

TILL & KEEP

called to serve our neighbor

A JOURNAL ON VOCATION, AUGSBURG COLLEGE, SPRING 2008

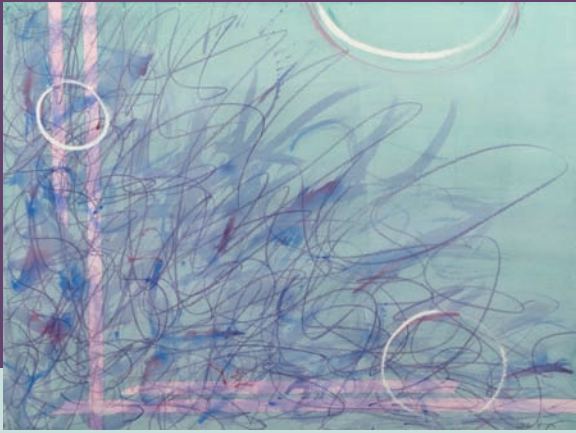


Table of Contents

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1	The Big U-Turn, David L. Tiede
4	Building the Cathedrals of Pluralism, Eboo Patel
7	A Recovering Agnostic Returns to Prague, Frankie Shackelford
11	After One Year: A Conversation with Paul Pribbenow, Interviewed by Mark Tranvik
15	From Heroism to Obedience, Samuel Kanenwisher
18	Generosity and Justice, Brother Louis DeThomasis
20	Jesus and Diversity, Mary Elise Lowe
23	The Dust of the Rabbi, Dawn Ludwig
27	Sharing Blessings, Tahera Mamdani
30	Exploring the Theology of Work, Paul Lutter
33	The Augsburg Center for Faith and Learning
34	Exploring Our Gifts Projects

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.”
—Genesis 2:15

The name of the journal, *Till & Keep*, echoes God’s purpose in placing humanity in the garden of Eden. It reflects a central theme of vocation—the call to service in God’s world.

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The Big U-Turn

CHAPEL TALK, OCTOBER 3, 2007
DAVID L. TIEDE

There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, full of sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus in his bosom.

And he called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame."

But Abraham said, "Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a

great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us."

And he said, "Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment."

But Abraham said, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."

And he said, "No, father Abraham; but if some one goes to them from the dead, they will repent."

He said to him, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead."

~Luke 16:19-31

The story of the rich man and Lazarus is being read in Christian churches throughout the world this week. It was the appointed lesson for the past Sunday in traditions that use the common lectionary. Think for a moment about how amazing and promising this story sounds to people who have nothing: *We are not forgotten. God's banquet table is set for us.* This story is another version of what Jesus earlier told the party givers, "When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."¹ The good news for the poor is that God's ways are not our ways.

And how does this story sound among us? As Mark Twain said, "I'm not bothered much about the things I don't

understand in the Bible. What troubles me are the things I do understand." It's hard enough to see the "beggars at the gate" of Riverside Avenue each day when you pull off the ramp of highway 94 to come to Augsburg. Then you arrive at the College, and its engagements with the city and its global and service programs compel you to see your prosperity amid human need. Last week I presented a paper at a conference on the interpretation of scripture in the world church. A speaker from Thailand noted that everyone seated in a chair is privileged. The poor of the world sit on the earth.

That's where we find Lazarus in the story—lying in the dirt. Most of us are not dressed in purple and fine linens, but we wear what we want to wear, eat when we want, and

¹Luke 14:13-14

sit in chairs. We owe a lot of money, but the banks know we are good for it. One way or another, we occupy places in a superb institution of higher education. In the world's economy, we are the rich.

Jesus didn't condemn people because they were rich but warned of the eternal dangers of the love of money and the risks of assuming you are entitled to your wealth. Old Abraham and Sarah were praised for knowing they were "blessed to be a blessing." My favorite rich man in the Bible is Zaccheus up a tree. He woke up when Jesus came to his house, pulled out his checkbook, and distributed from his funds to the poor. Zaccheus reminds me of a couple I know who are having all kinds of joy in their later years giving away their money. "Our goal," they declared, "is to give it all away before we die. We just hope the checks to the undertaker don't bounce."

Where does that freedom come from? The rich man in our story has none of that freedom, and it's too late. He pleads across the chasm for his brothers. "No, father Abraham, if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." But Abraham replies, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead." Those are stunning words! Here we are the brothers and sisters of the rich man. How will we get unstuck? Can Moses and the prophets do it for us? What if someone rises from the dead?

Repentance isn't just penance. Deep contrition for sins with dust and ashes can be a good place to begin when you realize the profound damage your self-centered life has caused. Every recovery program begins by facing the truth, breaking the bonds of denial. But repentance means more than just breast-beating; it means deep change. The Hebrew word is *shuv*, for the turning toward God. The Greek word is *metanoia* for the change of mind and alteration of the heart where the human will is centered. The British missionary to India, Lesslie Newbigin, called repentance the Big U-Turn. What is really interesting is that the New Testament regards this turn, this change, this

conversion itself to be a miracle God works in us—a miracle that yields faith.

In Peter's speeches in the Acts of the Apostles, he is once quoted as saying that God raised Jesus from the dead for

the very purpose of giving repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.² And when the Holy Spirit fell on the household of the Roman Centurion, Peter declared, "Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life."³ It's like the line from the hymn "Amazing Grace"—"I once was blind, but now I see." Sitting here in our chairs of privilege, even we, God help us, can be turned. We have Moses and the prophets. And someone *has* been raised from the dead.

Augsburg College is a testimony to changed lives. Your education is not value free, nor is it simply a route to upward mobility. It's about the Big U-Turn, drawing you beyond entitlement to touch the world God loves.

I also sit in a chair, and this chair is named for Bernhard Christensen, a sainted former president of Augsburg. Talk about privilege! And privilege bears vocations. With the help of people who knew him and faculty counsel, we have identified five lessons from Bernhard Christensen's legacy. One of them is that "The love of Christ draws us to God." So even in Jesus' harsh story of the rich man, we who are blessed still hear the love of Christ luring us, drawing us, inviting us to turn to God. It is all grace, all gift!

