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intersections

Spring 2012



in this issue

Civility and Civic Engagement

Purpose Statement

This publication is by and largely for the academic communities of the twenty-six colleges and universities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It is published by the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit of the ELCA. The publication has its home at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois, which has generously offered leadership and physical and financial support as an institutional sponsor for the publication.

The ELCA has frequently sponsored conferences for faculty and administrators that have addressed the church-college/university partnership. The ELCA has sponsored an annual Vocation of the Lutheran College Conference. The primary purpose of *Intersections* is to enhance and continue such dialogue. It will do so by:

- Lifting up the vocation of Lutheran colleges and universities
- Encouraging thoughtful dialogue about the partnership of colleges and universities with the church
- Offering a forum for concerns and interests of faculty at the intersection of faith, learning, and teaching
- Raising for debate issues about institutional missions, goals, objectives, and learning priorities
- Encouraging critical and productive discussion on our campuses of issues focal to the life of the church
- Serving as a bulletin board for communications among institutions and faculties
- Publishing papers presented at conferences sponsored by the ELCA and its institutions
- Raising the level of awareness among faculty about the Lutheran heritage and connectedness of their institutions, realizing a sense of being part of a larger family with common interests and concerns.

From the Publisher

Leaders in ELCA higher education built in the not-too-distant past a four-legged stool, upon which we have metaphorically sat together in conversation about the mission and identity of post-secondary education in the ELCA. The legs supporting this collaborative conversation are: (1) the annual Vocation of a Lutheran College Conference for faculty and administrators; (2) the Lutheran Academy of Scholars for faculty development on the topic of Lutheran mission and identity in higher education; (3) a similar opportunity for development of senior administrators through the Thrivent Fellows program; and (4) this journal, *Intersections*, serving a medium for the circulation of essays related to the mission and identity of Lutheran higher education.

A lively conversation has resulted, successfully moving Lutheran higher education away from the fruitless, hackneyed, and wrong-headed discussion of whether “the colleges are leaving the church and the church is leaving its colleges” to reflection on the theme of education for vocation. Having made that shift, we now face the need to extend the conversation deeper into our institutions, among their constituencies, and to the rest of this church. Progress gained will have limited impact and potentially no long-term success unless the conversation is extended beyond its large but very limited audience of college and university personnel. Those outside the conversation still frame their thinking about being a college of the ELCA in the tired, old rhetoric of “is the college leaving the church/is the church leaving its colleges?” The work of a generation could easily be lost if we cannot successfully extend the conversation to the larger community. Ad hoc steps are often taken to make such a move. We must, however, build standing tactics to extend the conversation as leaders once built the tactics for a sustained internal conversation.

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Holly Welch, *When We Serve*, 2011, acrylic.
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From the Editor

The authors first presented these essays as part of the 2011 Vocation of a Lutheran College Conference at Augsburg College. The annual vocation conference provides one of the four legs that sustain our conversation about the mission and identity of ELCA colleges and universities (see Mark Wilhelm's comments above). All who have attended know just how thought-provoking the sessions can be, and just how illuminating and even prayerful our common conversations are. The conference and *Intersections* want to provide the kind of public arena where civil dialogue can happen. But Mark is right, too, to suggest that rich deliberation about our identity for the public good has to extend beyond the pages of a journal or the borders of a campus.

The first two essays here suggest why deliberations within our campuses must turn outward, and why this is so hard to come by. Samuel Torvend vividly describes how a long stretch of the Christian tradition demoted the importance of our public, bodily life to the salvation of individual "souls." Luther turned this gnostic prejudice inside-out by recognizing God as deeply engaged in the civic realm—what Christians call the Incarnation. And yet Lutherans continue to miss the radicalness of a public Christ and the public reforms thereby engendered when they continue to privatize and spiritualize what "being saved" entails. Torvend insists that we must better follow Luther in linking the gospel with public engagement, especially among the hungry poor.

Per Anderson's essay turns toward the pressing needs of the church for civil deliberation and to the ways liberal education can help. In light of difficult discussions about the reach of its social statements, the ELCA's own civic engagement (or at least its understanding thereof) seems to be in holding pattern these days. Anderson notes how our colleges and universities are being called upon to help by forming citizens—not to mention churchgoers—with capacities for deliberation. Doing so would redirect our effort away from what we learn to how we talk with one another, although Anderson also notes that new moral quandaries also call us to ever-expanding bodies of knowledge.

Of course, our students see civil engagement modeled very infrequently. More and more American "consumers" (who used to be "citizens") get their news from private, partisan sources (e.g. from internet feeds, suggested according to search "preferences"). Those who do look for multiple perspectives usually find

them only in the form of televised talking heads talking past one another. Given this culture, small pedagogical acts can seem counter-cultural if not entirely subversive. For example, I sometimes make my students preface their own classroom comments by referencing a prior one ("I want to add to what Lisa said...") so that we learn how to listen and talk with one another rather than develop and defend our "own positions". Such strategies, of course, only start to cultivate the kind of community of moral deliberation that the church and world so desperately need.

The next two shorter essays were presented together at the vocation conference and here retain their oral style. Ann Svennungsen continues to discern why civility and civic engagement are so needful and absent in our dominant culture. She suggests that the civic realm itself is disappearing as citizens retreat to gated communities and niche markets. We thus must invest in the infrastructure for civic renewal. Some might assume that *private* colleges and universities would be the wrong place to look for such renewal, but—as Katherine Tunheim reminds us—much depends on whether we understand higher education as training for prosperity or for service. Our students' most valuable lessons might very well happen while filling sand bags or studying the demographics of local teens.

Paul Pribbenow draws together a number of these themes in recounting the story of Augsburg College. The outward mission of Augsburg—like all of our Lutheran schools in different ways—was founded on the hospitality of the Incarnation, on the fact that the Word became flesh, on God's own civic engagement. But, as Pribbenow reminds us, the world also did and does reject that Word, and so we need to go-out and pursue justice, and not only welcome-in outsiders. Doing so should lead us to recognize the education and liberation that happens "off the main road," whether that be the side streets of the city or the community garden of a small town.

These essays are critical, discerning, and hopeful. May they begin conversations that are civil and engaging—both within our institutions and the communities they serve.

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SAMUEL TORVEND

Critical Engagement in Public Life: Listening to Luther's Troubling Questions

The World in which Lutheran Education Emerged

I think it safe to say that between 500 and 1000 CE western Europe—the birthplace of the Lutheran reform and Lutheran education—experienced unprecedented dislocation and social trauma.¹ Such social instability was caused by a variety of forces: invasions from the North and the East that intensified in the 400s and lasted another 500 hundred years; the loss of a sophisticated transportation infrastructure, once the glory of the Roman Empire; the slow dismantling of an “universal” empire governed from Rome and then, with considerable disinterest in western concerns, from Constantinople; commercial decline due to road loss and increased brigandage; and a steady but high mortality rate. Add to this early medieval trauma the astonishing loss of life in the wake of the Black Plague during the late medieval period (1350-1500), and it is not difficult to understand why medieval Christian spirituality was suffused with a profound desire to enter, in the words of the Nicene Creed, “the life of the world to come.”

In the early medieval centuries, Christianity slowly expanded into northern and central Europe, an expansion made possible by monastic missionaries who vowed stability to one place, one monastery, and from these monastic centers, themselves oases of human stability in the midst of much social chaos, began to establish satellite monastic centers. Their work, over many centuries, reconfigured the map of Europe, creating a new cultural and religious landscape: villages, towns, and cities sprang up around monasteries; monastic schools were the sole centers of learning,

predecessors of the medieval urban universities which began to emerge after 1050. Monastic life was rooted in the local monastery where the cultivation of a common life and all that was necessary to sustain daily living took place (e.g., constructing buildings, producing a regular food supply, creating cloth for clothing).

And yet this seemingly down-to-earth existence lived in paradoxical tension with a focus on preparing for “the life of the world to come,” for union with God. This was due, in part, to neo-platonic impulses which had slowly but surely influenced the early and medieval Christian imagination. While the Jewish followers of Jesus of Nazareth would have imagined the human as an integral unity of body and soul, of matter and spirit, neo-platonic thought, shaped by matter and earth-escaping tendencies, posited a more dualistic sensibility in which the non-corporeal soul alone is the object of divine grace. The neo-platonic vision, which was welcomed by much but not all of medieval Christian life, suggested that this earth and all its creatures—who faced diminishment and death and thus experienced a corruptibility alien to the divine—simply did not matter in the end. Indeed, the Manichean temptation was and is ever lurking not far away from this dualistic thought form. The Manicheans taught that the earth was created by an evil god and thus the body, indeed all matter, is simply a terrible prison for the soul. That which was considered “spiritual” (i.e., incorporeal) received high religious value; that which was viewed as “material” (i.e., earthy, bodily) could be readily

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viewed as insignificant, as an annoying obstacle to be overcome or, at worst, as a terrible and horrifying mistake.

By the time of Luther's birth in 1483, the categories of "spiritual" and "temporal" had become a heuristic device to describe society itself from a medieval Christian perspective. Within the "spiritual" realm (what Luther knew as an "estate") were those persons, women and men, who had answered the call to the religious life as vowed members of an order (e.g., the Benedictines, Dominicans, or Augustinians) and those males who had a "vocation" to the priesthood, that is, to public ministry in the church. "Service to God" in the form of priestly ministry or vowed religious life was understood to be the only "calling" or vocation in Christian life. Furthermore, priests and vowed religious were frequently regarded as holier because of their distance from what were perceived as "worldly temptations" (e.g., sexual intercourse, pursuit of wealth, ambition for social status). Within the "temporal" realm were all other baptized Christians: rulers, barmaids, lawyers, teachers, peasants, soldiers, and mothers—to list only a few. Indeed, in this construction of late medieval society, baptized laypeople were taught to be passive recipients of the priest's active work, for it was believed that through the sacramental ministry of the priest alone that the grace of God was encountered.

One notices how these characteristics of medieval faith and life intersected with each other: life on earth as less significant than the afterlife; what survives death is the intangible soul, not the corporeal body; in order for the soul to enter the afterlife ("heaven" or "union with God"), one must work diligently in this life and follow the teachings and practices suggested or commanded by those in spiritual authority—the church's leaders. These marks of late medieval Christian spirituality shaped the milieu in which Lutheran education emerged—emphases which ironically were called into question by a monastic priest who yearned for union with a gracious God but during his early life found only a stern and terrifying Judge.

Asking Disruptive Questions

If anything can be said of Martin Luther's sixteenth-century revolution, commonly called a reformation, it is that he reversed the focus of late medieval spirituality and, in reversing that urgent desire to "gain heaven," reshaped the imagination of the West. In the late medieval world of Luther's birth, the Christian was expected to cooperate with the divine grace received in the sacraments, a divine energy, as it were, through which one could seek God, become closer to God, gain greater favor in God's sight, perform spiritual works which would demonstrate the quality of one's faith and thus, hopefully, secure a favorable decision on that day of fear and trembling when Christ "will come again in glory

to judge the living and the dead." The young Luther drank in the need to work diligently to gain divine favor. Indeed, as monk and priest he worked so steadfastly and with such anxiety that he wondered if he could ever do enough—*do enough*—to receive a favorable judgment from Christ the Judge and thus enter heaven.

