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From the Editor

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From the Editor

There seem to be very few “commons” left. Indeed, if someone should utter 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to enjoy, public art for many to behold, clean water for the taking, and so on), “the commons” seem to be not only an outdated term but also an outdated idea.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.

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