

# **Our City Of Hopes And Dreams To Achieve**

**LSC Design**

**April 24, 2015**

**Mayor C. Kim Bracey**

Governor Wolf, Representative Schreiber, County Commissioners, members of City Council, all elected officials, City directors, friends, citizens, believers, and doers, good evening!

Actually, as I look into your bright, cheerful faces, it's a **great** evening, yes, a great evening.

So let's do that again: Great evening to you, my friends!

I want to thank our event host, LSC Design, the York County Economic Alliance and this evening's sponsors: The Glatfelter Agency, A Division of Glatfelter Insurance Group; IO Creative Group; WellSpan Health; Community Courier/Engle Printing & Publishing Co.; Penn National Insurance; C. S. Davidson, Inc.; Johnson Mirmiran & Thompson; and ROCK Commercial Real Estate.

Thank you to all of our sponsors and to all of you for your commitments to and pride in our York, your county seat.

One night a year we pause to celebrate and honor our York and recommit ourselves to what she yet might be – a thriving urban community with equality, justice and opportunity for all, a shining city of work, education, recreation, creativity, heritage, and fulfillment.

When we are mired in the muck, mediocrity, and minutia of every-day challenges, we sometimes forget how many friendships we have forged, how many milestones we have reached, and how many edifices we have erected. So, one night a year, we take a step back to celebrate you, to celebrate us, and to ponder our city of hope and dreams that hovers on the horizon.

I thank our 315 dedicated city employees who make our government hum, tick, and run. From public safety to health and human services, from business management to sewer maintenance, from real estate development to high tech information services, from one-on-one assistance to entrepreneurs to blight remediation, from customer service at City Hall to long-term public-private partnerships, from special events to maintenance of 25 parks, your city workforce is a complex and committed human organization.

For our too often unsung workers who do yeoman's work day-in, day-out, please join me in applause!

Great hopes and dreams take time to achieve. As a team, when we persevere and believe, we achieve.

My friends, through painful cuts, renegotiating union contracts, and disciplined spending, we held the line on municipal property taxes in 2013, in 2014, and now again in 2015.

And we have done so while not sacrificing public safety.

Community Policing works. From day one, our strategy was to intensify and grow our Neighborhood Enforcement Units because communication, relationships, and trust are the best antidotes to crime.

You know, before I came into office over five years ago, I addressed the Fraternal Order of Police, and I challenged our officers to intensify our Community Policing efforts then underway.

I also said that, together, we can reduce Part I. crimes to below 2,000 per year.

Part I. crimes are the most serious crimes, including murder, rape, aggravated assault, robbery, burglary, larceny, arson, and motor vehicle theft.

When I issued those challenges, I bet some whispered, "Who does this woman think she is?"

Five-plus years later, the results are in, and facts are stubborn things. Intensive Community Policing works!

The year 2014 marks the second straight year in which Part I. crimes were below 2,000.

During our administration, we reduced Part I. crimes from 2,652 in 2008 to 1,850 in 2014. That's a 30% decrease! Yes, I said that right – a 30% decrease.

And that's cause for applause.

My friends, Community Policing and civic responsibility often are two-way streets shared by neighbors and our public safety professionals. I urge our citizens to use your I-pads and other devices to text, tweet, stream and be the changes you want to see.

We are proud to announce that our new Police Headquarters on West King Street is open for business. Some \$5.6 million in upgrades has means greater integrity of our evidence storage and processing system, a stronger security system, renovated locker-rooms, new detective interview rooms, new prisoner cells, and a new fitness center.

Upgrades also enabled our department to receive long sought accreditation by the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association earlier this month.

Accreditation helps us evaluate and improve overall performance through best practices and measures of excellence.

For our budget hawk friends, please note that upgrades were made possible through a \$5 million grant from the state and \$600,000 from the WellSpan Health.

We believe in our officers and our firefighters and thank them for their hard work. Led by Fire Chief Dave Michaels, and Police Chief Wes Kahley...they are all cause for applause!

We also thank our police retirees for their civic virtue and their loyalty to their brethren. In late 2014, benefit concessions by them enabled us to avert a property tax increase and avoid draconian cuts in our Police Department.

As pension costs continue to rise in 2016, we still plead for help from the state to maintain levels of professional services. Of these services, public safety accounts for 70% of our general fund.

