Renewing a Sense of Vocation at Lutheran Colleges and Universities: Insights from a Project at Valparaiso University

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Introduction

I have been asked to speak to you today about Valparaiso University’s “Project on Theological Exploration of Vocation,” a nearly two million dollar project funded by the Lilly Endowment. As director of the process for writing and submitting the grant proposal, I was privileged to work with many people on our campus in shaping this project. Since institutions are invited by the Endowment to apply for the grants, my purpose today is not to offer advice about submitting a proposal or to focus on the details of our project. Rather, I want to use my remarks to generate a lively discussion among us about why it is important to strengthen reflection on vocation on all of our campuses and about how this can be done, with or without outside funding. Therefore, before I introduce you to our project, I want to spend some time highlighting the importance of the concept of vocation for all of our institutions: how it informs our mission statements; why it is such a powerful resource for all of our students today, regardless of their religious backgrounds; and why all Lutheran colleges and universities need to renew and invigorate attention to vocation. I then want to outline eight important ways of creating a space for students to reflect on vocation and to discern a sense of calling that we discovered while formulating our grant and that you can easily support on your campuses. It turns out that many of these activities require more time than money to support, and they have been important vehicles of moral and spiritual formation throughout the Christian tradition. After devoting the bulk of my remarks to emphasizing why we should all renew attention to vocation and some general ways this can be done, I will briefly outline the particular activities of Valparaiso’s project, and I will close with some of the challenges that renewed reflection on vocation has created for us. Serious reflection on vocation is both an exciting and a disturbing enterprise because it causes you to reexamine your own life and the institutions in which you work and to reconsider your obligations and responsibilities. If you reflect seriously on vocation, then you no longer feel comfortable conducting “business as usual.” I’d therefore like to share some of the most challenging and troubling questions we face as we try to carry out our project with integrity.

I. Vocation and the Mission of Lutheran Colleges and Universities

Although Lutheran colleges and universities all seek to provide their students with a strong liberal arts education, they all emphasize, in various ways, that part of their mission is to prepare students for service to the church and the wider community. Thus, while Lutheran colleges and universities, like all colleges and universities, strive for academic excellence, they also emphasize exploration of faith and service to others. Their mission statements therefore typically include a commitment to helping students reflect on how their education and career choices might be informed by their deepest moral and religious beliefs and conducted in service to church and society.

This emphasis on service to church and society is deeply informed by the Lutheran concept of vocation. Indeed, the notion of vocation has always been central to the mission of Lutheran institutions and to Lutheran accounts of the Christian life in general. All believers, Martin Luther taught, are called to use their own unique gifts and talents to glorify God and to love and serve the neighbor. Although Luther believed that one is saved or justified by faith alone (not by works), he also emphasized that faith frees and empowers one to love and serve others and to seek justice. In this sense, all Christians share a common “Vocation”: they are all called to express their faith in works of love and service within the church and the broader culture. As Luther wrote, “Faith is truly active through love, that is, it finds expression in works of the freest service, cheerfully and lovingly done.” No matter what daily tasks Christians perform or specific careers they pursue, they are all called to love God and to love and serve the neighbor, especially those in need. This sense of calling is built on Jesus’ command to his followers to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your strength” and to “love your neighbor as yourself.”

Although Luther claimed all believers share this common Christian calling, he also emphasized that they honorably carry it out in a wide variety of specific “vocations,” within specific duties and offices that occupy each human life. Luther thereby firmly rejected the idea, common in his time, that people who enter the priesthood or who become monks and nuns are more pleasing to God than bakers, shoemakers, politicians, parents, or others immersed in
affairs of the world. He recognized that the Christian life and its practice of love of the neighbor can be lived out in diverse ways. The many duties and responsibilities we carry out in our personal and professional lives—whether as teachers, politicians, doctors, lawyers, firefighters, parents, or spouses—are all vehicles of God’s care and redemption of the world. Thus, Luther enlarged the concept of vocation by honoring activities outside the priesthood or monastic life; by honoring not only paid work but also our duties as parents, spouses, sons, daughters, and citizens; and by honoring our role as citizens and the need to contribute to the common good. His ideas about vocation have been highly influential not only in the church but also in Western culture. At the same time, Luther did not ignore the importance of excellence in church leadership. He understood the need for well-educated pastors and musicians who live out their vocations in the employment of the church.

