“The paradox is that part of what binds us closest together as human beings and makes it true that no man is an island is the knowledge that in another way every man is an island... Island calls to island across the silence, and once, in trust, the real words come, a bridge is built and love is done — not sentimental, emotional love, but love that is pontifex, bridge-builder. Love that speaks the holy and healing word which is: God be with you, stranger who are no stranger. I wish you well. The islands become an archipelago, a continent, become a kingdom whose name is the Kingdom of God.”

— Frederick Buechner

Becoming Pontifex

Duke Chapel is home to an interdenominational Christian community formed by the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Its faithful preaching and inspiring music are shaped by the neo-Gothic architecture that thoughtfully engages history and tradition with flexibility and creativity. Its vibrant worship strives to educate and integrate the whole person — head, heart, and hands.

From its Christian perspective, the Chapel recognizes the unique offering of Jesus Christ, “For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made separate groups into one, and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us... he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near... So then you are no longer strangers... but members of the household of God.”

Following the example of Christ, the Chapel aims to be “a church without walls.” Just as Jesus broke down the wall that divides humankind from God, the Chapel hopes to bridge all people to God’s reconciling love.
Duke Chapel and the Resource Center for Women in Ministry in the South provide an annual labyrinth.
Global Christianity is rich, textured, and vibrant, with a multitude of distinct representations on Duke’s campus. This diversity is a reminder that Christianity is not just a western phenomenon.

Western Christianity was once an imperial influence across the world, but in recent decades, the rise of *postmodernity, secularism, and pluralism* have led to the gradual decline of this particular Christian ethos, and made room for voices from the margins of society.

According to historian Philip Jenkins,³ eighty-three percent of the world’s Christians lived in Europe and North America at the turn of the 20th century. His research suggests that within the next 30-40 years, seventy-two percent of Christians will live in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Duke Chapel finds itself situated within the reality of global Christianity.

Though the Chapel finds itself amidst the declining influence of both western expressions of Christianity and the Western Church in society, it stands as a beacon signaling the tremendous growth of Christianity at large, opening its doors to the ever-increasing diverse expressions of Christianity (*ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural*) found on Duke’s campus. Religious practice in a university context is more visible and pluriform than it has been in the recent past.⁵ This infusion of diversity must affect the ways in which Duke Chapel approaches intellectual and spiritual formation. Instead of signaling the demise of the practice of faith, diversity calls for the expansion of the Chapel’s creativity, an opportunity to live more fully and faithfully into the welcoming gospel of Christ.

Duke Chapel holds a Christian confessional identity, while welcoming rich and charitable dialogue with other religious communities. The Chapel supports more than two dozen Religious Life groups, including Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist communities, as well as Roman Catholics and a wide variety of Protestant denominations and parachurch affiliations, many of which meet in the Chapel basement.

"More than a third of Duke’s undergraduates are now students of color. The percentage of African-American faculty members doubled in a ten-year span and enhancing faculty diversity remains a major priority. A third of all graduate and professional students comes from other countries, as do many undergraduates and faculty."⁴
Postmodernity

“Postmodernity at its best stands against modernity’s penchant to quash dissenting voices in its relentless quest for order, stability, unity, and certainty. At its worst, postmodernity loses all confidence in any truth or conviction beyond its own pessimistic views on the absence of truth and the futility of conviction.”  

Secularism

“Secularism...urges us to look not outward for hope and meaning, but inward toward the quest of human fulfillment and flourishing.”

Pluralism

“...the renaissance of religious interest that has grown in recent years is not, finally, limited to formal religion or even to ‘spirituality’ but has been expanded to include multiple and varied meaning-making systems. Pluralism ... includes religious faith but also moves beyond it.”
A 2013 report by the Interfaith Youth Core revealed that Duke students show positive appreciation of non-Christian worldviews and faith traditions. Within this campus climate, the Chapel creates a safe space for religious expression at Duke, fostering the spiritual lives of over two thousand students each year. Through interfaith and ecumenical collaboration, the Chapel is breaking down the barriers that have too commonly divided people of faith, and making bridges built on common ground. James B. Duke wanted the Chapel to be known as the “great towering church.” In keeping with Duke’s vision, the Chapel community wants to be known as a great loving church.

As we embrace the realities of globalization, the Chapel is exploring innovative strategies for hospitality, spiritual care, ecumenical collaboration, education, the arts, and communication, to reach our local and global constituencies. This strategic plan is the Chapel’s response to the current state of faith on Duke’s campus, and it is also a prayer:

*Through mutual listening, connection, and care, may the people of Duke, Durham, and beyond be blessed by Duke Chapel’s intentional hospitality, and invited into a beloved community of both contemplation and action.*

The plan gives focus to the Chapel’s hope for reconciliation among all people of faith, those whose faith rests in the divine, and those whose faith rests in the human belief that there is a way for all of us to walk through this life together.

