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Intersections

Faith, Learning, and the Vocation of Lutheran Higher Education

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Vocation and the Common Good

Intersections is a publication by and largely for the academic communities of the twenty-six colleges and universities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Each issue reflects on the **intersection** of faith, learning, and teaching within Lutheran higher education. It is published by the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit of the ELCA, and has its home at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois, the institutional sponsor of the publication. ***Intersections*** extends and enhances discussions fostered by the annual Vocation of the Lutheran College Conference, together lifting up the vocation of Lutheran colleges and universities. It aims to raise the level of awareness among faculty, staff, and administration about the Lutheran heritage and church-relatedness of their institutions, especially as these **intersect** with contemporary challenges, opportunities, and initiatives.

About the Cover and Artist

Elizabeth Person, 2015 Holden Village Artist-in-Resident
The Dining Hall on a Sunlit Morning
Watercolor and Ink

Elizabeth Person is a Washington-based artist and graphic designer. Using pen and watercolor, she creates "illustrative infographics," often featuring Northwest themes. Her illustrations can be spotted at local cafés, on concert posters, and, most recently, at her favorite store, Metsker's Maps of Seattle. She has served as a Cultural Arts Commissioner for the City of Everett since 2011.

In Spring, 2015, Elizabeth served as an artist-in-residence at Holden Village, which the cover art features and about which Elizabeth writes this:

In 1960, a *surprising gift* was given to the Lutheran community. It was a town—the defunct mining village of Holden, nestled in the remote northern end of Lake Chelan, just miles from North Cascades National Park in Washington State. Today, Holden Village is one of the most remote, continuously inhabited places in the lower 48 and operates year round as a Lutheran ministry.

The Dining Hall is the heart of the village. Guests find themselves dropping by the Dining Hall for the smallest thing, like returning a tea traveler, or for some of the most important things, like meeting up with a friend. Here you will smell bread baking, hear easy conversation around meal preparation, listen to children learning a new skill, and show up for your weekly kitchen chore. Ingredients are sourced locally, food is made from scratch, and all meals are prepared and shared in community.

I was thrilled to be an artist-in-residence at the historic Holden Village this past spring. For six weeks I painted non-stop, capturing as much of this luminous community as possible in my sketchbook. I discovered at and through Holden Village that we hold a common belief: art is work and work is art.

Her illustrations can be viewed at elizabethperson.com.

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

From the Editor

There seem to be very few "commons" left. Indeed, if someone should utters this quaint, traditional term, there is a good chance he or she is referring to a central dining hall on one of our campuses. (Quaint, traditional words have a way of sticking around longer in small, church-related colleges and universities; others include "liberal arts," "collegiate," and "calling.") As a term to indicate those natural or cultural resources that are shared by all (common land to graze livestock, a park for all to enjoy, public art for many to behold, clean water for the taking, and so on), "the commons" seem to be not only an outdated term but also an outdated idea. Increasingly, industries within our global economy privatize and sell what used to be shareable, public goods—or pollute and make unusable what is left. Most of us adjust accordingly to this tragedy of the commons—happily buying bottled water and sometimes even paying for access to toilets.

And how about education? Have we come to consider education as private property—another commodity to be securely transacted between our institutions (the sellers) and our students (the buyers and consumers)? More to the point: What and whom is higher education *for*? Is it primarily to credential the educated—full stop? Or does it also emanate outward, bettering those who haven't paid for it but still receive the service of others, those who are freed along with those educated in the art of making free? One irony of church-related, so-called "private" colleges and universities in the United States is that they may be one of the least fully-privatized resources left. At best, education is for vocation, and vocation is always a calling on behalf of the common good. Church-related colleges know and teach this.

The essays in this issue of *Intersections* lift up the common good and show how education for vocation strives to preserve and strengthen it. Most were delivered at the 2015 Vocation of a Lutheran College Conference at Augsburg College under the theme, "Vocation and the Common Good." Among the authors are some leaders of the "vocation conversation" (Samuel Torvend, Paul Pribbenow, Kathi Tunheim, and Mark Wilhelm); others bring fresh perspectives to questions around technology use (Amy Weldon), draw on work with interfaith engagement to ensure that commonality does not dilute religious and cultural difference (Rahuldeep Singh Gill), or claim that support for the common good might entail very ordinary—but no less important—service (René Johnson).

Two short announcements to close: First, please be aware that *Intersections* is now also published online through Digital Commons, an open source database for scholarly work; see more information and the web address on page 4. Second, please look for a special anniversary edition of *Intersections* in Spring 2016, which will showcase some of our twenty years of reflecting on the intersection of faith, learning, and the vocation of Lutheran higher education.

Jason Mahn is Associate Professor of Religion, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.

MARK WILHELM

Vocation and the Common Good

Our annual conferences on "the Vocation of a Lutheran College" are designed to explore the shared identity and mission of the colleges and universities related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). As the standing title of the conference suggests, these conferences claim that the concept of vocation offers the best lens for examining (and the best opportunity for invigorating) a shared identity and mission among our very diverse schools.

In my longer talk (forthcoming in *Intersections* Spring 2016), I offer an overview of how the leadership of the network of ELCA colleges and universities arrived at the conclusion that the theme of vocation should be our touchstone. I also focus on the particular wisdom about higher education embedded in the Lutheran intellectual tradition that "vocation" upholds. Despite many challenges, I remain optimistic that the Lutheran ideal of higher education and its vocation movement will find wide acceptance over time. Our generation has the chance to reclaim one of the great western educational traditions by remembering the ideal of education for vocation and the Lutheran notion of a non-sectarian, but authentically religious, higher education.

Lutheran colleges and universities are not defined by their support for an ethnic culture or by their adherence to a check-list of institutional practices or markers, such as mandating minimal standards for the numbers of Lutheran students enrolled. Nor are they Lutheran schools because schooling provides a platform for promoting parochial Lutheran interests. Rather, our schools are Lutheran because they stand in a 500 year-old intellectual tradition that educates for vocation, an education of the whole person, prepared to contribute to the common good.

Educating for the Common Good

Providing education for vocation to all persons of good will, whatever their personal religious or non-religious convictions, is educational excellence in the Lutheran tradition. It is the vocation of a Lutheran college. Given our particular theme of the "Common Good" here, I want to reflect on how the Lutheran intellectual tradition and its concept of vocation are worth reclaiming and promoting because they undergird and sustain an educational commitment to prepare students to contribute to the common good.

I will mention only two insights from the Lutheran intellectual tradition by way of demonstrating how our concern for character education, citizenship, and the common good stem from the Lutheran roots of our schools and the concept of education for vocation. The first points toward a rationale for a commitment to the commons, that is, a sense of community and shared

Mark Wilhelm is Program Director of Schools, Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit, ELCA. These reflections concluded Mark's opening address at the 2015 Vocation of a Lutheran College Conference. The full manuscript will be made available in *Intersections*, Spring, 2016.

well-being. The second aids our efforts to work toward the good by prohibiting any individual or group from claiming to definitively know the good.

"Our schools are Lutheran because they stand in a 500 year-old intellectual tradition that educates for vocation, an education of the whole person, prepared to contribute to the common good."

A Sense of the Commons

The Lutheran tradition's commitment to a sense of the commons is rooted in a number of sources, but among them is the Lutheran doctrine of vocation's insistence that all persons share a common walk of life. The Lutheran tradition teaches that people experience a variety of callings and that each person has multiple callings simultaneously, reflecting in the various aspects of their lives. The Lutheran doctrine of vocation also insists that this variety of callings does not indicate a division of persons into a variety of classes, hierarchies, or castes attendant to their vocations. The Lutheran tradition is adamant that understanding life in terms of vocation does not create difference of status. There may be many vocations, but these are all part of a single, common walk of life. To recall Luther's German categories, we are called to various functions, activities, or offices (*Amt*), but according to Luther all are called to and are part of a single walk of life (*Stand*).

Humankind is seemingly at work endlessly to divide people into this or that category, class or station. The Lutheran doctrine of vocation stands behind the democratic and egalitarian impulse that in its ideal informs higher education in the Lutheran tradition. Education for vocation promotes a commitment to the commons. We all have our distinct and various roles to play, but we all share a common walk of life. We are all—to use a sports analogy—on the same team—the team called humanity.

Ambiguity and Humility

The Lutheran tradition asserts that no one has a monopoly on knowledge, including knowledge of the good. This is drawn within Lutheranism from the belief that a person of faith has no epistemological advantage over non-believers about the workings of the world, and that knowledge of the world comes through God's gift of reason which is accessible to all. It is through cooperative work and inquiry, driven from a Lutheran perspective by the concept of vocation, that we strive to know the good.

As part of its assertion that no one has a monopoly on knowledge, the Lutheran tradition also does not shy away from the complexities of human life, including our attempt to know the good. This conviction in expressed in the Lutheran theological affirmation of paradox as key to a wise understanding of life. One of the paradoxes of our existence is the paradoxical mix of good and evil that is difficult to sort. The Lutheran intellectual tradition asserts that ambiguity is integral to this life and that determining wise ethical practice is fraught with complexity. For example, how can it be that persons in their one-to-one relationships can be exceedingly moral and yet they can seemingly not overcome the immorality of the collective actions they take as members of society? Education for vocation should encourage students to not despair in the face of such complexity, nor should they be deterred from pursuing the common good even as they struggle to work out the paradox of good and evil in life.

"Education for vocation should encourage students to not despair in the face of such complexity, nor should they be deterred from pursuing the common good even as they struggle to work out the paradox of good and evil in life."

Conclusion

The continuing conversation about education for vocation is about the grand renewal of a 500 year-old vision that returns our community of schools to an educational ideal as the basis of our shared identity and mission. The remainder of this issue explores in more detail one implication of the concept of vocation: namely, that from the Lutheran heritage of our schools we share a commitment to prepare students to contribute to the common good.

RENÉ JOHNSON

Making the Common Good Common

"The trouble is, I don't think the common good is all that common," said Miranda, a resident of the Servant Leadership House for women at Finlandia University. Two students and I were driving a truckload of broken furniture, unusable building materials, and long forgotten belongings from the attic of the Servant Leadership House to the local landfill.[1] It was a good time for a conversation about how the Servant Leadership House women would embody the common good at Finlandia in the coming school year. We were dirty and sweaty and lamenting the fact that we would be just one customer among too many that day tossing construction and junk waste into a crushing bin. We were also overwhelmed by the idea that this was happening in thousands of places across the country, and even the world, on any given day. Even with improved methods of waste disposal where much is recycled, the three of us wondered at the recklessness of our throw-away habits that are regarded as normal. Shouldn't we be leaving the landfill in tears? Might we ever consider it deviant behavior to produce and toss so much waste? We left the landfill with an empty truck and encumbered hearts, having this deed made far too painless with a charge of only $22.50.