I took an oath to serve our city and you. For years, I have been vocal about specific state reforms that could save our cities and usher in brighter futures.

I have done so even when such efforts put me, at times, at odds with my own party in Harrisburg.

At the local level, political partisanship does not matter to me. Results do. Political posturing and polarization do not matter to me. Our York matters.

Unfortunately, too often in Harrisburg, we have witnessed two disappointing movies: **50 Shades of Delay** and its sequel, **50 Shades of Dismay**.

We have pled for help from Harrisburg so Pennsylvania's 54 **other** cities can lift themselves up. We have asked for pension reform through House Bill 1581, which would be a long-term fiscal game-changer by reining in pension costs for new hires.

We also have pled for arbitration reform so arbitrators can take into account a struggling municipality's ability to pay and taxpayers are given access to closed door hearings with bargaining units. Lest we forget, already overtaxed urban residents are paying the salaries, pensions and benefits of bargaining unit members.

Help may be on the way. We are fortunate that York County's brilliant son, Governor Tom Wolf, understands that cities are the wave of Pennsylvania's future.

I fully support Governor Wolf's budget, which would nearly eliminate school property taxes, which account for about 56% of a city taxpayer's total tax bill. That would provide major relief for city homeowners and be a game-changer for urban cores.

But let's have no illusions. **Even if** the Governor's budget plan is passed in its entirety, **even if** pension reform is passed, **even if** arbitration reform is passed, we still are not out of the woods.

York still would be landlocked with 37% of the value of our real estate tax exempt, with **Fair Share** contributions falling way short, and with pension costs still rising.

We still would be an underdog fighting for tax fairness, still combatting poverty, still clawing to attract good jobs, still struggling to keep our infrastructure intact.

The work to stabilize and reform our city's finances is full time and year round. It's not limited to a budget season or a state of the city. We work annually to reform and stay afloat. You've watched the difficult decisions to reduce officer overtime, to terminate water service for delinquent sewer refuse customers, to request payments in lieu of taxes from non-profits, or to reduce our entire city workforce by 1/3rd since I've taken office. You've seen our city painfully propose to reduce our police force, to renegotiate contracts and to encourage a countywide tax to help all local governments. We are in this together, we are all sharing the sacrifice and we all want to see a financially healthy, professionally staffed, and stable city government.

Just imagine if we didn't have to do all that year in and out? Tonight, I am reaffirming my commitment made during this last budget cycle to reduce our municipal taxes by 15% over five years. We have made some very painful decisions and will continue to do so. I do firmly believe that the financial solutions for stability of all Pennsylvania cities ultimately must come from Harrisburg, and with renewed focus and Governor Wolf, I believe we will make significant strides. But in the meantime, while we as taxpayers and believers wait for our state, we will continue to chart our own destiny and invent our own reforms locally. Many of the difficult decisions we've made to date are working and beginning to bear fruit. With continue focus, led by our newly appointed Business Administrator, and financial prudence we can achieve a 15% tax REDUCTION. Then, imagine if reform does come and the playing field for cities is leveled and equilibrium is reached for all municipalities. My friends, we will see incredible success flourish as entrepreneurs, ownership, investment and confidence is unleashed in our urban cores.

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So we meet tonight at the nucleus of over \$100 million in new and ongoing development made possible by bold visioning and good planning; public-private partnerships; city site preparation; environmental responsibility; entrepreneurial tenacity; patient equity investments; and a host of smart programs: local tax abatements, state grants, and state loans.

In landlocked third class cities with barriers to entry, projects like this one and all around this one do not magically happen on their own. But as a team, we achieve.

When this building was a blight and just a gleam in city leaders' eyes as a key part of the Northwest Triangle, it became a gleam in architect Rob Kinsley's eyes.

Now, this 47,000 square foot historic structure has realized its highest and best use and is a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, PLATIUM, certified green building. After \$5 million in new construction, its 80 employees who help to build a downtown critical mass of professionals with spending power.

A jury of the American Institute of Architects of Central Pennsylvania called this building "a great example of adaptive re-use...and an exemplary use of an industrial palette."