It was through his study of the letters of Paul—in particular, his letters to the Christians at Rome and Galatia—that Luther, the university professor who lectured on the Bible, discovered what many of his theological peers had seemingly overlooked, namely, Paul's assertion that one can do nothing to get closer to God, to gain God's favor, to work diligently in the hope of heaven. Instead, argued the early Christian missionary, it is God who comes to humans in their limitations and self-centeredness, in their misery, suffering, and dying with nothing less than mercy and grace. That is, God is always advancing toward God's creatures—with "life, health, and salvation," wrote Luther—advancing most clearly in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary and son of God. Indeed, this emphasis on *God's advance, in Christ, toward those who dwell in the earth* effectively overturned the long-held notion that human beings can or need to strive for, seek out, get closer to, or make their way to God. All that striving to make oneself pleasing to God was, in the end, rubbish in the eyes of Luther.²

Who Benefits?

Such a scriptural discovery caused Luther to wonder if the previous 500 years of Christian teaching and practice had been terribly wrong, had led Christians into unnecessary anxiety, had duped them into believing that Christ was nothing but their judge, had encouraged them to believe that this world was to be scorned, had fostered the sense that one must indeed work hard on earth in order to gain eternal rewards. Such a discovery led Luther to ask a string of disturbing questions: Who fostered such a teaching? Who sanctioned the many spiritual works one must do in order to gain God's favor? And, who allowed the sale of spiritual favors to further one's entry into heaven, even after one's death? Would not the sale of spiritual favors actually discriminate against those, the majority of the population, who were poor? If the spiritual leader of the western church—the bishop of Rome, the pope—can, on behalf of Christ, offer the word and consolation of forgiveness to all Christians, why does he not abolish the practices which have made such free forgiveness into a marketable commodity?³

Continued study of Paul's letters led Luther to ask even more disturbing and disruptive questions: Is the separation of Christians into two "estates"—spiritual and temporal—fundamentally wrong? Does not Christian baptism initiate all persons

into one egalitarian state in which gender, race or ethnicity, and socio-economic status no longer hold sway? And, this, too: If all Christians, regardless of their place in society, enjoy all the gifts of God's Spirit, should they not be able to select and, when needed, dismiss their church leaders rather than wait for them to be appointed by someone higher up the hierarchical ladder? And, if one has been freed by God's grace from the need to work diligently to receive an eternal reward, where does the act of initiation lead one—into a private experience of the divine within *or* into a religious crusade to make one's society into the church, a "Christian" nation? In response to this final "either/or," Luther and his reforming colleagues offered a resounding "No." The advance of God continues, publicly, through the advance or movement of Christians into public life, not with the intent to establish a "Christian" society ruled by biblical law, but rather to engage one's society ("the kingdom of this world"), to offer concrete suggestions or proposals that would influence and shape the economic, educational, political, and social dimensions in which all citizens dwell. Thus, the Christian and the church are called to be "salt" and "leaven" within society, neither religious despisers of culture sitting on the sidelines nor religious conquerors of culture who will be tempted, Luther noted perceptively, to transform the Gospel of freedom into a new law of conformity.

Why Engage the Social, Bodily Realm?

Although he was influenced, early in his life, by an earth-escaping and body-punishing spiritual milieu, the social consequences of a theology rooted in the teaching on justification by grace would eventually reshape Luther's perception of matter, the earth, and the body. Remember that he was hired to teach Bible and spent much of his life studying and commenting on what Christians call the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures. Luther's initial search for eternal salvation began within the austere life of the Augustinian Hermits of the Strict Observance, itself a reform movement within German religious life. Within the monastic enclosure, he punished his body with stringent spiritual practices (e.g., strict fasting, little sleep, arduous marathons of prayer, self-flagellation). And yet he abandoned monastic life for theological reasons and married Katarina von Bora, a former Cistercian nun ("The Judgment"). As a biblical scholar, Luther shifted away from an allegorical, spiritualizing interpretation to one that emphasized the historical and Christocentric. Thus, he would come to accept the Hebraic emphasis on the integral unity of body and spirit and eventually recognize that the gifts of body and earth—sexual intercourse, children, physical pleasure, food and drink, and the creation itself—flow from the generous hand of the divine Creator.

Moreover, rather than seeing the creation of the earth and all its creatures as one act of the ancient past, he would come to see the creative activity of God as something continuing in the present and into the future. Thus, it should not surprise us that later in his life, Luther would suggest that a school or a university is the place in which each discipline is called to explore and study life on this earth, a diversity of life forms continually being brought into existence by the grace and vitality of God. A school or university is that place in which students and teachers engage, rather than escape, this world and its real problems: "In order to maintain its temporal estate outwardly, the world must have good and capable men and women ... for it is a matter of properly educating our boys and girls to that end" ("To the Councilmen" 368).

Calling Whom and to What End?

In the year 1520, Luther published a series of revolutionary texts that indicated his break with much (but not all) late medieval thought and practice and that constituted a recovery of Christian life rooted solely in the witness of the Bible. In his address "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation," he asked princely rulers to promote reform, a reform which began with his powerful critique of the social stratification of the baptized into two separate spheres or realms—those in holy orders and religious vows and those living "in the world" ("To the Christian Nobility" 127-33). One might see his criticism as a deconstruction of the hierarchical world that most of his peers took for granted. Grounding his argument in the radical act of inclusion called Christian baptism, Luther suggested that the community of faith was one in which all the baptized enjoyed all the gifts of the Holy Spirit and thus a spiritual equality.

His emerging "democratization" of the church, however, did not only end with a community more egalitarian than one imagined by the pope or the bishops, but also a redefinition of the term "vocation." While many of his peers accepted the medieval notion that only the ordained priest or vowed religious had answered a "call" from God, Luther asked yet another unsettling question: Does not the act of God in baptism call a Christian, every Christian, into relationship with others: with the Holy Three, the church, the neighbor, and the world? Such a question and its implied response, suggested that the home, the workplace, and the public square were the very places in which each Christian is called by God to use their reason, employ their skills, and bear witness to the "life, health, and salvation" God intends for all. This is to suggest that Luther's evangelical reconstruction of vocation extended the medieval understanding to virtually every Christian—priest, barmaid, or lawyer—and placed one's calling, or many

callings throughout life, within this world, *this world*. Thus, he would write:

Just as those who are now called “spiritual,” that is, priests, bishops, or popes, are neither different from other Christians nor superior to them, except that they are charged with the administration of the word of God and the sacraments, which is their work and office, so it is with the temporal authorities. They bear the sword and rod in their hand to punish the wicked and protect the good. A cobbler, a smith, a peasant—each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops. Further, everyone must benefit and serve every other by means of his own work or office so that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, just as all the members of the body serve one another [I Cor. 12:14–26]. (“To the Christian Nobility” 130)

Of course, Luther the biblical scholar recognized that the central figure in the Christian story—Jesus of Nazareth—had been baptized into public life: “When you open the book containing the gospels and read or hear how Christ comes here or there, or how someone is brought to him, you should therein perceive the gospel through which he is coming to you ... after that it is necessary that you turn this into an example and deal with your neighbor in the very same way, be given also to him (sic) as a gift and as example” (“A Brief Instruction” 121). As Jesus lived a public life in which he travelled “here or there” and persons were “brought to him,” so, too, the Christian, called forth from baptism into a life of service in the world, follows the example of Christ by caring for the well-being of the neighbor. Thus, the primal sacrament of Christian identity contained a profoundly public dimension.

And so, Luther the priest, pastor, and professor who preached in the university church and presided at the Lord’s Supper, the reformed Mass, recognized that at the center of Christian worship is a *public Christ*:

Learn that [the Lord’s Supper] is a sacrament of love. As love and support are given you, *you in turn must render love and support to Christ in his needy ones*. You must feel with sorrow all ... the unjust suffering of the innocent, with which the world is everywhere filled to overflowing. You must fight, work, pray, and—if you cannot do more—have heartfelt sympathy. See, this is what it means to bear in your turn the misfortune and adversity of Christ and his saints. Here the saying of Paul is fulfilled, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” [Gal. 6:2]. (“The Blessed Sacrament” 54)

Such a compelling exhortation was no invitation to a private life but rather a sacramental charge to “fight” and “work” in public among the needy and the suffering. In this respect, Luther was no innovator but rather a student of early Christian practice in which the sacramental table was extended into the distribution of food and drink among the hungry poor—a *public act*.

Calling to Public Life

While Luther’s reform of the Christian understanding of the relationship between God and humanity was crystallized in the teaching on justification by grace and became the powerful symbol guiding all other reforms, his theology manifested its public character within a relatively short period of time. By the early 1520s and thereafter, Luther and his colleagues—all university professors—were called upon to deal with a variety of pressing public issues: the reform of *social welfare* among the hungry poor, the provision of *job training* for the unemployed, the establishment of *public schools* for boys and girls, the provision of *healthcare* during war and plague, the building and supervision of *orphanages* for abandoned children, the *legitimacy of war* and the taking human life, the nature of *obedience to the state* and the grounds for *public disobedience*, and the *function of law* in society. In other words, they were pushed to consider the relationship between contemporary public issues or crises and their learning, rooted in the study of scripture, theology, history, and ethics. Thus, their many writings on public issues and their construction of actual responses to public need suggests that the reform of theology and the church also contained the reform of ethics and society, not one without the other. Indeed, one could argue that the promotion of literacy—a prerequisite for reading the Bible newly translated into the vernacular—inspired the establishment of public education and the reform of university education undertaken by early Lutheran educators. One could also claim that the suppression of monastic life—the center of social charity for the previous 1000 years—prompted Lutheran city councils to reform social welfare as a civic, religious, and public project, a project which in its secularized form can be found in many countries throughout the world today. Yet the “genetic encoding” of Lutheran public engagement was not constricted to public education and social welfare.

Luther also would be led to write about *the power of lobbyists* who bribe political leaders, “lining their pockets with silver and gold.” He would urgently propose *government regulation of banks* which charge exorbitant interest rates on loans. Aware of the increasing power of merchant capitalism to shape a society’s values and practices, he asked, even begged, for the *supervision of*

monopolies and multinational corporations which hoarded goods needed by all people. He vociferously argued that princes, legislators, and city councils regulate and impose fines on those business entities which would wait until a crisis to charge astounding prices on the goods they controlled, making profit from the misery of the innocent.⁴ While Luther's pleas for the regulation and supervision of the private sector thrust him and his university colleagues into the public light, he voiced dismay that those who had accepted the gospel of freedom seemed immune to its ethical and public implications.

Who Benefits from Our Silence?

While Lutherans and Lutheran colleges have steadfastly promoted education for service in the world, such service has frequently been focused on remarkable charitable initiatives that respond to immediate need. A closer reading of Luther's works, however, indicates that the reformer was well aware of the systemic injustices which actually produce the need for charity in the first place. The power of greed in human life, he wrote, is an unbelieving scoundrel, a ravenous consumption of what rightly belongs to all. And yet Luther's works on social reform, the many *Kirchenordnungen* (church orders on worship and public initiatives) which blossomed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the history of social reform in the Lutheran tradition are infrequently—*infrequently*—studied in seminaries and university courses on Luther or the Lutheran heritage. One then wonders if the questions and the writings of the early-sixteenth-century reformers still await study, reflection, and—yes—cultural translation for those who are eager to see the inherent relationship between faith, learning, and public engagement today.