Vocation within the Lutheran tradition, then, is a rich theological concept and a powerful resource for all of our students today, regardless of their religious backgrounds. It invites us to reflect on a number of issues such as: our service to the needs of the neighbor; our unique gifts and talents; our multiple duties in life as parents, spouses, sons and daughters, citizens, and professionals; and our relationship to God. Because the mission and identity of Lutheran colleges and universities are deeply informed by the concept of vocation, we hope that as our students think about their life goals, they are asking themselves more than the typical set of career questions: How should I make a living? What kind of career would make me happy? Do I have the skills to succeed in my field? Will I earn enough money? At a Lutheran college or university we are hoping they are also asking related to a deeper sense of relationship to God. Because the mission and identity of the church, including our own, to ensure that students are indeed introduced to theological ideas about vocation or have had opportunities to explore more deeply their own sense of vocation. These contemporary challenges make it necessary for Lutheran institutions of higher education to renew and invigorate their attention to vocation.

For example, one can no longer take for granted, even at a university rooted in the Lutheran tradition, that the concept of vocation is widely understood or even part of a student’s or a faculty member’s vocabulary. Some students have had little or no contact with the church and have not discussed issues of faith even with their parents. Even students brought up within the church now arrive at the university with little knowledge of their tradition or the historic language of faith, let alone with an informed theological understanding of vocation. Moreover, many professors and staff members come from religious or secular traditions that have not emphasized the notion of vocation. Thus, they are often uneasy speaking about their own lives and work in terms of vocation and certainly do not feel equipped to discuss vocation with students.

In addition, we live in a particular cultural context that undermines a rich theological understanding of vocation. In a consumer culture, focused on the accumulation of material goods and wealth, the term vocation, even within the church, is often reduced to refer only to a paid occupation, whether a particular “worldly” profession or ordained ministry. Here, one’s vocation is simply the way one earns a living. Because our culture also glorifies individualism and self-fulfillment, speaking about vocation can also sometimes be a way of simply adding a spiritual gloss to a subjective sense of self-fulfillment. Here, one’s vocation is what one does, whether paid or not, to find personal meaning and happiness. In this cultural context, in which vocation is understood as either paid work or self-fulfillment, there is little room for reflection on the relation of work to one’s faith, to family life, to civic and environmental responsibilities, or to God’s care and redemption of the world.
Another challenge within contemporary culture for the church and for church-related colleges is that, even in the church, there is a tendency to "rank" certain kinds of paid work as more "worthy" than others. Some of my business students tell me, for example, that in their circle of Christian friends, medicine and law are seen as "worthy" professions but business is not. Even just a few years ago, pastors and priests were viewed, even by many outside the church, not only as important religious leaders but also as valued civic leaders. Now, however, becoming a pastor or priest is generally disrespected or viewed with indifference. Thus, we find even highly talented young people who sense a call to ordained ministry being discouraged by parents, friends, and teachers from entering the ministry and encouraged to pursue more lucrative or publicly respected careers. In contrast to this "ranking" mentality, the concept of vocation claims that all occupations that serve the common good, when properly carried out with justice and compassion, have dignity and are expressions of God's will.