The Common Good as Commonplace

Whether we're talking about actions that express care for the earth or care for each other, the common good becomes truly common when it is embedded in the ordinary details of our lives. When combined, these two words, *common* and *good*, are rich in complexity and ambiguity of meaning. What do we mean by good? Is the "good" actually shared in common? How do we measure if the "good" that is pursued is genuinely for the sake of the common? And Miranda's comment begs us to consider if the common good is something we conceive of as commonplace or if our tendency is to associate the common good with big, bold endeavors.

As Lutherans we take our primary cues for deliberation of the common good from the Lutheran notion of vocation. Vocational living is "good" because the task of vocation is to be instruments of God's healing purposes in ways that are always and only for the sake of the neighbor's well-being. In the words of Gustaf Wingren, "our only care ought to be what we should do with all the good that God has made, so that it may benefit our neighbor" (8). The "good" that benefits the neighbor through vocation is "common" because it is an all-inclusive idea of the neighbor. The neighbor who is the beneficiary of the good of vocation should not be confused with a convenient, geographical, or familiar sense of relationship. The neighbor is not defined by location but by his or her *need* for wholeness and healing.

The common good can also be regarded as necessarily commonplace in a Lutheran sense of vocation. For Luther,

René Johnson is the Director of Servant Leadership and a religion professor at Finlandia University in Hancock, Michigan. Before coming to Finlandia in 2005, she taught for 12 years in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania.

there are no actions, interactions, or occupations that are more sacred than others. Luther's vocational perspective recognizes the sacred purpose in the seemingly mundane tasks and in the totality of our everyday lives. The visible common good enacted through vocation is intended to be commonplace. This is not to deny that we are also called to exercise the common good in more difficult and unexpected ways as well. We know from listening to the voices of the prophets and the poor that a broader vision of the neighbor and a more careful listening to the neighbor and his or her need is required. We begin to see new neighbors who were previously hidden from our consciousness and experience. We encounter neighbors who are denied healing and wholeness because of unjust, systemic poverty and the scandalous deprivation of human rights. These are circumstances which can stir the heart toward a sense of call to participate in a more radical pursuit of the common good that addresses the most serious concerns of the world. But God also calls his servants to take part in the healing of the world in the everyday occurrences of our lives.

Common, Little Bits of, Good

As we strive to stimulate thinking and action for the common good on the campuses of our Lutheran colleges and universities it is helpful to acknowledge the temptation to associate the common good only with programs and opportunities that are extraordinary. Indeed, there are fantastic things being accomplished at our schools which push our students to address the needs of marginal communities through action and advocacy. But we cannot lose sight of the simpler aim of nudging our students toward an enduring awareness of the call to do their "little bit of good" in their everyday relationships and actions.[2]

Finlandia University's Servant Leadership House gives the women residents the opportunity to grow in their capacity to promote and contribute their little bits of good to the common good. A servant leader's persistent concern is for the growth of people and consequently the growth of a better, more sustainable society. The women of the Servant Leadership House define serving as having an enriching net effect on others; they enrich campus and community primarily by carrying out awareness-raising campaigns for social justice concerns.

But it is really their understanding of leadership that fosters the women's sense of call to do their little bits of the common good. They understand that leadership is not simply about being in charge. After all, only a few are actually in leadership positions with this kind of authority. The servant leader is much more interested in having an influence than having a position of leadership because "at its core, servant-leadership is a long-term, transformational approach to life and work—in essence, a way of being—that has the potential for creating positive change throughout our society" (Greenleaf, *Servant Leader Within* 16). This type of leadership can be exercised by anyone.

> "The little bits of the common good—executed in the routine encounters and daily habits of servant leaders—define their way of being, subtly influence others, and carry the potential for significant positive change."

The Servant Leadership House women are genuinely concerned about many of the world's ailments. But as students of servant leadership they understand that "if a flaw in the world is to be remedied, to the servant the process of change starts *in here*, in the servant, not *out there*" (Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership* 44). So the women struggle to make the common good commonplace in their own lives. Examining their actions and motivations in relation to the common good, even if it is something as conventional as disposing a truckload of garbage into a landfill, is hard work, although it's not the kind of work toward the common good that usually gets attention. None the less, this cultivation of the common good as commonplace in the lives of these women rests on the assumption that the only way to address the urgent problems of our world is "one person and one action at a time because there isn't anything else to work with" (Greenleaf, *The Servant Leader Within*, 72).

Endnotes

1. The Servant Leadership House is a women's special interest housing option inaugurated in 2014. Students were somewhat involved in the renovation of the 100-year old house situated on the corner of the campus that is now a beautiful living space for six women.

2. The phrase is borrowed from a quotation by Desmond Tutu: "Do your little bit of good where you are. It's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world."

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SAMUEL TORVEND

"Greed is an Unbelieving Scoundrel": The Common Good as Commitment to Social Justice

I regularly teach a course entitled Lutheran Heritage, and now teach this course with a growing number of students who have little knowledge of or experience with Christianity, much less its Lutheran form. For me, there is something quite invigorating about all this as I lead students into what is for many of them a foreign territory. That being said, I enjoy introducing students to the *academic study* of the Lutheran tradition, a form of teaching appropriate and needed in a university that welcomes students from many countries, ethnicities, races, religious backgrounds and no religious tradition.

While we spend a good amount of time studying the context in which the Lutheran reform movement emerged as well as the prominent reforming insights of Luther and his colleagues at the University of Wittenberg, I also want my students to recognize that a particular insight or theological claim frequently, if not always, possesses a contemporary ecological, economic, political, or social consequence. For instance, the core Lutheran teaching on justification by grace alone—*sola gratia*—ruled out any human claim to inherited or achieved privilege in the eyes of God. This reforming conviction held that *prior* to one's ability to make a decision for God or work diligently to enter into a good relationship with God or to merit divine favor based on one's gender, race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status, God has already decided in favor of humanity. If, as Luther suggested, God's judgment is always a merciful one made tangible in the baptism of infants or adults, these newly Christian persons are free to live their lives in this world freed from anxiety about their eternal destiny (see Luther "Two Kinds").

Of course, the assumption here is that one is anxious about one's relationship with God and one's eternal destiny—a condition or concern not found in all forms of Christianity and in other world religions. At the same time, one's freedom from "anxious religion," freedom from religion as conformity to rules and regulations, bears responsibility, holds forth an ethic of care for others in this world. That is, the justice and mercy of God are to be embodied by humans in a world marked by injustice and suffering (see Luther, "Freedom"). Such ethical responsibility, however, is always—*always*—exercised within the interwoven ecological, economic, political, and social fabric of life, never apart from it. Consequently, one is called to pay attention to this interwoven fabric of life that so significantly shapes human commitments and affections.

Samuel Torvend in the University Chair in Lutheran Studies at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington.

Troubling Markers in the United States

My Lutheran Heritage students—from Canada, China, Denmark, Kenya, and Norway, but mostly from the United States—are surprised to learn that the interwoven fabric of life in United States society does not necessarily match the nation's promise of life and freedom and the pursuit of happiness.

"The interwoven fabric of life in United States society does not necessarily match the nation's promise of life and freedom and the pursuit of happiness."

For instance, the 2013 United Nations report on the well-being of children in 35 highly developed countries ranks the United States at 34, just above Romania (Fisher). Indeed, 1 of every 5 American children lives in poverty and thus suffers with food insecurity on a regular basis ("Child Food Insecurity"). As you might well imagine, the absence of regular and appropriate nutrition readily and negatively affects a child's neurological and physical development, his or her ability to learn in school, and the capacity to form healthy relationships with others. The report also notes that income inequality is a major contributor to this dismal ranking of the United States. The children of the prosperous few benefit while the many increasingly poor (now drawn from the ranks of the middle class) languish.

Much has been made in the news of the Affordable Health Care Act, some referring to its passage in Congress and its recent affirmation by the nation's Supreme Court as one of President Obama's major legacies. I do not want to diminish the good such an act has already engendered; nor do I want to give it a glowing endorsement. I do know that my students are surprised if not disbelieving when they read that the United States heath care system is ranked *last* of 11 developed nations studied in 2013-2014 by the World Health Organization, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Commonwealth Fund ("Mirror"). While the United States healthcare system is the most expensive in the world and while the reputation of its research and training is stellar, the *quality* of healthcare provision, the *efficiency* of the healthcare industry in providing healthcare, and the measure of *equity* provided for all Americans merits the lowest rating when compared to Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Compared to these other 10 countries, the most troubling indication concerns the difficulty in United States healthcare of achieving better health outcomes. To my professional colleagues in Brazil, Germany, Italy, and Norway, it is remarkable, indeed astonishing, that this nation holds the highest level of obesity and the highest level of food waste in the world.

While studying contemporary Lutheran commitments to the poor and homeless, my students also read a number of articles by leaders in Lutheran political theology, or what is frequently referred to as liberation theology, which focuses on liberation of the impoverished and the homeless from the ecological, economic, political, and social conditions that keep them in perpetual poverty and thus diminish or degrade their God-given dignity and ability to flourish in society.[1] Last Spring, they had also talked with Helen McGovern-Pilant, the executive director of Emergency Food Network, and discussed the alarming increase in hunger and homelessness in the region. In a moment of utter exasperation, a Danish student raised her hand and said: "I grew up in a society where it is normal to help other people, where providing for such basic things as housing and food through higher taxes is accepted. Here is the one thing I have learned living in this country for the past four years: *you go it on your own and you just hope you survive*."

The student's frustration was prompted not only by listening to a speaker but also by studying the 2014 Department of Housing and Urban Development report on the incidence of homelessness in the United States, a report that notes considerable growth in homelessness among children and teenagers. Indeed, the newspaper of the city in which I live and work only recently profiled the growing number of homeless elementary and middle school students in our *county* who must do their homework in a car that serves as home, a temporary shelter, or in a tent underneath a freeway (Schrader). In the United States, 1 out of every 30 children will experience homelessness in

this year alone, that is, close to 2.5 million children. By way of contrast, Denmark has counted its homeless population in the 20s and 30s. Yes, that's 20 to 30 individuals.

