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From the Publisher

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Purpose Statement

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

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

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

From the Publisher

| I became a fan of the Lutheran doctrine of vocation decades ago. It happened while I was a first year student (we were still freshmen back then) at St. Olaf in conversations stemming from reading *An Open Letter to the German Nobility* in the old Dillenberger collection of Luther's treatises of 1520. In the intervening decades, educational leaders have deeply embraced the concept and rhetoric of vocation. For example, Parker Palmer has made his living for twenty years by traveling the lecture circuit, frequently addressing groups of educators on the theme of vocation. Private higher education has been an avid participant in the larger conversation about vocation. References to the theme appear repeatedly. A recent example is a reference in a *Chronicle of Higher Education* (January 29, 2010, page B8) essay about the Mark C. Taylor, the highly regarded professor of religion at Columbia University, who has written (in *Field Notes from Elsewhere: Reflections on Dying and Living*) that he has struggled with coming to terms with "the meaning of vocation in his life and his career—what it means to receive something like a religious calling when you in fact 'don't believe in the one who calls.'"

Since the Lutheran church's theological tradition is a primary source for the current conversations in the USA about vocation, some leaders in Lutheran higher education (including myself) believe all ELCA-related colleges and universities should claim vocation as the defining mark of a school rooted in the Lutheran tradition. Embracing this doctrine provides an answer to the neuralgic question, "How can a college be Lutheran if it is no longer a college where all the Lutherans are?" Persons of good will from any background can join Lutherans and our institutions in education for vocation even if, like Mark Taylor, they cannot join with Lutherans (and other Christians) in believing that God in Jesus Christ is the one who calls us.

There is, however, no consensus about naming "education for vocation" as the defining mark of Lutheran higher education. The articles in this issue of *Intersections* reflect the widespread engagement with the theme of vocation by ELCA colleges and universities. The standing, annual "Vocation of a Lutheran College" conference further testifies to emphasis that the theme of vocation receives in our community, and a special conference this fall will explore the many programs (Lilly Endowment-supported and others) on education for vocation. Yet I fear that "vocation" remains for many merely the higher education program *du jour* instead of a permanent and enlivening hallmark of Lutheran higher education. All ELCA colleges and universities have received invitations to participate in the special fall conference, October 31-November 2 at Augsburg College in Minneapolis. I hope the event helps move us further along the way from *du jour* to hallmark!

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