

Called to *Civitas*: From Burning Bush to Jerusalem The Cliff Note Version

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After Moses chatted with the burning bush, he gathered the Israelites and led them to the wilderness, where they spent forty years and four Old Testament books talking about what they were going to do next. Mostly they spent their time compiling a policy manual--which turned out to be full of abominations. When they finally reached the promised land, they spent a few more generations encountering diversity, since this "land flowing with milk and honey" was also "the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite."

Unfortunately, these encounters did not exactly produce a model of a diverse community that Augsburg would wish to imitate, consisting, as they did, of brutally slaughtering the Canaanite, and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. But they did something more congenial to Augsburg's mission when they established Jerusalem as the center of the promised land. Ultimately the Israelites were called to Jerusalem. Their vocation was a city.

Augsburg also has been called to a city.

But even though a city is a real place, it is also an ideal that expresses eternal longings. In western tradition, Jerusalem is a type of the ideal human community—the City of God, one might say—and Augustine did say. In *Augsburg 2004*, the city is a metaphor for "the sort of world that the College's educational mission is intended to create."

My theme today is *civitas*, a Latin word for city. But *Civitas* means more than a specific city. It also means citizenship—a commonwealth or union of citizens. It embraces civility and community. In exploring how the theme *civitas* has been realized, complicated, extended, and at times challenged by our experience of the last few years, my paper looks at four areas.

The first of these is the **curriculum and co-curriculum**.

Since the completion of 2004, education for citizenship has become extremely trendy—and my paper has pages of footnotes to prove it.

At Augsburg, however, education for citizenship is not a trend—it's our history. The vision document gave us an occasion to recognize and renew our historical commitment to creating good citizens, and the last few years have produced a number of curricular initiatives with that aim in mind.

Today, in part, is an occasion for bragging. And certainly we can brag about what we've accomplished in the area of service learning. We're good--so good that recently *U.S. News and World Report* ranked Augsburg as one of the top twenty colleges and universities in the nation in the category "service learning". Sometimes maintenance is better than innovation—this is a case where our challenge is to maintain and improve what we are already doing. The new Augsburg Core in particular provides such an opportunity since its objective is "to prepare students to become effective, informed, and ethical citizens" through a curriculum that expresses Augsburg's core educational values.

A curriculum that prepares students for citizenship must attend to what it means to live and work in a diverse world, and to cultivate students' awareness of and sense of responsibility for the global community.

One of the greatest risks—and opportunities—in the new Augsburg Core Curriculum will be to replace the one-course "inoculation" intercultural awareness requirement of our previous general education with an infusion model, in which attention to diversity and global awareness becomes the responsibility of the entire curriculum—and the co-curriculum, and the entire institutional culture.

If we implement this model well, we will among the national leaders in general education reform.

But first we need to agree what we mean by diversity and global awareness—and the learning outcomes that we deem essential.

Beyond the curriculum, we need to develop what J. Herman Blake, calls “a pedagogy of diversity”—that will be practiced by both faculty and staff.

The second part of my paper deals with what I call the “**para-curriculum**,” the extension of our educational mission beyond the campus through efforts outside of the formal curriculum.

In May 2002 the Humphrey Institute published criteria describing “civically engaged” colleges or universities. The list contained some familiar-sounding items: establishing ties with K-12, and offering programs for the public as well as the college’s own students. From its collaboration with charter schools to other programs that it offers in the city, Augsburg can indeed claim to be an engaged campus—and the new brochure on Civic Engagement at Augsburg will give you a more complete picture of just how much Augsburg is doing.

We should encourage civic engagement, but at same time need to consider how best to commit the resources of the college. Even the Humphrey Institute cautions that while new programs should be “launched with enthusiasm,” they also should be “tracked with realism and attention to effectiveness.”

By what processes should we govern and manage the para-curriculum? Who reviews it? How do we decide which ideas to develop? And how can these initiatives arrive at the center of the college consciousness and gain a truly “Augsburg identity?” To the extent that satellite programs are perceived as being peripheral to the true work of the college, we lose some of their benefits and some of the coherence of an Augsburg community.