Lutherans and Lutheran colleges rightly resist the temptation to escape this public world into spiritual privacy and holy apathy.

They rightly resist the temptation, so strong in some sectors of American life, to urge the transformation of a pluralistic society into an allegedly Christian one.⁵

They rightly ask how teaching and learning at a Lutheran college or university, a teaching and learning marked by intellectual humility and charity, might yet prepare and inspire faculty, staff, and students for public engagement, for the promotion of a just and peaceful social order.

They rightly ask how one might resist the forces or presence of evil which diminish and degrade what God has created for life, health, and wholeness.

They rightly ask one last troubling question: Who in this world benefits if our graduates are silent and simply satisfied with way things have always been?

Endnotes

1. Any brief historical overview of 500-1000 years entails the risk of oversimplification. Indeed, there are exceptions to what is narrated here and scholarly dispute over the construction of western ecclesial and educational history in this time period. Having said that, readers may want to consult the following for more detailed narrations of the period: Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 2nd ed. (Blackwell, 2003); Everett Ferguson, *Church History*, Vol. 1 (Zondervan, 2005); Hubert Jedin and John Dolan, eds. *History of the Church*, Vol. 2-3 (New York: Crossroad, 1980-82); David Knowles and Dimitri Obolensky, *The Middle Ages, The Christian Centuries*, Vol. 2 in *The Christian Centuries* (Paulist, 1979).

2. See Luther's sermon, preached in 1519, on "Two Kinds of Righteousness," in which he sets forth his understanding of justification by grace, using the dialectic of "alien righteousness" and "proper righteousness," and his theology of Christ the servant.

3. These questions began to emerge in the ninety-five theses, which Luther proposed for discussion and debate by the theology faculty of the University of Wittenberg in 1517. They are readily accessed at: <http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/web/ninetyfive.html>

4. See my *Luther and the Hungry Poor: Gathered Fragments* (Fortress, 2008); Carter Lindberg, *Beyond Charity: Reformation Initiatives for the Poor* (Fortress, 1993); Kyle Session and Phillip Bebb, eds., *Pietas et Societas: New Trends in Reformation Social History* (Sixteenth Century Journal Publications, 1985).

5. One is mindful of the typology created by H. Richard Niebuhr, and still exercising considerable influence, concerning the relationship between Christ (Christians) and culture: *Christ and Culture* (Harper and Row, 1951).

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PER ANDERSON

Cultivating Transformative Responsible Dialogue: Community of Moral Deliberation and Lutheran Higher Education

In this essay, I want to propose that our colleges and universities embrace civility through a project of practice and research in transformative responsible dialogue. Such a project would advance the promise of community of moral deliberation in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the turn to responsibility in American liberal education. Dialogue differs from deliberation and discernment, which include judgment, decision, and response. Dialogue forms people *for* deliberation and discernment. Dialogue *moves* deliberation and discernment.

Our colleges and universities should undertake this project because the ELCA and the world need it. We cultivate human development with resources and norms that other formative institutions (the congregation, the family) do not possess. We generate essential social capital for urgent problems.

A Deliberative Church in Need

Twenty years ago, at its second biennial churchwide assembly in Orlando, the ELCA adopted its foundational social statement, “The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective.” The Preamble reads: “The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is called to be a part of the ecumenical Church of Jesus Christ in the context in which God has placed it—a diverse, divided, and threatened global society on a beautiful, fragile planet. In faithfulness to its calling, this church is committed to defend human dignity, to stand with poor and powerless people, to advocate justice, to work for peace, and to care for the earth in the processes and structures of contemporary society” (ELCA 1).

Following James Gustafson,¹ the statement understands the church to be a “community of moral deliberation” that seeks to discern God’s will so that Christians might “know better how to live faithfully and responsibly in their callings” (ELCA 6). The statement understands deliberation to be a response to diversity, division, and threat: “In dealing openly and creatively with disagreement and controversy, this church hopes to contribute to the search for the individual as well as for the common good in public life” (6).

Community of moral deliberation was a new commitment for a Lutheran church. The concept finds no explicit expression in the Lutheran Confessions. For the Reformers, God created the church for the Sabbath, which is for knowing and worshipping God through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. The church is “principally an association of faith and the Holy Spirit in the hearts of persons” (“Apology” 174). The church serves the inner person and brings the person into the spiritual kingdom of Christ, which is “the righteousness of the heart and the gift of the Holy Spirit” (175). By embracing community of moral deliberation, the ELCA enacted a distinctive identity in the global Lutheran communion. It has been energetic and competent in expression. And yet, it has only begun to fulfill its potential for deliberative community.

In 2011, the ELCA convened again in Orlando for another churchwide assembly, where delegates acted upon an eleventh proposed social statement “Genetics, Faith, and Responsibility.” The assembly also acted on a landmark report with numerous

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recommendations about the future of the ELCA. This is the LIFT Report, “Living into the Future Together: Renewing the Ecology of the ELCA.” The report includes recommendations about member conflict and leadership shortage with implications for community of moral deliberation.

In a section entitled “Communal Discernment,” the report tacitly affirms deliberation while calling for continuation of work begun three years ago to find “better ways to engage emotional and divisive issues and make difficult decisions in this church by means that increase mutual trust, build respect for each other as the body of Christ and deepen spiritual discernment” (LIFT 28). The report calls for work toward “a culture of faithful discernment” throughout the ELCA. As an immediate step, the report recommends a moratorium on social statement adoption pending a review process by the Church Council, which “should reflect the spirit and culture of communal discernment” (28). After long turmoil over sexual ethics and rostered leader conduct (which triggered a review of social statement process in 1995), this recommendation signals perceived loss of social capital due partly to a communal practice originally designed to create social capital. Deliberation, in all expressions of the ELCA, has sought to build up the church. However, leaders see persisting division and alienation as a problem. Modifying social statement process is simply a place to start.

Can ELCA colleges and universities address this problem? The question is real. In a section entitled “Leadership for Mission and Education in the Faith,” the report addresses shortage of congregational leadership in the next ELCA, where the churchwide organization will cede authority and responsibility to synods and congregations due to limited resources. The report recommends our 26 colleges and universities be encouraged to participate in the ELCA’s commitment to “a system-wide network of theological education and leadership development” and to “seek new ways to contribute to the network’s effectiveness.” Development of new “lay mission schools” is one named initiative. Toward this end, the report recommends a group of our presidents be convened “for the purpose of formulating new models of governance and ways for ELCA colleges and universities to relate to and support congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization” (LIFT 27).

If these recommendations are adopted, the ELCA will ask our colleges and universities to step up commitments to congregational leadership development. How should we respond? Doubtless, our church needs help. Many of us claim to be leadership schools. Currently, ELCA officials are considering new programming—lay mission schools. The group of presidents may have other ideas. Given variations in resources and commitments across

our 26 colleges and universities, our institutions may respond differently to their recommendations. Given the resource challenges we all face in recessionary and hyper-competitive times, our institutions may have difficulties mustering strong responses.

But let us entertain the question. What might our institutions do in common that would address urgent ELCA interests? I have noted two: a new culture of faithful discernment and new supports for congregational leadership development. For the sake of discussion, I would argue our institutions can make a common and robust contribution to a culture of faithful discernment and to leadership development that need not require major new resources. How? By attending to the elements of community of moral deliberation that liberal learning cultivates. Deliberation requires certain attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, skills, and behavior. Our colleges and universities are well positioned to form students accordingly. If our colleges and

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universities devote themselves to formation for community of moral deliberation and our graduates become invested in ELCA congregations, these congregations will have leaders who will contribute to a culture of faithful discernment and congregational life generally.

Liberal Civility and Transformative Responsible Dialogue

I want now to offer an account of community of moral deliberation that incorporates a particular understanding of public civility and dialogue. The ELCA wants to reduce furor, acrimony, and schism over divisive issues. It wants to increase trust and respect among members. It wants movement toward the *koinonia* (community, fellowship) of biblical Christianity. Again, such are the goods of community of moral deliberation—in theory. In reality, the empirical church has low capacity to deal “openly and creatively with disagreement and controversy.”

How to build capacity? For Lutherans, public morality can help, and cultivating civility can help. But civility must bring people together toward creative result, which I am calling transformative responsible dialogue. This involves civility attuned to the new reaches of human power. So understood, dialogical formation at our schools would cohere with community of moral deliberation and would serve urgent needs of the church and the world.

“Civility” often means what philosopher Michael Meyer calls the “civility of etiquette.” With Meyer, I focus on the Western tradition of “liberal civility” (Meyer 69). The term reflects that civility arose historically with liberal democracy and regulates its affairs. Civility is a virtue that orients the liberal democrat, who lives an essentially private life devoted to commerce and who negotiates interactions with others who are equals and subjects of common dignity and rights (Orwin 553-54). Recognition of the reciprocal rights of others generates toleration and self-restraint, which mitigate social conflict and keep the peace among diverse people within representative democracy.

Critics of the liberal political project quickly note that this conception of civility assumes a “thin theory of the good,” which asks little more of citizens than to leave others alone: Do as you please, as long as you do not hurt others. Civility is a politics of disengagement built upon erroneous understanding of human nature. Critics correctly note that liberal civility is a strategy for harmonious relations among strangers (Bilante and Saunders 33). Liberal civility forms people for life in a pluralistic society (White 451). A pluralistic society is a group of strangers, and the liberal project of governing in pluralism means ordering diverse people in distant relations. Civility makes political life possible by allowing many views of the good to exist openly under conditions where “thick” agreements about the good would be impossible (Boyd 865).

Are these critics right that liberal civility promotes social disengagement? For Michael Meyer and Melanie White, early and contemporary champions of civility (David Hume, Adam Smith, Benjamin Barber, Michael Walzer) see a socially engaged disposition founded upon respect for others, which drives reasoned public discourse toward shared understandings and decisions about societal arrangements (Meyer 72-78, White 446). This concern for others does not equal the solidarity of special relations. But it is more than enlightened self-interest. Civility operates in a moral universe of respect and equality, not moral solipsism. Liberal civility encourages commitment to civil discourse grounded in rational dialogue (White 446). It is a constitutive component of reasonable public discourse (Meyer 72).

For Meyer, the commitment of liberal civility to reasoned discourse gives coherence to public life amid the diversity of civil society. Civility empowers discourse that searches for what John Rawls calls “overlapping consensus” among interlocutors (Meyer 75). While this discourse will always be exchanges of strangers, the public realm can move from thin to thicker through dialogue.

Moreover, because dialogue as striving for shared understanding and reciprocal accord can fail, liberal civility promises to sustain good faith. Meyer contends:

Under conditions of severe disagreement, the primary goal of liberal civility is not to achieve the best outcomes but instead to avoid the worst—especially but not only the...end of civil dialogue. By avoiding some of the worst outcomes, the practice of liberal civility helps create and sustain further dialogue, which can...progress toward ever more intelligible compromises. Moreover the creation of citizens who are patrons of public discourse, disposed to practice and support the disciplines of public justification, is an ideal suitable to ground the standing of liberal civility as a public virtue of character. (76)

In sum, cultivating civility engenders reasoned public discourse through self-regulation and respect for others. The will to dialogue among strangers is no small achievement. Resolving conflict through reason is no small achievement. However, liberal civility is not fully adequate to the terms of contemporary life. We need to deploy civility for constructive and creative conceptions of dialogue, namely, transformative responsible dialogue.