We recently lost a giant in our decades-long efforts to transition from a hard industrial past into a softer, more civilized, and more humanized city. For over 40 years, Henry Leader led our Redevelopment Authority, transitioning abandoned factories and slums throughout our City into sites that yield life once again. This magnificent building is a prime example.

Henry and his beloved wife, Dorrie, also were instrumental in healing York's racial tensions in the late 1960s and beyond. Their devout civic service left a better York after they left us. My friends, will we be able to say the same someday?

As a nation and community, we often are cowardly when it comes to conversations of educational equality, race, religion, and poverty. Fully engaging our diverse citizens, respectfully listening to each other, and digesting opinions of which we might be skeptical will make us uncomfortable. But such conversations are cathartic in our cores, and they make us stronger and better.

You don't have to march on a bridge in Selma to bridge gaps of understanding and trust between peoples. The most segregated time in America is 10 to 11 a.m. each Sunday morning. So, as part of our ongoing **Faith Net** initiative, I'm asking faith and civic leaders and any and all to join me in a **York Worship Tour** where we will visit a new place of worship in our richly diverse city every two months.

Let's get out of our comfort zones, learn to appreciate different faiths and rituals, and get to know our spiritual neighbors better. It's free and it will free us.

Ladies and gentlemen, development officials and experts often talk about "synergy," "ripple effect," and "multiplier effect." Those phrases sound abstract at times, but they are real.

We convene in the center of the Northwest Triangle, which started with the construction in 2007 of what is now known as Santander Stadium. This year marks the ninth season of York Revolution baseball.

Sluggers dream of hitting for the cycle. Your stadium hits for the cycle each home game and beyond— hitting cycle upon cycle of family fun, friendships, fellowship, and feet-on-the-street.

Your stadium, York County's boardwalk, has been an astounding success, surpassing attendance projections and rippling positive energy in all directions.

Rippling across the street is the \$14 million CODO 241, which houses 36 market-rate apartments, Wagman Construction, and Brew Vino.

A monster shot from your stadium to 210 York Street bounces to the headquarters of Think Loud Development and United Fiber and Data.

Spearheaded by York high graduates and '90s rock-and-roll pioneers, Chad Taylor, Chad Gracey and Patrick Dahlheimer, after \$20 million in renovations, the 50,000 square foot project is becoming the nexus of a cutting-edge data company and a recording studio. What is incredibly cool, we now have successful, Grammy winning artists regularly coming to our York to make and record music.

We are living in an information and data revolution. United Fiber and Data or UFD understands that the east coast needs robust bandwidth and high-speed connectivity light years ahead of broadband. Fiber optics is the future proof technology. Pending state grants, UFD plans to build a 400-mile fiber optic network from New York City to Virginia with York as the nerve center.

In the 19th century, this section of York Street was known as the poorhouse area because it housed an almshouse and prison. It also was the intersection of three regional railroads.

From steel wheels to platinum records, from rail yards to a billion yards of blitzing bandwidth, from a poorhouse to ***a Data and Connectivity Powerhouse***, York Street will grow a campus anchoring the northeast neighborhood.

Pending a state grant, this state-of-the-art data center will add 150 jobs. Consistent with our City's Strategic Comprehensive Plan, the anchor campus will stabilize our northeast neighborhood, decrease crime, add jobs, and strengthen our tax base.

Speaking of campuses, rippling across North Street from here, the York Academy International Baccalaureate School teaches 500 students from York Suburban, Central York, and York City. The academy, eventually growing from K-12, is a \$7 million-plus project that ripples its own energy toward the Codorus in the form of the beautiful Simpson Station playground.

Great hopes and dreams take time to achieve. Working closely with the Redevelopment Authority board members, Acting Director of Economic and Community Development, Shilvosky Buffaloe and I have insisted that the west end of the Northwest Triangle be reserved for market rate housing. That stubborn vision will yield great results this spring.

Developers Jordan Ilyes and Seth Predix will start converting the three floors of Keystone Colorworks into 29 luxury apartments.

Connecting our downtown to Olde Towne East, Royal Square works its own colors in a mosaic of vintage wares and clothes; mind-bending art, music, and poetry; and art supplies and classes. Thanks to a state grant garnered by the YWCA, new streetscaping and vintage lights will complement Royal Square's bohemian charm.

