



An Open Letter To The Nyack Community
From Michael G. Scales
President of Nyack College and Alliance Theological Seminary

By now I'm certain most of you have heard the news that we have applied to the State of New York to operate solely from our campus in Lower Manhattan effective fall 2019. When the State approves its application, all Rockland County campus academic programs of the College and Seminary will be repositioned to the campus at 2 Washington Street.

I want to take a moment to share with our community some additional information about our journey. Many of you are wondering how this has happened. How did we get to the point of having to make this week's announcement? The answer involves three words: pain, prayer and process.

These are very difficult days in higher education. In June of 2017, I wrote openly to Nyack and ATS alumni and friends about the extreme difficulties we were facing in light of changing student demographics and economic realities. We have experienced significant operational losses over the past few years, despite making painful reductions to our faculty and staff.

In response to these losses, the Nyack College and ATS Board of Trustees gave the administration a mandate to develop a plan that would lead to a balanced budget and more importantly, to longer term sustainability for the institution.

I want our community to know that while we were charged with the task of balancing our budget, the leadership team did not start by talking or praying about **our budget**. We started by talking and praying about **our mission**.

In our prayers, we asked God painful questions. We asked if our mission of preparing men and women to take the whole gospel to the whole world was still necessary and relevant. We asked if there was truly fruit being produced by the ministries of Nyack and ATS. We asked God if His hand was still upon us. We asked our Heavenly Father the hard questions that His children ask when the way becomes dark and difficult.

We asked these questions and He answered us. To each question, His answer was, "Yes." He spoke "Yes" to our hearts, both individually and collectively. He powerfully affirmed the importance of our mission and the continuing need for its fulfillment. He assured us He was with us.

So we began to ask the Lord a different question. We asked, "How?" How, amid the challenges we face, might we fulfill this mission He had just affirmed. While we prayed and talked, the Lord made clear a reality we had already begun to understand. Although Nyack's mission is vital and viable for the future, our model of operating two campuses—one in Nyack and one in New York City—is not. We could not overlook this. **Something had to change.**

We faced an unthinkable decision. We had to discern which campus would best position us to fulfill our mission in the 21st Century and beyond. Again, we prayed. We sought God about His will for the future of Nyack College and Alliance Theological Seminary. And as we sought Him, He placed before us a series of truths that we could not overlook.

We could not overlook that A.B. Simpson established Nyack in New York City. New York City is Nyack's birthplace, its home. This is not just a cliché for us. It is a defining reality. We are at home in New York City where all the peoples of the world are gathered because we are called to all the peoples of the world. Our burden for the whole world began with A.B. Simpson. We could not overlook this.

We could not overlook how God orchestrated the return of Nyack and ATS to New York City in 1997. Even beyond this, we could not overlook that God miraculously provided a campus in New York City. The campus He provided can only be described as a miracle. In 2013, God provided Nyack and ATS with a state-of-the-art campus that can accommodate 3,000 students—a miracle indeed!

We could not overlook the realities of our residential campus in Rockland County. While this campus has great character, it is aging and in need of widespread modernization. Further, it lacks many amenities in demand by college bound students. From a strictly facilities perspective, we could spend hundreds of millions of dollars on the Rockland campus only to become comparable to many other institutions with whom we compete for students. We could not overlook this.

Finally, we could not overlook the reality that what the world needs—may not be another Christian college or seminary

located in a rural or suburban setting. These already exist. They are plentiful and serving effectively. Perhaps, what the world needs, is not a college and seminary like many others. Rather, what the world needs in these days is a school that is *unlike* any other.

We prayed, we talked, we listened and we cried. We knew God was calling us to make the difficult move away from our Rockland County campus to consolidate all our programs on our New York City campus. We had to choose the pursuit of our mission over the preservation of our Rockland campus. It was a very painful conclusion, but we could not overlook it.

The Chairman of our Board met with us and asked us a pointed question. He asked, "If you were given a gift of \$200 million dollars, would you change this proposed new direction?" Each member of our executive team—individuals who have spent decades working, leading, stewarding and, in some cases, raising children on the Rockland County campus—said the same thing. Each would continue with the difficult decision we had been led to make. They would do so simply because this was where God was leading us. We could not overlook this.

To my Nyack/ATS family, I want to be clear. The certainty of our decision in no way lessened the difficulty of our decision. There was pain, grief and tears. The burden of this responsibility has weighed heavily on our hearts for months. There have been moments when each of us has asked God to remove the weight and pain of this decision.

He has not done so. He has, however, provided other mercies for which we are thankful.

First, He has provided the affirmation of other godly leaders. Our Board of Trustees affirmed this decision. They did so feeling the same pain and experiencing the same grief as the administration. But they, too, could not overlook what God was calling us to do. Over the past year we have been dialoguing with the administration and committees within the Board of Directors of The Alliance. In late October, they also affirmed this direction. We are ever so grateful to move into this decision with unity and support.

Second, even despite feelings of loss, God has graciously instilled in us a sense of excitement for the future to which He has called us in New York City. We feel deep pain leaving a place with which we have such history and connection. The history of our Rockland County campus is not organizational history; it is personal history. It is family history. It is a history of people meeting lifelong friends, spouses, and most importantly, meeting Jesus in a deeper way. We cannot overlook this. We feel the pain and bear the weight of our decision.

But our Lord has called us to New York City, and to help us cope with the pain of this transition, He has given us a vision. We cannot overlook this.

In 1897, Dr. Simpson moved the Missionary Training Institute out of New York City to a location north of the City that a friend told him about. What must students at Dr. Simpson's Institute have thought when they learned they would be moving? How must the Institute's supporters in churches throughout New York City have felt about the school's move "upstate?" What did people feel when they were told about this move away from the familiarity of Manhattan to a place with such an odd name, a place called "Nyack?" They may well have felt what we are feeling now.

I thank you for engaging the realities and even some of the pain of this process. Most importantly, I thank you for your prayers.

There is another expression of encouragement that caught my attention recently. The 1902 Commencement program commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Missionary Institute includes the following testimony by an unknown author: "The sense of the Divine presence, like the Shekinah in the ancient Tabernacle seems always to abide."

There has been pain, prayer and process. And through all of this, the One who fills the tabernacle of our hearts has bid us to go. He bids us to go with only His command—the promise of His presence. We will go, like so many before us, because He has called. We go knowing that He goes before us and with us.

We will go, knowing that this will always be enough.

Sincerely,



Michael G. Scales, Ed.D.
President

For more information, visit
www.nyackinnyc.org.