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The Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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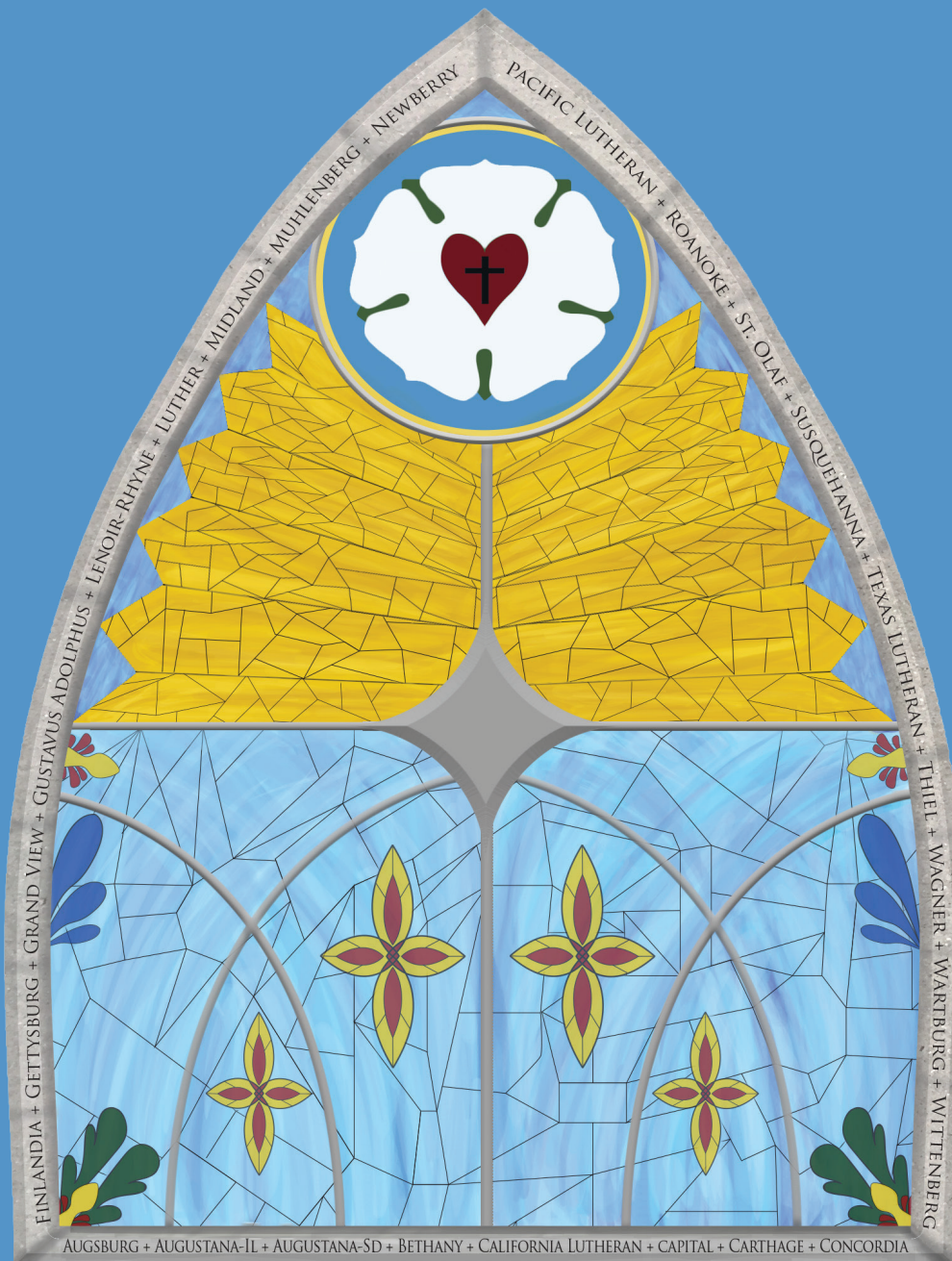
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SPRING 2016

Intersections

Faith, Learning, and the Vocation of Lutheran Higher Education



TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

Looking Back and Looking Forward

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 Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities, 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

Eileen Ruppel
A Window Into the ELCA
Digital image

Eileen Ruppel is a junior at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois. She is a Religion major pursuing minors in both New Testament Greek and Graphic Design. Designing this cover was meaningful as it showed an “intersection” of two of these areas of study. When considering the theme of “Looking Back and Looking Forward,” the concept of a stained-glass window came to

mind; windows are representative of where one is looking out to, whether that is in one’s vocation, one’s relationship with God, or any other facet of one’s life. This design was inspired by many Wednesday evening chapel services spent in prayer and quiet reflection upon both future and past, looking up at Augustana’s own stained-glass window in Ascension Chapel.

Intersections

Number 43 Spring 2016

Mark Wilhelm Publisher
Jason A. Mahn Editor
Kaitlyn Lindgren Editorial Assistant
Angie Williams Secretary
Leanne Paetz Graphic Designer

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From the Publisher



Associations of colleges and universities are commonplace in American higher education. Many of these associations are found in the community of church-related colleges and universities. Before 2016, however, the colleges and universities of the ELCA had never been organized into

an association. They shared in many others, including an association composed of schools from pan-Lutheran church-bodies in the United States and Canada (including those outside the ELCA), known as the Lutheran Educational Conference of North America (LECNA). But until 2016, ELCA colleges and universities never had their own association.

Now they do. The new association, called the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities, was established through a yearlong process in 2015, culminating in the first meeting of the Network's Board of Directors in February 2016. The Network was established as a missional collaboration of the churchwide organization and the twenty-six colleges and universities that are part of the ELCA. This new association will help ELCA schools and the churchwide organization sustain a common identity and shared mission in higher education. (The mission will include maintaining relationships with LECNA, in which ELCA colleges and universities continue to hold membership.)

The Network was created by the churchwide organization and the colleges and universities in response to lost capacity in the churchwide organization to maintain connections and programming among the ELCA's

twenty-six colleges and universities. The Network is not an additional administrative structure that will burden ELCA's mission of higher education with bureaucratic bloat. The new Network replaces former churchwide units devoted to higher education that had to be eliminated as the churchwide organization's annual budget shrank from approximately \$100 million in the 1990s (soon after the creation of the ELCA) to approximately \$50 million today. The Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities is a collaborative solution to address a problem of diminished capacity within the churchwide organization to provide leadership for ELCA higher education.

The Network came into being through the work of the college and university presidents and churchwide leaders over a period of five years. A special word of thanks goes to Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop of the ELCA; Stephen Bouman, executive director of the Domestic Mission unit; and Michael Maxey, President of Roanoke College and Chairperson of the President's Council, whose agreements in March 2015 about the mechanism of this new collaboration made it possible for the presidents to take the final steps toward creation of the new Network.

As I write this note, I am preparing for the first meeting of the Executive Committee of the Network. The committee's meeting will set in motion, in the words of President Mike Maxey, the pledge of this groundbreaking Network to "develop and sustain a stronger, more viable vision of Lutheran higher education in the ELCA. The links between and among our colleges and universities and the ELCA will make all of us stronger, separately and collectively."

I think Tom Christensen and the other Lutheran higher education leaders who invented *Intersections* twenty years ago would be proud.

Mark Wilhelm is Executive Director of the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities. He has served as the publisher of *Intersections* since 2008

From the Editor

A year from now, Lutherans around the world will commemorate the 500 year anniversary of the birth of the Reformation, marked by Martin Luther's 95 Theses in 1517. But today, faculty, staff, and administrators within Lutheran higher education commemorate a lesser-known milestone.

The summer of 2016 marks 20 years since *Intersections* was first printed at Capital University and distributed among the (then) 28 ELCA colleges and universities. As the journal's second editor, Bob Haak, would later say, it was "born in the twinkle of an idea" in the mind of the founding editor, Tom Christenson. Tom would edit the journal for almost a decade; Bob would take over for another half decade before inviting me to carry the work forward.

Intersections, along with the annual Vocation of a Lutheran College conference, was conceived as a way to sustain an open-ended conversation about the nature and mission of Lutheran colleges or universities after they ceased to be a places that (mostly) Lutherans went to be educated by (mostly) Lutherans. Thousands have attended the summer conference, learning about the Lutheran intellectual tradition that undergirds our residential colleges and education for vocation therein. Hundreds have contributed articles, essays, book reviews, reports, poems, and homilies to *Intersections*—sometimes celebrating our work or arguing with one another, often asking deep and important questions about how best to educate students for lives of responsible service, purpose, and meaning.

The first essay of this special anniversary edition comes to terms with the 20 year-old conversation called *Intersections*. It is co-authored by the three editors, past and present, although Tom's name is listed "in spirit." Tom passed away in 2013, but his spirit certainly lives on in this journal. The essay quotes from his editorials frequently and could not have been written without him.

I am delighted that the other authors of this issue agreed to write for this special anniversary issue. Mark Wilhelm has given a version of his essay as the opening address of the Vocation conference in recent years. In it, he explains why and how education for vocation has emerged as the *sine qua non* of Lutheran higher education. Florence Amamoto contributed to the first issue of *Intersections* in 1996; here she looks back to that essay and the dance between Lutheran identity and racial and religious diversity that she has witnessed (and helped choreograph) at Gustavus and beyond. Kit Kleinhans positions Lutheran conceptions among other recent scholarship on vocation. Her essay suggests that, while teacher-scholars contributing to *Intersections* often debate with one another, their work also helps direct broader conversations about holistic education and service to the common good. Kristen Glass Perez then "moves forward by looking back" as she suggests that the attention given to vocation over the past decades should also be given to interfaith understanding in the decades to come. Finally, Ernie Simmons takes into account a number of initiatives in Lutheran higher education before making one more irreplaceable proposal: We ought to help students become "sustainability leaders" in a world whose climate and environment has been drastically altered by human consumption and waste.

I close by thanking Augustana junior Eileen Ruppel for designing the wonderful cover of this special edition, and Augustana graduate Kaity Lindgren ('16) for her diligence, insightfulness, and care while serving as the editorial assistant. Eileen and Kaity are extremely professional and wise, even though they are hardly older than this journal.



Jason Mahn is Associate Professor and Chair of Religion at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. He has served as editor of *Intersections* since 2011.

The Vocation of *Intersections* on its Twentieth Birthday

Can a journal have a calling?

Certainly a journal, especially one for and by a particular community, has a life of its own. *Intersections* was conceived through the loving interaction of various individuals. Tom Christenson, the journal's first editor, gave it birth, but only with the midwifery of those from the Division for Higher Education and Schools of the ELCA (as it was then so-called), and of an editorial board and other key "stakeholders" in what Mark Wilhelm has described as the vocation "movement" within Lutheran Higher education.¹ The lifespan of *Intersections* thus far has included its birth, a period of coming of age, and the emergence of a mature, if still emerging, identity—along with the identity of the Lutheran higher education, which the journal underscores and investigates. In the summer of 2016, *Intersections* turns twenty years old. That is about the time that a young person in the North American context enters into adulthood—or at least into a long and messy (but no less formative) period of "emerging adulthood." Will those twenty years comprise the bulk of the lifespan of this journal? We think it has many more good years ahead of it.

So, *Intersections* has a life—but does it also have a calling? Well, yes, and in three ways. First, insofar as a vocation means to be summoned for a *purposeful* and *meaningful* life, the life of this journal has been "vocational"

indeed. When one reads the early purpose statements, editorials, and publisher's comments, one can see just how well-defined the journal's mission was, and also how little that central purpose has changed over the past twenty years. And yet, second, like a life that is perpetually open to new pleas, needs, and responsibilities, *Intersections* has entered into different conversations—responding to different voices—throughout its two decades. It has changed and has been changed, as has anyone constantly discerning her or his vocation. Third, and perhaps most important, *Intersections* has existed not primarily to perpetuate itself or for the satisfaction of its editors (three over the years), publishers (four to date) or contributors (over 200). Just as the called life is one that is constantly matching one's own passions and gifts with the needs of the community, *Intersections* has been in the business of service. Like the biology and English professors, chaplains, college presidents, board members, academic deans, admissions councilors, and occasional bishops who write for it and read it, *Intersections* goes beyond self-satisfaction as a criterion for good work. Good work—including that which has fallen between these covers—arises from the joy of being gifted and blossoms in service of a wounded and redeemable world.

In what follows I (Jason Mahn) will incorporate the words of others, especially of Tom Christenson and Bob

Tom Christenson was Professor of Philosophy at Capital University, Columbus, Ohio until his death in 2013. Tom first conceived of *Intersections* and was its founding editor, serving in that capacity from 1996 to 2005. **Bob Haak**, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Hiram College, Hiram, Ohio, began editing the journal in 2006 while serving as the Director of the Center for Vocational Reflection at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. **Jason Mahn**, Associate Professor of Religion and Department Chair at Augustana, has edited the journal since 2011. This essay incorporates editorials that span the first 20 years of *Intersections*.