In hope,

Luke A. Powery, Dean of Duke Chapel
Between classes, students converse under a Chapel arcade.
OUR VISION

To bridge the differences that divide humanity, reconciling us to God and to one another.

OUR MISSION

Through worship, student ministry, community connection, interfaith engagement, and the arts, Duke Chapel stands as a beacon of Christian hope that bridges faith (*religio*) and learning (*eruditio*).
View of the Chapel nave exterior from the top of the tower
Hospitality

Duke Chapel Fellows share a laugh on the porch of the PathWays house.
The Chapel offers its building as a hospitable place on campus for celebration, prayer, and the quiet reflection so direly needed at a busy university. But the Chapel is more than just a building; it is “a church without walls,” extending its ministry of hospitality to the larger community.

“Hospitality is the way we come out of ourselves. It is the first step toward dismantling the barriers of the world. Hospitality is the way we turn a prejudiced world around, one heart at a time.”

— Joan Chittister
Duke Chapel hosts the University's annual Martin Luther King, Jr. commemorative program.
GOAL

To extend boundary-crossing hospitality

by offering a welcoming space for people of all faiths to come together in service to God and to humanity. Through “in-reach” to university students, faculty, and staff, as well as outreach to community members and alumni across the globe, the Chapel offers hospitality that crosses dividing lines and creates a community of care.

STRATEGY 1
Contribute to the welfare of the city by maintaining the presence of the Chapel PathWays house in Durham’s West End neighborhood and strengthening Duke’s partnerships with local religious communities and non-profit organizations (such as Durham Congregations in Action).

STRATEGY 2
Provide community “in-reach” events for those attending weekly worship services (such as Sunday fellowship), as well as events that invite the larger Duke community into the Chapel space (such as the Annual Christmas Open House).

STRATEGY 3
Foster the development of a visitor relations specialist, who welcomes visitors to Duke as an ambassador of the Chapel, creates an inviting space for members of the university community, and extends the hospitality of the Chapel to the people of other university departments and of local partner organizations.
Students and community members gather regularly for vigils on the Chapel lawn.
The Chapel cares for the community by sharing in its sorrows and joys, and by fostering wholeness — the integration of its members’ spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual lives.

“Real care is not ambiguous. Real care excludes indifference and is the opposite of apathy. The word ‘care’ finds its roots in the Gothic ‘Kara’ which means lament. The basic meaning of care is: to grieve, to experience sorrow, to cry out with.”

— Henri Nouwen
The Chapel’s wedding coordinator experiences the joy of her own special day at Duke Chapel.
GOAL

To encourage spiritual care

by offering the Chapel as a resource and venue for events that cultivate the spiritual life, from lament to celebration, through memorial services, funerals, baptisms, weddings, and university ceremonies.

STRATEGY 1

Encourage creative use of the Chapel space for prayer, silence, meditation, and conversation, in order to call all who enter the building into a state of greater internal spiritual awareness and communal care, and to mark a space on campus for those working through questions of meaning, purpose, and identity (such as questions related to faith, race, gender, and sexual orientation).

STRATEGY 2

Explore intergenerational opportunities for students in partnership with the Congregation at Duke Chapel, while maintaining the ongoing mentoring and spiritual direction offered to university and community members by Chapel staff.

STRATEGY 3

Model the spiritual care offered by the Chapel through the embodiment of intentional mutual care among Chapel staff members day-to-day, as well as during monthly meetings and yearly retreats.
Ecumenism

The Chapel hosts an annual Christmas Eve service for the youngest members of the community.
VALUE

The word ecumenism in Greek denotes “the entirety of the inhabited world.” The Chapel welcomes mutuality and reciprocity within the whole of human society, inviting people to cross the boundaries of denominations, races, nations, generations, faiths, and academic disciplines.

“Sooner or later all the peoples of the world, without regard to the political systems under which they live, will have to discover a way to live together in peace.”

— Martin Luther King, Jr.
The Chapel invites global expressions of worship.
GOAL

To Enact Ecumenical Collaboration

by sustaining and strengthening the broader Religious Life function of the Chapel. The Chapel will facilitate deeper relationships and expand opportunities for university and community members to relate to partners across faith traditions.

STRATEGY 1
Foster the development of the C. Eric Lincoln minister for student engagement, who focuses on students who have been historically underrepresented. By offering cross-cultural engagement, opportunities for artistic expression, and space for spiritual care, this staff member actively engages Religious Life groups and supports Chapel PathWays student ministries.

STRATEGY 2
Promote interfaith engagement among students through community trips, academic service-learning courses (in partnership with Duke Service-Learning and the Kenan Institute for Ethics), as well as international mission trips and courses (such as those offered by PathWays), and ecumenical meals and dialogues (such as those offered by The Faith Council and The Duke Undergraduate Faith Council).

STRATEGY 3
Advance the interdenominational and intergenerational work of the Chapel by partnering with the Congregation at Duke Chapel and other Religious Life groups, through continued and enhanced collaboration in worship, fellowship, education, and community outreach.
Integrative Education

PathWays students in Belize
Through curricular and co-curricular education, the Chapel strives to educate the whole person — head, heart, and hands — by standing at the intersection of the spiritual and academic worlds, embodying the University’s motto, *eruditio et religio*.