We look forward to the old Allison's bar becoming a funky sit-down restaurant and the old Bond building opening a café and co-working site while hosting weddings, receptions, and art exhibits.

The Royal Square team also has an \$11.7 million vision for reinventing the first block of West Market Street featuring 45 market-rate apartments, 16 retail spaces, and restaurants. We are proud to support this plan, which is contingent upon a \$3.6 million state grant and tax credits.

The phrase "critical mass" doesn't have a solid definition. But we know "critical mass" when we see it and when we walk in the middle of it. If the



stars align and if the grant gods shower UFD and Royal Square with goodness, I guarantee you: We will see and we will be critical mass.

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Yes, great hopes and dreams take time to achieve, but they are worth our relentless efforts. All city students deserve a world-class education and a fair shot at the American dream.

Governor Tom Wolf, has appointed me Co-Chair, along with Dr. Carol Saylor, of a Community Action Committee. I am excited to work with Dr. Saylor, who has extensive public education experience, to craft and implement an amended recovery plan for our York City Public School District.

Dr. Saylor, please rise so we can give you a warm York welcome!

We are stronger because of our dialogue over the last two years, and we are ready to take the best practices and ideas from that process into the future. We must not let ideology displace our most important goals: fair educational funding, quality education, and equal opportunity for all.

I encourage all of us to see this as a fresh start and to recognize, get mad at, and mitigate the real menaces: injustice, unequal educational opportunities, parental dysfunction, and poverty.

To our young people and our parents-to-be: Yes, the challenges are tough. The deck seems stacked against us. Pennsylvania's outdated urban boundaries and practice of essentially warehousing poverty in our cores makes our quest for a quality education for all tougher.

But poverty and challenges are not excuses for apathy and failure. No government, no action committees, no council can legislate or usher in self-responsibility and self-respect. I urge our young people to meet us half way. A nurturing home life is as important as good schooling. If we are to realize our potential, all of us must do our part.

To our young men: impregnating a young woman does not earn you the honors of being "a father" or being "a strong man." Being consistently there for your lady and child earns you the titles of "father" and "strong man."

Being a breadwinner earns you the titles. Teaching respect, values, and love earns you the titles. So man up and be the man you're supposed to be. We need you.

And to all of our young men and ladies: Your degree is more important than a teenage squeeze. Let faith, mutual trust, and mutual love lead your hearts, minds, and decisions. You will thank me later.

Going forward, our Community Action Committee will be inclusive, diverse, open, and open-minded. With strong city representation, it will canvass the best ideas and expertise from our educational, non-profit, business, public policy, legal, and student sectors.

With mutual respect, empathy, and intellectual honesty, we will find the best options and means to provide a cost-effective, quality, just education for all of our students.

And we must close the spending gap between our rich and poor school districts. Pennsylvania has the nation's starkest spending gap between rich and poor school districts.

That must change.

Our recovery plan must be as transformative in aspiration and execution as it is engaging and inclusive for families throughout the City. The 5,600 students, parents, and staff members of our school district, York County's largest and most historic, deserve no less.

I have faith in Superintendent Holmes, who already has instituted important upgrades.

A partnership with Penn State York provides Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math or STEAM instruction to students in 6th through 8th grades at the Ferguson School. Through this program students are able to incorporate STEAM skills into real world situations, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Partnering with Martin Library, our District provides three and a half hours of tutoring, recreation, and dinner Monday through Friday for approximately 700 children. Our shared goal is to double the number of participants next school year.

Your city government is doing its part.

Our **MENTORYork** program pairs high school freshmen with mentors for four years to encourage students in their successfulness. Mentors meet with students on a weekly basis and maintain consistent communications.

In 2015, the first class of **MENTORYork** graduates graduate from William Penn with each pursuing post-secondary education. We are looking for more Mentors to make a difference.

**Through a HUD grant, this summer our Legacy Builders** will help to develop the professional skills of city youth by providing employment opportunities in City departments at the Red Cross, and Martin Library.

The opportunity will be given to 25 high school seniors to be employed 25 hours per week during the summer. **Tonight, we challenge our York County Commissioners to expand this program to engage city students in County departments to learn skills and hone values.**

In the spirit of Governor George Leader, Henry and Dorrie Leader, the Leader Family, and in the Spirit of all Leaders, I call on our community leaders to inspire and season the next generation of civic leaders. Based on a recommendation from our MLK Sunday Supper, I call on our City Council, city boards, authorities and commissions to invite one city high school student to serve as an annual honorary delegate to each entity.