Aren't Charity and Service-Learning Enough?

While teaching at Brooklyn College and then Brandeis University, the developmental psychologist, Abraham Maslow, published "A Theory of Human Motivation" (1943) and *Motivation and Personality* (1954) in which he claimed that human development is rooted in and begins with a person's physiological needs and the ability to meet them. These needs are the physical requirements for human survival. They include (but are not limited to) fresh air to breathe, clean water to drink, adequate and nourishing food to eat, clothing appropriate to one's climate, and shelter for protection from the elements. To these he added the need for physical security and access to basic forms of healthcare. Maslow claimed that only after these basic needs are met and met consistently throughout life, does it become possible for human beings to consider other integral dimensions of human life: the yearning for love and belonging; a sense of meaning and purpose; and the capacity for self-transcendence, that is, the ability to recognize and respond to the needs of others, to see beyond the self to others as living subjects in the world and to join them in preparing and caring for a world in which subsequent generations will live.

I bring your attention to Maslow and his grounding of human development in fundamental physiological needs because it is helpful to consider the meaning of "the common good" in terms more concrete than abstract, more tangible than speculative. I doubt there are many who would say, at least publicly, that they oppose the common good (especially if it can mean *anything*). Indeed, many of our schools (or at least their websites) speak glowingly of "care for other people and their communities" (Pacific Lutheran), "community engagement" (St. Olaf), "education for the common good" (Gustavus Adolphus), "making a difference in communities" (Concordia), and "transforming communities and the world" (California Lutheran).

But I wonder whether professed care for other people and their communities, for community engagement, for making a difference, and for transforming the world actually draw our students, staff, faculty, and trustees to human and ecological suffering, to the growing numbers in this society who do not breathe fresh air, have little clean water, survive with insufficient food, are homeless, worry about their safety, and receive inadequate healthcare. Or say it this way: support or care for the common good might entail the difficult labor to ensure that all persons who live in this land enjoy fresh air, sufficient food, clean water, clothing, shelter, and basic healthcare. And yet, as my students have discovered and as many of us know, there is a terrible discrepancy between rhetoric and reality. There is a great chasm, as Jesus indicates in the Gospel of Luke, between the rich man dressed in fine clothing who eats sumptuously every day and the poor man Lazarus who longs to satisfy his hunger with what falls from the rich man's table (Luke 16:19-21).

"I wonder whether professed care for other people and their communities, for community engagement, for making a difference, and for transforming the world actually draw our students, staff, faculty, and trustees to human and ecological suffering, to the growing numbers in this society who do not breathe fresh air, have little clean water, survive with insufficient food, are homeless, worry about their safety, and receive inadequate healthcare."

In that school of spirituality known as Lutheran Pietism, a spirituality that has had considerable influence in the Upper Midwest and the Pacific Northwest and thus in a good number of our schools, the ethic of care for others and their communities has been expressed largely, though not exclusively, through charitable giving and works of mercy (see Gritsch). Such charitable work continues to do enormous good, an exemplary form of faith active in love. Indeed, Lutheran social service commitments

in the United States consistently outweigh those of other religious and humanitarian groups.

But here is the challenge: charitable work and its academic corollaries in college course offerings, in service learning and "community engagement," may well respond to social symptoms (i.e., feed the hungry, visit the sick, build the shelter, tutor the child, run the relay) and yet never discern the economic, political, or social causes that produce such symptoms. Indeed, the remarkable presence of the academy and the church in public life, through acts of social service, can actually diminish the urgent need to ask why such service is needed in the first place. Asking questions about root causes moves us from charitable giving or actions into the far more challenging pursuit of social justice, of asking how the economic, political, and social fabric of our common life subverts the common good. Thus, to return to the Maslovian framework, we might ask:

- Who benefits from maintaining polluted air?
- Whose profit margin is served by feeding poor and middle class school children the worst possible diet in public school cafeterias?
- Why should water, what the Lutheran tradition claims is God's free gift to all creatures, be privatized and controlled by companies whose one goal is stockholder happiness?
- Why is it that cities or state governments are able to use citizen taxes to fund the construction of shiny new sport arenas but somehow cannot muster the funds to build adequate and secure housing for homeless children and their single parents?
- Or finally: Who benefits—*who benefits*—from the keeping the hungry poor both hungry and poor? (Because, believe me, someone or some group always benefits from having a class of poor, hungry, and dependent people.)

Lutheran Education and the Promotion of Social Justice

There are a variety of ways in which we can discuss what "the common good" means or might mean, from the most abstract and ambiguous to the most concrete and tangible. To use the phrase from one of our schools, "education for the common good" might well entail the difficult labor to ensure that all who live in this land, not just a majority of persons, enjoy fresh air, sufficient food, clean water, adequate clothing, protective shelter, and access to healthcare—for without these, the ability to discover and live a life of meaning and purpose is seriously inhibited if not doomed. In other words, education for the common good might entail something more than (as some of our schools suggest) "becoming a leader," "a resourceful person in a complex world," or "discovering one's passion."

"The first gift of Lutheran education is the ability *to question the status quo,* to call into question what you and I, our colleagues, friends, and families, our economic, political, religious, and social leaders may think is perfectly normal."

One of my colleagues at Pacific Lutheran University claims that what academics are trained to do is argue in a civil manner with each other. Certainly, one of the primary and essential functions of any university or college is the advancement of knowledge that takes place through research, experimentation, publishing, presenting, and arguing with others. I suggest, however, that the first gift of Lutheran education is not so much argument as the ability *to question the status quo*, to call into question what you and I, our colleagues, friends, and families, our economic, political, religious, and social leaders may think is perfectly normal. This particular ability marks the DNA of Lutheran education in light of the founder's charism, that is, Martin Luther's need to question presumptions of his own place and time. Luther questioned the method of education which had dominated the universities for the previous 300 years. He questioned the spiritual economy that favored the wealthy and disenfranchised the many poor. He questioned the time-honored authority of one man who lived in Rome. He questioned the bankers and lobbyists who controlled Germany's early modern economy yet steadfastly resisted any form of government regulation. Of course, if you, dear reader, are generally satisfied with the ecological, economic, political, and social fabric within which we live

(oh, you know, maybe with some tweaking here and there), then rigorous questioning of the status quo may not be your cup of tea. After all, those who raise troubling questions frequently find themselves pushed to the margin or getting in trouble. You think you're qualified for and want that upward career move in the great honeycomb of academe? Then play it safe and leave the tough questioning to others.

It should also be of interest that the early Lutheran reform project was grounded in a deeply *communal ethos*. While Luther is frequently singled out as the great German hero (as he is in the decade leading to the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran reform), or as the great pastoral theologian who single-handedly took on the mighty edifice and power of the late medieval church, or as the voice of the individual's conscience (a view so beloved of American individualists and libertarians), he did not think, write, or act alone. Rather, Luther was an active member of that medieval guild we call the *magisterium*—the company of teachers or professoriate who worked together to advance the reform of church and society. It was this group of faculty, students, church, and civic leaders who, together, proposed social reforms that affected if not reshaped communal life, the common good. Let me point out two of these reforms.

Commitments to Literacy

The core Lutheran teaching on scripture alone—*sola scriptura*—led to the translation of the Bible from Latin into German, the language of the people. Since the impulse for reform was first discovered by Wittenberg scholars in the New Testament writings of Paul, the Bible as a charter for ongoing reform would need to be given to the community as a whole, rather than controlled by those few versed in Latin. And yet with the German illiteracy rate at 80-90 percent in the sixteenth century, what good could the translation effect if only a few could read it? Thus, early Lutheran commitments to universal literacy, expressed in the reform of education, emerged. Such educational reforms now welcomed girls as well as boys, and children from all socio-economic classes, and funded school by civic taxes—all of which was unheard of in previous human history. What we experience today as public education had its roots in this reforming insight and social project. It was, to say the least, an astonishing achievement given the amount of resistance from working parents who saw no need to educate their domestic labor force (their children), as well as the resistance from wealthy merchants and landed nobility who saw no need to support the poor in education (Luther, "To the Councilmen").

Responsibility for Social Welfare

The early Lutheran reformers asked for the suppression of monastic and mendicant life because, in their eyes, it was wrongly viewed as a form of Christian faith and life far superior to that of the baptized lay person who lived in the world. But with that suppression, the thousand-year network of social welfare, sustained by monastic and mendicant communities, was dismantled in one fell swoop. Thus, there emerged from parishes and towns that had accepted the "evangelical" or Lutheran reforms a body of legislation called the "church order," which transferred responsibility for social welfare to city councils and congregations. This was both a religious and a civic reform that was funded by taxes, directed by laypersons, and instituted—please note—for the homeless, the hungry, the impoverished, the unemployed, the elderly, and for the maintenance of the newly created schools open to all children in city or rural town. Again, there was resistance to this project in support of the common good. The wealthy members of these towns saw little reason, religious or humanitarian, to pay the tax, make a donation, or establish funds to assist their fellow citizens. In despair, Luther wrote, "Greed is a disobedient and unbelieving scoundrel, a ravenous consumption of what rightly belongs to all" (Luther, "Preface" 170).

"The wealthy members of these towns saw little reason, religious or humanitarian, to pay the tax, make a donation, or establish funds to assist their fellow citizens. In despair, Luther wrote, 'Greed is a disobedient and unbelieving scoundrel, a ravenous consumption of what rightly belongs to all.'"

What he did not suggest was the way in which a society or national culture, can shape, often unconsciously, the commitments and affections of if its citizens.

When Educational Mission and Cultural Formation are At Odds

At the beginning of each school year at Pacific Lutheran, the incoming class of first year students and transfer students march from the upper campus to the large auditorium on lower campus where they will be welcomed by the university president at the opening convocation. Robed in splendid academic regalia, the university faculty process ahead of the students and then form, on both sides of the walkway, a living border of professors who clap their hands in greeting as the students process into the auditorium. As these new students walk by me, I find myself hoping that they will do well at our university, persist in their studies, discover interests and abilities previously unknown to them, learn to cherish the life of the mind, and find persons who will become life-long friends.

"I sometimes wonder if the vocation of a Lutheran college has become the calling to serve as the unwitting accomplice in such cultural formation."