Given these and other challenges, Lutheran institutions of higher education need to be more intentional about helping students gain access to ideas about vocation and helping them reflect on their own lives in terms of vocation. The concept of vocation is a valuable resource that is rooted deep within our institutional missions for prompting serious reflection on faith, love, and public service. If we want students to think about work more than as just a way to earn money or as a form of self-fulfillment, if we want students to ask questions about the deeper moral and spiritual dimensions to their life goals, if we want students to live out lives of service with their particular gifts, then the best way for Lutheran colleges and universities to begin is by renewing and invigorating attention to the rich concept of vocation that they have inherited.

II. The Lilly Endowment's "Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation"

The Lilly Endowment has recognized these challenges for church-related colleges and has understood that religious ideas about vocation can be a tremendous resource for young people, particularly during the college years, when they struggle with so many questions about who they are, what they believe, and what they are meant to do. Leaders of the Endowment have also supported programs that strengthen the church and build community, and they have realized that exploring the concept of vocation is one way to foster church leadership and civic engagement. Therefore, two years ago the Endowment started a new initiative called "Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation." This initiative has two central aims: 1) to help students at church-related colleges and universities to gain access to religious wisdom about vocation as they make choices about their future careers and commitments; and 2) to strengthen leadership in the church by providing talented young people with opportunities to explore full-time ministry, either lay or ordained, as their life's work.

In 1999 the Endowment invited Valparaiso University and approximately thirty-five other church-related colleges to apply for grants that would address these two aims. Many members of the University worked together to formulate our grant proposal. Two committees of ten people, representing various departments and campus offices, generated initial ideas for the project. These proposals were then evaluated and refined in conversation with many other members of the faculty and staff, with students, and with outside consultants.

As we formulated these proposals in conversation with one another, one of the questions we kept asking was: What is already working on our campus? What kinds of activities and programs are already helping students to gain insight from theological ideas about vocation, to develop morally and spiritually, and to grow as leaders in church and society?

III. Ways of Creating a Space for Reflecting on Vocation and Discerning a Sense of Calling

As we spoke to students about activities and programs most meaningful to them, eight general kinds of activities emerged. All of them are valuable ways of creating a space for reflecting on vocation and discerning a sense of calling. If one looks back at the history of Christianity, then one recognizes that these kinds of activities have commonly been used throughout the Lutheran tradition and throughout other faith traditions for moral and spiritual formation. If one looks, too, at recent sociological and psychological studies on moral or spiritual development, they also confirm the value of these kinds of activities for young people today. Most of these activities do not cost much money to support but do require the time and attention of adults, whether they are parents, pastors, professors, friends, or mentors. I would like to mention briefly these eight general activities or "doorways" through which students can begin to reflect on faith and vocation. There are, of course, many more, but these were the most significant on our campus. By outlining them, you will understand the basis for many of our project's activities.

1) Contact with Caring Adults and Exposure to Role Models. We all recognize the importance of caring adults.
and role models in the lives of young people. Students told us how much they appreciated contact with professors who cared about them, whether that contact came through class work, sports activities, or events sponsored by the chapel. Although students appreciated long-term mentoring relationships with professors, I was surprised how meaningful even passing remarks by professors can be to them, especially comments about their particular gifts and talents. Students also see alumni as role models. Students told us how much they appreciated particular programs, such as Christ College’s annual alumni panel, that bring back outstanding graduates to campus to speak about the ways they are trying to integrate their careers with their faith, family life, and public service. Having this exposure to people from different walks of life who are models of service in their communities gave students concrete possibilities for thinking and acting in life-giving ways. Students also see one another as role models. We believe that one reason more of our graduates are attending seminary is that over the past few years we have attracted several outstanding students who intend to become ordained ministers or full time church musicians. Because these students are respected by their peers, they are prompting other highly talented students to at least imagine, if not seriously consider, the possibility of a full-time church vocation.

2) Prayer and Spiritual Fellowship. As we see throughout the Christian tradition, prayer and intimate spiritual fellowship have always been important for reflection on one’s calling, and they are important practices for students today. On our campus, for example, students appreciated a program directed by two theology professors who invited students interested in church vocations to meet every other week for fellowship and prayer. This group also participated in an annual spiritual retreat. This kind of close spiritual fellowship attracted many students and created a sense of community, and the group grew from less than a dozen students to now nearly seventy.

