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Expanding and Renovating the Jeremiah Chapel

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Expanding and Renovating the Jeremiah Chapel



by Thomas White

As the clock strikes 9:55 a.m., a phenomenon happens every weekday on the campus of Cedarville University. Students, faculty, and staff stream into an auditorium where for the next 50 minutes, they will sing, pray, and listen to the Word of God. We call it chapel.

THE HEARTBEAT OF CAMPUS

To realize the importance of chapel, one need only look at our self-study and our history books. Our last self-study states that 89.75 percent of alumni listed daily chapel as a significant contributor to personal spiritual growth, and 51.80 percent noted the Fall Bible and Missions Conferences



James T. Jeremiah, Cedarville University President from 1954 to 1978, speaking in the nearly completed chapel, then at Apple Technology Resource Center.



Paul Dixon, Cedarville University President from 1978 to 2003, broadcasts live on radio while students carry hymnals to the new James T. Jeremiah Chapel.

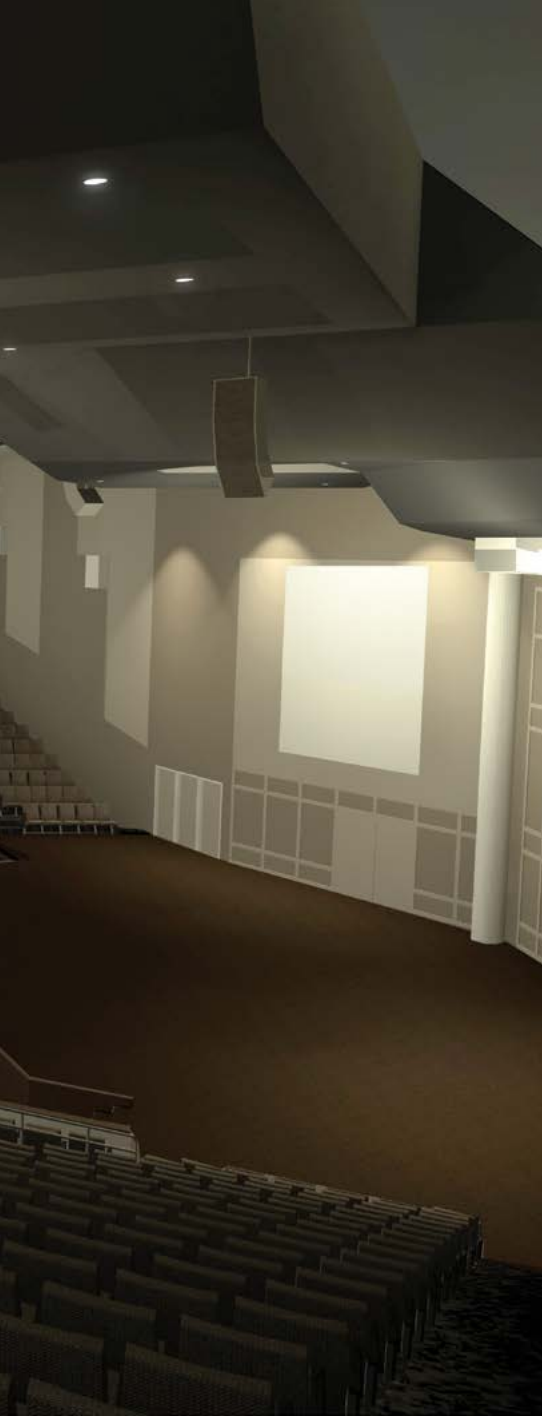
as additional contributing factors. Almost 25 percent of our alumni continue to listen to chapel on the radio or over the Internet.¹

Murray Murdoch indicated in *Cedarville College: A Century of Commitment* that the importance placed on chapel began at the top. James T. Jeremiah added a chapel to the campus landscape in 1976 as the center for spiritual development. A former pastor and

always a minister of the Gospel, Jeremiah gave great emphasis to chapel, so much so that our current facility still bears his name. Near the completion of the chapel, he engaged students in a walkathon to raise the necessary funds to purchase pews for the building.²

When evangelist Paul Dixon became President, the chapel maintained its central

importance. Murdoch wrote, "One of Dixon's first priorities as President was the chapel service. He viewed this as the primary responsibility for a Christian college president."³ Dixon stated, "Historically the direction you give the chapel ministry determines the future of the institution. The heartbeat of every Christian college is what happens in chapel."⁴ Dixon



Chapel renderings courtesy of Worship Space Advisors

raised money and built the Dixon Ministry Center, which houses the Jeremiah Chapel. As the new facility opened in 1996, Dixon signaled the transition to the new chapel with students carrying hymnals from the old building into the new.

William Brown continued the traditional emphasis on chapel by speaking every Monday, training his beloved students to think with a biblical worldview. He dismissed students each day with the memorable, “Have an awesome day in Christ.” Through four different buildings and four different presidents in the last 60 years, alumni, students, faculty, and



William Brown, President of Cedarville University from 2003 to 2013.

staff will all testify to the importance and centrality of chapel.