I also recognize this: that they, and you, and I have been formed in a culture that has tutored them and us in a profound if not toxic individualism and its narcissistic tendencies; that has catechized them and us to be consumers whose choices are shaped unconsciously by a media that serves the interests of someone else's profit; that has educated them and us in disposability rather than conservation; that has persuaded them that the value of a college education is measured solely by job security and financial well-being; and, finally, that has suggested to them and us that successful assimilation into this culture can reap considerable benefits.[2]

I sometimes wonder if the vocation of a Lutheran college has become the calling to serve as the unwitting accomplice in such cultural formation. That is, I have begun to think that the vocation of a Lutheran college has become the calling to serve as the unwitting accomplice in the acceptance of the status quo in which, ironically, we hope our students might discover their passion, their calling, their deep commitments.

And if this is so, how easy it will be to snuff out and smother that first gift of Lutheran education—the capacity to ask the deeply troubling question of what you and I, our disciplines, our expertise, or our trustees might take for granted, consider normal, even sacrosanct. Indeed, I wonder if it really is helpful to link the discernment of vocation, of one's commitments in life, with "making a difference" or meeting the world's great—yet rarely defined—need. After all, drug lords make a difference in their neighborhoods and the world certainly needs much more fossil fuel to burn—right?

Alternatively, is not the vocation of a Lutheran college to lead faculty, staff, students, and trustees to engage ecological and human suffering with which, as Luther says, the world is filled to overflowing? Is it not to do this challenging work together rather than alone? Is it not to ask why such suffering exists in the first place, and to see our many schools as centers of social reform, as places dedicated to the pursuit of social justice, a pursuit animated by intellectual rigor and that serves the common good?

A retired Lutheran bishop and former regent of Pacific Lutheran once told me that he thought our school did a fine job of "preparing students to fit into American society as leaders in their fields." I think he considered his comment a compliment. I, however, received it as a terrible indictment—an indictment of a school that looked little different from any other private college, albeit tinged by the rhetoric of "service" and "care" and "vocation." After all, asking supposedly inappropriate questions of the status quo, of what most of us consider normal and even helpful, can get you in trouble. Asking, in a wealthy nation, why there is unrelieved suffering within the ecological, economic, political, and social fabric, can be disturbing to some if not many. Wouldn't it be easier, so much easier, if you and I simply helped our students discern vocation as commitment to one's individual passion?

But, then again, no one has ever been crucified for being nice, for fitting in, for pursuing one's private dream. And no one has ever been raised from the dead to return to the way things have always been.

Endnotes

1. Examples include: Walter Aumann, *Luther and Liberation: A Latin American Perspective*, Fortress, 2013; Paul Chung, Ulrich Duchrow, Craig Nessan, *Liberating Lutheran Theology: Freedom for Justice and Solidarity in a Global Context,* Fortress, 2011; Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation*, Fortress, 2013.

2. Concerning intentionality in cultural formation, see Michael Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture*, Paulist, 1988; John Kavanaugh, *Following Christ in a Consumer Culture: A Spirituality of Cultural Resistance,* 25th anniversary edition, Orbis , 2006; Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology,* Fortress, 1997; Samuel Torvend, "Lutheran Colleges and Social Reform," in *The Cresset* (2006), accessed 1 November, 2015, http://thecresset.org/2006/Torvend L2006.html

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RAHULDEEP SINGH GILL

Grinding for the Common Good and Getting Roasted

Last spring, *USA TODAY* reported on a venture that it was taking on alongside the world's great coffee company:

> Starbucks, in partnership with *USA TODAY*, is about to tackle the issue of race in America.
>
> This week, baristas at 12,000 Starbucks locations nationally will try to spark customer conversation on the topic of race by writing two words on customer cups: Race Together. Also, a special "Race Together" newspaper supplement, co-authored by Starbucks and *USA TODAY*, will appear in *USA TODAY* print editions beginning Friday, March 20. It also will be distributed at Starbucks stores.
>
> Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz is on a mission to encourage Starbucks customers and employees to discuss race, under the firm belief that it's a critical first step toward confronting—and solving—racial issues as a nation. It is scheduled to be a key topic at the java giant's annual meeting on Wednesday.
>
> "Racial diversity is the story of America, our triumphs as well as our faults," says the opening letter to the eight-page supplement and conversation guide, signed by Schultz and Larry Kramer, president and publisher of *USA TODAY*. "Yet racial inequality is not a topic we readily discuss. It's time to start." (Horowitz)

Only three days later, *The New York Time*s ran a very different story about the same topic:

> Howard D. Schultz, the chief executive of Starbucks, said in a letter to employees on Sunday that baristas would no longer be encouraged to write the phrase "Race Together" on customers' coffee cups, drawing to a close a widely derided component of the company's plan to promote a discussion on racial issues.
>
> "While there has been criticism of the initiative — and I know this hasn't been easy for any of you—let me assure you that we didn't expect universal praise," Mr. Schultz wrote. (Somaiya)

Well, so much for that.

As someone who strives to work for the common good, but also enjoys the humor of everyday life, the Starbucks example tears at me. Ultimately, I have to appreciate the daring naivety with which the company surged into the stormy waters of race relations in America with the bold energy of a freshly brewed cup of Pike Place

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Roast. If you're going to get involved with Grande-sized conversations about the common good, aren't you going to need to be ready to err boldly? To look like a fool?

Missional Commitments

When we work for a goal as big as the "common good," don't we risk looking like those suits in the Starbucks boardroom drawing up the "Race Together" game plan? In hindsight, I'm sure the Starbucks folks can see how naive they were. What they thought was a good idea was certainly bold, certainly unconventional.

How many ways have we on college campuses felt totally abandoned by others on our quest to serve the common good? How many RSVPs have gone unfulfilled? How many campus conversations ended with doors slamming? How many times have we been left at the interfaith altar, having planned a grand feast for hundreds of folks who never showed up? Think of all the programming funds and speaker fees wasted!

And yet meeting these challenges head-on is why I have enjoyed teaching at a liberal arts college, and especially why I love teaching at an ELCA school. We take the education of the whole person seriously. Moreover, I have used the concept of vocation to articulate why my scholarship and research matter as academic exercises, and why it is vital that the university support my quest for knowledge. In this way, I get to model for my students what my interpretation of the "life of the mind" looks like. Reminding myself that I am modeling this for them helps me take care to be responsible to my own self-care and cultivate my curiosity.

I plug vocation into the "common good" in a few different ways as a professor in an ELCA Religion department. For us at Cal Lutheran, our commitment to Interfaith Cooperation is something that emerges out of our Lutheran identity. In my first-year Religion class, we read the memoir of Interfaith Youth Core founder Eboo Patel, called *Acts of Faith*. Using this book as a model, we connect it to our own lives by delving into a genre of writing spiritual autobiographies. It requires students to imagine the story that they have and bring to the study of religion, and to their interactions with other folks who orient around faith differently than they do.

The Vocation of the Lutheran College Conference itself embodies the missional commitment that ELCA institutions have to this quest. I have recently learned that the Second World War helped to raise awareness that Lutherans engaged in a kind of ethnic separatism in the American context. I have been told that the ELCA hosts the Vocation of a Lutheran Conference to investigate and invigorate the church's shared identity and mission. I hear often that "serving the neighbor" is the Lutheran "calling". One way the ELCA accomplishes this services is to make opportunities for excellent higher education available to a broad constituency. Creating leaders for a global society, developing whole persons, and being responsible servants to a complex world are part and parcel of what we do. Our mission and identity statements remind us where we are headed and why we do our jobs.

Lines of Difference and the Common Good

But on particularly difficult days, often deep into the semester, these missional commitments can taunt us like the naive smiles of well-meaning baristas. This is to be expected, because working for the common good is messy. You might muck it up. It might require you to be vulnerable and to put more on the line than you thought you signed up for.

Somehow, in the midst of those moments of vertigo from the whirlwind of vulnerability, we have to remind each other that *work* for the common good is common to us all. We have to stop playing hero-ball and remember to pass. We can lean back against solidarity and collegiality.

"These missional commitments can taunt us like the naive smiles of well-meaning baristas. This is to be expected, because working for the common good is messy."

Donors may call in to endowment offices to complain that the Religion Department is full of non-Lutherans, or that interfaith understanding is watering down a proper Christian ethos. But as I take on the mantle of vocation, such stakeholders have to contend with the truth in the following aphorism: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."[1]

We need to go far, and we need to be in this together, across lines of difference. Just from recent news, here is a rudimentary list of issues staring the common good in the face right now: race relations in America; mass incarceration (who gets incarcerated, for what, and how long?); women in science; responsibilities of nations to people forced to leave their homelands; nuclear proliferation; border disputes; mental health treatment; the disproportional impacts of global warming on the poor; educational priorities (should we focus on STEM or on reading, writing, and thinking?); and even what we might call "vocational" priorities (should we focus on reading, writing, and thinking and/or on the formation of good people who care about the earth?).

The list could go on. But whatever list one makes, there is no one position on any of these items that fits a "common" understanding of the problem. There are different visions of the common good rooted in differing value systems. What is more, any one particular vision sits at a number of different intersections of our identities. You know these well: race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, partisan affiliation, regional differences, geography, and so forth.

In the search for the common good, we have to resist the rush to conclude that these differences somehow do not matter. They do matter, and very much. All of these aspects of our identities impact how any of us come down on any one issue in relation to the common good. Each of us comes with different gifts, different talents, and different stories. The big news about the common good is that there may be nothing "common" about this "good." And that's why striving for "it" is messy. And that's why our work is necessary.

Re-Storying our Campuses

From Martin Marty's *The One and the Many: America's Struggle for the Common Good*, I learned about the "porcupine's dilemma," or "hedgehog's dilemma," which is often associated with philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. A metaphor for civil society, the story tells of the struggle of a group of porcupines that huddle to find warmth on a winter's day. As they get closer to find warmth, their sharp quills poke one another. This drives them far apart. They try again, and the same happens. After a while of huddling and running away, they find a distance from each other where they could just be warm enough without the danger of getting poked by a neighbor's quills. Like the porcupines, we social human beings learn to keep our distance from one another, just enough to still enjoy the benefits of social interaction. Some call this "politeness."

