



Remark by Nancy E. Chapman

Event: United Board Centennial Celebration Luncheon

Date: 12 November 2022

Good afternoon, everyone!

It is a pleasure to be with you all on this sunny November day in New York. I join my colleagues in thanking you for coming out to join us in celebrating the United Board's Centennial. The United Board has held many celebrations in New York over the years: one of them from the 1930s was pictured in one of the videos we just saw. On another occasion 10 years ago, many of us gathered here in New York to celebrate the United Board's 90th anniversary. When we were planning that event, we saw it as a sort of rehearsal for the United Board's Centennial – and lo and behold, a full ten years later, here we all are!

I would further like to express my gratitude for the extraordinary support you have shown to the United Board – and to me – over the course of many years, and especially during these past, very challenging, three years. Forgive me for not naming each of you and thanking you for the difference you have made in our collective work and in my own – it would simply take more time than we have. But please know what a blessing it has been for me to know that I was always amongst friends.

I'm honored to have been asked to share some of my thoughts after almost twelve years as your president. I thought I would start by reflecting on this particular moment in the United Board's history.

When we began to plan the United Board's Centennial celebration a couple of years ago, I was assigned the task of assembling a brief history of the United Board's first century. This task proved far more challenging than I had imagined given the regular demands of my position, but it was also far more interesting. Most of the work ended up being done in the evenings and on weekends, and it sometimes felt more like pleasure reading than a work task I had been assigned. One of the most notable aspects

of the United Board's history, and one which may be familiar to many of you, was the United Board's extraordinary ability to reinvent itself in the face of formidable challenges. There were quite a few moments across the course of the century when an organization less inspired than the United Board would have given up and moved on, most notably when, in 1950, the Christian colleges in China that the United Board had been founded to support were taken over by China's new government and absorbed into the national system of secular higher education. This and other pivotal moments in the United Board's history really tested the strength and resolve of the organization and its members. Yet, time and again, our predecessors succeeded in imagining a new direction for the organization, one that was true to the United Board's roots while also responding to new opportunities and new realities.

This aspect of the United Board's history had all the more resonance in the past two and half years as the global pandemic that has so upended our normal lives has been pursuing its course. Of course, the immediate impact of the pandemic is in no way comparable to the challenge the United Board faced in 1950. Yet, in hindsight, we may come to see it as nearly as significant for our organization and for the colleges and universities with which we work. The full impact of the pandemic will still be unfolding long after widespread disease has receded, and it will need to be measured not only in loss of life, but in learning loss, loss of hope, loss of livelihood, loss of faith in science, institutions, government authorities, and "experts" generally.

For the United Board, assessing the full impact of the pandemic will proceed on parallel tracks. We will need to assess broadly, deeply, and holistically the changes that have taken place at colleges and universities with which we work, including changes in teaching and learning, the effects of the pandemic on students and faculty, and new challenges facing institutional leaders. A second track for our assessments in the coming months and years will be to take stock of internal changes within the organization itself, not all of which may be evident to us now. I am confident, though, in the United Board's continuing ability to rise to the new challenges this global event has laid before us.

As you have heard, I will soon be completing my twelve years of service at the United Board. Over the years, when people have asked me what I enjoyed about my work, I have sometimes found myself holding back because I know that not everyone is fortunate enough to have an occupation that is as fulfilling as mine has been for me. Part of my good fortune has been in doing work that I can truly describe as a calling. Like a number of us here today, the United Board brings together Asia and higher education – our primary professional interests and commitments – with the Christian faith, which centers our lives. Working for the United Board also brings a certain sense of kinship – that of knowing one is always among friends. One also feels a meaningful sense of connection with the many generations that preceded us in this work, over a

century and more. This gives to our daily work a real sense of being grounded in something so much larger than ourselves.

To these commitments – Asia, higher education, and the Christian faith – can be added two particular joys that bless all of us who are part of the United Board community: the joys of place and of people. We are distinctly fortunate to be able to help link two great continents and many great cultures, and this makes the work endlessly fascinating and rewarding. And the people – well, you are all here today and others are with us in spirit!

Thank you all again for your warmth, friendship, and support. I am truly grateful.