Our president, Dr. Pribbenow, in consultation with many others has stated the conviction of the College in another remarkably strong declaration: "We believe we are called to serve our neighbor." It is all vocation!

You don't have to be a Christian to get this message. The speaker from Thailand at the conference I mentioned reported how his Buddhist friend holds his feet to the fire on caring for those in greatest need. "Of all people," declared the Buddhist, "you Christians ought to get this right, like Jesus did!"

Here we are brothers and sisters of the rich man. How will we get unstuck?

² Acts 5:31

³ Acts 11:18

And for those of you who name Jesus as Lord, the promise and your callings are a package deal. Each new day, today, the God who raised Jesus extends anew the gift of repentance and forgiveness of sins. The Big U-Turn is graced with the love of Christ drawing you, turning you to God. And in this turning, you are again brought face-to-face with your neighbor in need and the world itself. This turning, this repentance is your liberation to prepare yourself to do some earthly good with your life and to do it in joy.

So take the Big U-Turn! Today! Repent, believe, and enact the love of God for those who need it most, in the name of Christ Jesus.

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This chapel talk has been edited for publication.





Building the Cathedrals of Pluralism

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS AT AUGSBURG COLLEGE

MAY 5, 2007

EBOO PATEL

There is a line in the late work of the recently departed American writer Susan Sontag, “Whatever is happening, something else is going on, too.”¹

Reading that made me think of a woman I met at an interfaith conference in Australia a few months back, Gill Hicks. “She uses a cane,” I remember thinking to myself when she walked into the room. “Strange for a woman so young.” I forgot about that as we got into a discussion of interfaith relations in Britain and America. I was struck by the depth of her knowledge of the Muslim community, the extent of her relationships. She spent her days meeting with Muslim leaders and her evenings organizing programs that brought together people from different ethnic groups to build bridges.

“What’s your professional background?” I asked. “Were you trained in this?”

She laughed and said, “I’m an interior designer.”

“So how did you come to do this work?” I prodded.

“I was on the London Tube on July 7. I lost my legs on the Piccadilly line.”

I opened and closed my mouth a few times and finally stammered, “What do you think of when you think about it now?”

“The same thing I thought then,” she said. “How good human beings can be.”

I stared at her in disbelief.

“As I was almost bleeding to death, there were people making their way down into the tunnel, risking their lives to save me. I heard voices around me and felt someone touching my shoulder and shouting, ‘Priority one.’ I awoke in the hospital with a wristband inscribed with the words ‘One Unknown.’ My medical intake sheet read ‘Estimated Female.’ And I realized that the people who saved me had

¹ Paolo Dilonardo and Anne Jump, ed., *At the Same Time: Essays and Speeches/Susan Sontag* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007), 153.

no idea who I was. They were from all different backgrounds themselves, and it didn't matter if I was richer or poorer than them, lighter or darker, if I prayed in the same way or a different way or not at all."

Listening to her, I thought back to my own reaction to the London Tube bombing—how angry I was, how angry the whole world was. I remember the newspaper headlines about how we were all becoming more suspicious of each other, how that was a natural reaction. I remember the calls to arms, the clouds of distrust hanging over groups that happened to share the ethnicity or religion of those four terrorists.

Who knew that there was another set of eyes on the matter? Who knew that Gill Hicks was lying in her hospital bed arguing with her fiancé about the menu for their wedding, determined to get married on the day that they had planned, resolved that this incident would only inspire her to learn more about other people, only commit her further to building bridges, to shining light, to loving fully? Who knew that one of the people who lay bleeding deep in the tunnel thought mostly of the strangers who were rescuing her rather than the strangers who had harmed her? *Whatever is happening, something else is going on, too.*

In his new book, *Peace Be Upon You*, Zachary Karabell writes: "If we emphasize hate, scorn, war, and conquest, we are unlikely to perceive that any other path is viable..."² Hate, scorn, war, and conquest sounds like a pretty good summary of our newscasts; it certainly seems to be the dominant narrative of our times. And the soundtrack of violence these days appears to be prayer—in Arabic, in Hebrew, in Hindi, in various inflections of English. There are many who are eager to divide humanity along a faith line: Sunnis vs. Shias; Catholics vs. Protestants; Hindus vs. Buddhists.

I believe something else is happening. I believe that the faith line is indeed the challenge of our century, but it does not divide people of different religious backgrounds. The faith line does not separate Muslims and Christians or Hindus and Jews. The faith line separates religious totalitarians and religious pluralists.

A religious totalitarian is someone who seeks to suffocate those who are different. Their weapons range from suicide bombs to media empires. There are Christian totalitarians and Hindu totalitarians and Jewish totalitarians and Muslim totalitarians. They are on the same side of the faith line—arm in arm against the dream of a common life together.

A pluralist is someone who seeks to live with people who are different, be enriched by them, help them thrive. Pluralists resonate with the Qur'annic line: "God made us different nations and tribes that we may come to know one another."³ Pluralists are moved by the image of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. marching together with Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel in Selma. Pluralists love the words of the poet Gwendolyn Brooks:

...we are each other's
harvest:
we are each other's
business:
we are each other's
magnitude and bond.⁴

Near the beginning of *A People's History of the United States*, Howard Zinn hopes out loud that "our future may be found in the past's fugitive moments of compassion rather than in its solid centuries of warfare."⁵

So many eyes went to the smoldering ruins of those subway trains on July 7 and saw only destruction, perceived only a victory for the totalitarians, imagined only the narrow inevitability of continuing violence. But one woman was looking in a different direction. Her eyes went to the subway workers who rescued her, the nurses and doctors who restored her, the family and fiancé who never left her side. Like Jane Addams, she began to imagine a "cathedral" for this humanity—a place where people from different backgrounds live together in mutual trust and loyalty. And she left her career to follow that calling, to make the cathedral in her imagination a reality on earth—stone by stone, meeting by meeting, program by program. This is what it means to be human.