3) Leadership in Worship. Students who helped lead worship services, whether as sacristans, as members of chapel choirs, or as members of “Soul Purpose,” the University’s liturgical drama group, mentioned how formative these leadership experiences were for them in terms of reflecting on their faith and sense of calling. Although we cannot yet prove this as a fact, we have found that a high percentage of students who do take up leadership roles in worship are not only leaders in other areas of campus life but also later become active leaders in their churches and in their communities. This makes sense because as students take on these roles, they learn skills applicable to any parish setting, they gain a deeper understanding of worship, and they are prompted to reflect on their faith and their own relationship to the church.

4) Music and the Arts. The arts, especially music, have always been an important vehicle of moral and spiritual formation in the Christian tradition, and they are highly valued in Lutheran contexts. The moral and spiritual significance of music for Lutherans goes back to Luther’s own emphasis on the importance of music and the arts and to the long and rich musical tradition in the Lutheran church. For Luther, music was not simply an ornament for worship service but rather a vital element of human existence, an instrument of the Holy Spirit, and a powerful vehicle for spreading the gospel. He emphasized the value of music in these bold words, “Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise.” Because of the vital role of music and the arts in religious life, he specifically encouraged Christians to train young people in these areas.

5) Service. Students learn a great deal about themselves and their convictions as they help others. If you know students who have volunteered on your campus or worked for agencies, such as the Lutheran Volunteer Corp, then you know this is the case. As many studies about service learning and volunteer work confirm, participating in service projects with caring adults helps young people mature emotionally, morally, and spiritually.

6) Cross-cultural Experiences. We all know how living in another country or culture raises profound questions about one’s identity and convictions, and many of our students told us about their formative experiences abroad. Travel courses were especially meaningful to students because they were able to be in conversation with professors over an extended period of time and in settings that stimulated reflection on a whole range of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

7) Church Camps and Wilderness Experiences. There are many examples within the Christian tradition of how close contact with the natural world has been a source of spiritual growth and inspiration. Many biblical passages emphasize the beauty and goodness of creation and the importance of going to the wilderness for spiritual renewal, cleansing, or insight. Early in the Christian tradition, monks retreated to the wilderness to meditate and wrote eloquently about the insights they gained about God’s creation and their place in it. The important relationship between the spiritual life and the natural world is also found in the works of Celtic Christians, medieval mystics, St. Francis, and many Christian writers today, such as Leornado Boff or Wendell Berry. Many of our students echoed this long tradition as they told of their life-changing experiences at Bible Camps, church camps, or at wilderness retreat centers, such as
Holding Village.

8) Study and Reflection. In most faith traditions, reading, study, and reflection are not just the practical means of getting a job but are also moral and spiritual acts. This was the case for many of our students, as they told about books and courses that challenged them not only to refine their skills but also to rethink their convictions. Within the Christian tradition, study of the Bible is the centerpiece of moral and spiritual formation, and it should be part of the curriculum at any college of the church. In addition, most Christian traditions, including Lutheran, emphasize the importance of a strong liberal arts education that incorporates the close reading of a wide range of texts because this kind of education not only strengthens one’s ability to interpret scripture but also helps one gain the skills and knowledge necessary to use one’s gifts to serve others and contribute to the common good. Writing to political leaders, Luther told them that well-educated citizens serve both church and society and are “a city’s best and greatest welfare, safety, and strength.” He also advised them that “no effort or expense should be spared to provide good libraries” filled with books from all the arts and sciences.

Although we did not start writing our grant with a list of these eight activities, you will see how versions of all eight are woven into our project. I am delighted this is the case because students have different interests and backgrounds, and the “doorways” through which they can best enter reflection on vocation vary.