Haak, second editor of *Intersections*, to portray something of the life of *Intersections* and its ongoing calling on this, its twentieth birthday.

A Journal is Born

In the spring of 1996—just 8 years after the mammoth merger of various ethnic Lutheran bodies to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)—Tom Christenson sent out a “Birth Announcement” to the then 28 colleges and universities affiliated with the ELCA. Here is part of what it said:

We are pleased to announce the birth of a new publication. It will be called *Intersections: Faith+Life+Learning*. Why do we need such a publication?

At some recent conferences I’ve had a chance to talk with faculty colleagues from other ELCA colleges. From them I have heard comments such as these: “Many of the faculty at my institution don’t even know we’re church-related. To say nothing of knowing what that means.” “Is being church-related anything more than a public relations device?” “Most of the faculty at my college are afraid of our church-connectedness. They assume it implies another Inquisition and want nothing to do with it.” “I didn’t realize that we had any ‘sister colleges’ or that I had colleagues beyond my institution who were asking some of the same questions that I do.” “The Lutheran connection at our college is very vague, mostly because no one seems to know exactly what it means.” “Somebody ought to do us the big favor of articulating what it means to be a Lutheran college. The question, at our school, is most often met with a kind of bemused silence.” It is in response to this lack of awareness, this vagueness, this sense of disconnection, that *Intersections* hopes to speak. (Christenson, No. 21, 2).

In Summer of 1996, the Division for Higher Education and Schools of the ELCA published the first issue with James

Unglaube, the Director of Colleges and Universities within the ELCA Division for Higher Education and Schools, serving as Publisher, Tom Christenson as Editor, and the Lilly Endowment as an additional financial supporter. (See Figure 1, the cover of the first issue.) Tom wrote in his first editorial that he was “feeling like a proud parent.” He noted that the publication had been “talked about, hoped for, planned for, and worked on for what seems like a long time now.” He expressed his hope “that all those who read it will celebrate with those of us who have been in attendance at its birth” (Christenson, No. 1, 2).

Many who took the lead in “birthing” this journal and shaping it in early years remain leaders in our ongoing

conversation about the vocation of Lutheran higher education. One thinks of Mark Schwehn (Valparaiso), who wrote the lead article in that first issue, or L. DeAne Lagerquist (St. Olaf), who served on the editorial board from the start, published in it frequently, and, beginning in 2004, also directed the Lutheran Academy of Scholars. Both Ernie Simmons (Concordia) and Darrell Jodock (Gustavus) first contributed essays in 2002 and have steered the “vocation movement” in Lutheran higher education ever since. College presidents and former presi-

dents contributed institution-wide perspectives early on, including Baird Tipson (Wittenberg), and especially Paul Dovre (Concordia), who first came up with the idea of the Vocation of a Lutheran College “project” (Unglaube 2). Institutional leaders, such as Augsburg’s President Paul Pribbenow, have been equally invaluable in recent years.

Coming of Age

At the Vocation of a Lutheran College Conference and in the pages of this journal, most every “conversation” about what it means to be a Lutheran college or university has been irenic, constructive, and generative of further conversation. However, that does not mean that there has been a lack of serious debate. Especially in recent years, contributors have used *Intersections* to resist and

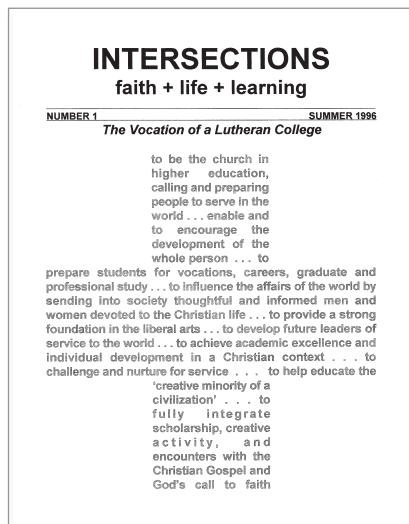


FIGURE 1

reconfigure leading assumptions about the state of college today—assumptions that college is *essentially* for credentialing and employment (*Intersections*, Fall 2013), that colleges are leaving students “academically adrift” and graduates “lost in transition”² (Spring 2014), or that robust commitment to a college’s church-relatedness competes with full-bodied openness to religious and ethnic “others” (Spring 2011; Fall 2014; forthcoming Fall 2016).³

Contributors have also raised critical questions about what they take to be a too-easy alignment of what the Lutheran tradition means by vocation and what “the world” means by a successful career or person. Writing of a dominant American culture that forms so many of us into individualism, narcissism, consumerism, “disposability rather than conservation,” and careerism, Samuel Torvend (Pacific Lutheran) recently pondered whether Lutheran “education for vocation” reinforces rather than resists such powerful cultural norms:

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—that capacity to ask deep troubling questions of what you and I, our disciplines, our expertise, or our trustees might take for granted, consider normal, even sacrosanct. (Torvend 16)

Marcia Bunge (then at Valparaiso, now Gustavus Adolphus) raised similar cautions in 2002:

Because our culture 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...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. [Bunge 12]

Invoking one’s vocation threatens to become nothing more than “a convenient rubber stamp of approval on our lives or institutions” (16). To resist this temptation,

Bunge suggest a number of strategies to Lutheran colleges and universities, including learning from Mennonite and other faith traditions that emphasize discipleship—the conviction that one’s deepest calling is to follow Christ—as well as from the Catholic tradition, with its disciplines of meditation, spiritual direction, and other practices of “listen[ing] to the One who calls us” (16).

Without such critical comments—that is, comments that are both essential and self-searching—*Intersections* might have denigrated into a cheerleader for Lutheran Colleges and Universities.

Instead, it has become a primary venue for understanding, interrogating, debating, strengthening, *as well as* celebrating the overlapping missions and Lutheran identities of our schools.

Perhaps influenced by Tom Christenson’s philosophical training, earlier conversations included a good deal of criticism (and self-criticism—see Figure 2 picturing Tom Christenson engaged in such.) The most long-lasting debates largely centered on whether and how a “Christian worldview” makes a difference for learning on our campuses. (At times these exchanges would span multiple issues; in the summer of 2003, for example, Baird Tipson responded to Robert Benne’s response to Tipson’s review of a book by Paul Dovre!) Some took on what they understood as failure of nerve by those invoking Luther’s “two kingdoms doctrine” and the “promiscuous use of the concept of paradox” in the Lutheran intellectual

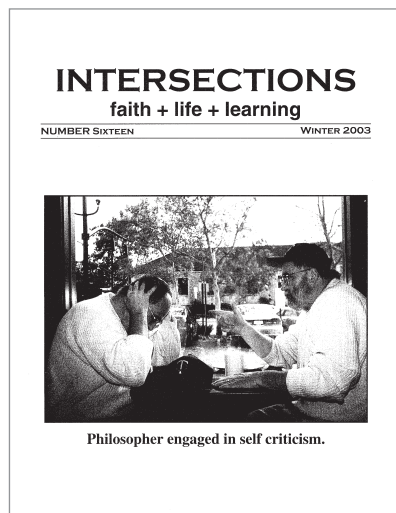


FIGURE 2

tradition (VonDohlen). They questioned whether carefully demarcating a civic realm or “kingdom of this world” apart from the kingdom of the gospel could do anything other than uncritically accept the finality of so-called secular reason or keep understandings of God securely confined to “personal opinions.” How much epistemological ground—frameworks by which we know what is true—could be ceded to secular departments (including religion departments) and still be called a Lutheran school (see also Benne, “Response”)?

Another central (and related) debate characterized much of the first decade of *Intersections*. Does the designation “Lutheran” depend at least in part on a sufficient number of Lutherans studying, teaching, and administering at our colleges and universities? Robert Benne (now Professor Emeritus at Roanoke College) insisted—sometimes solitarily—that Lutheran *institutional* identity does in fact depend on a critical mass of *individuals* identifying as Lutheran. According to Benne, the diversity understandably sought on our campuses should include affirmative action for Lutheran employees:

We should aim at an *intentional, robust pluralism*, a pluralism in which the college guarantees that the perspectives of Lutheran Christianity are represented in all the departments and divisions of the college. The Lutheran vision may no longer be the paradigm that organizes the college’s life, if ever it was, but it can be intentionally represented among the many voices representing other perspectives. (Benne, “Integrity” 10)

This particular argument seems to have stalled out at best. It slowly gave way to Lutheran understandings of *education for vocation*—as opposed to the two kingdoms, “paradox,” or a certain threshold of numbers of Lutheran faculty members or board members—as the central marker of Lutheran institutional identities. As Mark Wilhelm describes in the present issue, *education for vocation* is distinctively, decidedly Lutheran, and yet does not require individual educators to be thus.

The Summer of 2002 cover of *Intersections* included the famous definition of vocation by Frederick Buechner: “the place where your deep gladness and the world’s hunger

meet” (Buechner 95). In Winter of 2003, Arne Selbyg commented that, if someone did a words count of the articles published in *Intersections*, “vocation” would certainly be in the top three. He also says—perhaps with a dash of retrospective determination—that *Intersections* grew out of the very effort to make “vocation” a central concept at ELCA colleges and universities (Selbyg 2). With multi-million dollar grants arriving on eight ELCA college campuses from the Lilly Endowment for “Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation,” there were additional reasons to

“Intersections more self-consciously became an ongoing, open-ended, and increasingly multi-vocal conversation.”

lift up *education for vocation* as what Lutheran colleges and universities have always been about. Yet already in 2001 the ELCA Churchwide Assembly had called for a social statement on education, a statement whose very title (“Our Calling in Education”) underscores vocation as the aim of education “that develops personal gifts and abilities and serves the common good” (ELCA 1). It was only natural that ELCA colleges and universities would position themselves as uniquely forming Lutheran and non-Lutheran students for such meaningful and needed work.

Ever Emerging Adulthood

In 2005, in his last editorial before handing over the editor “position” (service? volunteer opportunity? labor of love?) to Bob Haak, Tom Christenson characterized the conversation about the identity of Lutheran colleges and universities as having matured significantly:

Of course, people at our colleges and universities still have questions about Lutheran identity and its implications, but now they are aware that they are not asking these questions all by themselves and they have some resources for addressing them, resources provided in some part by the annual Vocation of a Lutheran College Conference and by

Intersections. Our purpose was to encourage and facilitate such discussions, to create a larger sense of community among the ELCA institutions, and to share the best thinking that we were able to bring to this matter. I think we have succeeded in that enterprise. (Christenson, No. 21, 3)

Despite the past tense of this last sentence, the “success” of *Intersections* clearly does not depend on people no longer having “questions about Lutheran identity and its implications.”

In fact, *Intersections* more self-consciously became an ongoing, open-ended, and increasingly multi-vocal conversation in the decade to come. Besides one surprisingly agreeable “Point/Counterpoint” exchange between Tom Christenson and Robert Benne over “what it means to be a ‘College of the Church,’” there were few formal arguments that would take place within the journal. The tone was much more conversational, not so much in the sense of being relaxed or informal, but in terms of being constructive, deliberative, and open to new perspectives.

Besides bringing a new, more professional “look and feel” to the journal (Haak, No. 22, 4; see Figure 3), Bob also devoted individual issues to particular themes, as the Vocation of a Lutheran College Conference had begun doing around 2003.

The first two issues were devoted to subjects that arose from ELCA Task Forces weighing in on human sexuality (Spring 2006) and Lutheran commitments to education (Summer 2006). While these conversations between the ELCA church and its colleges and universities would not always be so direct, “the church” and “the college” do seem to emerge as distinctive conversation partners in the past 10 years. Mark Hanson, then the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA, noted that Lutheran colleges and universities often “lead way” when it comes to “reach[ing] out in mission for the sake of the world” (Hanson 5). Hanson even positions colleges as something of an intermediary between the church and the world, to the benefit of both:

The colleges and universities of this church have a vocation to call us to stand outside of ourselves so we might be engaged together, reaching out in mission for the sake of the world. I am grateful to God for these schools and their unquenchable curiosity, faith, moral discernment and engagement in mission. (Hanson 5)

Comments such as these suggest that Lutheran colleges and universities were increasingly institutions that should not just respond to the church’s initiatives or directives. The ELCA’s colleges and universities should take a leading role in developing their mission.

Bob’s second editorial reflects this very sentiment:

As we define our place in the academic world for our selves and our institutions, to one degree or another we look to the resources that our Lutheran heritage provides. We look for the guidance of the church, not to dictate who we are and what we do, but to inform the sorts of conversations that might take place on our campuses. (Haak, No. 23, 4).

Shifting Church-College Relations

There were also many changes on both sides of the relationship. On the collegiate side, market and economic forces

drastically affected two of the 28 original schools; Waldorf College had to sell to a for-profit company in January of 2010 and Dana College had to close its doors in July of that same year. As Florence Amamoto describes in her essay in this anniversary issue, economic pressures also have often taken focus away from Lutheran identity and education for vocation for the remaining 26 schools.