We pluralists far outnumber the totalitarians. What if we let ourselves imagine? What if we began building? What if

² *Peace Be Upon You: Fourteen Centuries of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Coexistence in the Middle East* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007).

³ Qur'an 49:13

⁴ "Paul Robeson," *Blacks* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1987), 496.

⁵ (New York: Harper Perennial, 1995), 11.

every city block were a cathedral of pluralism? Every university campus. Every summer camp and day care. There would not be enough bombs in the world to destroy all our cathedrals.

I believe each one of us is born with that cathedral inscribed in our soul. Our imaginations know its architecture intimately. Our hands recognize the cut of each stone. As J.M. Coetzee says, “... all creatures come into the world bringing with them the memory of justice.”⁶ We Muslims call it being born in a state of *fitrah*, naturally inclining towards that which is good, because God gave us the gift of his *ruh*, his breath. It is from breath that we get life, and from breath that we get song, and the most beautiful thing we do in cathedrals is sing.

Earth is not always an easy place to imagine cathedrals, or to build them, or to fill them with song. There are times when you will feel like there is a conspiracy against your clarity; as if the loneliness is freezing and the darkness is deep and the silence is unbreakable. Go back to your breath. Know its source. Know its purpose. Know that sometimes the order is upside down—that instead of going from imagination to building to song, you have to begin by singing.

And as you become accustomed to the sound of your own voice, you may discover that it is not alone. You may discover that a group of strangers has gathered, and they are humming, harmonizing, taking your lead, singing along. You may realize that the darkness has been broken by a soft glow. You may wonder where exactly you are. You may look around and see stained glass; you may look up and find yourself staring into the forever spire of a majestic cathedral. And then you will know the truth of the words of the poet Li-Young Lee: “You must sing to be found; when found, you must sing.”⁷

Eboo Patel is the founder and executive director of the Interfaith Youth Core, a Chicago-based international nonprofit building the interfaith youth movement, and he is the author of Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation. He earned a doctorate in the sociology of religion from Oxford University, where he studied on a Rhodes scholarship. He has written for a number of national newspapers and journals, as well as National Public Radio, and he has spoken at the Clinton Global Initiative, the Nobel Peace Prize Forum, and at colleges and universities around the world. Patel serves on the Religious Advisory Committee of the Council on Foreign Relations, the National Committee of the Aga Khan Foundation USA, the Advisory Board of Duke University's Islamic Studies Center, and the Board of the Chicago History Museum. He is an Ashoka Fellow and was named by Islamica Magazine as one of 10 young Muslim visionaries shaping Islam in America.

The text of this address has been edited for publication.

⁶ *Waiting for the Barbarians* (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), 139.

⁷ “You Must Sing,” *The City in Which I Love You* (Brockport, NY: BOA Editions, Ltd., 1990), 69.



View of Prague from hillside gardens

A Recovering Agnostic Returns to Prague

FRANKIE SHACKELFORD

Frankie Shackelford wrote this reflection paper as a result of her participation in Augsburg's Vocation Seminar for Faculty, which took place during the 2005-2006 academic year and culminated in a pilgrimage to Reformation sites in Germany and the Czech Republic in May 2006.

18 May 2006. It is mid-morning in the Czech Republic and we are driving through a spring landscape, lush with greens and the brilliant yellow of canola fields in full bloom. My eyes are still burning from the pollution of rush-hour traffic as we inched our way out of Prague. It took 53 minutes to leave the city behind. Fifty-three minutes and 39 years.

I recall a different landscape when I first came to Cold War Czechoslovakia in the early spring of 1967. I was a passenger on a bus, chartered by a Hungarian travel agency to take tourists from Vienna to Prague for the annual communist Labor Day celebrations. The workers' no-nonsense apartment compounds and the rainy weather are clearer in my memory than the magnificent castles and churches of Prague. I recall the crowds of people gathered to watch the gymnasts in their white uniforms mustered on the Old Town Square. Red flags hung from most windows and the party officials stood on a viewing platform, built especially for the occasion. I was impressed

by the spectacle, but unable to share the enthusiasm of other spectators. I felt a building sense of unease about the day to follow. What made me think I could handle this extraordinary task?

I was nearing the end of my "junior year abroad," which I spent studying philosophy, German, and psychology in Vienna. Already I had experienced the religious doubt that many students feel as they leave the shelter of family and church and begin studying science and the history of ideas. To its credit, the Honors Program at my college, Texas Christian University, encouraged broad questioning of core values in seminars on the nature of man, God, society, and the universe. That year in Austria I felt my Methodist church ties slipping even further away as I regularly attended an international, ecumenical church with members from many countries and backgrounds.

In late April I was sipping hot chocolate during the fellowship hour after the morning service when an elderly

Czech woman introduced herself to me. She had heard that I was planning a trip to Prague and had a favor to ask. The Czech ice hockey team had just won the gold medal in the World Championship, held in Vienna, and afterwards *the entire team had defected*. They were all given three months to find appropriate refuge in other places or be returned to a repressive and vindictive communist regime. The woman gave me a letter from one of these hockey players—a young man named Pavel (not his real name). She asked me to take it to his family in Prague and bring back some documents he would need to seek political asylum in Canada. I readily agreed to take on this mission, which initially seemed more exciting than frightening to an idealistic 20-year-old.

Carrying out the plan was complicated by Soviet-style politics. The “In-Tourist” agency that arranged all foreign travel to Czechoslovakia had designated official hotels and preferred tourist attractions. Pavel’s family lived in a small apartment in an obscure church, where, if I understood correctly, his mother was head custodian. I was uncertain how to get there from our hotel and asked for directions. At first our guide suggested that the church was not worthy of a visit by a first-time tourist in Prague. But when I insisted, he showed me the location on the map.