IV. Specific Aims and Activities of “The Project on Theological Exploration of Vocation at Valparaiso University”

Keeping in mind what we had learned from students, recognizing the centrality of vocation to the mission of our university, and taking into account the strengths of our own existing programs, the gifts of faculty and staff, and the current needs of students, we developed our project on “Theological Exploration of Vocation.”

The project has two overarching programs with two central aims. The first program, the CAMPUS-WIDE PROGRAM, aims to help all students explore theological understandings of vocation and to provide them with opportunities to reflect more deeply on their own vocations and to grow as leaders in church and society. The second program, the CHURCH VOCATIONS PROGRAM, aims to strengthen opportunities for talented students to explore full-time church vocations and to strengthen the preparation of students who expect to enter full-time church ministries. In other words, this second program is directed primarily to students who are interested in becoming pastors, deacons, or full time church musicians. Each of these two major programs includes several specific activities.

The CAMPUS-WIDE PROGRAM has two parts. The strategy of the first part, entitled “Academic Activities,” is to incorporate the theological exploration of vocation more fully into the academic life of the University, thereby creating a shared discourse on vocation among faculty, staff, and students. Although members of the community come from different economic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, we want all members to be able to carry on an informed and lively campus-wide conversation about vocation. We want vocation to be part of the shared academic discourse on campus. The ways in which we hope to develop this shared discourse include:

1) incorporating theological texts on vocation in the University’s Freshman Core Courses;
2) inviting new tenure-track faculty and administrators to participate in a nine-day seminar on “Vocation, the University, and the Church” at the conclusion of their first or second academic year at VU (this program will greatly strengthen our orientation for new faculty and administrators);
3) providing workshops on vocation for members of the faculty and for administrative staff who advise students on a regular basis about career plans (such as those in Admissions and the Career Center).

As you can see, through these activities, a large number of people on our campus will be introduced to theological ideas of vocation and will have had opportunities to reflect on their own work in the light of these ideas: all first year students; all professors teaching First Year Core Courses—some 43 each year; all professors who develop courses that incorporate ideas about vocation; many of those who serve as student advisers; and all new faculty and administrators. Furthermore, all members of the community will learn more about vocation through the weeklong series of campus-wide lectures and panels. Through these activities we hope we can foster a shared
One of the main strengths of the project as a whole is that is truly campus-wide: it is not the possession of one department or one person, and it offers varied opportunities to a wide range of students by incorporating so many forms of the eight “doorways” mentioned earlier. Through the project’s many activities, we hope that all members of our community discover how intellectually, morally, and spiritually stimulating reflection on vocation can be.

V. Challenging Questions Prompted by Reflection on Vocation

Of course, as we reflect more seriously on vocation, and as we seek to carry out this project on our campus, we have been faced with a number of challenging questions. Reflecting on vocation does not provide us with a convenient rubber stamp of approval on our lives or institutions; rather, it raises profound questions about our personal, professional, and civic obligations and responsibilities. I’d therefore like to share four of the most challenging and troubling questions we face as we try to carry out our project with integrity. These are questions that all those carrying out vocation projects on other campuses have also been forced to address and questions that perhaps you, too, are raising in your community.

1) What can faith traditions learn from one another about the strengths and limitations of their concepts of vocation and about the process of discerning one’s calling? For example, a Lutheran concept of vocation rightly honors the work of many professions even as it lifts up the broader call for Christians to love and serve the neighbor, whatever professions they pursue.

Nevertheless, as Karl Barth and Stanley Hauerwas claim, Lutherans are still sometimes guilty of reducing vocation to paid work or careers, thereby easily forgetting that their deepest calling is to follow Christ. Here, Lutherans can learn much from Mennonites or other faith traditions that emphasize discipleship. Furthermore, because Lutherans and other Protestants are sometimes tempted to reduce vocation to paid work, they often neglect other crucial elements of a broader sense of vocation, particularly the need for rest and meditation--the need for time to listen to the One who calls us. Here, Catholics have an overabundance of riches in their insightful and varied traditions of meditation and spiritual direction, and Protestants can learn much from them. However, Catholics still struggle with the widespread misperception that the term vocation is reserved for those called to the priesthood or to religious orders, and they try to correct this
misperception by building on Lutheran ideas. All faith traditions are seeking to articulate a meaningful vision of vocation within our contemporary context. What can we learn from one another in the process?