Is this the best we can hope for? Are we to keep just enough distance to not prick each other? That cannot be our highest aspiration. Which is why I love how Marty ends his book with a passage that is as relevant today as in the 1990s when it was written:

> The trauma in the body politic, the civil network, the social organism, continues. But in the meantime, and for the sake of a longer future, *every story well told, well heard, and creatively enacted will contribute to the common good* and make possible the deepening of values, virtues, and conversation. At the outset I described this book as an effort to contribute to the restoration of the body politic, or, with the many groups in view, the bodies politic. We have been speaking throughout of the "re-storying" of the republic and its associations. The advice for every citizen who wishes to participate in American life and its necessary arguments: start associating, telling, hearing, and keep talking. (Marty 225, emphasis added)

Re-storying our campuses is a great opportunity because great stories are particular: they speak *to* individuals because they speak *for* individuals. And if stories get told and retold, it's because there's something common and human about them. What stories of preparing students to work for the common good would you tell from your campus?

> "What stories of preparing students to work for the common good would you tell from your campus?"

Maybe your mind goes first to a certain exceptional student on your campus. Maybe she gets great grades

while leading the Amnesty International student club and building houses with Habitat for Humanity on the weekends. Great. Turn your attention also, though, to the blasé student. The one you meet at lunchtime at the cafeteria, who has skipped your class for the day and is digging into all-he-can-eat lucky charms at 1:30 PM in the afternoon in flip flops and flannel pajamas. How do we get him psyched on the common good?

Equipping students on our campuses to struggle for the common good happens in ordinary moments in our offices, classrooms, dorms, cafeterias, and chapels. We cannot take for granted that there is anything common, which is to say ordinary, about the common good. We cannot take for granted that our extraordinary dreams are going to fit into the ordinary aspirations of our Lucky Charms-eating, morning class-skipping students.

I remember the first semester I taught at Cal Lutheran, when a rather forgettable student in my global religions class who was a pastor's daughter came to me bearing triumphant news. "Dr. Gill, I just wanted to thank you for this class. I was scared about it at first, but it's made me stronger in my faith." In the moment, green out of my public and secular graduate school program as I was, I couldn't comprehend what she could have possibly meant. Frankly, I was miffed! The class wasn't about "her faith." It was about religion, globalization, and how to study both. But as I have become more experienced, I understand better what she meant. Whereas once the diversity of worldviews made her fear for her own security in her faith, she had been able to face that diversity in the course, and still loved her own tradition. It was a victory to celebrate.

With both shrewdness and naiveté, let us design experiences that allow students to wake up to the larger question of a shared humanity. Let us design experiences by which our students can come to understand what the common good means to them. To do this, we might even have to be vulnerable enough to abandon some pre-conceived outcomes.

If that seems too daunting to tackle, liberate yourself with one final idea: achieving the common good is not *our* vocation as faculty, administration, and staff of ELCA colleges and universities. *Our* vocation simply calls us to invite this generation of students to imagine and realize what their approach to a common good might be.

As I have meditated on these issues, I have found a new vocation: speaking and writing about purpose, meaning, diversity, and pluralism. I now speak on campuses and in workplaces about why we need to engage across boundaries, and how it is actually good for the bottom line. We can better engage the common good (of our organizations, our teams, our businesses) when we reach deep into our own stories and our motivations. Together, we can help create a society that is more engaged with itself, whose members take care of each other as a way to understand one another.

Endnotes

1. I am fortunate to be reminded of these words from time to time by my colleague and interfaith expert Dr. Colleen Windham-Hughes.

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AMY WELDON

Attentional Commons and the Common Good: Technology and Higher Education

Walk around any campus and you see what looks like a giant experiment in progress, with people as the unconscious subjects. And I do mean *unconscious*. Students trudge, face-down, leaping-thumbed, blind to blue shadows on the snow or cloud traceries in the sky. They snatch up their phones the instant class ends, as if these black boxes are little pets hungry for the touch they've been denied. *Harrumph*, we might harrumph, *kids these days*. But then we "adults" go to a faculty meeting—or conference, or family reunion—and behave just as badly, twiddling devices under the table, answering email, browsing Amazon, even playing games behind that laptop shield. We interrupt our grading or writing to bring ourselves the dopamine hit of a Facebook or email "break," even if it's only been five minutes since the last one. With our students, we're falling down a behavior-spiral like that of machine gamblers in Las Vegas,[1] seeking an eerie, unconscious state of total union with our device and the "rewards" it gives—even when that device is impoverishing us more than we can see.

"Impoverish" is a strong word, especially alongside the greater goods we claim to seek: social justice, self-realization as doers and thinkers, equitable resource-sharing. Yet I use it deliberately here to highlight what's at stake: the stealthy sale of the common good, and the attentional spaces in which we may discern it, for private profit. The electronic devices we reach for when solitude threatens are designed to turn us into consumers of ever-more-specifically-targeted information, rather than citizens or individuals. They reduce us to fast-twitch bundles of anxiety, unfulfilled desires, and data that comes unhooked from our actual lives in order to swell the coffers of large corporations.

However, the students sitting in our classrooms right now—the most-marketed-to generation that's ever existed, and the first to know the Internet from childhood—are often more likely, as sociologist Eszter Hargittai says, to be "digital naïves rather than digital natives" (Boyd 22). Many lack the language with which to speak about their growing sense that this wired world is not all it's cracked up to be. As tech-critic and virtual-reality pioneer Jaron Lanier writes, "[t]his is one of the great illusions of our times: that you can game without being gamed" (114). Still, we can help students be mindful of how to use technology without *being used*. We can also help students regain the tolerance for complexity and the capacity for attention they'll need to build lives of meaning and service to the common good, which technology is designed to fragment.

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Who is Watching (and Using) Whom?

"Here's a little artifact of our times," I tell my first-year students, "the iPotty. Go ahead, look it up." Screens come forth and heads go down. A stunned silence is broken by one student's quip: "because, of course, no child must *ever* be bored."

Yet our laughing jaunt into Wired Toddler Land has an ulterior motive: we're watching the invisible ad-trackers watching us. After looking up "iPotty" on Amazon, we surf away to Gmail or Facebook and find baby-related ads following in the sidebars. This is particularly true for my prime-childbearing-aged students, although Amazon did invite me to join Amazon Mom ("Amy Weldon, we noticed you've recently shown an interest in Baby products"). Some students then hasten to install Ghostery, a free program (which I use) that lets you turn off all the invisible data-harvesters following you around a site. Many of them have never connected the ads they see with the sites they visit and the data they feed social media just by using it, not to mention such behaviors as "checking in" at businesses, which report not only where you are but, based on the nature of the business, what you are likely to be doing there and what coupons you might use if they happened to show up in your Facebook newsfeed. These behaviors make you a more "valuable" user—meaning, more profitable for the corporations tracking you, although you usually see no direct economic benefit.

The Internet only looks "free." The "freedom" you feel while using it is, in meaningful ways, an illusion. And databases that monetize all your activity are forces for the concentration of the wealth we generate for those servers' owners by our "content"-contribution, clicks, keystrokes, and other behaviors, even if we never see a dime. The dangers of being watched and monetized are moral (the reduction of people to things, or dollar signs) and literal. Those who say, as many did after Edward Snowden's revelations about the NSA, "I have nothing to hide" are missing the point. If you object to the private self being spied on and commodified—and to the removal of our ability to make informed choices about *who* spies on and commodifies us—you should be concerned. I do use email and Facebook. I have a blog and contribute to various online journals. But I'm careful about what I feed Facebook. I'm not LinkedIn, I don't tweet, and I'm going to be smartphone-free as long as I can (my pay-as-you-go flip phone does just fine.) Like a techno-wary Bartleby the Scrivener, I usually prefer not to.

Perhaps a couple case studies will help convince you I'm not just talking through my (tinfoil) hat. In 2014, an Illinois man received an OfficeMax promotional mailing in an envelope with "Daughter Killed in a Car Crash" accidentally printed between his name and address. The company's apology couldn't console him. "Why would they have that type of information?" he asked a reporter. "Why would they need that?" (Silverman 279). They were probably following the lead of Target, which analyzes customers' data so carefully that the company "knew" a teenage girl was pregnant before her father did (Duhigg). Yet one of its own clerks—sixteen-year-old Alex Lee—found himself at the center of an unwanted publicity storm last year when a teenage girl surreptitiously took a picture of him bagging groceries and retweeted it with the admiring caption "YOOOOOOOO." And just like that, "Alex from Target" became an Internet phenomenon—and, this being the Internet, became the target of death threats and the release of his and his family's personal information.[2]

> "The veneer of 'fun' and 'control' we feel over our Internet presences and devices is really *only* a veneer."

My point—in conversations with students, too—is that the veneer of "fun" and "control" we feel over our Internet presences and devices is really *only* a veneer. At any moment, depending on a stranger's whim (or crime, or business plan), "our" tweets, pictures, video or audio recordings, and data stop being ours, with profit that aggregates itself away from us in ever-larger heaps and other social consequences we cannot foresee or control and very likely do not want.[3] Even if you're not Alex Lee, you may find your privacy shredded in another way, as your attention, focus, and capacity for non-electronic self-entertainment are scattered by a new techno-"normal" that nobody really chose.

Leaning Tech-Mindfulness

Let me answer some objections here: Can't technology be *good*? What about awareness of human and nonhuman beings and realities all over the world? What about convenience? What about enhanced research and communication? My response is, yes, a *mindful* use of technology can enable human flourishing. But the creeping *mindlessness* of technology can also turn us into consumer subjects and ease us into acceding to values that are, on closer inspection, alarmingly different than those we'd want to claim.

We in education have a regrettable tendency to drop our critical capacities and open our wallets whenever we hear the magic word *technology*. Think about your average K-12 school board, which cavils at raising teachers' salaries but pays up without a murmur to give every eight-year-old an iPad. Never mind that for children, the contact with caring humans, the texture of print on a page, and the relationships of real objects in the physical world is cognitively more nourishing than screens. Because college faculty are educated, trying to reach beyond our own limitations, we are also good liberals, in the classical sense. That is, we hate to foreclose possibilities, because we know the world's always complicated. That's good citizenship, and it's spiritual maturity. *Why mind students' screen habits?* we might murmur. *Isn't it…some new intelligence?* Yet I'd respond with a few choice words from philosopher Hannah Arendt, who was wary of the self-pacifying inner reflex that "wheedl[es] us with the voice of common sense," tempting us to refuse judgment and blinding us to wrongs-in-progress. In her landmark *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), Arendt reminded us of Hitler's belief that "to succeed, a lie must be enormous." And every year, the tremendous lie that technological "progress" is unproblematically good for us gets stronger. Henry David Thoreau spotted it as early as 1854: what good is a telegraph between Maine and Texas, he asks in *Walden*, if "Maine and Texas…have nothing important to communicate?" (Thoreau 34).