I remember little of the walk there, only a sense of tension and anticipation. What if nobody were at home? Luckily, I found the stairway up to the small apartment and Pavel’s two younger sisters came to the door. Their parents were away, but when they saw the note in Pavel’s handwriting, they shyly welcomed me. Using a Czech-English dictionary (they spoke only Czech and Russian, and I spoke only English and German) we were able to communicate the essentials. The assumption of trust came from some deeper, non-verbal understanding. They gave me the irreplaceable documents—Pavel’s birth certificate and high school diploma.

At the border crossing the next day, my heart was pounding. I had hidden the papers inside the dust jacket of a vinyl recording of Czech martial music for gymnasts, which I had purchased at the May Day celebration. Would the border guards demand to open my luggage? What would they do with a juvenile American smuggler? (My mother would not have approved of this for sure!) A uniformed inspector went through the bus, asking only sporadically for passengers to open their suitcases. To my great relief, he passed me by.

I don’t remember the rest of the trip back to Vienna, but the meeting with Pavel will always linger in my memory. We met for dinner at a Hungarian restaurant, where I was introduced to the rich flavors of *cevapcici*, a spicy ground meat dish. Pavel was just beginning to learn German and our conversation was very limited. At the end of the meal he gave me a small, but precious gift—his gold medal from the World Cup! I have worn it for nearly 40 years as a memento of trust and courage in an era of cowardice and suspicion.

In the ensuing decades I completed a double major in German and psychology at TCU, spent a year as a Fulbright fellow at the University of Hamburg, and eventually earned a PhD in Germanic languages from the University of Texas at Austin with a specialization in Norwegian. During these years, I grew intellectually but became totally estranged from my religious roots.

In June 1992, after having won prizes for my translations of two novels by Norwegian author Edvard Hoem, I was invited to be a guest at the festive premiere of a play he had written to commemorate the 250th anniversary of Molde, a city on the northwest coast of Norway. My husband Jole and I, barely scraping by with two children and one salary, were hardly members of the international “jet set.” We deliberated at length about whether to accept the invitation. In the end we arranged for his mother to come to St. Paul and stay with our sons, and we made a very quick trip to Oslo, rented a car, and drove up to Molde for a three-day celebration. There we met Jana, a playwright from Prague. She was also there as the guest of Hoem and his musical collaborator, Henning Sommerro. They asked if Jole and I could drive her back to Oslo, and we were glad to be able to share our rental car with someone whose monthly writer’s stipend had barely covered bus fare from the Czech Republic.

Somewhere along the route, I told Jana about my Prague experience, then exactly 25 years in the past. She was fascinated by the story and on her return home she went to the church she thought it must have been (I had only a vague memory of the name of it) and spoke with a very old man who remembered the family of caretakers. Somehow Jana managed to track down one of the sisters, who remembered me, and gave her my address, which she forwarded to Pavel, who was safely established as a professional cabinet maker in Canada. In December 1992, a Christmas card arrived from Pavel, who was now able to

write perfect English and sent a photo of his family, including his two grown-up children, students at the university near his home. I wrote back saying I would like to return his medal, but he insisted that I keep it. His note ended with more thanks and a special “God bless you!” I was taken aback. I hadn’t stopped to ponder that his Christian faith had been part of his motivation for defecting.

Pavel’s Christmas card was one of the signposts that returned me to my own aborted faith journey. There were others. Earlier that same fall my father had died suddenly of a heart attack. When I attended the funeral with my children, third-generation atheists on their father’s side, I realized with a jolt of guilt that my talented boys, who recited Shakespeare and played the violin at the graveside, were unable to join the rest of the family in reciting the Lord’s Prayer. How would my father—a lifelong Methodist and Sunday school teacher for 30 years—have reacted to their silence? How could Pavel’s upbringing under a communist regime have produced a devout Christian—and my Christian upbringing a radical agnostic? And what could possibly restart my spiritual journey? These questions simmered beneath the surface, and the answers are the slowly increasing sum of what I currently “know.”

My father was from a farm family. He was uneducated, but clever, hardworking, and a bit of a poet. His professional life, for which his service as a radio operator in the Army Air Corps during World War II was his main preparation, was spent in blue-collar work with electronics. Weekends were a time to putter in the garage, complete moonlighting projects, mow the lawn, and prepare to teach his adult Sunday school class—“The Questers.” It never occurred to me then that he himself was on a quest. But remembering

all the evenings he sat in a lawn chair out in the backyard, looking up at the half-hearted stars through the Houston haze, I began to realize that his mind was as actively trying to discern the truth as mine was. A poem my sister discovered after his death showed a remarkable sense of self-irony and wonder, a fertile combination for a quester. While he would not have understood my epistemological reasons for abandoning my childhood faith, I think he would have approved of my quest.

My father would also have been happy to know that seven years after his death, when my mother lay dying in a Houston hospital, I was able to join hands with her and my sister and pray earnestly for strength and acceptance of this passage. That was the result of an unlikely encounter during my sabbatical in 1997. A biology professor from the University of Minnesota, whom I had met through a faculty development project, had challenged me to reconsider my faith. His simple question after hearing that I was a confirmed agnostic sent another jolt: “But don’t you ever wonder about it?”



Author Shackelford in Prague—the second time

Jole Shackelford



Prague rooftops

Bruce Reichenbach

Indeed, I spent the next several years wondering, reading, exchanging e-mails about the nature of God with my biology colleague, co-leading a book study on the life of Jesus with my friend Garry Hesser at Augsburg, and “pondering the questions,” as Prague-born poet Rainer Maria Rilke advised. Rilke’s love poems to God became my favorite reading and over the next two years I began to “live the answers” as he predicted. I let go of the resentment I had felt toward my tight-fisted childhood religion with its literal understanding of the scriptures and sickly focus on the supernatural. I embraced a more liberal interpretation of the story of Christ’s sacrifice and its gift of freedom. Plenty of highly educated men and women throughout history had been able to make sense of faith. Pavel and his family had used their faith to transcend the communist tyranny. Other oppressed peoples have endured intolerable suffering by relying on their faith. My colleagues in the sciences at Augsburg saw no conflict between faith in God and the quest for scientific truth. My colleagues in the Religion Department live suspended in paradox with no apparent need to resolve it. Why couldn’t I follow their example? After all, I had received the “God gene” from both parents. I decided to live *as if* I were a person of faith. And I discovered in many surprising ways that “grace happens.”

