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From the Incoming Editor

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From the Incoming Editor



What is the worth of our work? To some extent, this question is always with us, whether or not it is spoken aloud. The pieces in this issue ask this question in various ways, guided by institutional practices of assessment. Assessment can be a cringe-worthy word, at least among students and colleagues at Cal

Lutheran, where I work, yet it helps me a lot to reclaim the root of the word *assess*, which suggests “sitting by.” Pairing assessment with a posture of sitting slows us down for collective conversation and reflection, which *Intersections* does well. I am so grateful for the work of Jason Mahn and Mark Wilhelm, as well as all those who contribute to, read, circulate, and have previously edited *Intersections*. It is meaningful and worthwhile to sit regularly at the intersection of faith and learning and to reflect on the vocation of Lutheran higher education.

In a recent gathering with colleagues, one said, “I’m not sure what the work is right now.” By “right now” they meant late pandemic, yet they also meant this social and historical moment as well as the role of higher ed in it. Over the past few years we have been working harder, in new ways, often isolated from communal practices and support, in a context that has frequently included violence. Given what it takes sometimes to remain present in body, mind, and spirit, we

insist that our work must be worthwhile. Not all of it is. And perhaps the experiences we have endured during the pandemic will strengthen us and lend courage to stop doing some of the things are not (or no longer) worthwhile.

Lutheran higher education is a strange and wonderful gift. Unabashed in its core commitments—that grace is free/unmerited/indiscriminate, that all are broken, that serving the neighbor is the practical application of every lesson learned and every skill attained—it, we, are sometimes a little too shy in telling this story or not quite equipped to convey the depth and fullness of these values within our campus communities.

With God’s grace, we continue to convene—in person, online, and through *Intersections*—to recommit to the values that make higher education in the Lutheran tradition treasures of inestimable worth. As incoming editor, I do not pretend to know what all of these values are, yet I am committed to the questions, chief among them, “What does this mean?,” and I will show up for the conversation. I will also confess my starting place with the worth of our work, which is centered in the universality of vocation—the giftedness of each being, manifest in different ways through the whole of life and relevant to the community’s needs. The conviction that education is for the whole of life and that it is properly directed to the common good brought me to Lutheran higher ed in the first place and continues to keep me here. I look forward to hearing from you and to sitting awhile together with the worth of our work.

Colleen Windham-Hughes, PhD, MDiv, was born into and ordained by the United Methodist Church, yet became Lutheran (ELCA) over time, due in part to over a decade at California Lutheran University, where she holds the Wilbert and Darlene Carlson Endowed Chair of Youth and Family Ministry and serves as associate dean of Interdisciplinary Programs and Community Outreach.