> "All this technology is not helping us get better at the kind of real conversation and action our beloved, beautiful, suffering world needs."

And that's the real issue. All this technology is not helping us get better at the kind of real conversation and action our beloved, beautiful, suffering world needs.[4] That takes a type of emotional, imaginative, and cognitive capacity that is more often dissipated than reinforced by omnipresent technotainment. Rooted in the examples of those who speak truth to power and who risk death by doing so (think of Martin Luther, as well as Jesus), we as faculty shouldn't be afraid to ask inconvenient questions. Caught up in a new-tech-initiatives-centric, admissions-driven higher-ed culture, we (and our institutions) dread being called uncool. But that fear needs the sort of brisk dismissal our parents gave it when we were thirteen: what does it *matter* what other people think, if conforming to them means being false to yourself? Shouldn't we, like Socrates, be proud to be at least a *little* countercultural? Let's find our truth, and stand there, by thinking beyond the shiny cliché of the moment, and asking, *How does this really serve our mission? How does it really serve the deep needs of our students? Of human and nonhuman beings? Of the world?*

Writer Bruce Sterling challenged an audience of engineers, "A billion apps have been sold. Where's the betterness?" (Byrne). Jaron Lanier asks, "If network technology is supposed to be so good for everyone…why was there so much economic pain at once all over the developed world just as computer networking dug into every aspect of human activity, in the early 21st century?" (54). Why are so many of us more isolated, depressed, and overweight than ever before? And why is it so easy to forget that our devices—made from mined minerals, produced under poor labor conditions, run on giant servers powered and cooled by coal from Appalachian mountaintops, sent to Third World dumps to be picked over when they die—are not climate-neutral? Are we being offered clicktivism as a substitute for public action, 140-character tweets instead of voices, Facebook "friends" instead of real ones? Who profits when we take that bait? Especially as people trained in (and training others in) critical thinking, we can't be afraid to ask the

questions that may be unpopular, even if—*especially* if—they uncover power motives that are more profitably kept hidden. Nor should we seek technological "solutions" to the "problem" of real human contact, especially in the small-college classroom, which thrives on just such accidental, un-monetizable, blessedly inefficient moments of in-person conversation and discovery. Such "solutions" smooth over the cognitive friction of difference and difficulty, the space in which real learning can begin.

"Nor should we seek technological 'solutions' to the 'problem' of real human contact, especially in the small-college classroom, which thrives on just such accidental, un-monetizable, blessedly inefficient moments of in-person conversation and discovery."

Attending to Attentional Commons

When students ask me what education is for, I tell them this: *becoming a self with something constructive to say.* This means cultivating a particular type of inner dignity and plenitude, a space for reflection and listening, inside and outside yourself, to larger voices, including that of God. It also means seeing that filling that space up with noise has individual and social costs. Hannah Arendt writes of the self as a version of the *polis*, or space of public conversation; I envision the self as gently stretched upward and outward by contact with others, expanded like clay in a potter's hands. In *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, Parker Palmer writes that public conversational space must be sought and maintained in a world that's always urging us to retreat to our private media bubbles or gated communities, and to subordinate our identities as citizens to identities as consumers. Philosopher Matthew Crawford, in *The World Beyond Your Head*, writes of what he calls the "attentional commons," publicly accessible spaces of relative cognitive stillness that makes it possible for us to weave solitary thoughts or mutual conversations, choosing where our attention goes. However, when ads fill every space over which our eyes might pass, including our computer or smartphone screens, the "attentional commons" is being sold, and the common good is suffering, since, as Crawford writes, "the question of what to attend to is a question of what to value, and this question is no longer answered for us by settled forms of social life" (5-6). Rather, corporations have rushed into the gap we might otherwise fill with private thoughts or conversation in order to glaze our eyeballs with "headline news" or makeup ads. And if this happens often enough, in enough areas of our lives (and it can, given that our phones now accompany us everywhere) then "our right not to be addressed" (13), as Crawford calls it, is violated and the moral sense that would preserve a concept of "attentional commons" and sustained attention to others, and the value of the quiet that nourishes it, never has a chance to form.

By contrast, when you pay attention to what (or who) is in front of you rather than the shadowily monetized images on your screen, you let the world beyond yourself make real demands on you, and your own self grows to meet it, in curiosity, wonder, irritation, frustration, or anywhere in between. In your experience of real emotion, you can begin to feel a deeper interest and obligation. Having seen something, and meaningfully engaged with it in a physical realm not bound to the artificial physics of cyberspace, you may begin to care for it as *it* is, not only as *you* are. And you are better equipped to see and work against the ways the apparent fun and freedom of the Internet contribute to income inequality and ecological loss.

"When ads fill every space over which our eyes might pass, including our computer or smartphone screens, the 'attentional commons' is being sold, and the common good is suffering."

Introducing students to these ideas can start with creating experiences of meaningful contact with others, which starts with clearly articulated syllabus policies that define the classroom as a space where we can come together to seek a common good. Ask for cell phones

and laptops to be turned off and stowed (not left on desks), and share the studies explaining why.[5] Address conversation practices explicitly, distinguishing acceptable disagreement from personal disrespect. (This can help many of our students get past "Midwest-nice."[6]) I've found that cordoning off technology with definite times and uses ("take out your laptops now so we can post drafts of thesis sentences to our course-page forum for feedback —I'll project them on screen and we'll talk about them") helps make the room a conversation-and-text-centered space, engaging even those students who might be tempted to lean away into the screen. (This is particularly important for first-year students, excited yet uncertain about how "college class discussion" is actually *done*.) Subtly, such practices reinforce that technology is a good servant but a poor master for human beings, whose humanity is nourished by keeping a space—individually and communally—for real encounters with the world, and other beings, beyond our heads.

Endnotes

1. See anthropologist Natasha Dow Schull's chilling *Addiction by Design: Machine Gambling in Las Vegas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.)

2. For analysis of trolls – especially gender-trolls – see Astra Taylor's excellent *The People's Platform: Taking Back Power and Culture in the Digital Age* (New York: Picador, 2015).

3. This issue is especially relevant for professors in the case of surreptitious audio or video recordings. Consider the case of Marquette University philosophy graduate student Cheryl Abbate, whose words were recorded without her knowledge or consent by an undergraduate on his smartphone, then used as out-of-context fodder in a senior professor's political campaign. See http://dailynous.com/2014/12/12/marquette-an-update/.

4. For excellent discussion of conversation, emotion, and technology, see Sherry Turkle's work, including the forthcoming *Reclaiming Conversation*: *The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* (Penguin, 2015).

5. I share these posts with students: Dan Rockmore, "The Case for Banning Laptops in the Classroom." *The New Yorker* Online, June 6, 2014 (http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom); Anne Curzan, "Why I'm Asking You Not To Use Laptops," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* Lingua Franca blog, August 25, 2014 (http://chronicle.com/blogs/linguafranca/2014/08/25/why-im-asking-you-not-to-use-laptops/); Kelly Dickerson, "Are Smartphones Killing Our Conversation Quality?" *Livescience*, July 18, 2014 (http://www.livescience.com/46817-smartphones-lower-conversation-quality.html).

6. See Anne Curzan's "The Work of Conversation," *Chronicle of Higher Education* Lingua Franca blog, September 27, 2013 (http://chronicle.com/blogs/linguafranca/2013/09/27/the-work-of-conversation/).

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PAUL PRIBBENOW

Say Something Theological: A Meditation on the Vocation of Lutheran Colleges and Universities to Serve the Common Good

He said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

Luke 14: 12-14, NRSV

A distinguished member of the divinity school faculty where I pursued my graduate education was once asked at a cocktail party to "say something theological," to which he is purported to have responded, "God," before walking away.

As much as we might like to get away with such a retort, those of us who lead Lutheran colleges and universities are often asked to say something theological as pertains to the mission and work of our institutions. And truth be told, we don't always feel equipped to do so. That said, I want to argue that our leadership demands of us a willingness to engage the theological issues that are at the heart of the vocation of Lutheran higher education—not because we need to prove ourselves as theological scholars but because the world needs the distinctive theological voice of the Lutheran tradition that points to love for the neighbor and hope for the world God loves so much. And we are uniquely situated in our leadership roles to help that voice be heard.

Furthermore, I believe that the questions around our personal and institutional callings to serve the common good are particularly fitting for theological reflection, creating an opportunity to engage our communities in the exploration of how our distinctive identities and missions as colleges and universities of the Lutheran church offer an important voice in the public discourse about pressing social issues.

The early twentieth century Swiss theologian, Karl Barth, once said that he did theology with the Bible in one hand and the *New York Times* in the other. How about you? How do you "do theology?" Maybe you think that task belongs only to the professional or expert class, such as members of our religion departments, those who have devoted their lives to scholarly research and reflection. Or maybe you believe it is the work of those called to ordained ministry, the clergy who teach and preach.

Paul Pibbenow serves as the 10th president of Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minnesota. This essay is an adaptation of a homily that he preached in Fall, 2014.

I want to explore in this essay the Lutheran idea of "the priesthood of all believers," Martin Luther's contention that the work of "priests" or "clergy" and even theologians belongs to all the faithful. This offers a way of understanding how the work of "doing theology" is actually another way of describing vocational reflection, discerning what God is calling us to be and do in the world.

Theological Education Unbound

In 2013, I was appointed by then ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson to the Theological Education Advisory Council (TEAC) for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). TEAC was charged with exploring the ecology of theological education within the ELCA and recommending ways in which theological literacy might be strengthened for all the baptized.

In particular, we focused on the vast and abundant resources for theological education that exist across our church—in seminaries certainly, and also in colleges and universities, in lay training schools, in congregations and synods, in outdoor ministries, and so on. In fact, I came to see my role on the Council as someone who reminds my colleagues that theology is being done day in and out in settings far and wide. Our job should be to tell the story of this expansive network of theological education.