I still have no fixed credo, no clear definition of the divine. I cannot claim to “know God.” Like Rilke, I believe we are all building God through our daily interactions. My faith lies in the human quest for greater insight and our ability to *enact* the message of God’s love. In a chapel talk at Augsburg a few years ago I tried to explain this understanding of faith through a water metaphor. Just as water seems to be an unlikely, yet effective medium to hold a body afloat, faith can provide a similar buoyancy to those who trust its bearing power. I *know* I can count on water to bear my weight and I *know* I can count on meditation, prayer, and the *reciprocal being as Christ to others* to bear the weight of contingency.

I “know” these things, even as I live with continuing uncertainty. My study of Luther’s life and theology over the past several years has reinforced both the knowing and the living with doubt. The Augsburg College pilgrimage to the cradle of the Reformation has brought me full circle

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through both. Here in Prague in May 2006 I have been given a chance to reconnect with my youthful memory of the city. Yesterday my husband and I found our way to the church Jana had directed us to—the one where Pavel’s family supposedly lived 40 years ago—only to find that its entryway had been completely remodeled with glass and stone. The corner where I remembered climbing the stairway up to Pavel’s family apartment was now an elevator shaft leading up to church offices. Nothing seemed the same. Was it even the same church? It must have been, since it led Jana to Pavel’s sister, but I had no bedrock recognition of this place. My recovery from agnosticism will never be complete. It is a slow process that moves from simply not knowing to no longer needing to know—and taking the rest on faith.

Frankie Shackelford teaches Norwegian and chairs the Department of Languages and Cross-Cultural Studies at Augsburg College. In addition, she chairs and teaches the keystone seminar for all returning study-abroad sojourners, focusing on issues of global interdependence and engaging students in examining ethical responses to terrorism, including cross-cultural and interfaith dialogue. She is also an accomplished translator of Norwegian fiction and poetry.



After One Year: A Conversation with Paul Pribbenow

INTERVIEWED BY MARK TRANVIK
SEPTEMBER 24, 2007

Mark Tranvik: You're now in your second year as president. What do you know now about Augsburg College that you wish you had known when you began?

President Pribbenow: I think there is a positive and negative side to my answer. I would say on the positive side—which is the primary side—that I now know a lot about the day-to-day work that we do as a college on a variety of fronts. We have a remarkable story to tell. For example, after being selected as Augsburg's president, I was traveling around the country on behalf of Rockford College, where I was still president at the time. When I told people I was going to Augsburg, almost inevitably the response I heard was: "Ah, that's where the Center for Global Education is." Then when I arrived in the spring of 2006 to do some transition work, I started to learn more about the Center and I also had the opportunity to visit our site in Mexico. I was so impressed by how it has evolved into an academic and social center that is totally

committed to introducing visiting Americans to members of the Mexican community. It is based on pedagogy that helps students connect with difference and otherness in a way that really transforms their lives.

A second, similar example is that this is a college that has found many ways to meet students where they truly are and help them find ways to be successful in college. Often that means responding to particular populations. Two manifestations of this effort are our StepUp program (for students recovering from chemical dependency) and our CLASS program (for students with disabilities). These programs are central to our educational experience. They are not out on the fringes but at the core of our work. And they represent the college's commitment to addressing the needs of all of our students. When I meet with StepUp parents, one of the things I say to them is "You may experience this as a really special program, one that meets the needs for your son or daughter who's here recovering

from addiction. Let me tell you, though, there's nothing special about this program. This is Augsburg College at its best."

MT: Let me push back on that whole issue of access. And I agree, it's one of the things that drew me to Augsburg initially and keeps me here now. But, not long ago, a colleague was talking with a prospective student about coming to Augsburg. He could sense she was hesitant. He asked her what she was thinking and she said something like this: "Well, I really like Augsburg, but I just wish it were a little smarter." Do you think there is a trade-off between access and excellence? Or is Access to Excellence in danger of being a slogan without much substance?

PP: I think that it is a false dichotomy. I believe that access and excellence can co-exist, and I also believe there is excellence and aspiration built into our daily work that marks this college as distinctive. We are saying that we want people to have access to that excellence. That doesn't mean we have an open admission policy that just takes anybody off the street. In some ways the continuum of higher education opportunities in this country is meant to respond to this issue. If you're a particular kind of student and you want to go to technical school, there are opportunities for you. If you need to go to community college, then it is possible to do that. Augsburg fits into that continuum in a way that I think is quite appropriate. I mean that in terms of our level of quality, our commitment to the liberal arts, and our commitment to the kind of disciplines that we honor here. And I think that quite often there is a false assumption that a student who has a learning disability or a physical disability can't do mainstream, excellent work. I think that is a dangerous premise that comes out of the arrogance of the higher

education community. At Augsburg, we believe that regardless of whether you have a particular sort of experience in your life or some sort of disability, you can in fact achieve excellence. All our students are capable of excellence.

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them.

MT: Okay. Now how about the shadow side of Augsburg? I can't let you off the hook....say something more about what you wish you had known.

PP: Oh, the negative side. Well, I wish I had known about some of the cultural issues around the College. Maybe the way to talk about this is to say that I wish that I had had a fuller sense of how much a culture of scarcity has taken root in this college. I doubt it's a recent phenomenon—I imagine it goes back a long time. What it has led to, I think, is that even when our mission-based work and all the trends about this college and its enrollment are positive, we still have a culture that sometimes looks at new ventures and says, "Well, we can't quite do that because we don't have enough people or financial resources." That is not something I can just snap my fingers and change. This is a college that needs to understand how its work really does make a difference! And then we can begin talking about abundance and imagining a different way of living as a college community—in essence, growing into that abundance.