Why? Because we live in a new world where extant norms and institutions cannot sustain planetary life. As Martha Nussbaum observes:

We live in a world in which people face one another across gulfs of geography, language, and nationality. More than at any time in the past, we all depend on people we have never seen, and they depend upon us. The problems we need to solve—economic, environmental, religious, and political—are global in their scope. They have no hope of being solved unless people once distant come together and cooperate in ways they have not before. Think of global warming; decent trade regulations; the protection of the environment and animal species; the future of nuclear energy and the dangers of nuclear weapons; the movement of labor and the establishment of decent labor standards; the protection of children from trafficking, sexual abuse, and forced labor. All these can only truly be addressed by multinational discussion. Such a list could be extended almost indefinitely. (Nussbaum 79-80)

Note the condition for hope: “unless people once distant come together and cooperate *in ways they have not before*” (emphasis mine). Solving these problems begins with new global practices and institutions that must be dialogical. The world needs dialogues of understanding, insight, and, above all, creativity. Life in an integrated and interdependent world needs less estrangement, less competition, and less coercion. It needs more commonality of conscience, more routine cooperation, and more rapid innovation. It needs billions of people with attitudes,

beliefs, knowledge, skills, and behavior to talk together constructively in interconnected societies. Dialogue can put people in motion toward novel outcomes. Such is the “transformative” possibility of dialogue that civility can engender.

A New Moral World

Our great problems did not fall from a blue sky. They are realities of our making, some well-intentioned but unforeseen, and all the result of new powers to reproduce, extend life span, roam the Earth, and harness elemental forces. And they present us with unprecedented challenges. The scale, the speed, the intricacy, and the uncertainty of these realities are daunting. With Nussbaum, we can hope for solutions because humans share novel and immense power to control the processes and materials of nature for human benefit. We cannot say we are powerless to change.

The term for moral thought responsive to new and immense power is “responsibility.” The ELCA’s recommended proposed social statement “Genetics, Faith, and Responsibility” sets forth such an ethic.² The statement is distinctive because it addresses plant, animal, and human genetics in one framework. It is most important for its responsibility ethic based in Lutheran natural law and previous ELCA social statements.

Responsibility ethics owe much to the German philosopher Hans Jonas, who argues for revision of received moral traditions given the new relationship between human power and life on Earth, a relationship where humanity increasingly bears the burden for the character and wellbeing of the planet. For Jonas, writing in the late 1970s, the extension of life span, behavior control, and genetic manipulation exhibit “the altered nature of human action.” Modern technology has sought to change the environment by creating a wealth of tools. Now technological humans are making over the maker and taking their own evolution in hand. New human power needs new moral governance (Jonas 1-24).

Jonas claims all previous ethical systems generally hold the following: (1) action toward nature is ethically neutral or amoral (no right or wrong); (2) moral standing is limited to humans (anthropocentric); (3) moral norms address the present (not long-term consequences and a remote future); and (4) a good will and common knowledge are sufficient for right action (no dependency upon experts such as climatologists or agronomists). Consider, for example the Decalogue, which Luther understood as middle axioms of the double love command and as a revealed reminder of what God writes on the human heart. Notice the anthropocentric context, the focus on relations and order in the present, and the assumption we know right from wrong and that the problem is the disordered will. For Jonas, the Decalogue does not help us sort out reproductive technologies, global warming, or genetically

modified organisms. We live in a different moral world because of science, technology, and modern institutions.

For Jonas, humans must develop an ethic that amends the scope, norms, and methodology of received traditions. Here I want to focus on methodology and implications for formation. Jonas’s analysis challenges not only the adequacy of classic moral codes like the Decalogue. It challenges the adequacy of traditional communities of formation—the family, the village, the church—to fully prepare people for the moral questions of our day. In a world where common knowledge was sufficient to do the right and the good, these institutions could suffice. Moral agency could be solitary. Today, we routinely make decisions that assume dependency upon others, especially persons of particular and expert knowledge, to discern what we ought to do. Inclusivity—knowing how to engage and evaluate the manifold perspectives of others—is a new challenge for moral thought.

Is ELCA teaching on community of moral deliberation adequate to these challenges? In fact, it calls for public, inclusive, and global discourse bringing multiple and relevant perspectives to the deliberative process. Toward that end, Church in Society staff have prepared and field-tested sophisticated guides for responsible deliberation.³

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ELCA teaching is good. The churchwide organization has done well with limited resources to support good practice. However, in the future, these resources will be more limited when they need to be expanded, hence, opportunity for our colleges and universities. Where in the ELCA can members gain formation for responsibility—in Jonas’s sense? Our colleges and universities have the potential because we cultivate liberal education; we attend to vocation and ultimate concern; we are increasingly diverse and global communities; and we are essentially discursive and dialogical communities.

As institutions of American liberal education, we now educate students under the claim of responsibility, which compels us to be incubators of community of moral deliberation. I assume the learning goals at our institutions are more or less those of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, which include civic knowledge and engagement, intercultural knowledge

and competence, ethical reasoning and action, all grounded in active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges (AAC&U 12).

What makes the AAC&U's turn to responsibility important is its recognition that other learning goals are crucial for responsible agency. They include knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, intellectual and practical skills, and integrative learning. This is why the AAC&U wants liberal education to be the dominant curriculum of American learning—secondary and post-secondary. All citizens today need it (not just social elites), and responsibility theory agrees.

Christian Strangers United in Dialogue and in God

Is a dialogical project at our colleges and universities the right response to ELCA interests and needs—a culture of faithful discernment and congregational leaders for a new church? Colleges and universities differ from congregations, of course. But a common public identity suggests this project would help. ELCA community of moral deliberation seeks to be a microcosm of human diversity, which matches the social assumptions of liberal civility and public discourse. Such discourse, to recall, is the conversation of strangers.

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But are congregations also strangers? In the United States, churches are voluntary associations of civil society, welcoming all who accept the terms of membership. While voluntarism can breed like-mindedness, the typical American congregation is more distant than intimate and more differentiated than unified. While members may long for the bonds and unity of family and friendship, American liberal civility enjoys more vitality in our congregations than the Sermon on the Mount. This means congregations are public in their internal lives as well as external relations. For Lutheran theologian Patrick Keifert, the public internal life of congregations actually forms members for public life in the world. For this and others reasons, Keifert defines the church as “a company of strangers engaged in an evangelical conversation and life on behalf of the world”

(Keifert 90-91, quoted in Duty 278). If Keifert's conception of the church is true, colleges and universities can educate to community of moral deliberation.

The notion of the congregation as strangers engaged in an evangelical conversation and life (another formulation of “community of moral deliberation”) has implications for Christian identity. To assume thick agreement about belief and practice is questionable. When congregations are strangers, the ways they interpret the Apostles' Creed are many. When congregations are communities of moral deliberation, the motion of exchange will take them to new understandings—sometimes shared. Shared or not, congregations may find their identities in the to and fro of conversation, as Keifert contends.

Cultivating diversity and harnessing the creativity of dialogue have implications for the ecclesiology of the ELCA. Like most communities, churches and denominations tend to believe identity arises from shared belief and practice; the thicker, the better. As Kathryn Tanner argues, modern conceptions of culture encourage people to think they live in incommensurable groups, which cannot and should not communicate. According to these conceptions, cultures are relatively static, homogenous, and generative of shared constructs that make life possible. They are sharply bounded and consistent wholes that seek continuity from one generation to the next. They embrace diversity at their peril. Such conceptions of culture make the possibility of dialogue questionable (Tanner 25-58).

Formation of cultures of dialogue in our colleges and universities and in our congregations may require conversation about the soundness of such conceptions of culture and the sources of shared endeavor. It may require conversation about whether porous and dynamic conceptions of culture are more helpful and needful. Conversation about the nature of culture can legitimate transformative responsible dialogue because people need to feel at home in dialogical space with strangers.

For many of us, the capacity to engage the other in openness will include the confidence that God calls us to be in motion together through complex and critical exchange. For Christians, agency should be ordered to the world as God relates to the world. The theological ground for dialogue stems from the conviction that God creates and sustains the world, in part, through dialogue. Further, God redeems the world, in part, through dialogue, as Paul writes: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:2).

How are Christian minds renewed? For the ELCA, dialogue can yield discernment of God's will, because God shares the world with humans and invites them to cooperate with God's

action in worldly structures. Through the Holy Spirit, God gathers and transforms the world through human cooperation in the diverse contexts where God acts. Christian responsibility says that faithful response to radical dependence upon God and to God's renewing of our minds occurs in inclusive dialogue.

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Such capacity to discern and respond to God's action in the world is assumed in what the Lutheran Reformers call “the mutual conversation and consolation of the brothers and sisters” (“Smalcald” III/4). For the Reformers, Christian community is a means of grace—along with the gospel, baptism, the Lord's Supper and the power of the keys. Although their interest is forgiveness of sins, the Reformers see divine action in the critical communication and solidarity of the faithful. Critical communication can break the idolatry of being conformed to this world. It can engender faithful response to God's action.

Christian identity, then, includes openness to the grace of dialogue. It includes commitment to seek what is “good and acceptable and perfect” in communal motion. Christians claim this identity because they understand the limits of individual effort to grasp God's will. Dialogue both reveals and transforms the limitations of solitary agency. The “mutual conversation and consolation of the brothers and sisters” can engender redemptive and creative acts of faith in the free and living God.

A Project of Shared Purpose and Intention

My proposal for transformative responsible dialogue in our colleges and universities is a project of shared purpose and intention. It assumes existing commitments to vocation and responsibility on our campuses. It asks us to pursue forms that undergraduate institutions of liberal education can deliver and that the ELCA and a common world need. Most of what we can do as incubators of community of moral deliberation we are already doing. As American privates, we can be fiercely independent and allergic to common commitments. As academic institutions, we should consider critical conception of responsibility (such as Hans Jonas) and imagine curricula adequate to our context.

The possibility and the promise of transformative responsible dialogue in higher education are being explored and documented. For example, with support from the Ford Foundation, the Difficult Dialogues National Resource Center has enabled 29 United States colleges and universities to do curricular and co-curricular programming to promote civic engagement, academic freedom, and pluralism with a focus on constructive dialogue about complex and controversial issues. Manuel Gómez has written about successes at University of California Irvine in a recent issue of *Change* (Gómez 10-17). A recent issue of *Liberal Education* features a social scientific assessment of a three-year, large-scale, multi-campus study in intergroup dialogue around race and gender (Gurin, Nagda, and Sorenson 46-51). The study shows that carefully designed and conducted dialogue courses help students to relate and collaborate across difference, to think more complexly about relations, to open up and trust others more, and to engage in constructive change about gender and race. Beyond such emerging initiatives in higher education, we can learn from the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation in the United States and the Nansen Dialogue Network in Norway and the Western Balkans.