On the ecclesial side, major restructuring of the ELCA church-wide organization also influenced, and perhaps complicated, the relationship. When the ELCA was formed in 1988, six divisions represented the whole of the church’s national and international work, and one was the Division for Higher Education and Schools (DHES; previously named the Division for Education). One of the three departments—with

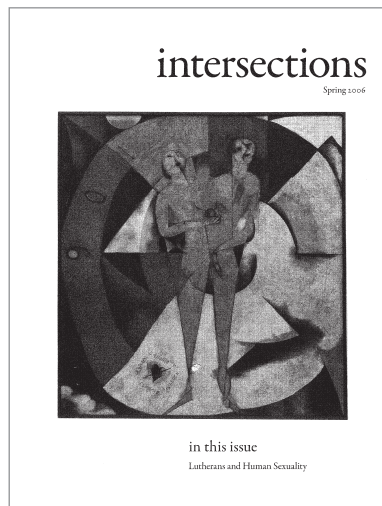


FIGURE 3

its own director and small staff— within that Division was the Department for Colleges and Universities. The world's second largest Lutheran church thus gave "high visibility to the place of education in the life of this church" (Sorensen 4). In 2005, the ELCA was streamlined and restructured; the Division for Higher Education and Schools folded into the broader Division for Vocation and Education—essentially merging with the Division for Ministry (5-6). While some, such as Bob Sorenson (Executive Director of the DHES until his retirement in 2000), wondered in 2005 whether the restructuring would separate the work of the church from the work of colleges and universities (6), others, such as Leonard Schulze (Executive Director following Sorenson and until 2004) argued that the new "Vocation and Education" name and mission would better align the work of colleges and congregations and would foreground the theological rationale for their shared work. Schulze appreciates the ascendancy of "vocation" in particular. According to him, "there is no single concept that is more important to our understanding of why the church must be involved in education and why education is crucial for the continuing vitality of the church" (Schulze 11).

Whether or not such restructurings strengthened or weakened the relationship between congregations and colleges, they certainly complicated it—at least in the eyes of newcomers to either. Mark Wilhelm, who assumed the position of publisher of *Intersections* three years earlier as Associate Executive Director of the Vocation and Education Unit and leader of its working group for "Educational Partnerships and Institutions" (Wilhelm, No. 28, 2), announced in 2011 that the Vocation and Education unit had ceased to exist as of February, 2011. Mark would continue to work with colleges and universities, but as only one of his four chief responsibilities (Wilhelm, No. 33, 2). Folded twice into broader units and with significant reductions in human resources, the ELCA now needed Lutheran colleges and universities to take the lead in their relationship with the church. Most recently, college presidents have done so by forming a new Network for ELCA colleges and universities in collaboration with the ELCA's churchwide organization to promote their shared identity and the mission of the ELCA in higher education.⁴ While the relationships with one another and with the church were and will continue

to be complex, Lutheran colleges are claiming a primary role in directing the mission of the ELCA in higher education.

"Education for vocation" is part of what holds 26 distinctive identities together and to the mission of the church. Bob Haak, now viewing these connections from his position as Dean of Hiram College, which is affiliated with the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ tradition, maintains that conversations about vocation and the education of whole persons

"While the relationships with one another and with the church were and will continue to be complex, Lutheran colleges are claiming a primary role in directing the mission of the ELCA in higher education."

in the service of whole communities is needed now more than ever. Indeed, the fragmentation of individuals and communities that contributors to *Intersections* talked about twenty years ago has now become something of the norm. Lutheran colleges have a message that sees and confronts this sort of shattering of people, communities, and the world. It is a message and a work that is more important than ever—not just for us as Lutheran institutions of higher education but for our whole culture.

The *Hiram Connect* program is built on the concepts of vocation that were cultivated at Augustana (Rock Island, Illinois). But after more than four years at Hiram, Bob knows that those who do not identify as Lutheran also clearly resonate with the idea of vocation. In personal correspondence, he says this about a movement rooted in the Lutheran intellectual tradition but now branching throughout higher education:

I can report that what we had hoped for 20 and 10 and 5 years ago is happening in many places. The word [about purpose and wholeness] that we believed would speak to the whole culture does in fact work just that way. Whether that word to the world has the label "Lutheran" attached to it is less important than the message of wholeness and good news that is

spread throughout the fragments of our culture. We can and must be communities that help mend this shattered world.

Identity in Relation

One might compare the ongoing conversation in *Intersections* and the fluctuating identities of ELCA colleges and universities recorded therein to a third—and still rare—cultural trajectory available to today’s late adolescence and “emerging adults.” The majority of college graduates today are “individualists”; through their 20s they will primarily seek personal satisfaction, robust social lives (often without long-term commitments), and ample leisure consumption. Another third or so of college graduates find themselves in “traditionalist” trajectories.

They find stable work, start families, join religious or civic organizations, and otherwise live out—sometimes unreflectively—the stories and expectations of those who have raised them (Clydesdale 52-53; 219-23). Church-related colleges can follow these very trajectories. For much of their institutional lives, Lutheran colleges and universities have lived out the expectations and stories of “mother church.” The possibility of thoroughly secularizing, or retaining only a “historical” connection to the Lutheran church, has become a real possibility, perhaps even a temptation, in recent years as well. Just as college graduates can sever ties to the domestic, religious, and civic communities that birthed them, colleges can and do become “independent,” “free” from what is seen as the anachronistic authority of the church.

If the conversations in *Intersections* count as evidence, most of our colleges and universities seem to be carving a third way forward, one that corresponds to a small minority of college graduates who find themselves—or rather intentionally put themselves—on an “interdependent” trajectory. Rather than step into predetermined roles or try desperately to resist every script, these young people forge stable and resilient identities through conversation and by committing to and helping to

create particular communities. They develop what Tim Clydesdale calls grounded idealism and purposeful grit (Clydesdale 222-23). So also with Lutheran colleges and universities: Over the past 20 years, they have come into their own identities, increasingly clear about their distinctive purpose and meaning. They have done so beside and with the broader church, not by rejecting it.

In his final editorial, Bob again portrays *Intersections* and the vocation movement within Lutheran higher education as open-ended conversations, ones that build identity without gating it in:

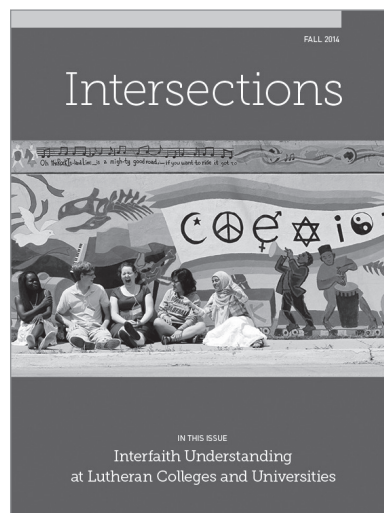


FIGURE 4

The joy [of thinking and working on issues of vocation] is to remember the powerful voices that have driven this conversation, and to recognize that fresh... voices are entering the dialogue. It is clear that the power of these ideas enlivens and refreshes this conversation even as the people involved change. That is surely the work of the Spirit among us.... And the ideas still are important. Who are these Lutherans and what sort of schools are these?... How do we see students in ways that treat them as whole people living in community and in a world that matters?

How do we relate to others in conversation about these issues, especially those who don’t seem to be like us? And the questions continue—questions that are crucial for our survival today as institutions...(Haak, no. 34. 4)

Just as Lutheran colleges and universities are maturing, developing grit, and coming to name their grounded idealism about what it means to educate for vocation, so too has *Intersections* become neither the child of Christenson, Haak, Mahn, nor that of Unglaube, Selbyg, Sorenson, Schulze, or Wilhelm, but a journal with life and legs of its own. As Bob wrote after the death of Tom Christenson on February 8, 2013, *Intersections* “was born in the twinkle of an idea in Tom’s mind and brought to life through his hard work. He saw *Intersections* mature and take on a life independent of him—but always with his watchful eye and careful guidance” (Haak, “We Remember,” 31).

It is difficult to know whether this twentieth birthday of *Intersections* marks its middle age, its waning years, or perhaps the infancy of a life still to fully unfold. However many years this journal should last, it has been—and will be—a rich and rewarding conversation. May *Intersections* continue to provide a platform for educators at Lutheran colleges and universities to reflect on their vocations, the vocations of their students, and the vocation of Lutheran higher education.

Endnotes

1. See Mark Wilhelm's essay in the present issue of *Intersections*. See also Ernie Simmons's remarks about these early developments in his essay in this issue.
2. References are to books by Arum and Roksa and Christian Smith, et al., as listed below.
3. All past issues of *Intersections* are now available online: digitalcommons.augustana.edu/intersections
4. See "From the Publisher" in the present issue for more details.

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MARK WILHELM

The Vocation Movement in Lutheran Higher Education



This article presents a brief history of the movement to urge colleges and universities related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to view their identity and mission through the lens offered by the concept of vocation. It argues that the vocation movement arose

as Lutheran higher education leaders re-discovered a wisdom about higher education within the concept of vocation as expressed by the Lutheran intellectual tradition. This re-discovery enabled leaders to articulate a rationale for educating students to live meaningful, purposeful lives dedicated to the common good.

As a result of the vocation movement, reclaiming education for vocation has become the hallmark of ELCA higher education.

Changing Conditions in Lutheran Higher Education

Reclaiming vocation as the hallmark of higher education in the Lutheran tradition occurred in the context of a larger, decades-long conversation in the United States about the aims and purposes of church-related higher education. Within that larger conversation, discussions in Lutheran

higher education circles about the concept of vocation developed into a movement intent on re-grounding Lutheran higher education in the rich intellectual tradition of the Lutheran community. The vocation movement accomplished this goal by using Martin Luther's theology of vocation to derive the aims and purposes of higher education from a Lutheran viewpoint.

The movement arose to answer a very practical question: "In what sense is a college Lutheran if it no longer means being a college almost exclusively populated by Lutherans?" This question was asked with increasing frequency as the percentage of faculty, administrators, and especially students who were personally members of the Lutheran community noticeably declined. The decline grew steadily over the course of the twentieth century, and it occurred dramatically at some institutions during the last quarter of that century, where the presence of Lutherans dropped below 10 percent.

This transition accompanied the ending of Lutheran ethnic separatism, a separatism from mainstream America that had defined Lutheran colleges and all other aspects of the Lutheran community well into the early twentieth century. Ethnic separatism had also meant *de facto* that Lutheran colleges were operated by Lutherans for the service of Lutheran students. The vocation movement cannot be understood unless one realizes it was a response to the collapse of a living ethnic culture at all Lutheran colleges that had separated them

Mark Wilhelm is Executive Director for the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities. In that position, he serves as publisher for *Intersections*.

from the general American public. That is, it was not just a response to a decline in the numbers of Lutherans at schools founded by the Lutheran community. The decline in Lutherans present on Lutheran campuses was the direct result of the collapse of ethnic, separatist Lutheranism.

During the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, Lutheranism in America had been an ethnic,

“The movement arose to answer a very practical question: ‘In what sense is a college Lutheran if it no longer means being a college almost exclusively populated by Lutherans?’”

separatist culture serving various branches of German-American and Scandinavian-American communities. These communities were significantly separated from mainstream American society by linguistic and cultural divides, in addition to religious ones. This reality of cultural, linguistic, and religious separatism was so thoroughly true that Sydney Ahlstrom, the great historian of American Christianity who taught at Yale University in the third quarter of the twentieth century and who was himself a Lutheran and an active participant in the early years of the vocation movement, labeled Lutheranism a “countervailing religion” in his acclaimed book, *A Religious History of the American People* (515-26). With the label “countervailing,” Ahlstrom underscored that Lutherans, Lutheranism, and its institutions—including its colleges—spent their initial existence in America set apart from and counter to mainstream American society. For Lutheran colleges, being ethnic, separatist institutions meant that they only served Lutherans, the members of their ethnic tribe, even though Lutheran colleges were formally open to the larger community and some outside of the Lutheran orbit participated in them from the beginning.

All this changed slowly during the twentieth century, and with increasing rapidity in its second half, as the Lutheran community and its institutions steadily entered mainstream American culture. This meant that its institutions, especially

its institutions of higher education, were actively opened to non-Lutherans, not only for the admission of students from other backgrounds, but also to the academic subject matter and research interests of others. Lutheran scholars had always engaged the wider European-American academic community, but during the twentieth century Lutheran schools that would one day be part of the ELCA and their faculties became more deeply engaged in the mainstream of that larger academic community and in making scholarly—and hiring—decisions in concert with those who had once been outsiders to ethnic, separatist Lutheran higher education. This willingness to engage the mainstream academic community is shown in the trend among our schools during the twentieth century to join higher education accrediting bodies that expanded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in order to differentiate serious academic communities from lesser schools and programs of study, particularly the so-called Bible colleges.