MT: What's amazing is the way stories have a tendency to shape us from the earliest days—and this is especially true of institutions. Augsburg is rooted in the Lutheran Free Church where there were plenty of tales about scarcity—poor farmers in rural communities that somehow scraped together enough money to support a college of the church. Is this a large part of the culture of scarcity that continues to shape us?

PP: Yes ... and I think that the sad thing is that the Lutheran Free Church story, of course, is also full of abundance. For example, the College founders made a decision to stay here in the city. And they persevered in this neighborhood. So the question is how do we take the best of that tradition, lift it up, and let it guide us?

MT: The next question I have is more personal. You are the son of a Lutheran pastor. Was there pressure on you to become a pastor? There must have been some implicit or even explicit promptings to follow your father's path. How did you sort out your sense of calling?

PP: I was very much halfway to becoming a pastor. When I went to Luther College in 1975, I entered as a pre-seminary student.

MT: That's how you saw yourself?

PP: Yes, I saw myself that way. I majored in sociology and political science but at the same time took courses in religion and philosophy. I also took Greek. But in the middle of my third year something started to hit me. Some of it was related to the social activism work in which I was involved, and I started to realize that my strengths and gifts tended more in that direction. Even though I was doing it because of a faith commitment, it still didn't match up with my understanding of my dad's life. So I went to a professor and said, "I don't think I can actually live my dad's life and go on to seminary." And he said to me, "When I see what you're doing, I can see clearly that you love these questions and issues, so I urge you not to abandon that part of your sense of calling."

Eventually I went to the University of Chicago Divinity School, and this was a remarkable setting. Everybody was struggling with the kind of questions I was asking. And they weren't necessarily preparing for ministry but for lives of teaching and service that often were based on a religious sense of call. It was a relief to realize that ministry isn't higher than other callings. When I talk about this with our students, I always try to stress that their vocations are in the process of unfolding. And the other thing I ask them to think about are the moments in their life stories when something happened and they ended up making a different choice than what they had always envisioned. In fact, I was talking to a class last week about the professor I mentioned

earlier, who during my junior year at Luther College helped me to understand the direction my story could go. It was clear my life would still have meaning, but it wasn't the story line I had always embraced—that I should be a minister. So I am able to step back and recognize that my story went a different way while at the same time bearing many of the marks of the previous story (and how could it not?). But it turned out to be a different path than the one my dad took.

MT: So it was freeing.

PP: Yes, it was very freeing. For me, the power of vocation is that it's not rigid, it's not legalistic, it's not blocked in. What worries me is that when people already have a very clear sense of where they're going, sometimes they are not open to the fact that their stories could be diverted. As Bishop Peter Rogness of the St. Paul Synod likes to say, we never know exactly how our grand and mysterious God might work in our stories.

MT: Let's move to a related but slightly different topic. C.S. Lewis once said, "We never really learn anything until we suffer." Would you agree? And if you do agree, how has that truth been shaped by your own experience?

PP: I definitely think that facing suffering—personal or emotional—puts people outside of their comfort zone. I think about my own experience growing up in a very small town in a Lutheran family with six kids, living in the parsonage of the Lutheran church.

Then I went to college, and that was certainly a place where I was awakened, but it wasn't a place of great personal trial. For me, it was going to the city—leaving Iowa and Luther College and going to Chicago—that caused huge changes in my life. I was in Chicago for 18 years, and the diversity I encountered there changed me profoundly.

Of course, I also have had moments where I've suffered. There was a divorce—a very painful thing for me and my family. My mother died just when I became president of Rockford College in 2002. In situations like that, you learn things. It doesn't even have to be a crisis. But it does challenge you to rethink your story or maybe incorporate that suffering into your story. As a result, you become stronger, which is what I think Lewis is trying to say. It is

also possible to resist that kind of suffering, and the result is that either we don't grow from the experience or we end up living lives that are not as authentic or genuine as they could be. We can never be sure how, as Bishop Rogness said, our grand and mysterious God might be working in our lives.

MT: Say more about that phrase "grand and mysterious God."

PP: He was talking about this at a board meeting. It was actually in the context of the conversation about Augsburg and the Church (which I thought was fascinating and a very rich conversation). The question was how can Augsburg—a college of the Lutheran Church that has only 30% of its students coming out of the Lutheran tradition—live out what it means to be faithful? His point was that if it's all about quotas and the number of students, faculty, and staff who match up with our tradition, then we've lost sight of the way God works in our lives. Because our grand and mysterious God may be teaching Lutherans important things coming out of other traditions—things we need to learn as we interact and intersect with them.

MT: Moving to the whimsical—well, not necessarily the whimsical, but certainly a change of pace. I will give you a name or phrase and then ask you to react to it. Ready?

PP: All right.

MT: I'll start with the war in Iraq.

PP: Very sad. The situation in Iraq is a sign for me of how our country has not thought through its relationship to the entire world.

MT: The Augsburg Wrestling Team ...

PP: A source of great pride and an example of great discipline. It has a sense of spirit that I hope can carry over to the entire institution.

MT: The State of Iowa ...

PP: Yes, I am proud to be Hawkeye. Close to the corn. Great place to grow up. Probably glad I don't live there anymore.

MT: Barack Obama ...

PP: A sense of hope, a sense of promise. Not sure if the promise is going to be fulfilled.

MT: Don't miss this movie ...

PP: *A River Runs Through It*.

MT: A book or books you recommend ...

PP: I'm recommending a book called *The Greater Good* by Claire Gaudiani, the former president of Connecticut College. It is a book about philanthropy, democracy, and capitalism. It is a very personal and powerful statement. And I am always sending people back to Parker Palmer's work, such as *To Know as We Are Known* and *The Active Life*.