These dialogues are building social capital that can heal and change the world. They share a commitment to inquire, explore, and discover and not to argue, advocate, or persuade. While they emphasize the peace-making power of dialogue, they also understand dialogue creates space for collective imagination and novelty, which responsibility requires. Dialogue lends cooperative and creative power to processes of deliberation and discernment, where groups judge, decide, and respond. Dialogue contributes to a wholesome culture of deliberation and discernment.

Conclusion

The ELCA needs our help. The world needs our help. Our colleges and universities can help by cultivating liberally learned responsible persons who contribute to creative solutions to novel, urgent, and complex problems in the church and the world. These persons, by virtue of a liberal education, can be open to diverse others and can be engaged with them in dialogue, leading to deliberation and discernment. As ELCA educators, we can be thankful this church has a durable and relevant social teaching, which is calling us to embrace civility by educating for transformative responsible dialogue. I look forward to our ongoing deliberations.

Endnotes

1. See, for example, James Gustafson, *The Church as Moral Decision-maker* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1970).
2. This social teaching statement was adopted by a two-thirds vote (942–34) by the twelfth biennial Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on August 18, 2011, in Orlando, Florida. See: <http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements/Genetics.aspx>
3. Division for Church in Society, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, “Talking Together as Christian about Tough Social Issues” (1999), and “Talking Together as Christians Cross-Culturally: A Field Guide” (Revised Edition, 2009). Both available at: <http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Moral-Deliberation.aspx>

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ANN M. SVENNUNGSSEN

Why Lutheran Colleges Need to Engage Civil Society

I am delighted to be with you at the 17th annual Vocation of a Lutheran College conference. I am passionate about the work of our Lutheran Schools, and am delighted to have attended Concordia Moorhead, served at Texas Lutheran, and will begin work at St. Olaf in two weeks. In this essay, I will make a case for why Lutheran colleges need to engage the larger civil sphere; the following essay by Kathi Tunheim will suggest practical ways that they might begin to do so. It's a joy to be part of this conversation.

This past year as a resident scholar, I have been working on The Presidents' Pledge Against Global Poverty, inviting university presidents to pledge 5% of their personal income to organizations of their choosing that fight extreme poverty.¹ This is a moral and public commitment intended to inspire greater giving and resolve in the public square—and to model civic engagement for students, the next generation of global citizens. It is also an effort to galvanize public will around an issue that Bread for the World's David Beckmann calls the Holocaust of our time. As I thought about my topic, I was reminded of my conversation with the president of an urban university. Very supportive of the idea, she had one serious reservation. The school she leads is really the “anchor” institution in a city facing serious economic challenges. To shine a spotlight on the president's giving to fight poverty overseas—without also recognizing her sense of personal commitment and giving to address local poverty—misrepresents the university's sense of calling to local community. So, we modified The Presidents' Pledge so that, while at least half of individual contributions must focus on international projects, up to half may be allocated to causes that alleviate poverty within the United States.

What is the vocation of a Lutheran college in the larger community—or civil society as a whole? Per Anderson's essay in this issue of *Intersections* makes a compelling argument about the work of colleges as incubators of communities of moral deliberation. My essay's focus is more on an institution's direct engagement in the surrounding community.

The focus on civic engagement seems to be everywhere—from the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) “Liberal Education and America's Promise” (LEAP) project to the work of Campus Compact, a national coalition of college presidents committed to fulfilling the civic purposes of higher education.² In the past 20 years, almost 1200 colleges have joined Campus Compact—representing more than a quarter of all higher education institutions—and over 20 million students, representing 5.7 billion dollars annually, have contributed through volunteer service. The Campus Compact schools are committed to make *educating citizens* a national priority, to the development of personal and social responsibility as integral to the educational mission, and to advocating the participation of students, faculty, staff, and higher education institutions in public and community service.

Equally compelling are the 88 Programs for the Exploration of Vocation—funded by grants from the Lilly Endowment, many of which emphasize community service as a key ingredient in a student's discernment of vocation.³ In fact, when I read about the program at Gustavus, and their list of seven experiences that are fundamental for enhancing a person's sense of vocation, I marveled at how most of the seven could be experienced

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through community service. The fundamental experiences, as articulated by Darrell Jodock, are as follows:

1. A sense of connectedness with others—that is, a sense of being “nested” in a larger whole
2. A safe place in which to consider alternatives
3. Modeling, which includes hearing other people talk seriously about responsibility and significant community matters
4. Mentoring, which includes being asked the right questions by others, questions which prompt thinking about vocation
5. “A constructive engagement with otherness”
6. A sense of agency and influence, which includes experiences that affirm that what I do matters and makes a difference
7. Religious reflection on questions of meaning and purpose in life (Jodock 7)

The list reminds me of what can happen on a spring break service trip, although each of us could capture these experiences in a host of ways. Our world’s need for this work and the wisdom these experiences provide is enormous. There’s much in Luther’s theology to commend this emphasis. Service-learning provides experience within the community of those who are serving others with mentors, models, and experiences of otherness. The community of the world that we’re called to serve provides many more as well.

This is no small issue. Recently, two authors renewed for me this passion for civic engagement and community service. First, David Brooks, in a New York Times op-ed piece, “Tree of Failure,” describes the relationship between civility and modesty—modesty about oneself, one’s limitations, one’s failures. Brooks writes:

We all get to live lives better than we deserve because our individual shortcomings are transmuted into communal improvement. We find meaning—and can only find meaning—in the role we play in that larger social enterprise....Civility is the natural state for people who know how limited their own individual powers are and know, too, that they need the conversation. They are useless without the conversation.

The problem is that over the past 40 years or so we have gone from a culture that reminds people of their own limitations to a culture that encourages people to think highly of themselves.... [O]ver the past few decades, people have lost a sense of their own sinfulness...So, of course, you get narcissists who believe they or members of their party possess direct access to the truth, people who prefer monologue to dialogue. Of course you get people who detest politics because it frustrates their ability to get 100 percent of what they want. Of course you get people who gravitate toward

the like-minded and loathe their political opponents. They feel no need for balance and correction. Beneath all the other things that have contributed to polarization and the loss of civility, the most important is this: The roots of modesty have been carved away. (Brooks)

Brooks thus traces the connection between our lost sense of modesty (and even “sinfulness”) and the corrosion of a shared civic world. The second author, Harvard professor Michael Sandel, further tracks our decaying public world and diminishing sense of civic virtue. In his book, *Justice: What’s the Right Thing To Do?*, Sandel notes that “within the United States, the gap between rich and poor has grown in recent decades, reaching levels not seen since the 1930s” (265). Political philosophers from John Rawls to Alasdair MacIntyre have long debated the appropriate of “just distribution” of income and wealth. Sandel, however, argues that the most important reason to worry about the growing inequality of American life is that

Too great a gap between rich and poor undermines the solidarity that democratic citizenship requires....As inequality deepens, rich and poor live increasingly separate lives. The affluent send their children to private schools (or to public schools in wealthy suburbs), leaving urban public schools to the children of families who have no alternative....Private health clubs replace municipal recreation centers and swimming pools. Upscale residential communities hire private security guards and rely less on public police protection. A second or third car removes the need to rely on public transportation.... The affluent secede from the public places and services, leaving them to those who can’t afford anything else.

This has two bad effects, one fiscal, the other civic. First, public services deteriorate, as those who no longer use those services become less willing to support them with their taxes. Second, public institutions such as schools, parks, playgrounds, and community centers cease to be place where citizens from different walks of life encounter one another. Institutions that once gathered people together and served as informal schools of civic virtue become few and far between. The hollowing out of the public realm makes it difficult to cultivate the solidarity and sense of community on which democratic citizenship depends. (Sandel 266-67)

So convincing are Brooks and Sandel about this erosion of the public realm, civic virtue, and a sense of citizenship that a solution seems hard to come by. Sandel, however, does not leave us without hope for civic renewal:

A politics of the common good would take as one of its primary goals the reconstruction of the infrastructure of civic life.

An earlier generation made a massive investment in the federal highway program....This generation could commit itself to an equally consequential investment in an infrastructure for civic renewal: public schools...public transportation... public health clinics, playgrounds, parks, recreational centers, libraries, and museums that would, ideally at least, draw people out of their gated communities and into the common spaces of shared democratic citizenship. (267)

Is there time for service learning and civic engagement in the Lutheran college curriculum? Can we afford to do it? Can we afford not to? Does it make a difference? I will leave the practical questions to my colleagues like Kathi Tunheim—and to organizations such as Campus Compact.

“Is there time for service learning and civic engagement in the Lutheran college curriculum? Can we afford to do it? Can we afford not to?”

From my perspective, I want to make the case that this work is as important for Lutheran educators as it ever was. Luther was always pushing people into the community. “If your town needs a mayor,” he said, “become a mayor. If it needs a school, help build a school.” Perhaps, the same wisdom can be applied to the vocation of a college as an institution. What does the community need? What does the world need? How

is this university in this community, this region, this world, being called to serve—to meet real needs?

If Brooks and Sandel are correct, what our world clearly needs today are opportunities for conversation, civic engagement, and service-learning. I am grateful for the work of our Lutheran colleges in providing such opportunities, grateful for this conference as a means to engage in serious conversation about such matters, and grateful to the faculty and staff of our ELCA colleges and universities who serve on the front lines in these programs, making a vital difference in our world.

Endnotes

1. See www.presidentspledge.org/about.php. Accessed 1 June 2012.
2. See www.aacu.org/leap and www.compact.org. Accessed 1 June 2012.
3. See www.ptev.org, as well as the newer “NetVUE” network to “expand and extend the conversation about vocational exploration”: <http://www.cic.edu/Programs-and-Services/Programs/NetVUE/Pages/default.aspx>. Accessed 1 June 2012.

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KATHERINE A. TUNHEIM

Practical Approaches for Lutheran Colleges to Engage Civil Society

Good afternoon. It is good to be back at Augsburg College. I had the privilege of serving as an adjunct faculty member in the Business Department during the 2005-06 academic year and enjoyed it immensely. Working with the students here confirmed that I felt called to finish my Ph.D. and try to teach at an ELCA college someday. After many stops and starts, always working full-time during a 25 year business career and raising three busy children, I finally finished my dissertation at the young age of 48 years old. Can you see my wrinkles from the back row? As I tell my students, I am just a late bloomer. That is vocation for you. It's a journey.

Six years later, I am happily stationed at Gustavus Adolphus College, another institution that also takes vocation very seriously. Eric Norelius was a Swedish Pastor who not only founded Gustavus, but also saw another need coming from the community to help children who were less fortunate. He later created Lutheran Social Services, as Samuel Torvend mentioned last night. Eric Norelius is kind of a "leadership rock star" in my book. This fall we will celebrate our Swedish heritage and sesquicentennial at Gustavus. This 150 year celebration hopefully will provide a unique and reflective opportunity for us to discuss Luther's idea of vocation again in our small community of St. Peter, Minnesota.

Speaking of heritage, in Paul Dovre's new book, *The Cross and the Academy*, in the chapter titled, "Lutheran Higher Education: A Heritage Revisited," he draws on the work of Richard Solberg (*Lutheran Higher Education in North America*) in claiming that the Lutheran college has been the most important educational vehicle of the North American Lutheran tradition (Dovre 40-55). Dovre continues saying, "These colleges were established

by intention; located by accident; and sustained by faith, hope, and charity. All over-simplifications run their hazards but, as such devices go, this one is not far off the mark" (40).