“If we want to grow as teachers — we must do something alien to academic culture: we must talk to each other about our inner lives — risky stuff in a profession that fears the personal and seeks safety in the technical, the distant, the abstract.”

— Parker Palmer
Chapel staff and religious life groups join other university members to pack food for people in need.
GOAL

To Educate to Integrate

by offering opportunities for university and community members to integrate faith holistically into their personal, curricular, and co-curricular lives.

STRATEGY 1
Encourage participation in academic courses taught by Chapel staff members through the Divinity School, the Department of Religious Studies, the Sanford School of Public Policy, the Music Department, and through Duke House Courses.

STRATEGY 2
Convene public “Bridge Panels,” facilitated by the Chapel dean, and made up of distinct and diverse voices, in order to facilitate interdisciplinary dialogue surrounding topics relevant to religion, culture, and society.

STRATEGY 3
Partner with Duke Athletics to encourage student athlete participation in community outreach connected to issues of poverty, race, and violence in Durham’s West End neighborhood.

“...to prepare students for lives of personal integrity and engaged citizenship by nurturing reflective judgment and discernment, compassion and courage, and a concern for truth, justice, order, and freedom.”

4
Creativity

The director of Chapel music takes a bow after conducting a concert in partnership with Duke Initiatives in Theology and the Arts.

PHOTOGRAPH BY PILAR TIMPANE
The Chapel views the creative arts as both an expression of the worship of God and an expression of human longing for God. By creating art from the materials of creation, humanity takes part both in the broken beauty of our creatureliness and of its glory.

“If beauty once saved the world, then art must prove itself an instrument of this salvation.”

— Sergei Nikolaevich Bulgakov
The Chapel hosts QUARTETS, a visual and musical celebration of T. S. Eliot’s Four Quarters.
GOAL

To Explore Faith through the Arts

by creating a space on campus for artistic expression of the spiritual life. By both preserving the rich traditions of worship and sacred music, and also by offering innovative opportunities for the sharing of diverse experiences through various artistic mediums, the Chapel encourages art from a wider spectrum of perspectives.

STRATEGY 1

Preserve and broaden the traditional Chapel music and arts programming (such as weekly worship services and monthly art exhibits), with particular attention to ethnically and culturally diverse musical and aesthetic offerings.

STRATEGY 2

Develop new initiatives, such as a Jazz Vespers service around liturgical and seasonal themes, in collaboration with Jazz Studies at Duke; and also, a program of visiting artists, which invites artists from a wide array of genres to display/perform their art and generate conversations about faith within the Chapel community.

STRATEGY 3

Coordinate partnerships and programs with existing university schools, departments, and initiatives, such as: Duke Initiatives in Theology and the Arts, Visual and Media Arts, the Nasher Museum of Art, Franklin Humanities Institute, and Center for Documentary Studies.
The community gathers at the Chapel steps on All Hallows’ Eve.
VALUE

Whether the space is physical or digital, the Chapel utilizes creative communication to extend its mission and ministry both locally and globally, as well as to invite individuals and communities to connect with the Chapel in purpose and belonging.

“The Christian communicator ‘proclaims God’s Kingdom rather than our divided churches’... Ecumenical Communication [occurs when] Christians of different denominations [are] speaking with one voice and bearing witness to the one body of Christ...”

— Ineke de Feijter
A photographer captures images of campus from the Chapel tower.
To Expand Communications

by developing fresh approaches to external and internal Chapel communication by enhancing the quality and quantity of media outlets. Through innovative strategies, the Chapel invites participation from potential audiences and hopes to connect more closely with its diverse constituencies.

**STRATEGY 1**
Form a communications team to convey publicly and clearly the image and mission of the Chapel and to enhance its overall message, which includes fostering the development of the Chapel’s multimedia manager to amplify the Chapel’s online presence through the production of mini-documentaries and videos that capture its mission and ministry.

**STRATEGY 2**
Establish a digital archive of past, present, and future worship services and musical performances as resource tool for research, teaching, and practice.

**STRATEGY 3**
Facilitate public in-house and online conversations (*such as Bridge Panels and #DukeChat Twitter dialogue*) in collaboration with university departments and community organizations (*such as The Religious Coalition for a Nonviolent Durham*)
“To build your house well is, ironically, to be nudged beyond its doors.”

— Richard Rohr

1. Adapted from Ephesians 2, New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
2. The Hungering Dark, Harper Collins: 1985
4. Duke University Strategic Plan — For an online version with links to the University’s strategic plan, visit chapel.duke.edu/mission/strategic-plan.

— All photos are by Duke Photography, Duke Archives, or Chapel employees, unless otherwise noted.
Duke Chapel before the construction of its walls was completed.
STRATEGIC PLAN 2014