The transition also meant that Lutheran students no longer felt restricted to the schools birthed by their communities. Young adult Lutherans who, in a prior generation, would have never considered attending a college outside of their community, began to accept admission to other colleges and universities—from flagship public universities to the Ivy League in the second half of the twentieth century. The shift in practices among

“Lutherans began to leave their own ethnic separatism behind, even as Lutheran schools increasingly opened their doors to others.”

Lutheran students occurred within a larger break-down of the barriers of ethnic separatism and prejudice—indeed, legalized institutional racism—that had prevailed in American culture and had prevented many persons from attending colleges outside of their community. This change was most publicly debated and made visible during the third quarter of the twentieth century by the opening of Harvard College to Jewish Americans and by ending the segregation of African Americans into black-only colleges.

In that larger milieu, Lutherans began to leave their own ethnic separatism behind, even as Lutheran schools increasingly opened their doors to others. As a result, the campuses of Lutheran colleges and universities were increasingly populated by persons—students, faculty, and administrators—who were not Lutherans, while Lutherans were often studying and working at non-Lutheran schools. Other economic and social factors, such as a growing professoriate trained in common programs of graduate education, also drove these changes, but addressing these factors is beyond the scope of this essay.

The increased presence of non-Lutherans among students, faculty and administrators compelled the leaders of Lutheran institutions to ask—as noted above—how a college was Lutheran if it was not a college primarily operated by Lutherans for the benefit of Lutherans. The question never arose, of course, when Lutheran colleges functioned as ethnic, separatist institutions; they were simply institutions of the Lutheran community. But what made them Lutheran if they were no longer defined *de facto* by a primary—and nearly exclusive—mission to serve Lutherans?

The initial answer to this question focused on institutional markers to define a Lutheran college. Governance documents at Lutheran colleges and universities began to specify arrangements that had historically been assumed, such as specifying that the president must be a Lutheran. (In its original iteration, bylaws typically specified that the president had to be Lutheran clergy.) Constitutions mandated that certain percentages of governance board members had to be Lutherans or even Lutheran clergy. Admission practices reflected what we would today call affirmative action in favor of Lutheran students, such as the practice of reserving certain scholarships for Lutherans. Hiring practices for faculty and administrators strove to maintain a significant, albeit typically indeterminate, presence of Lutherans on campus.

The creation and policing of institutional markers such as these was the initial response to the questions arising from the opening of our schools to many non-Lutheran students, faculty and administrators. A Lutheran college or university was Lutheran if it maintained these types of institutional markers.

No formal, collective decision by Lutheran schools or by church leadership mandated the use of such institutional factors to definitively identify a Lutheran school. In the face of declining numbers of Lutherans at Lutheran schools, the practice represented an all-too-easy capitulation to the American cultural assumption that an institution exists to serve its founding community and promote its parochial interests.

Americans, and seemingly people everywhere, believe that a religious college cannot be a genuinely a religious college—such as an authentically Lutheran college or university—unless it is parochial in its practices. They also assume that institutional markers are needed in order for school to be properly Lutheran. These cultural assumptions about the necessarily parochial orientation of a religious college also insist that the only alternative for a school is to be secular. As Professor Darrell Jodock has taught us through his essays and presentations, most people cannot accept that a third option is available, namely, the existence of a college or university grounded in a religious tradition that does not exist to serve parochial interests (5-6). Hence, Lutheran leaders assumed that they had to ensure a college or university met parochial standards if significant numbers of non-Lutherans were also involved in the school. Institutional markers demonstrated that the necessary standards for Lutheran parochial interests were being met when parochial standards were no longer culturally enforced *de facto* by a nearly exclusive population of Lutherans on campus.

In the 1970s, many leaders at our schools began to question the adequacy of institutional markers as the way of defining Lutheran higher education. A search began for

“The complexities of institutional issues and other aspects of the relationship between the ELCA and its colleges and universities will always be with us, but the vocation movement points us rightly to an educational ideal as the defining marker of Lutheran higher education.”

a more authentically Lutheran perspective on the mission of higher education that was not rooted in parochial assumptions or norms.

Reclaiming Education for Vocation

The search for a more authentic core and definition for Lutheran higher education is what I have called the vocation movement. Institutional matters, including matters of governance and administration, obviously remain important for our common work. All of your schools, for example, have some type of constitutional connection to the ELCA. Service to students, scholars, and the mission of the ELCA also remain important. But the vocation movement asserts that our common identity as Lutheran schools is based in something else. The vocation movement says that a missional commitment to education for vocation is—and should be acknowledged as—the defining mark of higher education in the ELCA. The complexities of institutional issues and other aspects of the relationship between the ELCA and its colleges and universities will always be with us, but the vocation movement points us rightly to an educational ideal as the defining marker of Lutheran higher education.

What is the ideal of education rooted in the concept of vocation and how is this derived from the Lutheran intellectual tradition? Here I can only offer a short summary. The doctrine of vocation is the Lutheran tradition's label for living life as God intends, namely, living lives that are purposeful, worthy, and open to considering the needs of others as well as one's own and therefore having value both in the eyes of humanity and of God. Lutheran theology teaches that people need not spend their lives trying to curry God's favor because the good news or gospel of Jesus Christ proclaims that God freely accepts persons as they are. Instead of seeking to find or impress God, to be religious is to respond to God's invitation and call to follow Jesus, that is, people are to serve rather than be served, living lives—like Jesus—that serve others and contribute to the common good or, in traditional Lutheran discourse, "serve the neighbor." The word vocation, of course, means calling, and Lutherans believe they are called by God to live lives of service. One way to serve the neighbor is to make opportunities for excellent higher

education available to people of good will, enabling them to also pursue a meaningful life that contributes to the common good through whatever work they undertake. Persons of good will may not and need not affirm with the Lutheran tradition that God in Christ is the one who calls people to lead such lives, but from whatever religious or ethical motivation, all persons of good will can engage in education for vocation at Lutheran schools.

"Persons of good will may not and need not affirm with the Lutheran tradition that God in Christ is the one who calls people to lead such lives, but from whatever religious or ethical motivation, all persons of good will can engage in education for vocation at Lutheran schools."

Gaining consensus about the educational ideal of education for vocation has not been easy, nor has it been achieved among ELCA-related schools. Education for vocation can be a "hard sell." Significant opposition remains to building the public identity of ELCA higher education around the concept of vocation. This is true even at the many institutions which have embraced vocational reflection as an important programmatic aspect of their schools' mission.

Those who object to the vocation movement and its concomitant reaffirmation of the Lutheran identity of their schools are not unreasonable. America is rife with examples of religious authority acting to interfere with a school's free exercise of its mission. Hardly a month passes without *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reporting another silly move in religiously-affiliated higher education, such as the action at a small college in Indiana reported in early July 2015 to limit the teaching of evolution, bringing with that limitation a curtailment of academic freedom. Religious authority has also been a source of more sophisticated attacks against self-determination by the academy, such as the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities effort to seek exemption from gay rights protections. All too often it seems that the

role of religion in American higher education is negative and sectarian, intruding on academic freedom, and substituting other ends for an authentic educational mission. Critics of the vocation movement ask, "Why should the Lutheran tradition and the vocation movement be any different?"

"All too often it seems that the role of religion in American higher education is negative and sectarian, intruding on academic freedom, and substituting other ends for an authentic educational mission."

Despite the challenges, I remain optimistic that the Lutheran ideal of higher education as defined by the vocation movement will find 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 third way for non-sectarian, but authentically religious, higher education. In doing so, we will be remembering and reclaiming one of the foundational movements that produced our North Atlantic academy and the idea of the academy's unfettered freedom to explore the world and engage in teaching and learning. This essay cannot explore the links between Lutheranism and our contemporary North Atlantic academy. Suffice it to say that Lutheran leaders created the influential German educational system in the sixteenth century, and their heirs were directly involved in creating the University of Berlin and the modern research university model in the nineteenth century.

This Lutheran academic tradition, although distorted through decades of ethnic, separatist existence and now not infrequently hidden to many at our schools, continues to reside in the culture of ELCA schools and inform their core commitments. Perhaps the post-modernism sensibility that all persons, communities, and institutions are formed by a particular history and genealogy will make it possible for our generation to reclaim, reaffirm, and overtly practice the great Lutheran intellectual tradition in which ELCA colleges and universities stand.

In doing so, we will be affirming that 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 Lutheran enrollment. Nor are they Lutheran schools because schooling provides a platform for promoting parochial Lutheran interests. They 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. 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.

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FLORENCE D. AMAMOTO

Diversity and Dialogue: Twenty Years and Counting

The 20 years since I gave my presentation “Diversity and Dialogue” at the Vocation of a Lutheran College conference that was printed in the first edition of *Intersections*¹ has been, to use Charles Dickens’ opening line in *A Tale of Two Cities*: “the best of times and the worst of times.” Although I will be discussing the situation at my own college, in the current financial and demographic conditions, I suspect all of our ELCA colleges and universities face similar if not identical challenges. While each college’s challenges and solutions will be unique, growing as they do from an institution’s history, I hope this article can spark thought and dialogue about diversity and identity precisely because I continue to believe that church-related, and particularly ELCA, colleges have an important part to play in our increasingly diverse and divided society and globalized world.

A Changing Demographic, a Changing Mission?

When I wrote my presentation 20 years ago, I felt I needed to make a case for diversity. Having been privileged to attend the first Vocation of a Lutheran College conference before being asked to talk at the third conference, which focused on diversity, I had learned that ELCA schools on the East and West coasts had long grappled with the conflict between diversity and identity, but Upper Midwest colleges like Gustavus had been sheltered by

demographics, with our large Scandinavian and German Lutheran populations. In the mid-1990s when I wrote the original piece, Gustavus was about 70 percent Lutheran and the 6-8 percent figure for diversity in our brochures, I had discovered, was the result of adding the numbers of international students to students of color. Also, a good number of those students of color were Minnesota-raised Korean adoptees, as Minnesota Lutheran churches had helped facilitate these adoptions in the 1970s.

I suspect I no longer need to advocate for recruiting students of color. At Gustavus, our diversity figure now is in the teens, which is still low compared to our coastal sister schools, but it matches the racial and ethnic diversity percentages in Minnesota. We have also been recruiting more students of color from other states, and recent years have seen a substantial increase in the number of international students. Students now hail from the burgeoning communities of Somalis, Hmong, and Tibetans in the Twin Cities and from places like California, Nigeria, and Honduras, as well as from the long-time exchanges with Japan and Sweden. The current administration has made increasing these figures a priority for our admission office.



Florence D. Amamoto is Associate Professor of English and holds the Sponberg Chair in Ethics at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota. She is also the co-President of the Western Literature Association (busily organizing its 2017 conference in Minneapolis) and will begin work this summer on a NetVUE project to develop material to support vocational reflection in multi-faith contexts.

This has, in large part, been driven by demographics. Small liberal arts colleges like Gustavus are tuition dependent and the number of white college-age students is decreasing even in Minnesota. Such demographics have made attracting larger numbers of students of color and first generation students imperative. However, I continue to think that maintaining our Lutheran heritage is important. In the 1990s, much of the thinking about this issue was in terms of threshold numbers of Lutherans to maintain our Lutheran identity (see Mark Wilhelm's essay in the present issue). A recent alternative has been to re-see our founding mission not in its most particular form (i.e. as serving Swedish Lutherans) but in a more general form as serving an immigrant population.

"We need to foster both multicultural competence (and appreciation) *and* moral development in our students."

I would like to argue that it is precisely our Lutheranism that could allow us to reconcile these two seemingly conflicting desiderata. Lutheran theology emphasizes free intellectual inquiry and the importance of dialogue. It is this latter emphasis that also underlines the importance of diversity. Different backgrounds, experiences, and cultures enrich the conversation and give us a more nuanced and layered understanding of the world. An education for the twenty-first century *must* prepare our students to operate comfortably and knowledgeably in our more diverse, globally-linked world. But our world is also faced with issues that are immense and complex, like domestic and global inequality and climate change, that cannot be solved quickly and will be more likely to be addressed by people with a global vision and moral grounding, something church-related colleges are particularly well positioned to provide. We need to foster both multicultural competence (and appreciation) *and* moral development in our students.

If we do increase our percentage of students of color, international students, and first generation students, we also must provide the services needed for them to

thrive. In the early 1990s, the then president of Gustavus Adolphus College appointed a director of diversity. This one position has gradually grown into our Diversity Center, with a Director and Assistant Director, and offices and a meeting space in the student union. For the last ten years we have had a weekly meditation session led by a local Sri Lankan Buddhist monk and have recently established an interfaith space on campus as a result of student initiatives. We have also added a multilingual specialist to our student support staff to work with our ELL students.