President Dovre's two phrases—"established by intention" and "located by accident"—are what I want to focus on here. The question I have been asked to discuss is: Practically speaking, how can our Lutheran colleges think of their vocation in a larger community, the civil sphere? Most of us, especially thanks to the Lilly Endowment, have done an admirable job of focusing on vocation for our students. But what about the vocation of our Lutheran colleges in our respective neighborhoods, towns, or cities? Whether they were located by accident or not, I suggest that not every Lutheran college has the same vocation. If you look at the mission statements of each one, you might not agree with me. In June 2001 at the first Thrivent Fellows Conference led by Steve Titus and Paul Dovre, we reviewed all 28 (at the time) ELCA college mission statements. There are a few distinctions, but not a significant difference. Tom Christenson from Capitol University wrote eloquently in his 2004 book, *The Gift and Task of Lutheran Higher Education*, that we need to look closely at the mission of our Lutheran institutions (9-16, 25-27). Two years later, I heard Tom speak here at Augsburg at an ELCA Development Conference for Advancement Officers. There he said, "Institutions can and will die if we no longer articulate and live out the mission and vision of these special places. If the purpose is lost, so is the institution."

From Mission to Vocation

So, is mission of the college the same as vocation? I do not think so. I define mission as reason for being, for existence, purpose.

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Vocation is a calling *from the community*. Vocation is a calling *from people in need*. And whether you can recite the mission of your college verbatim or not, can you truly articulate what is the vocation of your specific institution today? It is likely quite different today than when these institutions were founded.

I want here to share with you four different examples of civic engagement in different institutions of which I have been made aware. I am sure there are hundreds more examples at each place, so be gracious with me. But hopefully they will either serve as a reminder to what you may be doing in your community or serve as a catalyst for something you could get started.

First, let us again start right here with Augsburg College. They are situated in the middle of the Cedar Riverside Neighborhood. It is located in a triangle of sorts between Interstate 94, Interstate 35W and the Mississippi River. The University of Minnesota is across the street. It has been home to immigrant populations for years. It is also known as a very fine place for good music, art, theatre, and education. Augsburg has worked well with the people in this area and has shared their students, faculty, and staff to help revitalize the area. They have also strengthened local networks committed to engagement in the neighborhood. Being in the city, they have a unique vocation that works to serve their neighbors well. But it is very different from my second example.

Second: at Gustavus this past semester, my students chose to help the St. Peter Soccer Club as their group project in my Organizational Behavior course. The president of the club shared that he needed to solve a problem. He could not figure out why there were so few Hispanic and Somali children in their club, when there were significant groups of these kids in the area. Was it solely due to an inability to afford the fee or was there another reason? My students met with him, analyzed local demographic data, interviewed parents of these two groups and suggested some interesting recommendations. They found that the fee was not the main problem. Rather, there were no older assistant coaches or other students of color on these teams to serve as recruiters. My students suggested that the president consider doing that and start a scholarship fund. They even offered to have their fraternities and sororities fundraise for the club. Through this experience, my business students learned a lot about being on a board *and* serving in the community.

A third example: My son, Rob, has been a sophomore football player at St. Olaf for the past two years. His football coach, Jerry Olszewski, suggested that he and his sophomore friends volunteer in the All-Star After-School Program at Northfield Public Schools. Rob went there every Wednesday afternoon. He helped some of the children with their homework, played dodge-ball, touch football, and endless games of tag. He came home over Thanksgiving and said, "I had no idea there were so many lower-income families in Northfield. Mom, they need

more soccer balls, kick-balls and other toys like Legos. Since we have more than enough toys in our basement, I think we should share some of them with these families." Thanks to the St. Olaf football coach, Rob's engagement with the kids of Northfield helped him see his community through a different lens. He grew as a human being.

Fourth, as a Concordia College in Moorhead alum, I will never forget in 2009 when the Red River threatened to flood much of the city, including Concordia's campus. The students were the ones who advocated to cancel classes and live out the college's mission of influencing the affairs of the world by filling hundreds of thousands of sandbags and making dikes. The mayor reported that they literally saved the city. One of my lasting memories of this community in crisis was seeing young Cobber students on television filling sandbags shoulder to shoulder with retirees and young school children—all facets of the community working together to save the town. The retirees have reported that the conversations that occurred between those multi-age groups during those long days of sandbagging were amazing.

The "Business" of Service

Professor DeAne Lagerquist from St. Olaf was interviewed by one of my female students last year for a paper on women, leadership, and vocation, and she stated, "Instead of *having* a vocation, we need to *hear* a vocation." She likened hearing to "dancing with your neighbor." You have to get up front, close and personal with them. How can our institutions dance in the community even better tomorrow than they already dance today?

In my classroom, my overall goal is to make future business leaders *think* about some troubling questions before they graduate and head out the door to make their first million. Is being a business leader today *only* about making money? Is that your true definition of success? What is your personal mission and vision as a corporate executive? As Sharon Daloz Parks from the Whidby Institute often asked in her Harvard Business School classes, "If you are a CEO, CFO or COO, who will your

"How can our institutions dance in the community even better tomorrow than they already dance today?"

leadership *hurt* or *harm* as a result of your work?" Names come to mind like Enron, Worldcom, Madhof, Petters, and most recently, Murdoch. These are ripe case studies to read, analyze, discuss, and discern what we can learn from them.

I walked away from 25 years of working in the business world in part because of the absence of ethical decision-making. As Grayce Belvedere Young says, “Money is King,” and unethical practices occurred more times than I care to count. I left the trappings of the money and glitz because of the gift I was given at a Lutheran college to be able to ask troubling questions. Now, hopefully, I am able to influence a new generation of decision makers in the business world. I thank God nearly every morning that I get to work at a place like Gustavus where I can do this.

I know that vocation and civic engagement need to be part of the discussion in every semester I teach. I know that my students learn far more from engaging in the community instead of just sitting and listening to me lecture. And I know that my students will probably be leading the Fortune 100 companies of tomorrow.

If I do not ask the big questions while I am shepherding them in my classroom for a semester or two, who will? The vocation of each our Lutheran colleges is critically important. I agree with DeAne Lagerquist. It means dancing with our neighbors to their own specific tune. So, dance away!

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Artist Statement for *When We Serve*

The longer, original title for the art on the cover is taken from a song by Handt Hanson (c. 2000, Changing Church Forum, Inc.): “Take me, Jesus / Way beyond me, Jesus. / I will love you, Jesus / When I serve the ones you love.” The piece was painted for a silent art auction at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Burnsville, Minnesota, where Handt Hanson is the worship leader.

I’m lucky enough to be a part of a terrific small group. We’re all very different, we disagree about most things, and we love each other anyway. One day we got to talking about stewardship. The leadership in our church reminds us often that every person, in every walk of life, is called to share God’s love and grace. Parent, teacher, business leader, cashier, politician, cook—we all have creative energy to offer.

That night I watched the old holiday classic, “The Little Drummer Boy,” with my children. A poor shepherd boy comes face to face with the baby Jesus. He desperately wants to give the baby something, but has nothing. All he can offer is his talent,

his creative energy—he plays his drum. What a beautiful idea! Our group spent weeks asking people, “What is your drum?” What can you make? What can you do? What can you offer? What creative energy do you have? We received paintings, jewelry, blankets, carvings, CDs, music lessons, a five-course meal, tax preparation services, computer repair, and even a handmade duck call and fishing rod.

All of this was auctioned on New Year’s Eve, and all the money was given directly to the Feed My Starving Children program. We raised enough money to feed an entire village for a year. There is something extremely satisfying about making a difference in the world with art, your own personal drum.

This piece is acrylic, and simply represents this process of daring to jump into community, share your opinions, listen to others, and care about people who seem different or new. It is about daring to let God’s love overflow, and daring to trust that there will always be enough love to go around.

HOLLY WELCH is a freelance artist, graphic designer, and editor, and can be reached online at hollywelchdesign.com. She edits a weekly worship resource for *Changing Church Forum, Inc.* Find it at cctoolkit.com or link from changingchurch.org.

PAUL PRIBBENOW

Hospitality is Not Enough: Claims of Justice in the Work of Colleges and Universities

Augsburg College educates students to be informed citizens, thoughtful stewards, critical thinkers, and responsible leaders. The Augsburg experience is supported by an engaged community, committed to intentional diversity in its life and work. An Augsburg education is defined by excellence in the liberal arts and professional studies, guided by the faith and values of the Lutheran Church, and shaped by its urban and global settings.

The Augsburg College mission statement

Augsburg College's founders chose as the college's original motto these words from the gospel of John: "And the Word became flesh" (John 1:14). Today the motto is more relevant than ever as it provides a theological framework for the college's deep commitment to access and hospitality while also challenging the Augsburg community to explore and respond to the ways in which the world is marked by systems and practices that are unfair and unjust. We believe that the claim of hospitality demands that we work for justice. I want to explore with you what this theological claim means for our mission and work as a college. How does Augsburg College imagine its distinctive work as an expression of faith in our particular location and context?

From the time of its founding, Augsburg has been a place of great hospitality, which plays itself out in many ways because of our character and our location. In particular, we have become a place that is hospitable to students who have joined us from communities of color, from first-generation families, and from the city. That has changed the nature of our day-to-day life in fundamental ways over the past three or four years as we have

lived into our mission commitment to intentional diversity and the hospitality that enriches our life together. More recently, we have been wrestling with the question: Is hospitality enough? Is just the fact of welcoming enough, or, is there a reason *why* the need to be welcomed demands more of us? As I started to explore this question, I found that Augsburg is in fact a place that is both hospitable and also very much dedicated to sending and equipping our students to go into the world to fight for justice for those who are vulnerable and who do not have access.

Civility: The Etiquette of Democracy in Action

Let me begin with a claim—civility is democracy in action. The theme of our coming together for this conference is the role of civility in our common lives. For me, the concept of civility was critical as we rewrote and adopted the college's new mission statement in 2010 (printed above). The new mission statement says that Augsburg College educates students to be informed citizens, thoughtful stewards, critical thinkers, and responsible leaders. The first outcome named is informed citizens, a deliberate choice

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made by the community and a part of our legacy of preparing and equipping students to go out into the world—yes, for professions and jobs and careers in a variety of areas, but also for their roles as citizens in a democracy. This claim of civility as democracy in action is especially vital in today’s society where civility is not one of our most highly regarded values.

Civility is not only democracy in action but also the *etiquette* of that democracy, as suggested by Stephen Carter, Yale Law School professor. Carter says: “Civility...is an attitude of respect, even love, for our fellow citizens....Civility is the sum of sacrifices we are called to make for the sake of living together....Rules of civility are thus also rules of morality”(Carter xii). We shape citizens in many ways—we teach them to vote and get involved, and we also teach them the rules of living together and getting along with each other.