MT: The Augsburg endowment ...

PP: It needs to be four times bigger, and it is often on my mind. I foresee a lot of activity in that area in the next few years.

MT: Finally, Britney Spears ...

PP: O, good Lord!

MT: Well ... we started with the strengths of Augsburg and have ended up with Britney. That suggests this interviewer is running out of questions. Thanks for taking the time to talk with me.

PP: Thank you. It was my pleasure.

Paul C. Pribbenow, the 11th president of Augsburg College, is recognized as one of the country's most engaging commentators and teachers on ethics, philanthropy and American public life. He received his BA from Luther College and his MA in divinity and PhD in social ethics from the University of Chicago. He is a member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals Standing Ethics Committee and serves on the boards of the Minnesota Private College Council, Pillsbury United Communities, and VocalEssence.



From Heroism to Obedience

SENIOR CHAPEL TALK, FEBRUARY 7, 2006
SAMUEL KANENWISHER

When I was 18, I wanted to be a hero. Immediately after high school I joined the Coast Guard and went off to boot camp. Soon after boot camp I began rescuing people out of the rough seas off the coast of Oregon. Though the work was scary, it was exhilarating.

I can recall the story of one of our rescue operations. We got the call about four in the afternoon. A crabbing boat was caught in the surf and had a broken rudder cable. We raced down the catwalk to the boathouse, grabbed our gear, and fired up the 47-foot surf rescue boat—a boat that is self-righting (in other words if it flips over, it will turn right side up). As our coxswain (or boat driver) gave us a safety brief, we cruised out to the bay entrance, where we watched the 20-foot high waves that we were about to enter. We checked each other's safety harnesses and clipped them onto the boat. Then off we went—straight

into the curling surf. The first wave was steep and loomed over us as we entered it. The coxswain threw the engines into reverse to slow our descent on the back side of the wave. The boat shook violently and then crashed into the wave with the impact of a car accident. The coxswain weaved in and out of troughs of the waves until we reached the disabled crabbing boat. We timed the waves just right so we could successfully throw lines to the boat. Finally, we were able to get it in tow, and we brought the boat and its crew to safety.

This was fitting work for a hero. It was an adventure to battle the ocean, and it was rewarding to help people who were in danger. But there was one problem I hadn't foreseen—I got seasick, and I was useless on the boat when I was sick. This made me feel worthless, and I became sad.

I eventually decided that I could escape this sadness by going to the Coast Guard's electronics technician school in northern California to learn to fix radars and radios. I thought that I could learn the trade at a basic level and then go off to college to become an electrical engineer and make a lot of money. But soon after I enrolled, I became depressed again. Many of my classmates went out drinking, and I was underage. I was frequently alone at night while my classmates were out having fun together.

Because of my loneliness and isolation, I decided to return to the Lutheran community. I joined a Bible study group at a local church. We gathered weekly to read and discuss the scriptures, to pray, and to support each other as we tried to live out our faith. Eventually, a woman in the Bible study asked me if I had ever thought about being a pastor. She said that she liked my reflections on the Gospel, and the rest of the group agreed. I was taken aback. I thought to myself, "No! How am I supposed to make any money doing that?" Still, despite my initial reaction, her comment made me wonder.

I began to think a lot about being a pastor. What did it mean to be a pastor? I had no experience leading in the church. How could I possibly do a good job? Once again I realized that I didn't have the answers, and I felt like I was in poverty. I began to pray and talk to the members of the congregation. As I became more involved in the church and talked to people about their faith, I started to see how God was calling me in this direction.

I got out of the Coast Guard, and my next goal was to race through college with good grades so that I could go to seminary and become a pastor. I thought my perspective on Christianity and religion was about the best—and therefore I did not need to learn any other perspectives. As I'm sure you can predict, my professors quickly confronted me. I fought them as they taught me about new viewpoints and interpretations. I did not want to go back on the hard path of searching for meaning. Yet, I soon found myself doing just that as I read the writings of Martin Luther King Jr. He wrote about loving one's enemies, and I realized that I did not know how to have the strength to love. Yet, I believed that his words were true.

King wrote:

Jesus realized that every genuine expression of love grows out of a consistent and total surrender to God. So when Jesus said, "Love your enemy," he was not unmindful of its stringent qualities. Yet he meant every word of it. Our responsibility as Christians is to discover the meaning of this command and seek passionately to live it out in our daily lives.¹

In this attempt to learn to love my enemies, I began to see that they are not really my enemies and that their perspectives are just as valid as my own.

I discovered that the field of social work is consistent with this philosophy, and I began to develop a passion for working with people who had experienced social injustice. I saw myself as a privileged white male who had the strength to help those in need. I was sure that if I could just get a chance to talk to these people, I could fix them. (Obviously, I still had a lot of learning to do.) I got that chance to work with a man who was homeless, and I was struck silent as he told me his story. Once again, I felt completely inadequate. I thought that I had nothing to offer this man. Yet, as I look back I realize that silence and a listening ear are often the best things anyone can give to another person. As I moved along in the social work program, the professors fed me in my poverty. They taught me active listening skills, and they taught me more about when to speak.

I also searched for meaning in action through my activities on campus. I volunteered to help with the Nobel Peace Prize Forum and served as Campus Ministry co-commissioner. I helped plan and lead an alternative spring break trip to the Grand Canyon. I participated in the Lilly Scholar Seminar, a program for students who are considering ministry. In all these activities, Augsburg staff, students, and faculty supported and nurtured me. I am truly thankful to all of these people. They gave me a chance to learn, act, and reflect.

