it appears as if God is going to allow Belhaven College to collectively strike out to levels we've never known, each one of us will develop three personal growth plans, for we can never go farther in God's work as an institution, than we are willing to go individually. So here is my suggestion:

First, allow comfort to die in your work, and make a plan for how you are going to courageously climb to new ground this year. Especially on a college campus, where there is a repetitious to academic cycles, it is easy to be lulled into "same-o same-o" for if it worked in the past, we know it can work again. But instead of accepting that your previous year's pattern was good enough, we each need to take the same advice we often give to our students and always be moving forward. Jim Leher of the PBS News Hour, told the graduates at SMU: "I must tell you that some of the dumbest people I know went to great, prestigious colleges and universities like SMU. They walked across the stage...with diplomas in their hot little hand, pronounced themselves well-educated...and proceed to never read another book, entertain another fresh idea or tax their minds in any way beyond what was minimally required to make a living or make it socially or both."

A college is a great place to hide in a professional comfort zone, for here we can very easily declare ourselves proficient and never strive to do any better. I hope that before this week ends, you and I will make a plan of 3 to 5 areas where we need God's courage to improve our work this year. Write them down -- you don't have to share them, but refer to them throughout the year, and hold yourself accountable.

Second, have the courage to strengthen your family life. I never forget that if I got hit by a car tomorrow, they would appoint a search committee the afternoon of the funeral. But at home I can't be replaced. Nobody else can be husband and father. And I hope this week, you and I will go past what is comfortable, and make a have the courage to examine how we could climb to a higher level in our home life and assure that it meshes well with our work life. And while you owe the college a fair effort for your paycheck and more importantly because this is your calling from God, don't ever let work -- the place where we can all be replaced -- come before home, the only place where no other applicants can apply.

And third, and most importantly, don't settle for what is comfortable in your spiritual life, but courageously examine the depths of your walk with God to see where you spiritual growth needs to be in the coming year. Working in a Christian environment, and doing God's work every day, it is very easy for all us to substitute the comfort of our work in a Christian cause, for the courage necessary to move to a higher level relationship with Christ. Make a spiritual plan, and again, hold yourself to it. It has been said, "Liberalism almost destroyed the church at the beginning of the century and lack of integrity can destroy it at the end." Whatever else we do at this College, let's assure that we not allow Comfort to rule, but rather we to have Godly courage to examine our lives to find the genuine integrity that only can come though God's grace.

I believe this academic year is going to be a wonderful moment for Belhaven College. And I am convinced that God is preparing significant advances for us. But it will only happen if we are to allow the kings that may rule us to die -- career, control, and comfort -- and rather, see the majesty of God's calling, consecration, and courage. These changes call us each to a Godly commitment, and then we must implement this new vision through a daily diligence to separate what is urgent from what is important. For when we focus on the important rather than the urgent, the kings die and we walk into the fullness of God's ministry through us. So in closing, let me share with you this wonderful verse which makes the point well:

What is urgent is measured by the running clock
What is important is measured by the growing spirit

What is urgent clamors loudly for action
What is important knocks quietly for attention

What is urgent says "do this now"
What is important says "put this first"

What is urgent is information-intensive
What is important is value-intensive

What is urgent may boost a career
What is important will build a character

What is urgent shows in financial statements
What is important is seen in empowering people

What is urgent builds taller buildings
What is important builds stronger families

What is urgent may add to reputation

What is important will determine destiny

What is urgent focuses on a schedule
What is important centers on Godly opportunities

What is urgent matters most in time
What is important matters most in eternity

May God bind us together to be sent to do the important work of God on our campus. And may the only goal of our College be to Glorify Him in all we do.

And as we allow the kings to die, so that God may be seen in his fullness, may our Lord bind us together in this work, so that we build up one another in our shared calling at Belhaven College. And may we bond to our students in Christian love, so that their lives are eternally changed.

So in closing, let us sing that hymn which we will use at this occasion each year, which so wonderfully expresses the core of what should be the core of our aim at Belhaven College.