

Delaware Valley University
Ida M. Block Chapel Dedication, October 22, 2023
Rabbi Lance J. Sussman, Ph.D.

Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf, founder and first President of Delaware Valley University, built two religious structures during his career. The first, completed in 1892, stood in the middle of the 1700 block of North Broad Street, just below the current location of the Temple University Law School. With its 1600-seat sanctuary, central dome, and soaring minaret-like towers, it was one of the largest synagogues in the world. The Broad Street Temple symbolized the majesty of God and the place of Judaism in Western Civilization.

Seven years later, in 1899, Rabbi Krauskopf dedicated this modest chapel, not only as a place of worship, but as an enduring symbol of his belief in the essential unity of humanity and the common origin of the Abrahamic faiths. Its only ornamentation was the stained-glass windows, which still adorn this sacred space with their depiction of the sheaves of the field and the harvest of knowledge.

Krauskopf's two sanctuaries, large and small, could not have been more different in scope nor more similar in theme: that all people are children of a single humanity, united by love, and commanded to serve one another.

Today, we are called upon, not only to rededicate this sacred space, but to reaffirm Rabbi Krauskopf's universalism and his belief in the redemption of the world through experiential, scientific education and a common spirituality.

Today, more than ever, we are called upon, not only to recall Rabbi Krauskopf's vision, but to transcend this terrible moment of enmity and strife, pitting the children and spiritual descendants of Abraham against one another.

Today, perhaps even more than when this space was first dedicated 124 years ago, we need to bring the spirit and philosophy of Rabbi Krauskopf into our hearts and minds. And so, I offer this prayer of rededication:

Our God, Eternal One of the Universe, God of all people:

Help us to see that a single sky is above us, that we stand on a shared earth and sail the same seas of destiny.

God, Give us the ability to envision a world beyond the horizon of our time and to believe in the possibilities of tomorrow.

Instill in all the people who will come to this place a deep respect for one another and a commitment to a life of learning and service.

Bless us, God of all people and faiths, with peace.

Amen.