Although we provide support services, we are not always as proactive as we should be as many of our students of color and first generation students are loathe to ask for help, too shy or too respectful. Faculty need to be educated not just about implicit bias but also about cultural differences that might hinder students from benefiting from all we offer. Also, we often talk about how much diversity enriches our majority students' learning but ignore the personal hardships many students of color experience. Numbers should be sufficient enough that students feel they have a community where they can relax, feel comfortable and understood, and can have a social life. The college has been good about supporting student organizations like the various culture clubs and the international students club, which provide such a community and leadership opportunities as well as educational experiences for the whole campus. Students flock to Africa Night and the Hmong New Year celebration to learn about the cultures and especially to enjoy the food; we simply need to continue to aspire to move them to real multicultural competence. In like manner, the college should think harder about student needs, for instance, by providing more services for international or out-of-state students who cannot go home during breaks. These students are enriching all of our students' educational experience, often at some personal cost; we need to support them.

Faculty Diversity and Identity

Although in the 1990s I felt I needed to argue for the importance of diversity, today I feel the greater threat is to our college's Lutheran identity and sense of vocation. This threat is coming from both a more diverse faculty and from immense financial pressures, which I will discuss in the next section.

“Although worship may strengthen one’s faith, real faith to me is shown in how one acts in the world. Perhaps the most salient characteristic of our culture is its diversity. As W.E.B. DuBois prophetically foresaw, this has been the major problem of the 20th century. Religiously affiliated colleges allow us to address questions of diversity in a way that goes beyond the easy appreciation of exotic music and food to ask the harder questions: Who is my brother? How shall I treat my neighbor?”

Florence Amamoto
“Diversity and Dialogue” (1996)

Now don’t get me wrong. Today, the faculty at Gustavus is much more diverse and our course offerings are concomitantly richer than in 1996, and I think that is a very good thing. Although in the early 1990s, search committees contained a “diversity representative” to ensure attention was paid to diversity in hiring, some concerned Board of Trustees members also raised the issue of “ethos”—which felt like code for “we need to make sure we are hiring enough Lutherans.” And at one of those early Vocation conferences, the idea of a host-guest model was introduced—which bothered me immensely. Although the argument was that one cannot be a host without having a guest so both are equally important, it still felt like non-Lutherans like me were being told we were outsiders, despite the fact that we were dedicating our lives and careers to Gustavus, whole-heartedly identified with its values, and were being asked to speak and recruit for it. Perhaps I was more sensitive to this because I appreciated Gustavus’ sense of community and inclusiveness after having moved to Gustavus from a Catholic college, where, despite its famous Benedictine hospitality, I knew I would always be an outsider. Fortunately, these ideas did not gain much traction at Gustavus. Gustavus has long had a tradition of inclusion, an attitude re-enforced by its most important president Edgar Carlson. When Christ Chapel was built in the 1960s, he instructed its first chaplain Richard Elvee, that it was to be modeled after the Swedish folk church, that is, it was to be the chapel of the community

rather than narrowly sectarian. The idea of “fit” in hiring may still come up but it is in relation to our being a small liberal arts college in rural Minnesota. Today I think the bigger issue is not the number of non-Lutheran faculty, but the large (and increasing) number of faculty with little knowledge about Gustavus’ Swedish Lutheran heritage.

At the time I wrote my earlier article for *Intersections*, there were many opportunities to intersect with Gustavus’ church-relatedness. Gustavus boasted a robust chapel program under the leadership of its by then locally legendary chaplain Richard Elvee, a charismatic and thought-provoking campus leader. The newly added First-term Seminars for all beginning students were required to involve consideration of questions of values; eventually, we added a director of community service programs. Sparked by initiatives like the start of these Vocation of Lutheran Colleges conferences and the Rhodes Consultation of Church-related Colleges and supported by the administration throughout the 1990s, interested faculty from across the campus regularly organized talks, panels, discussions, and retreats on Gustavus’ Swedish Lutheran heritage, questions of the vocation of church-related colleges, and the meaning of liberal arts education, which were well attended. These efforts were given a boost when in the late 1990s, the Lilly Foundation asked for proposals from church-related colleges to support the theological exploration of vocation at those colleges. Gustavus was among the first group of colleges to receive a Lilly grant and (unusual at the time) used the grant to found a Center for Vocational Reflection. Drawing on Luther’s broad definition of vocation, which includes all aspects of one’s life and on Gustavus’

“Support for the college’s church-related identity is fragile.”

inclusive sense of community and tradition of service, the Center supported a wide range of programs for students, faculty, and staff as it sought to foster an atmosphere where *everyone* would be encouraged to ask the “big questions” about their life purpose—and the college’s.

As I noted in 1996, support for the college’s church-related identity, however, is fragile, and time has only underlined that fact. The chaplain’s office has undergone

several major turnovers since Elvee's retirement, the most recent involving both chaplains being replaced at the same time, thus disrupting any kind of continuity in the chaplain's office. The new chaplains have worked hard to repair the breaches produced by the manner of their hiring and other administrative actions, but this remains a work in progress. Although the college continues its commitment to having daily chapel, with an increasingly diverse student body and faculty, it is not surprising that attendance has shrunk. The Center for Vocational Reflection has disappeared, as have many of the programs it supported. Tellingly, the only regularly scheduled retreats are now writing retreats to help faculty work on articles and books. A session on Gustavus' heritage is still included in first-year faculty orientation offerings; however, attendance at this session is voluntary. There has been an intentional effort to recruit new faculty to attend the annual ELCA Vocations of a Lutheran College conference, but again attendance is voluntary and—what may be the biggest problem—in competition with the numerous pressures faced by faculty.

Those pressures are many and intense. At least at Gustavus, the last 20 years have seen an increasing emphasis on and expectations of publication for tenure and promotion. There has been a roughly 80 percent turnover in the faculty and the new generation of faculty is more likely to live in the Twin Cities (and thus have an hour-plus commute) and to have small children. They are likely to demand more work-life balance (not a bad thing) and thus less likely to attend what they see as "extra" activities without the promise of some compensation. This is especially true because of the increasing busyness of the faculty due to a shrinking faculty size and continued commitment to shared governance. All of this has led to a decreased sense of community and perhaps identity with the college. Small wonder the newer faculty members have not seen learning about the college's history and heritage a priority.

To help remedy this lack of knowledge, our Distinguished Endowed Chair in Lutheran Studies, Marcia Bunge, recruited a stable of Gustavus faculty to write short articles for a soon to be published booklet to introduce new faculty, administrators, staff, and students to our Swedish Lutheran heritage and the way it is manifest at Gustavus today. Faculty orientation is important in part because it helps faculty understand how the mission of the college—its

"We are at a critical juncture in our history. Financial pressures are acute and the pressure toward secularization tremendous and subtle, fueled as it is by valid concerns for excellence and marketability. But if my students...are any indication, what they value most about their education is that these schools are genuinely concerned with the growth of the whole person and actually nurture the intellect, the emotions, and the spirit. The faculty are academically challenging but personally accessible and supportive. I believe that the kind of education of the whole person offered by church-affiliated colleges and universities has an important part to play in our world—and that it is marketable."

Florence Amamoto
"Diversity and Dialogue" (1996)

emphasis on a combination of academic excellence, values exploration, service, and community—grows out of its Lutheran heritage as much as its liberal arts orientation. It also counteracts stereotypes they might have about church-related colleges and affirms Gustavus' inclusiveness, reassuring them that they indeed are a valued and integral part of the institution no matter their background. I would hope that it would also encourage them to reflect on bigger issues of meaning and purpose both for themselves and with their students.

On a brighter note, not only is our faculty more diverse now than it was 20 years ago, but the last five years in particular have seen an increased interest in diverse religions and spiritual practices. Gustavus has long had a Buddhism specialist, but last year the Religion Department received one of the few tenure track lines to add an Islamist. More classes are adding meditation and mindfulness practices in response to increased interest on the part of both faculty and students. As noted earlier Gustavus now has an interfaith space on campus and supports a weekly meditation session led by a Buddhist monk, and a more contemporary student-led worship service has been added to the daily chapel

weekly schedule. One of our current chaplains lived in South Africa for a number of years and brings an interest in global and diversity issues, especially in relation to economic and social justice considerations, as well as an interest in teaching, continuing the crossover between the chaplain's office and the academic program. Now, a few years after the demise of the Center for Vocational Reflection, the other chaplain has been given the task of beginning to investigate devising a program to integrate more vocational reflection into the advising program.

All these initiatives are to the good—but more needs to be done. I am concerned with the decrease in opportunities for faculty to learn about our campus inclusion and practice of Lutheranism and to discuss our vocation as a church-related college. In an increasingly competitive market, inspiring and inspiriting our faculty and being able to articulate our mission and its distinctiveness are only becoming more important.

Money and Mission

Like most colleges in America, Gustavus is dealing with financial issues. In the last five years or so, faculty retirements have accelerated, encouraged by early retirement programs and buyout packages to help fill financial shortfalls. Many of these positions have not been filled or have been filled with temporary part-timers. As noted earlier, with increased publication expectations and tasks like faculty governance and advising parceled out among fewer and fewer tenured and tenure-track faculty, it is not surprising that church-college retreats and other events that allow us to reflect on the value of church-related higher education can easily look like unnecessary extras to administrators and faculty alike. This is especially true when continued financial exigencies lead not just to reductions in the number of faculty but also threats to majors, programs, and departments.

These financial problems are real and not likely to go away soon. In such a cost-cutting environment, it is easy to look first at numbers: which departments have small numbers of majors? Which departments give better (or worse) “bang

for the buck”? How can we best utilize our resources? These are reasonable questions. I would like to argue, however, that this re-evaluation needs to be done with vision as well as statistics. We will never be able to compete with the large research universities or even the much better endowed liberal arts colleges in many areas. If we cut the programs, both academic and co-curricular, that make us distinctive—programs that emphasize service, community, values, and academic excellence that come out of our Lutheran heritage—we will be losing some of the reasons students decide to attend church-related colleges like ours. At the same time, although the millennial generation is large, the number of students in our tradition demographic is shrinking. ELCA colleges need to think about how to best attract and best serve this new, more multicultural generation.

I still believe that church-related colleges and particularly ELCA colleges and universities have a real value in the twenty-first century. The problems I identified in my article 20 years ago have only intensified—the growing gap between haves and have nots has become a chasm; the effects of global warming are becoming more serious; tensions in race relations echo the 1960s; and our political system is polarized and paralyzed. Leaders with moral compasses as well as a wide-ranging understanding of society and the world are needed more than ever. My experience of today's students is that they are much more comfortable with diversity than preceding generations, but they are also searching for that moral compass; they want to make the world a better place. There is no better place for nurturing such students, for producing such leaders, than our Lutheran colleges and universities.

Endnote

1. “Diversity and Dialogue” (see below) was published in the first edition of *Intersections*. The sidebar quotations are taken from that original essay.

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KATHRYN A. KLEINHANS

Distinctive Lutheran Contributions to the Conversation about Vocation



Martin Luther has long been credited—and rightly so—with expanding the narrow, ecclesial understanding of vocation associated with the medieval Catholic church into a broader view of vocation as God’s call for all people within the context of their daily lives and responsibilities.

For Luther, the human vocation, or calling, included not just one’s work but one’s roles within the areas of family life, religious life, and civic life. Luther’s understanding of vocation is so significant that theologian Jürgen Moltmann identifies vocation as “the third great insight of the Lutheran Reformation,” after Word and sacrament (186). But, to ask the perennial Lutheran question, what does this mean? Or, to speak more colloquially, so what?

Over the years, the breadth of Luther’s understanding of vocation was diminished. Later theologians, particularly in Reformed traditions (those coming out of the Calvinist tradition), equated vocation primarily with productive work, thus excluding other major areas of human life from the category of vocation. Some interpreted the “particular calling” of the individual as an expression of the more “general calling” to faith in Christ, thus limiting vocation to Christians. By the twentieth century, the concept of vocation had become largely secularized, with the term “vocational”

designating work that required technical training in contrast with the professions, which required genuine education.

Reviving Vocation

In recent years, two things have helped shape the conversation about vocation in the United States. The first is the widely quoted description of vocation penned by Presbyterian pastor and author Frederick Buechner: “the place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet” (119).

The second is Lilly Endowment’s Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation (PTEV). Over the course of a decade, Lilly Endowment Inc. gave grants totaling over \$218 million to 88 private, church-related colleges and universities. Lilly Endowment did not attempt to promote a uniform understanding of vocation. Rather, it encouraged each institution to define and explore vocation within its own context, informed by its own theological and historical identity.

The good news resulting from these two things is a noticeable resurgence of a rich language of vocation. However, much of the conversation about vocation has been shaped by a somewhat generalized emphasis on finding meaning and purpose in one’s work. This is valuable, to be sure. But a recovery of the distinctive characteristics of the deeper Lutheran understanding of vocation has much to offer—and not just for Lutherans!