2) How well do we invite parents of students into our conversation about vocation? Although we certainly hope that colleges and universities shape the moral and spiritual lives of young people, we must humbly admit, as Aristotle recognized thousands of years ago, and as studies of faith formation emphasize today, that parents, in most cases, are and should be the primary agents of moral and spiritual formation in their children. Some parents carry out this task better than others, but all of them are looking for ways to connect with their children and to find ways to discuss questions of meaning and value with them. Are there ways that colleges of the church can invite parents of students into reflection on vocation, so that parents and students share a common and meaningful discourse for speaking about goals and commitments?

3) How well do we help faculty and staff reflect on their vocation? Do we recognize that living out one’s calling is a life-long process? Students are not the only ones in our communities who struggle with issues related to vocation. Faculty and staff also face serious questions about what matters in life as their circumstances change: as they change jobs, get married, have children, or face family health problems. Since all of us are continually challenged to face new life circumstances and accept new responsibilities in our families and communities, we must continually reevaluate and renew our sense of calling. As communities of faith and learning concerned about vocation, do we offer opportunities not just for students but also for faculty and staff to reflect on vocation?

4) How well do our everyday institutional practices reflect our convictions about vocation? In other words, how well do our day to day institutional practices and policies reflect a commitment to love and serve the neighbor and to seek justice? To what extent are the foundations of our mission being eroded by economic pressures and corporate models of “how to do business”? As I speak to my colleagues, or colleagues at other institutions that received Lilly grants, these are perhaps the most troubling questions for us as we seek to carry out these grants with integrity. Our concerns typically circle around four major areas:

Responsibilities to Families with Children. Are we helping faculty and staff live out their vocations by acknowledging the difficulties of balancing commitments to work, family, and the community? Can we do a better job of supporting families by offering adequate health care benefits, parental leave policies, or child care?

Just treatment of those on campus with the lowest paid positions, typically housekeeping staff, dining staff, and adjunct faculty. How do we speak with integrity about vocation when people working on our campuses feel exploited or underpaid?

Environmental Responsibility. Since colleges of the church are rooted in a rich theological vision of vocation and the goodness of creation, they should be models environmental responsibility. However, they all too often mimic the destructive habits of our consumer culture. If we take service to the neighbor and future generations seriously, then we have to be concerned about how much garbage we generate; how much energy we use; and how we can protect our soil and groundwater.

Obligations to the wider community. In what ways, if any, do we contribute to the surrounding community? Do our neighbors view our institution as a civic asset or as an institution that “takes care of its own.” Although our mission is not to be a social service agency, does our mission call us to attend to needs in the wider community and contribute to public life?

These are the kinds of tough questions we need to address if we at all care about the identity and mission of Lutheran colleges and universities, if we take vocation seriously, and if we want members of our community to at least engage, if not appropriate, some of the wisdom about what matters that is embedded in the concept of vocation.

Conclusion

Of course, in any project that aims to shape the moral and spiritual lives of young people, there are paradoxes; and the Lutheran concept of vocation acknowledges many of these paradoxes. For example, even as the Lutheran concept of vocation calls us to take seriously the task of educating young people and helping them mature in faith and service to others, it emphasizes that genuine faith and service ultimately come through God’s grace and God’s activity. Even as the Lutheran concept of vocation also calls us to develop institutional practices that reflect our deepest convictions, it warns us that human self-interest and power struggles often mess up our best intentions. However, recognition of such paradoxes does not mean those at Lutheran institutions must surrender to cynicism, pessimism, or indifference. A Lutheran view of vocation is also grounded in a trust and confidence that there is a God who sustains the world, who loves and forgives us, even when we fall short, and who empowers us to use our
gifts and talents to love and serve those in our midst. By taking seriously the notion of vocation that shapes the mission of all of our institutions, I hope that all of us are able to discover a deeper sense of our own calling and to address both the yearning of students for lives that matter and the needs of church and society for leadership and service.