This August at the annual Fall Bible Conference, nearly 100 students professed faith in Christ while more than 90 answered a call to ministry. Whether professing faith, repenting of sin, answering the call to ministry, or making other spiritual decisions, students have been significantly impacted by their chapel experience.

STONE OF REMEMBRANCE

The summer of 2016 will be the 20-year anniversary of the Jeremiah Chapel in the Dixon Ministry Center. While this facility has served Cedarville well, the time has come for renovation. The life expectancy of the pews has expired, while the color of the carpet and pattern on the fabric testify to the style of a time gone by. Additionally, our video and sound equipment is greatly out of date. Moreover, the student body has grown from 2,509 in 1996 to 3,711 in the fall of 2015, thus requiring additional space through expanding the auditorium into one of the classrooms along the back. Yet, for all the expanding, updating, and renovating, the foundation for chapel remains the Word of God, and the message of chapel is still the Testimony of Jesus Christ.

As we renovate every area of the chapel — the sound, video, carpet, seating, paint, rails, lights, and stage — we ask for your

help. We want to provide an opportunity for alumni and friends of the University to invest in the most important part of Cedarville — to invest in eternity for generations to come. We are also raising money for this renovation because we don’t want these upgrades to be financed in any way through student tuition or fees. Your support will provide a state-of-the-art chapel facility that does not depend at all on current students’ funds.

After the Israelites had finally crossed over the Jordan River in Joshua 4, the Lord commanded Joshua to take 12 representatives from the tribes of Israel and have them construct a memorial out of 12 stones from the Jordan. This memorial was to serve as a reminder to future generations of God’s faithfulness to His people and His promises, signaled by the Jordan’s waters drying up as the Ark of the Covenant passed over.

Establishing a memorial can serve as a reminder to those to come of God’s faithfulness, just as it was for the people of Israel. As part of our chapel renovation, we invite you to raise up your own “stone of remembrance” through placing a plaque on a seat in chapel, signifying all that God has done in this place, and thereby reminding future students of God’s faithfulness to

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Cedarville University throughout its 127-year history.

For a gift of \$250 dollars or more, we will place a plaque of remembrance on a seat in the renovated chapel. On this plaque, we will inscribe a Bible reference of your choice, along with your initials, and your year of graduation (if applicable). Some may choose only the Bible reference, which can be a life verse, something you heard in chapel, or a special verse representing a time when God worked in your life. The seats will be randomly assigned to avoid any appearance of violating James 2 and valuing one area over another, and we will map out where each plaque is placed. Imagine



visiting with your children or friends and showing them your plaque of remembrance and sharing what God has done in your life. Future students may see your verse at the precise moment when God knows they need it. At \$250 or more, not only will your gift help provide a state-of-the-art facility for generations to come, but also ensure the same life-changing opportunities for future generations that you experienced in chapel.

Regardless of whether you have experienced chapel firsthand, we want

Will you pray about raising your stone of remembrance? Will you invest in the Cedarville chapel renovation and expansion project?

you to contribute to this exciting project. For alumni giving anything, your name will go on a donor wall to honor your gift. Alumni who give a gift of \$100 or more will have their name placed on the donor wall and receive a 9:55 commemorative coin to remind them to pray for chapel every day. For a gift of \$250 or more, you will receive a plaque of remembrance on a new Jeremiah Chapel seat. For additional information about other ways to support the chapel renovation and expansion project, please contact our Advancement Division at 1-888-233-2784.

Altogether, this renovation will cost around \$3 million. We are thankful to announce that a \$750,000 lead gift has already been provided. Your investment to help us complete the project is worthwhile not because of the importance of the facility itself, but because of the importance of what takes place inside the facility.

MY PERSPECTIVE

Chapel will always be the heartbeat of Cedarville University. Mondays when I stand on the stage and look around at more than 3,000 students, faculty, and staff, I feel the

weight of the responsibility and the stewardship entrusted to me. One day, I will stand before Jesus Christ and give account for how we led these students. That's one reason I desire intentionality

with each of their 1,000 days on campus. I pray that each chapel will guide them one step deeper in commitment, to be firmer in their faith, to repent of sin, to be good spouses and parents, and to live a life for the glory of God in a world full of chaos. In chapel, we deal with eternal matters. In this time of cultural confusion we must present compassionate conviction as we continue to stand for the Word of God and the Testimony of Jesus Christ.

We need your help. Will you pray about raising your stone of remembrance? Will you invest in the Cedarville chapel renovation and expansion project? Will you invest in eternity, praying that future generations will see God move in a mighty way?

Thomas White became Cedarville's 10th President in 2013.

1. Accreditation Self-Study Report Spring 2007, 102.
2. J. Murray Murdoch, *Cedarville College: A Century of Commitment* (Cedarville: 1987), 145.
3. J. Murray Murdoch, *Cedarville College: A Century of Commitment* (Cedarville: 1987), 152.
4. Ibid.



Thomas White, Cedarville University President since 2013.