Tonight, I join Dr. Holmes in calling for universal pre-kindergarten program for all four-year-olds in our York. This added year helps children learn the fundamental skills they need to be successful later in life. Starting with 13 classrooms next school year, we will not stop until our goal of 22 classrooms is met. Ladies and gentlemen, I am a proud graduate of William Penn Senior High School.

I find it deplorable that our city students walk through hallways passing an athletic sanctioned swimming pool that is empty. What message does that send to our students? In terms of community development, we've heard of the "broken window theory." But we may need a new social theory – "the empty pool theory."

We've heard of the debate between whether a glass is half full or half empty, but the messages sent by a desolate pool is undeniable. You're not worthy. You're not good enough.

Well, those messages are not good enough. We can and we must do better.

As Mayor, I have visited every school in our district – public, charter, and private, from elementary to middle school, to high school to post-secondary – from City line to City line. I have seen the bright, expressive faces of hundreds of students, and I have met their inspirational teachers.

Even if circumstances are precarious, all of our children and youth are precious, and all deserve a first class education.

Each also deserves to feel safe and befriended so he and she can strive and thrive. Tonight, building on the brilliant, humane concept of York County’s own, Christian Bucks, we will erect buddy benches in each of our City’s K-8 schools and at City Hall.

A partnership between Representative Schreiber, CORE-Design Group, and Wagman Construction will bring a Buddy Bench to Lincoln Charter School this spring.

Pure kindness can conquer hearts and minds and transcend counties and nations. Already, Christian’s idea has led to Buddy Benches in 50 states and ten countries. Here at home, the birthplace of so many firsts and feats, why shouldn’t York County be the Buddy Bench capital of the world?

My new buddy Christian, please rise so that we can recognize you!

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My friends --- oh, pardon me, I guess I should say “My Buddies” now . . . .

My buddies, we know that our greater York community ultimately will be judged, not just by the strength of our businesses, or the beauty of our architecture, or our thriving parks, trails, and recreation.

We will be judged by our partnerships against poverty and our moral commitment to our next generation.

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We want a city where each young boy and girl cannot be anonymous and will not drown in poverty, neglect, or instability.

We want a city where it is virtually impossible for a young girl or boy to walk outside of home without being inundated with the possibilities of hope, learning, imagination, beauty, and opportunity.  
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We want a city where we recommit to values in the home, the family, the extended family, the block, the neighborhood, our place of worship, the village, and, yes, in you.

Each of our children and youth deserves a world class education and a fair shot at the American dream, regardless of zip code, race, and familial status.

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Ladies and gentlemen, shared leadership between city government and our major institutions, WellSpan and York College, are crucial to our future.

After 28 years of committed, innovative, and excellent service to our City as its Medical Director, Dr. David Hawk is retiring on June 30<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Hawk, on behalf of a grateful city, thank you! Please rise!

In July, Dr. Matt Howie will become our new medical director. No stranger to York, Dr. Howie is the Medical Director of the York Hospital Community Health Center at the Loretta Claiborne Center on South George Street. An historic first, our Medical Director will remain a WellSpan Medical Group physician and his salary will be paid by our partner, WellSpan. Dr. Howie, please rise so we can welcome you to your new position.

With WellSpan, our shared strategy is to: Improve Health, Ensure Public Safety, Support Economic Growth, and Be Active and Visibly Participate.

Public health and public safety go hand-in-hand. All lives matter.

Going forward, in both 2015 and 2016, WellSpan has pledged a contribution of \$500,000 annually for public safety. Fifty thousand dollars of this total will be earmarked for South George Street Community policing.

Tonight, we are proud to announce that, at a cost of about \$100,000, WellSpan will pay for body cameras for ALL City police officers. Body cameras are good for our officers and our people. They record accurate evidence and encourage all of us to be on our best behavior.

But all the technology in the world cannot replace meaningful communication, trust, and relationships shared by public safety professionals and our citizens. And all the technology in the world cannot

usher in trust and friendship between neighbors nurturing strong, stable neighborhoods.