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1 “The Freedom of a Christian,” in Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings, edited by Timothy Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 617.
3 Because fewer talented young people are entering the ministry, there is a marked lack of creative and vibrant leaders in the church today, as a recent study by the Auburn Center and several other studies confirm. See, for example, Elizabeth Lynn and Barbara G. Wheeler, “Missing Connections: Public Perceptions of Theological Education and Religious Leadership,” (Auburn Studies, No. 6, September 1999).
4 Outside consultants included Dr. Timothy Lull (President of Pacific Lutheran Seminary and Luther scholar), Dr. Jonathan Strandjord (Director of Theological Education of the ELCA), Richard Hardel (Director of the Youth and Family Institute of Augsburg College), Brian Johnson (Campus Pastor at Gustavus Adolphus College), Michael Beaty (Baylor University), and Paul Koch (an outstanding VU graduate who is currently attending Luther Seminary).
5 See, for example, studies by the Search Institute and the Youth and Family Institute of Augsburg College.
6 For example, I once had a bright and compassionate engineering student in class. I wrote on the back of one of his essays that he had a lot of gifts for ministry, wondering if he had ever thought of becoming a pastor. Later that week he came in my office. He told me that another professor had just mentioned the same thing, and he admitted that he had always thought he had a call to ministry but had never been encouraged to pursue it. These almost off-handed remarks by two professors prompted a process of discernment that eventually led him to the seminary.
7 We are able to attract these outstanding students, in part, through the Allen Scholarship Program, which provides generous scholarships to top students seeking church vocations (up to full tuition, fees, and room and board). The Allen scholars currently enrolled at VU share a deep commitment to the church and to practices of faith. They are also highly articulate and intellectually gifted. Although most of them come from Lutheran congregations (and are fairly evenly divided between ELCA and LCMS), a few are Presbyterians or Episcopalians. The Allen scholars also come to VU with impressive records of service to the broader community, and many of them are currently leaders in a wide array of on- and off-campus activities.
8 Dr. David Weber and Dr. David Truemper.
9 Directed by Dr. John Steven Paul
10 Forward to Georg Rhau’s Symphoniae iuconudae in Luther’s Works (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965), 53:323.
11 In one passage Luther claims, “I would like to see all the arts, especially music, used in the service of Him who gave and made them. I therefore pray that every pious Christian would be pleased with this [the use of music in the service of the gospel] and lend his help if God has given him like or greater gifts. As it is, the world is too lax and indifferent about teaching and training the young for us to abet this trend.” “Preface to the Wittenberg Hymnal” (1524) in Luther’s Works, 53:316.
12 Strommen and Hardel cite one study that found “involvement in service proved to be a better predictor of faith maturity than participation in Sunday School, Bible study, or worship services.” The study also disclosed that youth who reported growth in their faith during the previous two or three years were the ones most likely to have been involved in “helping people who are poor or hungry or helping people in town or city” or “spending time in helping projects through the church.” They also found that service activities deepened a young person’s relation to the church. Apparently, involvement in service activities helps all youth, whether in the church or not. In a study of public school youth, those who participated in service activities were “half as likely to be involved at risk behaviors as nonservers.” Merton Strommen and Richard Hardel, Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry (Winona, MI: Saint Mary’s Press, 2000), 94-95.
13 Martin Luther, “To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools” (1524) in Luther’s Works (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 45:356.
14 Luther, 45:373.