Carter has articulated several rules for democracy, and I lift up a few here:

- Our duty to be civil toward others does not depend on whether we like them or not.
- Civility requires that we sacrifice for strangers, not just for the people we know.
- Civility has two parts: generosity, even when it is costly; and trust, even when there is risk.
- Civility creates not merely a negative duty not to do harm, but an affirmative duty to do good.
- We must come into the presence of our fellow human beings with a sense of awe and gratitude.
- Civility requires that we listen to others with knowledge of the possibility that they are right and we are wrong. [Wouldn’t that be significant!]
- Civility requires resistance to the dominance of social life by the values of the marketplace. (Carter 277-86)

These are just seven out of his dozen rules, but you get a sense of how the power of these “rules” integrates with the liberal arts, with our spiritual and faith foundations, and with the moral underpinnings for our work. Civility calls us to hospitality, yes, to welcome people in; but civility also calls us to the work of justice, because the fact is that we are not following these rules. We are not being courteous to each other in this broad sense, and we need to hold each other accountable for both hospitality and justice.

The late Letty Russell, a theologian and teacher at Yale, writes in her *Just Hospitality* about bringing the two concepts of hospitality and justice together: “Just hospitality is the practice of God’s welcome by reaching out across difference to participate in God’s actions bringing justice and healing into our world of fear and crisis of the ones we call ‘other’” (Russell 101). There is a theological underpinning for civility, for this connection between hospitality and justice.

Hospitality and Justice in our Lutheran Colleges

I want to argue that the above claim about how civility exceeds hospitality to include justice is important to all of our Lutheran colleges, but especially to Augsburg. Our College seal illustrates this. It points to the fact that Augsburg links together three important commitments—the lamp of learning and wisdom, the city skyline reflecting our location, and, of course, the cross as an overarching guide. Even in this visual mark, you see the connection between hospitality and learning and their link to our faith. This integration happens in our academic programs, common life, and outreach—all of the forms in which this commitment to hospitality and justice are played out.



As mentioned above, Augsburg’s new mission statement has been important for us to continually see how this commitment to hospitality and justice is grounded in our mission. We educate students in a community that is engaged and committed to intentional diversity in its life and work. We educate students with commitments to excellence in the liberal arts and professional studies, to the faith and values of the Lutheran Church, and to the nature of our place in urban settings as well as globally. Important conversations led to this mission statement, and it is critical that we keep returning to the mission statement as the foundation for our commitment to both hospitality and justice.

God’s Hospitality

I began by stating that Augsburg’s founding motto was John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh,” which is printed on the wall plaque outside our chapel. This founding idea is more relevant than ever, both theologically—the Word did and does become flesh here in this college and in this neighborhood—and practically, because it leads us to think about the various forms in which we carry the Word into the midst of our neighborhood and work. Many of us would see that this is God’s ultimate act of hospitality: the Word came into the world and became flesh. At the same time, we learn from another part of the first chapter of John’s Gospel that God’s hospitality was rejected. Thus, we are grounded in our call to hospitality and to justice. This incarnational thinking is critical as the basis for the work of colleges. Our work is on the ground, in the classroom, in the residence halls, on the athletic fields, out in the neighborhood. But, it is also *God’s* work and we are *called* to God’s

work. We are called because the Word did become flesh, and as a result we are freed to be neighbor to others, a critical part of the Lutheran heritage that we all share.

Incarnation at Augsburg

Historically, this incarnational claim has been a very important part of the conversation at Augsburg. Augsburg grew out of the Lutheran Free Church, a denomination that blended Lutheran pietism and social responsibility. We embrace that history, know that it is messy, and see the good in it, as well as the places where it led us down paths that were not particularly fruitful. It is important that we claim that history and know it has shaped us and our culture. Over the past 10 or 15 years the Augsburg community has done a fine job of thinking through this history; from it, we renew our commitment to the important concepts of *caritas*, *civitas*, and civility. Naming our place, naming how this place in the city shapes the way that we love each other and the world, and considering the ways in which we live out the practices of citizenship—all of this serves as a foundation for our calling as a college that embraces hospitality and justice at the intersections of faith, learning, and service.

“We are called because the Word did become flesh, and as a result we are freed to be neighbor to others, a critical part of the Lutheran heritage that we all share.”

In 1938, Augsburg President Bernhard Christensen’s inaugural address was titled “The Word Became Flesh.” In that speech, he wrote, “Yet for those who have caught its spirit, Christianity does uphold the highest ideals for service and sacrifice on behalf of [humans] in the world.” The commitment to the city was lived out in the 1940s under President Christensen. He served on (then mayor) Hubert Humphrey’s Human Rights Commission in Minneapolis. Later in the sixties when Oscar Anderson was president, sociology professor Joel Torstenson and some of his colleagues defined our role in the city and founded many signature programs like metro-urban studies, social work, and sociology. More recently, faculty like Garry Hesser, and now Lars Christianson and Nancy Fischer, continue this tradition in meaningful ways.

A couple of years ago, I wrote something a bit more flip-pant about hospitality and justice: “Genuine hospitality offers mercy so that it might know the mercy that comes from engagement with others. If it was just about welcoming people ... well, then, we might as well be a hotel” (Pribbenow 24). Hospitality is good—we care deeply about it— but there has to be something more, and that is the claim of justice that serves as a foundation for our work. At Augsburg, we have a statement of our vocation, “We believe we are called to serve our neighbor.” Faith, learning, and service, linked in those eight words, represent our institutional calling.

The Forms That Hospitality Takes

Hospitality takes many different forms for us, and it is critical to get beyond the notion that hospitality is just how we greet people at the front door or serve the potluck supper in the basement. The much broader claim on us is our openness to the stranger. This is a critical part of our daily life and experience, especially in this neighborhood, as we are faced each day with otherness and differences of religion, culture, and background. This jarring passage from Laurel Dykstra, a Canadian theologian and educator, sums up some of the challenges of engaging strangers. In her commentary on Matthew’s Gospel, she writes:

Prophets have no subtlety, no appreciation for the daily compromises required for getting along. And while truly good people don’t trash the place, they can make you really look at your own life and upset your routine. Disciples and little ones are perhaps the worst of all. You know who they are: no money, no bag, no coat, bad-smelling, and talking about mercy. To get a cup of cold water, they have to come right into the kitchen. (Dykstra 48)

That’s what otherness does to us. To be challenged with otherness so that you look at your own life critically is at the heart of authentic education. I emphasize this claim because colleges, given the more transient nature of their communities, can be great lovers of random acts of service. But most essential is that we try to help students understand how this commitment to hospitality is a way of life; it’s not simply random acts of kindness, it is a way of life. We integrate this notion into our work with students, so that when they become an accountant or a teacher or preacher or social worker—whatever they choose to do with their lives as their vocational journey unfolds—included is this commitment to embracing otherness as a part of that calling.

Along the same lines, Father Daniel Homens, a Benedictine monk, and Lonni Collins Pratt describe what it was like for the monks of St. Benedict Monastery to open their worship lives to

the public, when they had long seen themselves only as “professional pray-ers,” watching the world from afar:

It is easy to pray for “the world” and “God’s people” when you don’t have to look into their tear-reddened eyes or fetch more toilet paper after mass on Sunday. Something sacred and unexpected has happened since we opened our doors and our hearts ... we have become a part of each other’s lives. (Homens and Collins Pratt 84)

Being truly hospitable opens us to a kind of messiness that becomes an integral part of life.

Hospitality Creates Free Space

Henri Nouwen extends this claim about hospitality when he writes:

Hospitality is the creation of free space where a stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer space where change can take place....The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create emptiness, not a fearful emptiness, but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and find themselves free; free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances; free to leave and follow their own vocations. (Nouwen 71-72)

This is what Augsburg does. We create the space for our students to find and discern their vocations and then to leave and follow them wherever that may lead them.

This is God’s plan, and there is a long horizon to this work. Hospitality is the first step in the broader claim of what God’s plan or intentions are for the world. This has been a key part of our work over the past five years, particularly as we mourned the murder of our student three years ago this fall. It is the only time an Augsburg student, faculty, or staff member has been murdered in this neighborhood, and it happened while he was doing the good work of tutoring kids at a local community center. This was a critical issue for our community to struggle with, and it led us to think about what this tragedy means for who we are as God’s people and how we build community here.

The Arc of the Moral Universe

One of the ways we were able to change that conversation was to point to a wider arc, an arc of the moral universe in God’s plan for the world that is not necessarily focused on just what happens tomorrow or next week but what God intends for us and how we live into that. This became a powerful part of our experience in the aftermath of the murder, and we found guidance in

these important words from the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech popularly named, “How Long? Not Long”:

I know you’re asking today, “How long will it take?” Somebody’s asking how long will presidents blind the visions of men. I’ve come to say to you this afternoon I have a different goal of the moment. However frustrating the hour, it will not be long because truth across the Earth will rise again. How long? Not long, because no lie can live forever. How long? Not long, because you shall reap what you sow. How long? Not long, truth was ever on the scaffold, wrongs were ever on the throne. If that scaffold sways in the future behind that ever stands God within the shadow keeping watch of his own. How long? Not long, because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.¹

We remember people like Dr. King who inspire us to think this way about our lives of faith in the world.

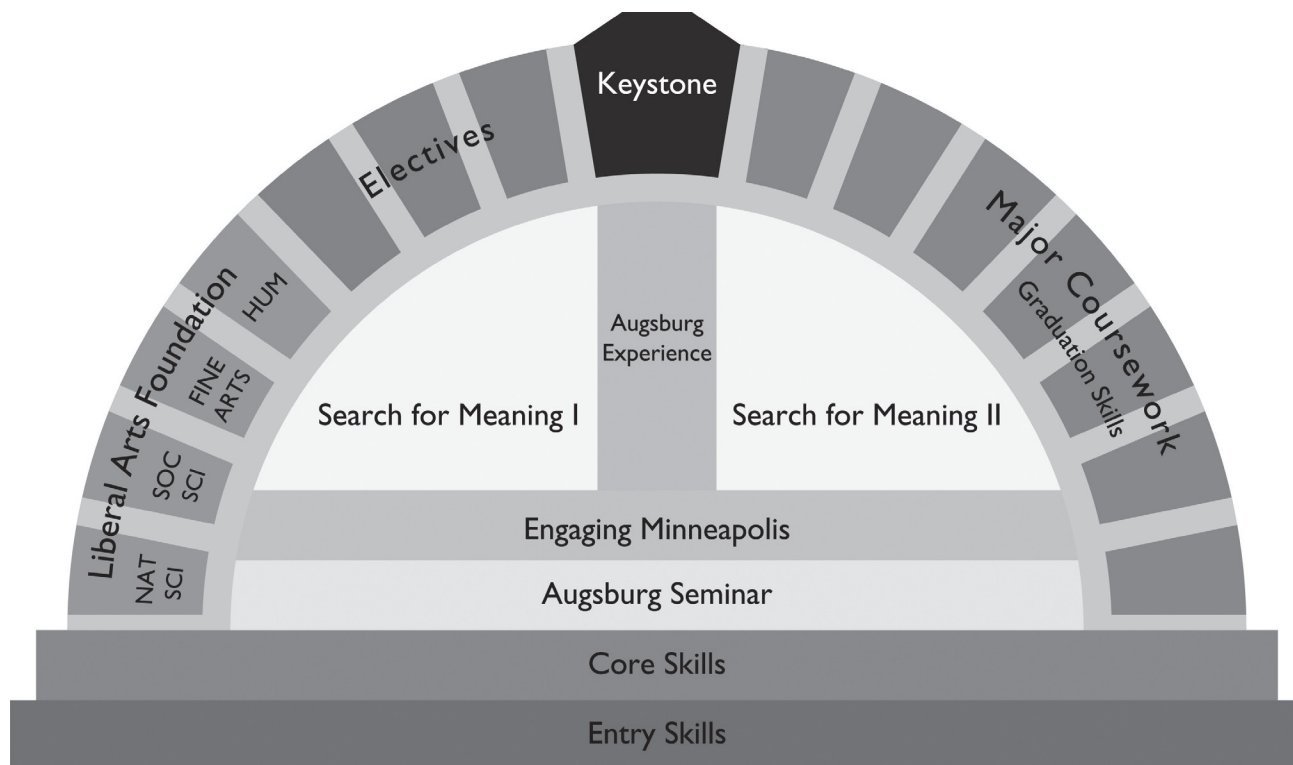
The Work of Justice and Our Colleges

As to hospitality and justice in the context of the work of our colleges, four components will give you a sense of how Augsburg is thinking about this nexus.

