



Upfront, May 2008
**Dr. David E. Schroeder, President of
Somerset Christian College**

Centennial Soiree

March 29, 2008, Bridgewater Manor, festive atmosphere, a “laud” program, as over 160 friends of Somerset Christian College met to praise God and celebrate 100 years of continuing Christian higher education being offered at Zarephath! Truly an enchanted evening, and a grand soiree, for sure. One of the “shoulda-been-there” events. No way to give it life in words, but let me try, anyway.

It was a magnificent spring evening, and the Manor was a gorgeous setting. During an hour of Hors d’Oeuvres, the guests were able to view a fascinating archival display of the hundred years of Zarephath Bible Seminary, Alma White College, Zarephath Bible Institute and Somerset Christian College. Mrs. Heidi Walker was able to glean from hundreds of photos to produce a photo montage that spanned the room. Fashion garbs from yesteryear adorned students and faculty in and around facilities that long ago received facelifts.

Another visual treat was a digital photo journal on screen at the front of the terrace ballroom. As we enjoyed a totally delicious meal, the guests were torn between watching the changing images of SCC or engaging in the stimulating conversations, on which I eavesdropped as I “worked the room.”

Each attendee received a Centennial Souvenir Booklet that also featured friendly greetings and ads from sponsors of the evening. The dinner was partly celebration and partly fund-raiser, and on both scores it was a raging success. Several corporations and individuals underwrote the event financially, and nine tables were sponsored, thanks to the tireless work of the Director of Advancement, Carol Birgfeld, and her Centennial Committee.

Praise to God was lifted through the worship led by Raphael and Aly Giglio. Two current students, Jennifer Lee (graduating this month and accepted into Rutgers University’s MSW degree program) and Joshua Paul, a first-year student, gave inspiring testimonies of their experiences at SCC. Dr. Rob Cruver, first President, current Chancellor, and Senior Pastor of Zarephath Christian Church, gave a keynote address that focused on the Lord “coming for our hearts, not just our belief.”

Another highlight was the unveiling of a commissioned painting by internationally renowned artist, Makoto Fujimura. Words are not even worth 1/1000 of seeing his painting, but here is one line of his description: “Here, in a traditional Nihonga method, I am using layers of mineral pigments, and a layer of gold gilding to depict the fire of sanctification.” You’ll have to visit the college to see *Golden Fire – Somerset*.

Near the end of the evening, I wrapped it up inviting people to “Journey into Vision” with Somerset Christian College. If you’d like a copy of the Centennial Souvenir Booklet, either email Carol at cbirgfeld@somerset.edu, or respond to this email, requesting a copy.

Students' Rights

Recently, I heard again the powerful phrase in our nation's Declaration of Independence, "unalienable rights." These rights that focus on the fundamental freedoms of a democracy have been worth fighting for, and as a nation in nearly every generation since our birth in 1776, we have done that. Unalienable rights have motivated many movements in our nation, such as the suffrage movement, the civil rights movement and the women's movement. I'm thinking it's time to start a student movement that focuses on some unalienable rights of today's college students. Here are some points for the movement.

1. Every student deserves to be taught in a college or university with a curriculum, by faculty and with textbooks that openly declare their worldview assumptions. Some institutions do well with this. For example, the *New York Times* received a notification when the School of Socialism opened in the Labor Building in Kansas City. Even though its socialistic agenda attracted only 100 students, the school led no one into its halls deceptively. Every student knew what to expect from its curriculum and faculty. But then, that was in 1903.

That kind of transparency has long ago ceased for most academic institutions. In fact, many otherwise intelligent educational leaders labor under the false assumption that they have an agenda-free and values-neutral perspective and program. Not so! Definitely, not so! Every institution, every curriculum, every textbook, every faculty member has a worldview that highly determines its (their) educational bias, and most of them in our day and culture are decidedly humanistic and anti-Christian.

Christian colleges are pretty upfront about their educational bias. Students know they will get a biblical worldview in the classroom along with a thorough knowledge of other perspectives. They also know that their faith will not be ridiculed or undermined. That should be an unalienable right. While faculty has the responsibility to present information and the right to share their views, they should not have the right to objectify their opinions into hard-core ideas that gain credibility because of their academic credentials.

2. A second tenant of the students' bill of rights should be to study in an environment of moral decency. One of the purposes of higher education historically has been to produce citizens of refined character, civility and charity. The moral compass seems to have been lost in the past few generations; it seems that the brightest are now inventors of new ways to express decadence, vulgarity and degeneracy. Cheating, lying, stealing, drunkenness, violence and sexual promiscuity are the norms of collegiate culture with nearly 80% of students in some universities participating in one or more of these activities regularly.

Christina Hoff Sommers, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Clark University, gives insight into how the moral compass in education has been lost: "Teachers should not be accused of brainwashing children when they insist on basic civility, decency, honesty and fairness." (Cited in IMPRIMIS, the monthly journal of Hillsdale College). To that I say, "Duh!?"

These are just two ideas that come quickly to mind as we ponder the higher education environment of today. So, we might be encouraged to begin a student bill of rights, or we could just encourage young people to attend colleges that already live by these codes.

Somerset Christian College offers an online option for contributing to the Student Support Fund by accessing our website, http://www.somerset.edu/friends/give_now.htm.