Most days we get this work right, but to get it right clearly requires a different understanding of what it means to do theology and who is charged with the work of theological education. And here we have our Lutheran Christian tradition to thank for a more expansive understanding of theological education. For those of you who went through the confirmation program in a Lutheran church, remember that key question: "What does this mean?" It is a question that invites us into the work of "doing theology."

One of the joys for me in serving on TEAC has been the opportunity to share the remarkable theological education happening on the Augsburg campus every day. Theological education is happening in the classroom and residence halls, in locker rooms and cafeteria, in the sacred space of Augsburg's Campus Chapel and out in the community, in Urban Plunges for middle and high school students and Spring break service trips and interfaith projects—and it belongs to all of us!

So what does "doing theology" look like? What are we invited to do when we talk about theological reflection and education? As Martin Luther taught us, we need to work out our own relationships with God—there is no mediator in the person of a theologian or a priest or a church. That is the work of doing theology.

The Bible, the Times, and Community

More specifically, to do theology truthfully and commendably requires us to explore the theological issues pregnant in our world's most pressing challenges. Let's start with theologian Karl Barth's instructions to have the Holy Scriptures in one hand and the *New York Times* (or some similar arbiter of world news and social realities) in the other. But we need also to add another critical component of doing theology. Beside scriptural literacy and knowledge of contemporary events, we need to situate our theological reflections in the context of communities of memory, tradition, and ongoing practice. Churches and other faith communities provide one kind of context, but so do academic communities.

The remarkable passage from Luke's gospel quoted above serves as our scriptural foundation. Surely there are copies of the *New York Times* and plenty of other newsfeeds close by. And each of us lives and works in a particular community of faith and learning.

An Inviting God

First, here are three themes from Luke's gospel that offer us insight into the nature of the God we know in Jesus Christ—themes that go to the heart of the character of God and God's aspirations for our common life:

- Ours is an *inviting* God, not a commanding and controlling God. We are invited in. And then the choice is ours whether to come to the banquet or not.
- Ours is an *inclusive* God, urging us to invite not simply those who will feel obligated to come (and return the favor) or those entitled to come, but those vulnerable and forgotten whose place at the table is not secure.
- Our is a God of *fellowship and hospitality*—a God who understands that feeding our bodies also feeds our souls, that the banquet table is a compelling metaphor

for our lives together in the community. Ours is a God who wants the banquet hall filled with those who hunger for nourishment of all sorts.

News about Walls

Second, there is the *New York Times* or some online news source, pointing to the realities of our lives in the world:

- *We build walls to keep people both in and out.* Even as we read about the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Berlin Wall coming down, we are surrounded here in our Minneapolis neighborhood by the "walls" that have been built to separate us from each other—walls in the guise of freeways and concrete jungles and other less tangible means of walling ourselves in and out.
- *We argue over whether and how to welcome the stranger to our country and community and banquet table.* Our struggles over immigration reform boil down to our fears of losing control and jobs and power and safety. The experiences of our immigrant neighbors here in the neighborhoods of Cedar-Riverside and Phillips are daily reminders of a fearful world.
- *People are going hungry and homeless when there is plenty to go around.* When food and homes become weapons, we surely have reached a low point in our humanity, refusing to feed bodies and souls. We don't need to go far to witness this barbarism in our own community.

The Character of Community

And finally, we at Augsburg have particular values and commitments, as does every college of the church. While other churches and college communities will certainly be different, each is called to live out the biblical vision in society that often pulls us in opposing ways. Some of the particular gifts we try to nourish at Augsburg include the following:

- We are a community with an "immigrant sensibility." Surrounded by immigrants in our Minneapolis neighborhood for most of our history, we have the gift of living alongside neighbors who don't take for granted the freedoms and opportunities most of us enjoy. What difference does that make for our educational work in this college and for our commitments in the world?
- One of the central tenets of our campus ministry program (and I would argue for our entire college community) is our core commitment to radical hospitality. What does that look like in daily practice? Why do we have too many students on this campus and fellow travelers in the neighborhood who bear the burden of bias and prejudice in their daily lives? And what are we doing about it?
- Which points to my final thought about the character of this community: We have to believe that, as important as it is, hospitality is not enough. We must believe that gifts of education and community and faith demand of us more than inviting people in; they demand that we fight for the justice that evades too many of our fellow citizens in their journeys in the world—journeys in pursuit of safety, nourishment, meaningful work, a better life.

Here is what *doing* theology looks like: We discern the character of our God and the nature of God's work in the world through the scriptures that have been passed to God's faithful over two millennia. We also seek to understand the realities of the world that challenge God's good intentions for God's people by our vigilance in study and experience. Finally, we discern our vocations as co-creators of God's will and plan for the world in the midst of this particular community and beyond.

Conclusion

I conclude by asking some simple theological questions that flow from these reflections:

- God invites us in—will we accept the invitation and invite others to join us?
- God loves all creation—will we be good stewards of that inclusive impulse?
- God believes in hospitality *and* justice—will we join in the work to be done?

The invitation is into the work of doing theology, into the practices of loving God's good world, and into the wonder of community where we know God's grace and love in the work of compassion and reconciliation. What a remarkable gift. We are all deputized and commissioned as theologians. Let us get to work.

KATHERINE TUNHEIM, GARY MCLEAN, and AIMEE GOLDSCHMIDT

Women Presidents in Higher Education: How They Experience Their Calling[1]



The academic presidency in the United Sates has generally carried with it prestige and distinction (Bornstein, 2003). Rhodes (1998) called the academic presidency one of the most influential, most important, and most powerful of positions in United States society. In 2011, 2,312 four-year institutions, 697 public and 1,615 private comprised the collegiate arena (Hennessy, 2013). Each has a president to lead the institution in implementing and executing the organization's mission.

According to Ruben (2003), "Extraordinary challenges face higher education nationally, and leaders with exceptional capabilities are needed to help institutions meet these challenges" (p. 288). King and Gomez (2008) noted that, with the graying of the academy, over half of college presidents are aged 61 or older. The American Council of Education (ACE) Report on Presidents predicts a "significant turnover in presidential leadership due to retirements in the near term," which will present "an opportunity to further diversify the presidency" (*The American College President Study*, 2012, p. 49). Given this imminent turnover, identifying and preparing future leaders for higher education is critical. As we predict that more women will consider the role of the presidency in the next ten years, understanding the concept of calling may be critical in order to entice the best talent possible to lead our students, faculty, and staff. This article investigates the journeys of female college presidents and the role of calling in leading these women to the office of president.

Past Studies: Calling and Females

By some estimates the present concept of calling emerged in 1522 when Martin Luther, declared that everyone (not just religious leaders) has a calling from God (Kolden, 2008). Calling, often used interchangeably with the concept of vocation, from the Latin word *vocare*, or "to call" involves living a life of meaning and purpose (ELCA, 2013). In addition, the Lutheran definition suggests that one's calling seeks to equip people to serve their neighbor and the community in wholesome and effective ways (Christenson, 2004).

Hunter, Dik, and Banning (2010) suggested that definitions of calling vary considerably—from limiting calling to the work environment to defining the concept

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broadly to considering it more a lifestyle. Buechner described calling as any place where one's "deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet" (1992 p. 186). According to Johnson (2012), vocation or purpose in life has the ability to change based on circumstance. Unexpected experiences may lead to the discovery of a new vocation, and the way in which vocation is fulfilled depends on the individual and the call they perceive.

Gender differences also appear to influence one's sense of calling (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011; Dik & Duffy, 2009; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Longman et al., 2010; Philips, 2009). Researchers have suggested that males tend to view their job as a calling, while females rely more on relationships and caring for others. Longman et al. (2010) offered a theoretical model for women and calling according to which the strength of a calling relies on four factors and lies along two continua. The continua (internal-external and specific-general) refer to sources of validation and the manifestation of calling in a specific or general way. An internal validation could be "a strong sense of self-awareness and self-efficacy" (Longman et al., 2010, p. 269), while an external validation could be in the form of "encouragement from mentors or other important figures" (p. 269). The manifestation of a calling can occur in a specific way, as in a vision, hearing the voice of God, or in answer to prayer, or in a general way, as in a pull towards a career.

The participants of that study also identified four factors connected to calling: theological influences, family realities, cultural expectations, and life circumstances. These four factors "represent potential for movement or development inherent in a woman's sense of calling…that could propel women further into pursuing their giftedness and talents, which may result in greater clarity about their calling, or could act as limitations to an exploration of calling." (Longman et al., 2010, p. 270) This article expands the concept to female presidents in colleges and universities to determine the role of calling in the pinnacle role of higher education leadership.

Present Study: Women Presidents and Calling

The number of women at every level of academia has been rising for decades. Within the United States, a recent Department of Education (2010) report identified that, in 2007-2008, women earned 57.3 percent of bachelor's degrees, 60.6 percent of master's degrees, and 51 percent of doctoral degrees. Yet, the percentage of college and university leadership positions held by women remains low (Moore Brown, 2005). According to the American College President (2012), 26 percent of the presidents of doctorate-granting institutions are now women, as compared with 14 percent in 2006.

Little has been written about women presidents and their calling. Madsen's (2008) research on women presidents does not mention calling. A few women presidents, former presidents, and authors refer to it (Bornstein, 2003; Wolverton, Bower, & Hyle, 2009), but none directly explains the role of calling for women presidents in higher education.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the present study draws from transformative learning theory, which explains that individuals cannot develop leadership unless they are receptive to learning, the basis of effective development. Kolb (1984) defined learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38) and emphasized that learning takes place through reflection on one's experiences. Merriam and Caffarella (1995) suggested that "transformational learning theory is about change—dramatic, fundamental change in the way we see ourselves and the world in which we live" (p. 318).

Both Meizrow (2000) and Merriam and Caffarella (1998) explained that this theory focuses on three core components: *mental construction of experience* (engaging with each life experience to make meaning contains an opportunity for a change in perspective and behavior); *critical reflection* (effective learning follows effective reflection, not the experience itself; individuals must not only think about their experiences, but also examine the underlying beliefs and assumptions that influence how they make sense of their experiences); and *development and action* (to transform, individuals need to try out their new knowledge, skills, or roles and then build new competence and self-confidence).

Effective leaders experience all three components of transformative learning while discerning a potential calling. Among them, critical reflection stands out as a crucial part of the journey to becoming a college president.

Methodology

Our study employed a qualitative methodology with a descriptive approach. We used in-depth interviews of 15 women presidents in higher education. Collected data included an extensive description of the journey to the presidency (Creswell, 2007).