Kathryn A. Kleinhans holds the Mike and Marge McCoy Family Distinguished Chair in Lutheran Heritage and Mission at Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa, where she has taught since 1993. She is also an ELCA pastor.

What are those distinctive characteristics? For Luther:

1. All human work is equally valued, not only specifically religious work.
2. The purpose of human work is not primarily to please God but to serve the neighbor.
3. All of us have multiple vocations—over a lifetime, of course, but also within multiple dimensions of human life at the same time.
4. The call to live faithfully in service of the neighbor is not limited to Christians but is part of God’s intent for the whole creation.

Following the conclusion of the vocation grants made directly to colleges and universities, Lilly Endowment provided financial support to the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) for the establishment of an entity called NetVUE, the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate

“Much of the conversation about vocation has been shaped by a somewhat generalized emphasis on finding meaning and purpose in one’s work. This is valuable, to be sure. But a recovery of the distinctive characteristics of the deeper Lutheran understanding of vocation has much to offer—and not just for Lutherans!”

Education. NetVUE’s purpose is to *continue* the conversation about vocation in undergraduate education and to *expand* the conversation well beyond those institutions that had received Lilly PTEV grants.

In 2013, NetVUE launched a Scholarly Resources Project in order to develop and publish resources related specifically to vocation in undergraduate education. A series of three books is envisioned, with the first volume exploring the theology and practice of vocation and higher education in general, the second volume focusing on vocation in the disciplines, including pre-professional areas of study, and

the third volume focusing on vocation from an interfaith perspective. For each volume, scholars were invited into a yearlong project of study, conversation, and writing.

I was privileged to be a participant in the first round of the NetVUE Scholarly Resources Project, which resulted in the publication of *At This Time and In This Place: Vocation and Higher Education*, edited by David S. Cunningham. The process was both intentional and intense. The 13 participants met together on three separate occasions over the span of a year. Prior to our first meeting, we were asked to read three books on vocation. We discussed themes and questions arising from what we had read and from our own work. By the end of the week, we had sketched the outline of a book, detailing the contribution each of us thought we could make. Six months later, we met to discuss rough drafts. After another six months, we met to discuss revised drafts. We asked questions that helped each other clarify our writing, and we identified connections among the themes of the various chapters. The book is organized in four parts: Part One: Vocation in the Current Cultural Context; Part Two: The Contours of Vocation; Part Three: Vocation and Virtue; and Part Four: Vocational Discernment Beyond the Classroom.

I was pleased by the invitation from Jason Mahn, *Intersections* editor, to call your attention to *At This Time and In This Place* and to commend its use in our colleges and universities. As a whole, the book explores vocation both theologically and practically, engaging the perspectives and responsibilities of both faculty and staff in institutions of higher education. It flows well when read as a whole, but individual chapters can also be lifted up for fruitful conversation among specific constituents.

Scholarship on Vocation through a Lutheran Lens

My own chapter, “Places of Responsibility: Educating for Multiple Callings in Multiple Communities,” draws on Martin Luther and on Dietrich Bonhoeffer to develop some distinctive Lutheran emphases for the conversation about vocation in the context of higher education. Far from summarizing my chapter or the book as a whole, I here highlight several themes from my chapter and point to other chapters that illustrate or develop these themes.

Creation and Universality

One of the distinctive elements of Luther's understanding of vocation is that he grounds it in the doctrine of creation rather than the doctrine of redemption, as is more typical in other theological traditions. It is certainly the case that faith can strengthen and guide Christians in living out their various callings in life. Among Lutherans, this is often described as one's baptismal vocation. Yet for Luther, our callings within the dimensions of family, economic, and civic life are part of God's creative design. Humans operate within God's multi-faceted creation as God's stewards, working in and through the created world for the benefit of others. For Luther, this is simply part of how God has created the world to work, and thus it applies to all human creatures, regardless of whether they recognize God as the source of this calling.

"Regardless of the labels our students espouse or eschew, the broad Lutheran understanding of vocation is a way of engaging all of our students with questions of meaning and purpose in life."

This Lutheran understanding of vocation within the context of creaturely existence offers our colleges, universities, and campus ministries an important base from which to reach out to students of other religions or students with no religion at all. We can state without hesitation that all people have callings, not only Christians. All people are called to lives of responsible service within the realms of family, economic, and civic life.

While most of our ELCA colleges and universities were founded to educate members of the founding religious and/or ethnic community, today our campuses are characterized by a wide diversity of students. We have students of all faiths and none. Among the "nones," there are students who are actively asking religious and spiritual questions apart from any organized religious community as well as those who dismiss religious and spiritual concerns as irrelevant.

Regardless of the labels our students espouse or eschew, the broad Lutheran understanding of vocation

is a way of engaging all of our students with questions of meaning and purpose in life. As our students choose majors and prepare for future occupations or professions, we have an opening to talk about what author Sharon Daloz Parks has termed "big questions, worthy dreams." The notion of vocation as how we steward life on our shared planetary home is a way of challenging our students to locate meaning and purpose outside themselves and their immediate environs.

Several chapters in *At This Time and In This Place* explore the structure of call narratives in ways that can open up vocational discernment with young adults apart from a shared religious belief. In "Stories of Call: From Dramatic Phenomena to Changed Lives," Charles Pinches of the University of Scranton identifies common characteristics of call experiences. Too often we focus on the dramatic or even supernatural aspects of call narratives. Pinches helpfully redirects our attention to characteristics of the call experience that can be cultivated in our students and ourselves—characteristics like attentiveness and responsiveness.

In "'Who's There?': The Dramatic Role of the 'Caller' in Vocational Discernment," David Cunningham of Hope College explores the logic that a call implies a caller. Using examples from theater, he explores call as an enacted conversation. Regardless of whether one identifies the caller as God, the existence of a dialogical relationship between called and caller serves to locate the call outside the individual self alone.

In "Vocation and Story: Narrating Self and World," Doug Henry of Baylor University examines the themes of some of the literary and cinematic narratives of our day (e.g., George R.R. Martin's *Game of Thrones* and J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*). Such epics offer framing narratives within which young people can locate the micronarratives of their own lives. But what values do these narratives espouse? Do they convey worldviews dominated by optimism or cynicism? Do they reward self-interest or foster community? How do we, as educators, help our students navigate among these competing narratives?

The creation stories of the major world religions were first told and recorded to help communities make sense of their existence from a larger perspective. Even students who reject the notion of a god tell stories to make sense

of their lives. An understanding of vocation rooted in our common human identity and shared human responsibility can be a resource to help our students tell better stories.

The Given-ness of Multiple Callings

My chapter title signals another distinctive aspect of the Lutheran understanding of vocation: the insistence that we all have multiple callings, not just over the course of a lifetime. We have multiple callings—multiple “places of responsibility”—because we participate simultaneously in multiple communities.

Buechner’s popular description of vocation as “the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet” is rich, but it carries the implication that vocational discernment is about finding one’s personal “sweet spot.” It can also foster a perspective that one stands somehow outside of vocation until one identifies and takes up one’s calling.

While Luther affirmed human freedom to make choices within the framework of our earthly lives and relationships, much about his understanding of vocation in his own context was simply a given. For Luther, all people have callings within the areas of family/household,

“As real as those future callings will one day be for our students, many of us challenge our students to recognize and embrace the reality that one of their primary vocations here and now is the vocation of student.”

religious community, and civil society. (Later Lutherans distinguished the workplace as a fourth area, although Luther himself understood economic work as part of one’s household responsibilities.)

In the realm of family, I may choose whether and whom to marry and whether to have children. However, my relationships as daughter, granddaughter, and sister are simply given—and existed long before I was aware of them. Having chosen to marry, my relationships as daughter-in-law and sister-in-law came as givens with my choice of spouse. At issue is not whether I am called

to these relationships but how I live faithfully within these callings, even (and especially when) they conflict. How do I love the neighbors who are given to me within these family relationships? Luther’s understanding of vocation in service of neighbor reminds me that I am called to do so for their own sake, regardless of whether it contributes to “my deep gladness.”

This recognition of the given-ness of our vocations within our individual contexts calls our attention to vocation as a present reality, not a future one. This emphasis is particularly important for the work we do as educators. Much of the marketing of higher education, in tune with the consumer expectations of students and their parents, focuses on the future: What does a college or university education prepare you to do? What kinds of jobs does a particular course of study open for you? As real as those future callings will one day be for our students, many of us challenge our students to recognize and embrace the reality that one of their primary vocations here and now is the vocation of student. Education is more than a means to an economic end.

The Lutheran recognition of the simultaneity of multiple callings is also a challenge to educators. If we take seriously our own call to educate “the whole student,” we are challenged to recognize that our students’ callings outside the classroom also have value. Many students struggle between the demands of school and family. In my experience, this is particularly so for first-generation college students. Much as we rightly call our students to take seriously their present calling as students, we need to recognize that their legitimate callings as son or daughter, sibling, etc. do not cease for the years they are enrolled in college or university. Insisting that academic coursework trumps all other obligations is neither helpful nor likely to be effective.

The developmental task for our students is to learn how to negotiate these overlapping and conflicting responsibilities in new ways as their life circumstances change. As educators committed to a broad understanding of vocation, we have the opportunity to support them in this work.

Several chapters in *At This Time and In This Place* engage the competing claims of the multiple communities to which our students belong. In “Commitment and Community: The Virtue of Loyalty and Vocational Discernment,”

Hannah Schell of Monmouth College draws on American philosopher Josiah Royce's understanding of loyalty as a virtue. Using Greek life as one example, Schell explores the tensions that can arise between loyalty to self and loyalty to community. She also addresses the challenge of helping students reflect critically on those groups or causes that may not be worthy of their loyalty.

In "Rituals, Contests, and Images: Vocational Discernment beyond the Classroom," Quincy Brown, former Vice President for Spiritual Life and Church Relations at LaGrange College, also considers co-curricular activities as a locus for vocational exploration. Studies have shown that student athletes are less likely than other students to have participated in distinct vocational discernment programs. Brown looks at athletic participation itself as an arena within which values can be formed and mentoring communities can be developed and strengthened. He does not shy away from naming problems such as alcohol abuse. Instead of washing our hands of campus "bad boys" and their behavior, he challenges us to offer our students an alternative vision of a good and meaningful life.

Recognizing the legitimacy of the multiple callings that our students are negotiating should also heighten our appreciation for the role of non-faculty educators in the process of vocational discernment. Student life personnel, coaches, counselors, and student employment supervisors also influence how well our students navigate the challenges of their college years. We fulfill our own callings as educators more faithfully and serve our students more effectively when we collaborate across the line separating faculty and staff.

Simultaneously Called and Constrained

In other writing on the Lutheran understanding of vocation, I explored what some colleagues have described as "the dark side" of vocation (see Kleinhans). When all of our roles and responsibilities are seen as divinely authorized callings, the opportunities for failure and guilt are compounded. From a theological perspective, we need to acknowledge the damage that sin inflicts on and in our vocations and to recognize the judgment of the law.

In "Vocational Discernment: A Pedagogy of Humanization," Caryn Riswold of Illinois College (the other Lutheran contributor to the volume) names the challenge

that dehumanizing systems of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism pose to vocation and to our work as educators. The call to steward God's creation and to serve our neighbors is mightily hindered by the realities of structural sinfulness, which defends privilege at the expense of the other. Teaching our students to name and work towards dismantling these systems of oppression is challenging; our students value independence and choice so highly that they resist the claim that they are captive participants in systems outside their control.

Bill Cavanaugh of DePaul University also takes up the challenge of constraints in a chapter titled: "Actually, You Can't Be Anything You Want (And It's a Good Thing, Too)." Cavanaugh argues that engaging matters of vocation well can be an importance corrective to the consumer-driven "tyranny of choice."

An Invitation

I have tried here to provide readers of *Intersections* with a tasting menu. It is my hope that this has whetted your appetite to read and discuss the volume with your colleagues. While vocation is currently experiencing a resurgence in the discourse of higher education, the distinctive Lutheran understanding of vocation in which our institutions are rooted has much to offer the conversation. Join in!

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KRISTEN GLASS PEREZ

Moving Forward by Looking Back: Lutheran Vocation as Foundation for Interfaith Ministry

The majority of my professional career has been spent alongside young adults within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in its various expressions, networks, and related institutions. The beginning of the cohort that I started working with is now at the end stages of the demographic. To say that I have been given much by this generation would be an understatement. My own “Generation X” sensibilities have been opened up, expanded, and embraced by this group of people who, through their generosity, have shown me what it means to be an accompanist rather than a composer and a conversation partner rather than a soliloquist. It should be no surprise, then, that most of what I have learned about interfaith understanding I have learned from accompanying college students as their pastor.

In the 2012-13 academic year, I began my call as co-chaplain at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois. “Interfaith Understanding” was assigned to me as a part of my chaplaincy profile, and I looked forward to easing my way into learning more about this topic. It had been my plan to first research all that I could about the different religious traditions of students on our campus and then form a student interfaith council. I was going to think about it first, and then work on the people part. As often happens, it didn’t work out that way.