These questions lead to the third part of paper, **Paradigms of an Academic Community**.

In the course of writing *Augsburg 2004*, Mark Engebretson observed more than once that without quite noticing what it is up to, Augsburg has become a “small university.” For a college of 3,000 students, Augsburg is remarkably complex—so complex that it may be in danger of losing its “center.” One of the significant omissions of the

vision document was that it did not take on this question. Although *Augsburg 2004* had much to say about the week-day program, it did not offer a vision for graduate programs, Weekend College, continuing education, or para-curricular efforts.

My paper poses the question: should Augsburg remain a college or just go ahead and declare itself a university? It also suggests that Augsburg might find its identity as a New American College.

The last section of the paper deals with **Augsburg as microcosmic social and political universe, a miniature metropolis.**

Like Jerusalem, Augsburg is two “cities.” One city is unified by its mission and vision. Its silos exist only to store its surplus grain. Its employees are all above average, and better yet, are paid that way. They don’t concern themselves with “rights” since justice always prevails. Decisions are always made collaboratively and are always right. Everyone’s equal; no one’s fungible. And when human frailty occurs—which is seldom does—it is overcome by *caritas*.

Then there’s the other city. That’s the one governed by “policy, not law,” where we are attentive to rights since we can’t count on justice, where the parts don’t care about the welfare of the whole, where cynicism is a spectator sport, where employees feel they work too many hours for too little pay, where human frailty ends up in litigation, where some people are perceived as being more equal than others, where there must be representation because no one trusts deliberation.

Augsburg 2004 called us to the first city. But in so doing, it made us more aware that we often inhabit the second. We are two cities, and must navigate the tension between the two through civility.

Civility, I would suggest, implies more than manners—although I do not want to be dismissive of manners. Manners are rarely simply decorative; they express our political, moral, even theological, outlook. Thus several pages of my paper discuss ways in which we communicate with each other.

Beyond manners, I'd suggest, civility is the way in which we negotiate our political and social transactions—the ways in which we make decisions, value each other's work, make our policies.

The final section of my paper made some recommendations, but also attempted to be diagnostic.

I particularly want to suggest that sometimes we seem more like that second city because we have multiple work cultures. The faculty work culture is modeled on the medieval collegium, or guild. It is largely self regulating; it is managerial and votes on at least some decisions that affect it. Staff culture is much more diverse. Some are unionized; others are not. Many are employed by Augsburg; others work for the companies to which the college has outsourced work. Some are “on-scale,” others not. Some have considerable academic and professional preparation for their work; others do not. Some have made long-term commitments to working at the College; others will make Augsburg just one stop on their career paths. All, however, are at-will employees and thus some insecurity is a permanent part of their working conditions.

While trying to create the ideal community, we sometimes stumble on these differences. How can we create a culture that honors and values the contributions of all of its citizens while acknowledging that people contribute different things to the institution? How can Augsburg meet its obligations to its citizens while still making the common good the priority of the institution?

I want to conclude with a quotation from President Frame's May baccalaureate address which, for me at least, summed up what we can expect from civility as we try to bridge the gap between the two cities, the real and ideal:

Civility] is a friend of decency but not of Forgiveness. It can diminish personal injury only by excusing it as unintentional. But if it knows it as wrongdoing, it punishes it --and joins hands for the purpose with its natural partner, Law (not Gospel). Civility serves the community; it is the language and manner of public conduct. When it senses the presence of unmitigated private interest --or a claim to uncompromising and absolute truth--it turns away. And why should it not? As the guardian of a diverse community, Civility aims at good order and it seeks agreement, not truth; it prays for equity not Perfect Justice. The natural friend

and practitioner of Civility is the citizen, not the philosopher, or the Preacher, or the True Believer. The commitment of Civility to such limited objectives as peace and order is a great gift to all of us that are interested in telling a truth, searching for one, or living according to one. It protects us from having to give up our truth for some other—and the cost of this protection is that it is available to every truth, including those we despise.