Women comprise 26 percent of all current college presidents. Having identified 70 female presidents, we sent each a letter inviting each to participate in the study. Consistent with Gustavus Adolphus's Institutional Review Board approval, the e-mail contained a description of the study, its purpose, the benefits and risks, a guarantee of anonymity (unless participants decided to share their identity publicly), and their willingness to have the interviews audiotaped. Sixteen responded initially. Fifteen followed through with a phone interview.

The ages of the responding presidents ranged from 50 to 76. Of the 15 women interviewed, 13 self-identified as Caucasian, one as black, and one as Hispanic. These women have spent an average of 8.7 years as president. Nine held the office of academic vice-president or provost prior to becoming a president. Six were presidents of public institutions, five were presidents of religiously-affiliated institutions, and two were presidents of private all-female colleges that were not religiously affiliated.

Each interview began with the question, "How did you first get interested in being a president?" and then, "Did someone mentor or sponsor you to the role?" After defining calling, using the definitions of Luther and Beuchner, the question was asked, "Were you called to the role of college president?" Other questions included, "What advice would you give to women who may hear a calling toward a presidency but are still unsure about moving forward?" and "What should interested female presidential candidates be doing now to get prepared?"

Results

Based on the nature of the questions asked and the presidents' responses, three descriptive categories emerged: Identifying the Call, Interpreting the Call, and Pursuing the Call, as shown in Figure 1.

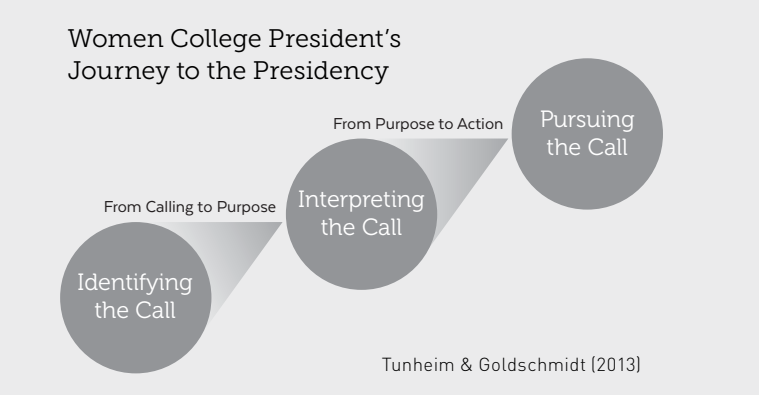

Figure 1

Identifying the Call

Twelve of the 15 presidents claimed to have a calling to their role. Three described a spiritual calling, with one replying, "The Lord opened this door for me. I could not have done this without [God]." Nine said that they felt a calling in terms of a felt match between their gifts and skills and the needs of the institution, which fits with Beuchner's definition. One explained:

> I am not an evangelical Christian by any means, and so I didn't have a calling like a burning bush or anything like that. But I certainly felt as though my strengths and what I loved to do, I felt called in that way.

Three respondents denied the existence of a calling to the role, stating that their position came as the next logical step and that there was no religious aspect at all. Said one,

> I would say that I felt like I was ready, that it was something that I really wanted to do, that I had the talent and the skill to do it. But I didn't think that anyone was calling me…

All respondents were asked how they became a president. Several were approached by search firms or by mentors or co-workers who encouraged them to look into the possibility. One described the frustration she felt from experiencing bad presidencies. She had also been discouraged by how the potential of faculty had been untapped in a previous institution, which inspired her to pursue the role. Another spoke of how the idea of this role had gradually grown in her, finally leading her to think that it was something she could do. The first step of transformational learning theory is at work here; engaging with

life experience opened up an opportunity for change in the lives of these women. The next thing they needed was to understand this change and what it meant.

Interpreting the Call

Women who felt that they had been called explored that calling in a variety of ways. After being approached by search firms or encouraged by mentors, the seed had been planted. The next step consisted of interpreting that encouragement and determining its purpose. The participants offered different advice to women who felt a calling to the role. One who had felt a spiritual calling recommended examining the desires of the heart:

> If you're not sure about moving forward [and yet]...you ask God to guide you and you really mean that with all of your heart, [and] if the desire gets stronger and stronger...I'd say, "Lord, I see that you're calling me this way, but if I'm making a mistake, I trust you to then shut doors, close windows if I'm not supposed to be there."

Another suggested looking into attending workshops to explore the possibility. She too had decided to "test to see whether or not this sounded like something I wanted to do...not only to prepare me but to solidify for me that that was something I wanted to do."

One president replied that it "would be wise to talk to quite a few people who are in higher education about the distinctive culture and values of higher education" if the calling came to someone outside of academe. If the calling came to someone inside higher education, she continued, "I would encourage them to use some of the programs that the national organizations have...for people considering a presidency." Additionally, she advises potential candidates to research current female presidents and not to hesitate to contact them for help.

Finally, two presidents stressed the importance of self-evaluation, to "analyze whether it's in your own being to take risks, make tough decisions, take criticism if things go wrong," and to be aware that "it's not just about wearing nice suits and going to great parties." Moreover, it is imperative to "think about what you can get and what you can give...[and to] trust your own instincts."

In essence, understanding the role and the self are imperative in interpreting whether one has a calling to college or university presidency. The second part of the transformative learning theory ("critical reflection") appears here; these women not only reflect on their feelings, but also closely examine their underlying gifts and purpose in life. Prospective presidential candidates should examine how the role would fit into their lives, discuss the possibilities and implications with the important people in their lives, research the requirements and skills needed for the job, and otherwise think deeply about this opportunity.

"While men are typically under-prepared and over-confident for these roles, women are often over-prepared and under-confident for leadership roles."

Pursuing the Call

Once one has determined that she feels called to the role and is willing to accept that calling, the next step is to pursue the calling. Women in academic leadership seek out opportunities and ways to fit into the organization in order to advance their careers. Several things contribute to this step. The first is preparation for the role. Academic literature has identified a gap between men and women concerning preparedness and confidence. While men are typically under-prepared and over-confident for these roles, women are often over-prepared and under-confident for leadership roles (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2009). In order to have success in these roles, candidates for the position must have confidence in both their skills and ability. One respondent emphasized the importance of this balance:

> If you go into a position [and] you think you know everything, you can almost guarantee it's not going to work, and if you go in without the confidence that can even get you there, it's obviously not going to work.

As described in the transformative learning theory, trying out new knowledge, skills, or roles, and building new competence and self-confidence, truly transform individuals and will prepare them for their calling. One current president said that women trying to get into the presidency "should be working in the academic arena

as much as they can, in whatever position they're in, [and] should be getting special training from the AGB (Association of Governing Boards) or other sources that they know about." Delegation is also key. Several presidents spoke about the importance of having the ability to recognize their skills and then supplement their weaknesses by having others to advise them.

One spoke encouragingly about women's natural gifts for the role:

> We have a lot, if not all, of the major qualities needed that have been attributed to men—hard work, commitment. We're analytical; we're both right brained and left brained. And here's the thing: women intuitively have the emotional intelligence down…In this diverse world, emotional intelligence, almost innately, should bolster up our confidence.

Focusing on performance makes up the next part of preparing for the role. Nine interviewees had been provosts before their appointment to the presidency, and all of them had served in administration as vice-presidents, deans, or assistant provosts. Several presidents said that interested candidates should volunteer for committees not only to gain experience, but also to show their skills, work ethic, and enthusiasm for the role. Said one president:

> Everything in my life has prepared me for this role—my role as a soccer mom and busy mother, as a department chair and as VP of Academic Affairs. Every role was important in giving me skills. My work outside the office was as important as in.

All of these requirements add up to the next part of pursuing the calling: opportunity. These women came to presidency through a variety of pipelines. Some were contacted by search firms; others were nominated, and some were encouraged by mentors who were previous presidents. Women who feel a calling and want to pursue that calling should be on the lookout for opportunities to learn more, to strengthen their skills, and to apply themselves. When the opportunity does come, fit with the institution is paramount, according to the interviewees. One president even interviewed for over ten positions and waited until she found the right fit.

Implications

Women who sense a calling to presidency need to be encouraged to attend ACE, Higher Education Resource Services (HERS), Bryn Mawr, Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), and similar types of women-only leadership development programs. The research suggests that this is helpful for women leaders in higher education (Madsen, 2008). The more women who are exposed to the idea of a presidency, the more they can identify, interpret, and pursue the call.

Current male and female college presidents need to continue to increase their mentoring of high potential women leaders, both inside and outside their institutions. Research suggests that mentoring and sponsoring women leaders works (Moore Brown, 2005). With the imbalance of women in higher executive roles, women need to be encouraged to pursue such callings earlier in their careers.

More needs to be written and published about college and university women presidents. Besides Bornstein (2003), Longman et al. (2010), Madsen (2008), and Wolverton et al. (2009), few authors have written on the topic of women in higher education in relation to callings. Many of the journal articles focus on women presidents of community colleges, as that is where the majority of the 26 percent of women college presidents reside. As more women pursue higher degrees and take on higher roles, we can expect a growing percentage of female presidents.[2]

Conclusion

After discovering the role of calling in the journeys of male college presidents, the question of whether women feel that same calling arose. Seventy percent of men responded that they felt a calling in a previous study. This study concludes that many of the women in this study also felt a calling in their journey to the presidency. This calling manifested itself in a variety of ways with little regard to religious affiliation; it occurred through personal, spiritual, and vocational connections.

Endnotes

1. An early version of this article was published as: Tunheim, K. A., & Goldschmidt, A. N. (2013). Exploring the role of calling in the professional journeys of college presidents. *Journal of Leadership, Accountability and Ethics*, 10(4), 30-56. It has been revised and is published here with the permission of the publishers. The citation style of the earlier publication is retained.

2. Two central limitations influenced this study. First, the 15 presidents who participated were volunteers. They are a small percent of the total number of women in higher education presidencies. Therefore, these presidents are not representative of the at least 70 women college presidents in the role today. These presidents may be the only ones interested in or familiar with calling as a construct. Thus, the findings of this study cannot be generalized. Second, we set out specifically to explore calling by offering the two definitions and asking questions about calling. If we had conducted a phenomenological study in which we simply explored the experiences of these presidents in pursuing the presidency, calling may not have surfaced as such an important factor.

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