Rev. Kristen Glass Perez is Chaplain and Director of Vocational Exploration at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois. Previously, she served as the inaugural Director for Young Adult Ministry for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Most recently, she wrote the forward for the book *Major in Happiness; Debunking the College Major Fallacies* (2016, Business Experts Press).

Learning from Students

The first week of classes (August 2012) was the week of the mass shooting at the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin. Before I could make any sort of plan to respond to this tragedy, I received what was maybe my first ever “invitation

to edit” a shared Google Document. Student leaders from various groups on campus immediately planned that we would hold a vigil service as a response to this shooting and, to my surprise, they knew what my role would be. As described in one of the case studies within *Engaging Others, Knowing Ourselves: A Lutheran Calling in a Multi-Religious World*, my colleague Rev. Richard Priggie had well prepared our students for planning and experiencing interfaith “worship” together. In clergy terminology, my role would be to “preside,” not preach, at the vigil.

Having never done this type of vigil before, I was nervous, but of course I said yes. Admittedly, the misguided question I wondered about was: “Do we have any Sikh Students on campus and how will I figure that out?” Without question, we would hold the vigil, no matter what, as we grieved as a



community about this tragic hate crime. Yet I still worried about identifying Sikh students and/or making them feel uncomfortable. As it turns out, I need not have worried. Indeed, we did have Sikh students on our campus and student vigil leaders were swift and adept at inviting both secular and religious Sikh students who were willing to stand and share their stories at the vigil. Some, like me, were experiencing their first week on campus. In a very real way, it was my first “on the ground” experience with twenty-first century grassroots organizing and networking among college students. What then was my role as a campus chaplain to be?

“In a very real way, it was my first ‘on the ground’ experience with twenty-first century grassroots organizing and networking among college students. What then was my role as a campus chaplain to be?”

As Lutheran Christians well know, we cannot merely think our way into relationship, and I quickly learned that interfaith understanding was not just a topic. The Incarnation brings us into a full, robust and embodied relationship with all of creation. We also know, however, that we cannot be in relationship without doing some measure of careful thinking about who we are and how we are called into relationship with others. I didn’t have to worry about what my role would be at the vigil. The students mentored me into my role, which was to show up and “do life” alongside those in the community, whoever they might be. I had to think about what it would mean to “preside” in this community as it was, not as it used to be or might be in the future. From that moment on, interfaith understanding has been a journey of co-mentoring for me and for our campus. It would be an undue burden to place on our students to expect that they should teach us everything about the traditions from which they come. It also would be unjust not to dig deep into our own roots as Lutheran colleges and provide time, space, programs, and academic rigor through which to engage in these questions of identity.

Both Interfaith and Lutheran

Engaging Others, Knowing Ourselves brings deeply-rooted Lutheran theology and pedagogy to bear on its many different case studies and voices. The book offers a combination of practical tips, theological reflections, and historical analyses about interfaith understanding. In this way, it provides a helpful resource for multiple audiences. In a campus setting, it is appropriate for a faculty book discussion group, classroom text, or as a resource for work with students in co-curricular settings. For congregations, this book will provide an accessible entry point for conversations about interfaith understanding. I would even go so far as to suggest its appropriateness for use with confirmands as a helpful way to think about what it means to be Lutheran in today’s diverse world.

The book speaks with a clear and prophetic voice through the section entitled “Millennial Voices.” Rebecca Cardone, a California Lutheran graduate, describes the process of developing an interfaith student organization on campus. She writes: “We decidedly were not a club at all, to avoid drawing a distinction between members and others, or between students and stakeholders. The Interfaith Allies pointedly partnered with existing organizations and infiltrated them with intentionally interfaith angles from the ‘bottom up’” (166). As I read this section, I couldn’t help but imagine what it would look like if all parts of the ELCA leaned deeply into this beautiful description of what it means to be in community with our neighbors. What would a church without a distinction between “members” and “non-members” look like? A somewhat blurry vision, indeed.

“Interfaith understanding is perhaps one of the greatest gifts that Lutheran higher education offers not only to our students, but to the church at large.”

To help the church see more clearly, we might come to embrace interfaith understanding as a mode of praxis of the twenty-first century Lutheran college. ELCA colleges and universities are uniquely called and positioned to

help the church live into its relationship with a multi-faith world. Interfaith understanding is perhaps one of the greatest gifts that Lutheran higher education offers not only to our students, but to the church at large. It expands our mission to educate students for lives of leadership and service. It also helps articulate what a lived relationship looks like with our neighbors, both religious and non-religious. *Engaging Others, Knowing Ourselves* invites the reader into a framework of lived theology. I am convinced there is no other way to engage an interfaith world.

Interfaith Youth Core (IFC), the leading interfaith organization working nationally with college campuses, has identified nine leadership practices of a “vanguard interfaith campus.” They are: identity and mission,

“There would be great benefit in developing a common language within the ELCA context for how interfaith understanding is both an expression of vocation and a disposition that strengthens the church as a whole.”

campus-wide strategy, public identity, respect and accommodations for religious identity, academic priority, staff and faculty competence and capacity, student leadership, campus-community partnerships, and assessment cycle (Patel, Baxter, and Silverman). There could be some value in connecting each of these leadership practices to a Lutheran theological understanding. In the same way that ELCA colleges and universities worked as a cohort group to develop and assess vocational exploration programs in the early and mid-2000s (see Owen), there would be great benefit in developing a common language within the ELCA context for how interfaith understanding is both an expression of vocation and a disposition that strengthens the church as a whole.

Lutheran colleges and universities might also draw on networks for vocational exploration such as the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE) as we seek to build similar networks around interfaith understanding. Such networking would make connections between the many areas our colleges have in common,

including academic disciplines, chaplaincy, student life, athletics, career development, and vocational exploration programs. By doing this, we would be able to link interfaith programming to key learning outcomes of each institution. An ELCA network that could articulate its interfaith position well would help all expressions of the church with its articulation of what it means to be Lutheran in a multi-religious world.

College Campus: A Global Community

Inspired by the statement from the Luther College community in Decorah, Iowa (“Luther”), Augustana College produced a statement in December, 2015 in support of the Muslim community on our campus and beyond. The statement was printed in large poster form and signed by hundreds of students, faculty, and staff; it was then presented to the two Muslim Communities in the Quad Cities. The statement reads:

As an Augustana College community that includes people of many different religious and non-religious identities, we the undersigned stand in support, solidarity and friendship with Muslims on our campus, in the Quad Cities, in the United States and in the world. We reject calls for discrimination, separation, hateful speech and violence based on religious belief. As articulated in The Five Faith Commitments of Augustana College, “Augustana commits to making our campus and the wider world a more livable place for all persons by loving and serving the neighbor and by acting against injustice and intolerance.” We are thus compelled to be a part of an interfaith movement because of our unique heritage, identity, and core values as a college rooted in the Lutheran expression of the Christian faith.

At Augustana and many other ELCA campuses, interfaith engagement takes place both through the academic curriculum and through robust student organizations such as Campus Ministries, Interfaith Understanding, Hillel, Muslim Student Association (MSA). This rich intersection between the curricular and co-curricular was reflected in a recent Symposium that included sessions on social justice from the perspectives of various religious traditions. Examples

of student-led sessions included “Tikkun Olam-A Jewish Take on Social Justice,” and “Interfaith Dialogue: Muslim Faith Stories.” The program also featured a keynote presentation by Bassam Tariq, a TED fellow and director of the acclaimed film, *These Birds Walk*.

These contributions from a religiously diverse campus and global community have enriched the experiences for students, faculty, and staff. They have also given hope to our community that we might live together as people who are friends always, not only during a time of tragedy. In a similar way, *Engaging Others, Knowing Ourselves* suggests that interfaith literacy and understanding are not only attainable but are also critical skills and dispositions for the whole church. In this book, I see a glimpse of what it would look like if the ELCA were known for its ability to prepare all people to live, work, serve, and play as friends and neighbors in a diverse and changing world.

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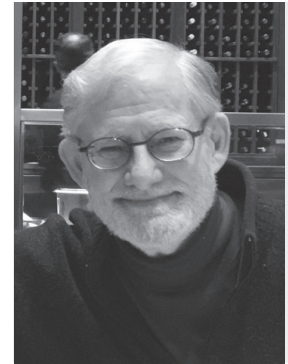
Semper Reformanda: Lutheran Higher Education in the Anthropocene

I believe that God has created me together with all that exists.

Martin Luther, *Small Catechism*

A constituency able and willing to fight for the long-term human prospect must be educated into existence.

David Orr, *Earth in Mind*



Identity is a process, not a possession.¹ It is always undergoing dynamic change because of conditions in space and time. Traditions and institutions are no exception. Luther and Melancthon understood this well. That is why one of the watch phrases of the Reformation was *Semper Reformanda*—to always be reforming—whether that be in the church, society, or education. Change, then, is not something to be mourned or simply obstructed but rather embraced so that a trajectory may be channeled and developed in consonance with tradition. This has been the challenge and opportunity to be found in Lutheran higher education, especially over the last twenty years. While acknowledging the changes in society, learning styles, administrative structures, and faculty preparation, the ELCA has also been intentionally involved in supporting programs to reform the Lutheran expression of higher education alongside all the other changes in higher

education. This effort has not simply been a retrieval or reprimation process, for that would ignore the intrinsic changes of our time. Rather, Lutheran higher education has brought current academic life into dialogical interaction with the Lutheran tradition. Among such interaction has been an intentional effort to interpret higher education as preparation for the expression of vocation in the context of Christian freedom. It has been an effort to differentiate vocation from vocational training and to place career preparation within the wider context of service to society, world, and self.

This essay begins by briefly enumerating the initiatives that the ELCA has undertaken over the last twenty years to retrieve the Christian understanding of vocation in higher education. It then turns to the future and the directions that Lutheran higher education might (must?) take in the coming decades. Indeed, Lutheran higher education has been reforming, as the following sections will bear out. It must

Ernest Simmons is Professor of Religion and Director of the Dovre Center for Faith and Learning at Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota. An ordained ELCA pastor, he is author of the book *Lutheran Higher Education* (Augsburg Fortress, 1998) and a book on the Trinity entitled *The Entangled Trinity: Quantum Physics and Theology* (Fortress, 2014). He also currently serves as President of the Editorial Council of the scholarly journal *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*.

continue to do so if it is to have any constructive contributions to make to our rapidly changing world. Our focus question will be: "In what ways should Lutheran higher education on vocation be revised to include the fact that we are living in a natural world massively impacted by human behavior?" The contention of this article is that Lutheran liberal arts education should become environmental and sustainability

"In what ways should Lutheran higher education on vocation be revised to include the fact that we are living in a natural world massively impacted by human behavior?"

education in addition to education in whatever major a student selects. Through the theological and ethical exploration of vocation, Lutheran colleges and universities can help prepare students to become sustainability leaders in the critical areas of society, ethics, ecology, and economics. They must do so in a geological age in which the climate and environment are dominated by human influence and control—an epoch that geologists call the Anthropocene.

Re-Rooting Lutheran Higher Ed

Starting in the early 1990s, Dr. Robert Sorenson and later Dr. Leonard Schultz, Executive Directors of the Division for Higher Education and Schools, and Dr. Jim Unglaube, Director of Higher Education in the ELCA, began a series of initiatives to address the retirement of a major segment of college faculty who had entered teaching during the sixties. By and large these persons had been the pillars of the college's identity and spokespersons for the church-related tradition of the college, and they were now leaving. An intentional effort was needed, therefore, to help educate the new ranks of faculty, administration, and staff into the tradition. Over the next several years, and with the additional encouragement of presidents Dr. Paul Dovre of Concordia College and Dr. Mel George of St. Olaf College, a number of nationwide programs were launched to address this need. These initiatives included:

1. **The Vocation of a Lutheran College Conference.** This annual summer conference helped introduce new faculty and administrative staff to the Lutheran tradition in higher education. It continues to the present, meeting in recent years at Augsburg College, Minneapolis.
2. **Lutheran Academy of Scholars Summer Seminar.** Patterned after NEH summer seminars, these two week summer seminars (typically at Harvard University and chaired by Ron Thiemann), assisted faculty in connecting faith and learning in their respective academic fields and in producing publishable articles and books. (Because of budget and other considerations, this program was discontinued in 2012.)
3. **Intersections.** The establishment of the present journal encouraged reflection on Lutheran higher education and disseminated informative essays on conference and additional themes.
4. **Other scholarship on Lutheran Higher Education.** Among others, two books directly sought to lift up the intellectual tradition informing Lutheran colleges and universities. *Lutheran Higher Education: An Introduction*, by Ernest Simmons (Augsburg Fortress, 1998), provided historical, theological, and pedagogical background of the Lutheran tradition of higher education to assist faculty, board members, and other interested parties. *The Gift and Task of Lutheran Higher Education*, by Tom Christenson (Augsburg Fortress, 2004), addressed issues of why a college or university should be "Lutheran" and what the continued robustness of Lutheran higher education has to contribute to the church and broader public arena.²
5. **Faith and Learning Centers.** Many colleges, starting with Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, with the Dovre Center for Faith and Learning, established faculty/staff development centers to direct mentoring programs as well as research and writing projects, conferences, heritage travel seminars, and workshops in faith and learning in order to stimulate campus wide discussions on vocation.
6. **Lilly Endowment Grants.** Large grants from the Lilly Endowment critically assisted many ELCA campuses in their "Exploration of Vocation." These significant grants raised awareness, discussion, and preparation for and reflection on vocation, the impacts of which continue to this day.