With some vision and innovation, we can. So, tonight, we applaud WellSpan Health, York Revolution, CGA Law Firm, and Shipley Energy for implementing a homeownership incentive program for its employees.

We also respectfully encourage our sponsors and stakeholders to launch CITYWIDE homeownership incentive programs for their employees. A thriving, walkable urban community requires more of your professionals putting up stakes in our diverse neighborhoods and nurturing socio-economic balance. Your folks can reinvigorate our neighborhoods and spur long-term trust and city-wide pride.

We also issue a friendly challenge to York College to work with us in developing a long-term plan for improving town-gown relations. Drawing on the success of Jackson Street, let's connect Kings Mill Road to our downtown and connect Grantley Avenue to WECO. Through streetscaping, pedestrian charm, and vintage street lighting, we can be a bustling "college town" in the best sense of that phrase.

From WellSpan to York College and the full span of our City,  
From CapLive! to "Live" and Think Loud,  
From Bearcats to Spartans to Nittany Lions,  
From hand-pressed Harleys to hand-craft breweries,  
From engineers to artists, musicians, and imagineers,  
From culinary creators to industrial sculptors,  
From Fireside to Springdale,  
From Olde Towne East to the Avenues,  
From Continental Square to Newtown Square to Royal Square,  
From Memorial Park to our Industrial Park,  
From WECO to CODO to a reconceived Codorus,  
From YorkArts and CityArt and Marketview Arts to Parliament Arts,  
From Dreamwrights to our right to dream, believe, and achieve,

And every precious being in between,

We are one York, united, with liberty, justice, and opportunity for all.

Next year marks the 275<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of York. In the coming months, I will charge a task force made up of professionals in history, cultural heritage tourism, and event planning to plan tributes that honor our historic city.

Next year also marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Penn Park, whose 15 acres served as a Revolutionary War encampment and then as a Civil War hospital. Upgrading our oldest and most famous park, Bring on Play and community volunteers completed the Youth Play Garden, which boasts our City's highest sliding board! The Spray Garden and Splash Pad will be completed this spring.

To honor Penn Park and all of our parks, partnering with the York County Community Foundation, we will launch a Parks Conservancy to service our beautiful parks in perpetuity. Fundraising begins this year.

Non-tax revenue streams that benefit our city – like Beautiful York and our new Park Conservancy – are essential to our curb appeal and quality of life.

I want to publicly thank our Public Works Director, Jim Gross, who, for years, has been a stoic champion of a parks conservancy. Yes, great hopes and dreams take time to achieve. Right, Jim?

**[PAUSE]**

Two hundred seventy five years and counting, our York still is sacred soil in the grand story of America.

We walk city streets trudged by our nation's first heroes – George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Paine, James Smith, and the Marquis de Lafayette. We walks streets walked by more recent heroes – Thaddeus Stevens, William Goodridge, and General Jacob Devers.

Recently, we have shared these streets with exemplars of excellence Henry and Dorrie Leader, Tom and Frances Wolf, Loretta Claiborne, Bob Kinsley, Ron Martin, and Chantel Tremitiere, just to name a few.

Like this scrappy, stubborn city, they never gave up on their principles and their dreams.

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These giants and the ghosts of these giants are in our midst. They witness and write the great interwoven saga of York, of Pennsylvania, and of America.

We are in their midst, pondering our lives and our city of hopes and dreams lingering on the horizon. With courage, compassion, and resolve, we will continue the great, unfinished work of our York.

Each one of us has goodness and even greatness within us. Each one of us is an unfinished work of art, a magnificent garden yearning to bloom.

Great hopes and dreams take time to achieve. But when you and when we persevere and believe, you achieve and we achieve.

When our days dim, the trumpeter readies his hands.

What will you say to your Maker, family, and friends?

Did you rise and serve when the bugles were blown?

Did you pledge fidelity when our flag was flown?

Did amazing grace soak your bones?

Were sweet seeds of mercy sown?

Did you nurture and love your own at home?

Did you help the poor, the damaged, and outcasts, too?

Did our hearts, minds, and muscles do all that they could do?

**[PAUSE]**

Let your answers and your light shine forth brightly. May they torch-light your paths to your promised lands and to our City of hope and dreams.

Thank you and may God bless us on our noble journeys.

