

Let's Build

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LET'S BUILD

At church recently, I had an interesting conversation after the service with a banker here in Sioux Center.

We were reflecting on the last 25 years; 1997 was the year he started at the bank and also the year I moved to Sioux Center. We've both seen substantial development of this town and of Dordt University over that quarter century. We mutually praised God and thanked one another for the investments our two institutions have made here in a mutually beneficial manner, along with dozens of other institutions in this community.



That same Sunday afternoon, I read a book entitled *A Time to Build*, by Yuval Levin. His thesis is that we've seen a turn in our culture toward a disturbing trend of hyperindividualism—of people turning away from trusting and investing in institutions. Levin contends that the time has come to turn the tide back—to begin (re)building institutions as fundamental building blocks of civilization which serve as places of character formation in addition to institutions' culture-shaping roles.

Levin highlights not only institutions like businesses, campuses, non-profits, and other volunteer organizations but also less tangible (but perhaps more important) institutions like marriage, family, and citizenship. Levin warns—and rightly so, I believe—that unless we turn the tide to start building institutions again, we're in a downward spiral as a civilization.

Levin's thesis reminded me of one of my favorite memories from the last decade of serving as Dordt's president—and that reminder also brought me back to the Old Testament prophets.

Sometime in the last 10 years, I was at a Dordt event for alumni and friends in Denver, Colorado. Late in the evening, an older gentleman pulled me aside. He didn't attend Dordt, but over the past 40 years he had noticed a few things about Dordt graduates in the Denver community.

"First, at Dordt, you take young Christians from Denver and send them back to

us—that doesn't always happen at other colleges," he said. "Second, you send them back to us better than when they left—thank you for that, and be sure to thank your faculty and staff for that, too. Third, just look at this room—as I observe the people here, there's something I didn't notice before tonight: that in this room are many Christian leaders in the Denver community. They're on school boards; they're building businesses; they're founding non-profits; they're building strong families, churches, and communities. What I didn't see until tonight is that the common thing about all these people is that they're Dordt graduates."

I agree with his assessment. Dordt is somewhat unique in that Dordt people have taken to heart the guidance that God gave to the Israelites through the prophet Jeremiah in Chapter 29:

"This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 'Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.'"

There are fleeting moments during which I almost feel like an "exile" in today's culture. Yet, I'm encouraged to continue the equipping work here at Dordt of developing effective kingdom citizens. In these days of increasing individualism, I'm motivated by the winsome way our graduates settle into their communities to build institutions and the way they optimistically provide both salt and light to the world—as together we work for Christ centered renewal in every area of life—until Christ returns.

DR. ERIK HOEKSTRA, PRESIDENT

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Our Mission

As an institution of higher education committed to a Reformed Christian perspective, Dordt University equips students, alumni, and the broader community to work effectively toward Christ-centered renewal in all aspects of contemporary life.

On the Cover

Graduates of the class of 2022 toss their caps into the air as they celebrate commencement on May 13, 2022. Photo by Adri Van Groningen ('18).