7. **Thrivent Fellows for Administrative Leadership.** Begun in 2002 under the leadership of Paul Dovre with sponsorship by the ELCA Council of College Presidents and financial support by Lutheran Brotherhood/Thrivent, this week long training seminar informed future academic administrators about academic management within the context of Lutheran higher education. There are now over 150 fellows serving in a variety of roles and places.

“One change, however, is so significant that it threatens to subsume and render insignificant all these other changes, as well as the concerted efforts of Lutheran colleges and universities to respond to them creatively and collaboratively.”

What we have seen over the last twenty years, then, is a concerted effort to bring the richness of the Lutheran tradition to bear on the changing circumstances of higher education. Such changes have only accelerated with globalization, dispersed learning, social media and other new technologies, increased assessment, changing demographics, and economic realities. One change, however, is so significant that it threatens to subsume and render insignificant all these other changes, as well as the concerted efforts of Lutheran colleges and universities to respond to them creatively and collaboratively. I have in mind the potentially catastrophic environmental changes that human societies are and will be facing with ever greater intensity.

Repurposing the Liberal Arts and Lutheran Learning

Several of the world’s leading geologists and climatologists coauthored “The Anthropocene: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives.” It begins thus: “The human imprint on the global environment has now become so large and active that it rivals some of the great forces of Nature in its impact on the functioning of the Earth System” (842). The article assesses the appropriateness of naming our current geological epoch the “Anthropocene” to signify such human

impact. The anthropological is now having as much impact on the planet as the geological and meteorological. The planet is no longer dark at night, just one indication of global human impact. Our focus question: “In what ways should Lutheran higher education on vocation be revised to include the fact that we are living in a natural world massively impacted by human behavior?” can now be broken down into two more explicit questions: “What is the role of liberal arts education in such a changed context?” and “What resources in the Lutheran tradition can contribute to preparing our students to become effective sustainability leaders?” Let us turn to the first question.

What is the role of liberal arts education in such a changed context?

Here I think re-envisioning of the classical purpose of liberal arts education will serve us well. In the Greek city-state the purpose of such education was to prepare a person for thoughtful and responsible citizenship in the polis. This meant having knowledge of the fundamental “liberating” arts of Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric, which during the middle ages became known as the *Trivium*, literally, “where the three roads meet.” Whereas grammar teaches the mechanics of language, logic is the “mechanics” of deliberation and analysis as well as the process of identifying erroneous arguments. Rhetoric is the application of language in order to persuade the listener or the reader. While the *Trivium* is later supplemented by the *Quadrivium* of arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy, for our purposes these three basic “liberating arts” are the most important.

One need only look at the recent dissembling discussions of climate change to see the importance of these three arts. To be able to name something clearly and to ferret out the illogical and fallacious arguments that have been made are survival skills for society, especially today. We have to prepare our students to be able to critique and dismantle such obstructionist thinking and call out the powers that have a vested interest in promoting such arguments. In their book *Merchants of Doubt*, Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway indicate that by supporting fringe scientific research, the energy industry has engaged in the same tactics of sowing uncertainty about climate change that the cigarette industry did for decades concerning the carcinogenic character of cigarette smoking and nicotine addiction. As horrible as the loss of life from smoking is, it is still on an individual

basis. Climate change, however, is not. Whole cultures and nations are at stake as well as the viability of human civilization itself. We no longer have time for such distracting and fallacious arguments. We must prepare our students to think clearly and critically in order to cut through obfuscation and disinformation as well as to creatively formulate viable responses. We must enable them to communicate clearly, effectively and persuasively in their social context. Along with grammar and logic, the art of rhetoric is as needed

“As the liberating arts were once used to prepare persons for citizenship in the Greek polis, we must now prepare our students for citizenship on the planet, that is, for planetary citizenship.”

today as in the ancient polis. All this is to say that a liberal arts education is one of the best educations to prepare students for sustainability leadership in the coming decades. As the liberating arts were once used to prepare persons for citizenship in the Greek polis, we must now prepare our students for citizenship on the planet, that is, for planetary citizenship. We turn now to the second question:

“What resources in the Lutheran tradition can contribute to preparing our students to become effective sustainability leaders?”

For Luther the purpose of education was to preserve the Gospel and equip the priesthood of all believers for vocations of serving others within the world. Today this understanding of vocation must be enlarged to also include the natural environment. In the first article of his Small Catechism, Luther observed, “I believe that God has created me together with all that exists.” Luther understood our own experience of createdness to be our most intimate experience of creation and a window onto all the rest. He had a deep love for creation and often referred to the divine presence within it—ourselves included—as *larvae Dei*, the masks of God.

For Luther, God is present in, with, under, and through the natural world. The world is full of God and God fills it, yet God is not limited or circumscribed by it. In essence, this is a panentheistic position where God is in the world but more

than the world. Such an understanding provides an excellent theological foundation for the development of an ecological and sustainable understanding of vocation on our campuses. While much of the Lutheran ecclesial tradition tended to emphasize Christology in regard to justification and human salvation (particularly during the period of Lutheran Scholasticism), Luther himself also saw the justifying grace of God as acting to restore nature and the nature-human relationship. Humans stand before God (*Coram Deo*) by grace through faith and before humanity and the world (*Coram Hominibus* and *Coram Mundo*) through loving service, making one’s faith active in love as St. Paul enjoins in Galatians 5:6. Just as human relationships are subject to distortion, as persons become incurvatus in se (curved in upon themselves), so too can humanity’s relation with nature become so distorted. Human attitudes toward nature have too often been to see it merely as a natural resource for human use. This curves nature into our own sinful self-preoccupation and promotion of self.

Fast forward a couple hundred years: From the beginning of the Enlightenment through most of the twentieth century it was common to speak of a separation between fact and value, science and religion, nature and history. Nature, as object, had no intrinsic development but was understood through scientific analysis as an objective, value-free inquiry where both human and religious purpose were considered to be irrelevant. History, on the other hand, was the realm of subjective human purpose and religious value in which civilizations rose and fell, charting their course in dominating an impersonal world. While there are many scholars today who still affirm such a separation, many if not most have come to understand it as a false dichotomy. In *Exiles from Eden*, Mark Schwen discusses what Parker Palmer perceives as the Enlightenment scheme of “objectivism.” Palmer observes that epistemologies (ways of knowing) have moral trajectories; they are not morally neutral but morally directive (Schwehn 25). Ways of knowing necessarily include ways of valuing, and so a complete separation of fact and value is not possible. The challenge today is to retain the achievements of objective reflection without perpetuating its limitations. Nature need not be defined simply as “natural resources” for human use but rather as having its own intrinsic integrity.

Religion has a particular view of the world; it is not limited so “subjective” value. On the other side, science

requires values for the consideration of its applications. History would not exist without nature; nature itself has a history. In *Earth in the Balance*, Albert Gore asserts that humanity has always connected history to nature through technology and its impact upon the surrounding environment. Many civilizations have fallen because of the environmental destruction they wreaked upon their supporting nature (see also Diamond). Technology is a prime example of the intentional connecting of fact and value. The values intrinsic in scientific research are given embodied expression through technological application (Ferre). Today we see this with unprecedented clarity. With this clarity comes an increased responsibility to reconnect fact and value and steward the relation. Such a reconnection would go a long way toward preparing for sustainability leadership.

Divine Entanglement and Hope

When one studies the scholarly literature on the diverse changes taking place during our time, it is easy to become apocalyptic and feel that we may be living in the “final days” when nothing can be done. Such belief is stultifying and undermines the very will to change that is necessary for human and planetary survival. Make no mistake, the planet and some form of nature will go on for billions of years to come. The question is whether that will be with or without human presence. The planet has already existed far longer without humanity than it has with it and, given human impact, some suggest that it may be better off without it. If we succeed in making the planet uninhabitable for our species as well as many others, will that have demonstrated that the great brain was not a positive survival characteristic? In the face of such negativity one needs to find a basis for hope that can inspire constructive and creative change. One of the gifts of Christian faith is hope in the face of suffering and death. Environmental education must be supplemented with religious and ethical education that provides hope in the face of impending cultural and climatological change. Fostering hope and feasible practical responses will provide a foundation for our graduates to become sustainability leaders in their future communities.

It is precisely here that I think theology has a global role to play. I will speak briefly from the Christian,

trinitarian understanding of the nature of God, but other theistic and nontheistic traditions have critical roles to play in their respective geographies and cultures.

Within a Christian framework, human hope, along with salvation, ultimately rests upon the grace of God alone. This places human response and action in a transcendent context which does not rely entirely upon human motivation. Indeed, as I have argued in my recent book, *The Entangled Trinity: Quantum Physics and Theology*, God is “entangled” with creation in general and humanity in particular through the work of Christ and the animating power of the Holy Spirit. In quantum physics, research has demonstrated that two particles (such as paired photons) are entangled once they have interacted. When one is measured the condition of the other is immediately known. Particles are still connected at the level of the quantum vacuum no matter how far apart they are separated in the physical universe. This means that at a deep, ontological level there is interrelationality and connectivity throughout the universe. Appropriating this understanding for theology affirms that God is interrelated to everything in the cosmos and that there is a reciprocity of affect. What we do affects God as well as God affecting us. We are in a reciprocal, if unequal,

“Particles are still connected at the level of the quantum vacuum no matter how far apart they are separated in the physical universe. This means that at a deep, ontological level there is interrelationality and connectivity throughout the universe.”

ontological relationship with God. The divine is present in everything (radically immanent) and everything is present in the divine, while God still transcends it—thus the “panentheism” described above. Theologically, Luther would affirm such a dynamic, interdependent relationship. This entangled intimacy can be the ground for hope. It provides a more inclusive vision as well as animated action for constructive change.

Conclusion

Our students come to us formed by mass media merchandizing, social media patterning, and material consumption and waste. Our contemporary society encourages a person to be preoccupied with the self and the satisfaction of its desires. To be liberated from such a condition is one of the main objectives of a liberal arts education. Only with a changed vision can we begin to talk about a viable foundation for a sustainable future. It is in light of what might be that one can become empowered to challenge and change what is. The green grace of creation intersects the red grace of redemption upon the wood of the cross, making possible the blue grace of hope in the Spirit. We need a grace from beyond the self to reform the self and provide both forgiveness and hope. Judgment is easy and cynicism breeds self-defeat. What is needed is reconciliation that motivates beyond the despair and hopelessness that inevitably result when coming to terms with one's own responsibility for destructive actions. We are becoming aware of our collective environmental responsibility and now need forgiving, motivational grace to transcend self-interest for constructive change.

The Christian tradition, among others, can provide such grace-filled hope that can sustain one in the face of enormous challenges. As Viktor Frankl observed in his classic work, *Man's Search for Meaning*, "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way" (66). Lutheran higher education must foster a realistic but hopeful attitude towards the future and the systemic changes that we are all facing. Accordingly, environmental education for sustainability must be supplemented with religious and ethical education that provides hope in the face of impending cultural and climatological change. As the quote by David Orr at the beginning of this article states, we must "educate into existence" leaders for sustainability that can undertake this task with grace and hope as well as knowledge and conviction (Orr 126). Lutheran liberal arts education—a tradition founded on change and encouraging continued reform—is up to such a task if we undertake it as educators and administrators. Fostering hope and feasible practical responses, Lutheran higher education could provide a

foundation for our graduates to become sustainability leaders in their future communities and engage the challenges of the twenty-first century, the epoch of the Anthropocene. This would be education *semper reformanda!*

Endnotes

1. Some of the material in this essay was published as "Lutheran Education in the Anthropocene," in *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 55.1 (March 2016): 2-5, and in "Liberal Arts for Sustainability: Lutheran Higher Education in the Anthropocene," in *Eco-Reformation: Grace and Hope for a Planet in Peril*, ed. Jim Martin-Schramm and Lisa Dahill (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, forthcoming Fall, 2016).

2. The editor and publisher of *Intersections* are also planning to publish a book collecting some of the most influential essays appearing in the journal over the past 20 years. (Forthcoming from Lutheran University Press, 2016.)

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