(1) Education Off the Main Road

“Education off of the main road” is a phrase I first coined after a trip to one of our global sites in Africa last fall. I was sitting in a fancy restaurant on the top of a hill overlooking Windhoek, Namibia, where we have had study programs for 16 years. We had spent a whole day visiting several horrendous places around the city that were villages of people who had moved in from their kin villages. We had seen a lot of misery, disease, and poverty, yet we were in this fancy restaurant looking over the lights of the city. One of the folks who was joining us for dinner asked, “What did you do today?” I explained what we had seen and done, visiting AIDS clinics and tin-roofed temporary villages, and he said, “It’s good that you have been off of the main road, because in Namibia if you’d stayed on the main road, you wouldn’t know what we are challenged with.” That became for me a metaphor of the kind of education and curricular plan we offer—we take students off the main road.

Our education in the community begins with our curricular plan. This arch depicts the College’s curriculum, including the Focus on Engaging Minneapolis and the Augsburg Experience. We have two Search for Meaning courses on vocation; the liberal arts foundation across the curriculum; electives and major coursework; and Keystone course that ties it all together. This commitment to educating students and challenging them



The Augsburg Core CurriculumSM

to think outside of the mainstream in various ways is embedded in this curricular plan. In this commitment to education off the main road there is a real experiential bias, for which this college has been recognized for at least 50 years.

We fit *experience* into the students' coursework—internships, service learning, a whole variety of techniques—but it is all about learning. A persuasive statistic illustrates this: the power of knowledge retention soars to 75% when it is practiced by *doing* compared to retention of 20% when learning is simply by *listening*. That is why community engagement is among the most powerful learning experiences our students have.

Furthermore, our curriculum also contains a commitment to exposing our students to injustice that challenges the ways they see the world. What they see and how they experience unfairness in the world is then linked to learning through a critical pedagogy, which our Center for Global Education (CGE) does so well with its Circle of Praxis. Participants start with an *experience*, go to *reflection and analysis*, then gather *new information*, have *new experiences*, and *continue to reflect*. Ultimately they *take action and evaluate*, and then return to *celebrate* and prepare for other experiences. Anyone who has been on a CGE trip knows how they teach—they put participants into the midst of the community, they do homestays,

they go to places that are very disturbing, especially compared to American experiences, and these experiences are all part of their ongoing educational experience.

We are also a teaching and learning community marked by what educator Parker Palmer calls the “grace of great things,” a notion signifying that when we come together:

- we invite diversity,
- we embrace ambiguity,
- we welcome creative conflict,
- we practice honesty,
- we experience humility, and
- we become free. (Palmer 106)

(2) *Co-created Common Life*

The second component of the work of justice in our colleges focuses on our common life. Most college communities in their daily life teach students how to treat each other, how to get along, how to solve their own problems. This is what we call co-creation and focuses on how our students, faculty, and staff are involved in creating the day-to-day life of the college. It is about sharing power and modeling democracy. Higher education has a long tradition of this, but I think Augsburg has a specific bias around this because of our Lutheran Free heritage.

Some compelling examples of co-creation have begun to unfold on our campus. Our entire Enrollment Center staff went through a process last year working with coaches who helped them explore ways they might change how they do their work—everything from how their space is organized and hours they keep to how they can build better team efforts. We asked them to solve their own problems, which is a concrete example of co-creation. We gave them back the privilege of doing their work and also the responsibility of coming up with solutions. These are very simple examples we are trying to model around campus.

This work is led by our Public Achievement program, which teaches the skills and habits that accompany and sustain a change in individuals from spectators to citizens. How in our day-to-day life can we help people move from being observers or spectators to being co-creators and engaged citizens?

(3) *Abundance versus Entitlement*

We also lift up the possibility of abundance in our lives together over-and-against the commodification of education and our culture's sense of entitlement. When you put things together in ways that make better things happen than could be done individually, you bring your best resources to bear with a sense of imagination and creativity. Augsburg models this commitment to abundance in so many ways, e.g., in our partnerships with other organizations, and we recognize that when we come together, we accomplish more for both institutions than we could have done each on our own.

“Colleges and universities are organized on outdated models. How do we imagine new ways of working together and creating more fluid boundaries, both within the campus and with other organizations outside the campus?”

I also believe higher education needs to pursue openness to evolving social arrangements in order to thrive and respond to public criticism about costs and efficiencies. We owe it to the public to demonstrate that we are thinking through new ways of doing our work in partnership with each other and with other organizations. Colleges and universities are organized on outdated models. How do we imagine new ways of working

together and creating more fluid boundaries, both within the campus and with other organizations outside the campus?

To fight for justice, we have to change not only the practices we have employed over decades, but also the perspectives of those who come to our institutions. I and my fellow private college colleagues recently met with both the new University of Minnesota president and the new chancellor of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. One of the central themes of our discussions was how in this great state, with all of our progressive ideas about lots of different things, we have fallen into the trap of thinking about higher education as a private right instead of a public good. We have commodified education. We now have transactions with students. They come to us and enter into economic relationships as opposed to the original vision of colleges and universities that offer a public good in order to serve democracy, serve society, and serve our communities.

Michael Sandel's recent book on justice points to four concepts about justice and the common good that he believes are critical for our 21st century. He focuses on *citizenship*, *sacrifice*, *service*, and the *moral limits of markets*. Markets are important, but in fact, if our whole life is defined by markets, that's going to be a problem; the whole issue of inequality and how we work together, going back to the concept of civic virtue about how we are formed to be certain kinds of people; and then, what he calls a politics of moral engagement (Sandel 263-69). These are important concepts that are at the heart of how we think about our life together on campus.

(4) *Colleges as “Anchors”*

The last piece that relates to our vision for the college's role in neighborhood wellbeing is a movement that has begun to emerge in urban areas such as Philadelphia, Cleveland, Boston, and other places where colleges serve as anchor institutions. These colleges have begun to think of themselves differently, not as places that have all of the answers for the community, but places that want to enter into mutual conversation and mutual benefit for each other for the sake of the city and the neighborhood. The fundamental challenge is overcoming academic hubris; we have to get beyond our own arrogance. As we work to change our mindset, we begin to engage our neighbors differently because we engage them as fellow citizens and as potential members of our teaching and learning community.

A woman on our staff recently took a group of our students into the neighborhood. They were wandering the streets when she happened to see Chester, a homeless man, whom she knows well. She asked him if he would talk with her students. She could see the fear in the students initially. Chester came over, took off his hat, and spent twenty minutes giving them a history lesson about

the neighborhood. And all of those students learned something from a new member of our faculty. Think about that. This was an openness to being taught differently. Seeing the neighborhood as a classroom is critical.

The anchor institution model also helps us think about our college as an economic engine in this neighborhood alongside of the University of Minnesota, Fairview Hospital, and the businesses down the street. We must move away from a charity model of our relationships with the neighborhood, considering not simply what we can do *for* them, but what we can do *together*.

Some very practical strategies are part of the anchor movement concept—for instance, how we share people’s time and talents. We recently won the Presidential Award for Community Service, and one of the factors in our favor was that we offered 225,000 hours of community service last year. That is *people* on this campus—students faculty, and staff—giving to the community in varied ways. Additional strategies for anchor institutions include purchasing policies that support the local economy; claiming our place and how we take care of and have pride in it. We also focus on the partnerships and alliances that I’ve talked about. We are taking up these sorts of practical strategies in our work as an anchor institution, working for hospitality and justice.

Loving the World—God’s Plan instead of Our Own

I end with where I began—how we love the world that God so loves and so live into God’s intent for our lives. This gets back to that notion of our institutional vocation as a college and how we always are looking to discern what God calls us to be and do. There are four simple, little quotes that sum up for me our understanding of God’s plan.

The first is found in a wonderful passage from an oratorio written by Lawrence Siegel called *Kaddish*, the Jewish prayers for mourning. The words come from Rabbi Nachman of Breslov:

Nothing is as whole as a heart which has been broken.
All time is made up of healing of the world.
Return to your ships, which are your broken bodies.
Return to your ships, which have been rebuilt. (Siegel)

This is the text I used in my “9/11” tenth anniversary homily in chapel to remind our community again that this work of healing the world is God’s plan, and we have been called to it.

Another source of inspiration is from Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

[I]t is only by living completely in the world that one learns to have faith....By this worldliness I mean living unreservedly in life’s duties, problems, successes and

failures, experiences and perplexities. In so doing we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God, taking seriously not our own sufferings, but those of God in the world—watching with Christ in Gethsemane. That, I think, is faith;...that is how one becomes a human and a Christian. (Bonhoeffer 369-70)

This commitment to the world is very real here at Augsburg. In the mission conversations with faculty, in particular, there was a real focus on *how we educate*—yes, it is educating informed citizens, critical thinkers, responsible leaders, and thoughtful stewards—but it is *for the world* that we educate students, and we have to keep that in mind.

Then there is this lovely, little passage attributed to Teresa of Avila, “Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”² That gets to the point! If the Word became flesh, we’re it now, and we are living it out and we illustrate faith active in the world.

And, finally, the following passage from Reinhold Niebuhr challenges us to remember again the horizon of our work:

Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime; therefore we are saved by hope. Nothing true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history, therefore we are saved by faith. Nothing we do however virtuous can be accomplished alone; therefore we are saved by love. No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as from our own; therefore we are saved by the final form of love, which is forgiveness. (Niebuhr 63)

Niebuhr’s words takes us back to our mission, the foundation upon which Augsburg educates, the community we are trying to create, and the impact we are hoping to have on the world. I am to be a partner in that work with faculty members, staff members, regents, and other leaders and alums of this college who care deeply about living into our mission to embrace hospitality and justice. I’m privileged to tell their story.

Endnotes

1. Martin Luther King Jr. speech’s “How Long, Not Long,” also referred to as “Our God is Marching On” was given March 25, 1965 at the State Capitol, Montgomery, Alabama. It can be found at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAYITODNvIM>

2. This prayer, attributed to Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), is cited often, although its source remains unknown. See: http://www.journeywithjesus.net/PoemsAndPrayers/Teresa_Of_Avila_Christ_Has_No_Body.shtml

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