Shortly, I will be off to seminary. I pray that Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary will become as much of a

¹ Martin Luther King Jr., *Strength to Love* (New York: Walker and Co., 1984, c1963), 50.

home to me as Augsburg has been. The words of priest and author Henri Nouwen capture how I feel as I continue this journey:

I saw how real this downward way of Jesus is and how, if I go this way, I go not alone, but as a member of the "body of Jesus." Seldom have I experienced so directly the difference between individual heroism and communal obedience. Whenever I think about becoming poor as something I must accomplish, I become depressed. But as I soon realize that my brothers and sisters call me to go this way with them in obedience to Jesus, I am filled with hope and joy.²

Samuel Kanenwisher graduated from Augsburg College in May 2006 with a major in social work. While at Augsburg, he participated in the Lilly Scholars program. He is currently in his second year at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley, California. He has a special interest in how the visual arts can be combined with the spoken word to convey the depth of the Gospel message. Recently, he returned from a three-week trip to Guatemala, where he explored the culture and religion of the people and observed how their religious images shape and reflect their relationship with God. He hopes that as a pastor he will be able to use visual images to help people connect to the Gospel.

² Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Road to Daybreak: A Spiritual Journey* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 154.



Generosity and Justice

CHAPEL TALK, FEBRUARY 8, 2006
BROTHER LOUIS DETHOMASIS

For the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard ... And about the 11th hour he went out and found others standing ... He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'

And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last up to the first.' And when those hired about the 11th hour came, each of them received a denarius.

Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled to the householder, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.'

But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong ... Take what belongs to you, and go ... Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?'

So the last will be first, and the first will be last.

~Matthew 20:1-16

If I work more than you—don't I deserve more than you? That's only fair. If I work harder than you—don't I deserve more than you? That's only fair. If my work makes me more important than you—then surely I deserve more than you. That's only fair. But, is that Christian?

Is not that what Christianity tells us, no, commands us, to do—to be fair and just in all we do? Justice ... social justice ... Christian social justice—do they not all compel us to be fair and just? I think not. In fact, if we truly embrace in faith the light that shines forth from the parable of the landowner, then its dazzling brilliance will illuminate and grasp our most inner being. It will make us see, as never before, that true Christian justice has very little to do with what is fair.

In this parable the key that opens the door to knowledge of our Christian faith occurs when the landowner asks a simple question of those grumbling against him—“Are you envious because I am generous?” At that moment, we begin to realize that Christian justice really has nothing to do with what we deserve. Christian justice has all to do with generosity.

There are millions of people on this globe who never achieve a subsistence level of living. Lack of food, water, shelter, and basic health care force them to live desperate and despairing lives. Do they deserve suffering while so many of us live in abundance? Work, wealth, and material things are not bad things if we understand them as occasions to do justice—through generosity.

Faith and finance can no longer be seen in opposition to each other. The traditional paradigm of the sacred and the secular dangerously fragments our global society in this third millennium. We must bring the two together if we are to help all people in the world to live in dignity and if we are to live without the dark shadow of terrorism destroying us. We can do this with Christian faith—the faith that brings together freedom, wealth, and material advantages through love of neighbor. Work, indeed, is a noble human undertaking. But, generosity is our Christian vocation.

I believe that if I have Christian faith and the zeal to be generous with my wealth, my knowledge, my expertise, my talents, and my love, then Jesus will always be at my side. And, when my time comes to leave this blessed world, I know that—thank God—Jesus will not say to me,

“Hey, Louis, your time is up. Come with me and I will give you *what you deserve* for all eternity!” Instead, he will tell me and all those who have used their blessings in the service of others, “Come home with me to my father's house. He is so generous that he wants you with Him in His loving embrace forever.”

May Jesus live in our hearts forever, and may our actions cause many, many people to grumble, so that we too may ask as the landowner in this

Gospel, “Are you envious because I am generous?”

... true Christian justice has very little to do with what is fair.

Brother Louis DeThomasis, FSC, PhD, is a member of a Roman Catholic religious order—the De La Salle Christian Brothers—and currently serves as chancellor of Saint Mary's University of Minnesota and senior fellow of the Hendrickson Institute for Ethical Leadership. An accomplished educator, scholar, author, lecturer, and executive, Brother Louis is a nationally recognized authority on the integration of the complex and seemingly disparate worlds of faith and finance. He is convinced that the power of the financial world can be a dynamic tool for creating a better future for humanity.

The text of this homily has been edited for publication.



Jesus and Diversity

CHAPEL TALK, NOVEMBER 11, 2007
MARY ELISE LOWE

Sermon Text: Matthew 15:21-28

Grace to you and peace from God, who creates, redeems, and sustains us.

Why did you come to Augsburg? Why do you work at Augsburg? Why are you a member of this community? Perhaps you chose Augsburg because it is close to home or because it is far away from home. Perhaps you came to Augsburg to play sports, perform music, work with students, or teach mathematics or history.

Hopefully those of us who live, work, and study at Augsburg share similar goals and values with the College. For example, Augsburg has a commitment to excellence and access. This commitment to excellence can be seen across the College in the outstanding work of students, staff, and faculty. Augsburg also takes pride in the fact that it offers access to higher education to many students who might not otherwise be able to attend college.

Augsburg has also made a commitment to diversity. In fact, the word is so frequently used here that I always get a few eye-rolls, bored looks, and shoulder shrugs from my first-year students when I talk about diversity. Recently the first-year students attended diversity training in their AugSem orientation groups. After the diversity session, I asked them what they thought about this experience. Most of them said that they knew Augsburg was diverse, that this is part of the reason they came to the College, and that they don't need diversity training. They think diversity is easy.

At the risk of a getting tuned out and seeing a few more eye-rolls, I want to talk about diversity again. Why does Augsburg have a commitment to diversity? I want to suggest that there is a Christian foundation for talking about diversity and for increasing the diversity of our community. The text today from Matthew can help us think about diversity in a deeper way that springs from the life of Jesus Christ.

Don't get me wrong. I am not arguing with any of the usual reasons to encourage diversity on our campus. Minnesota is becoming more and more diverse and Augsburg should adapt to serve the needs of the complex communities in the state. When we hear the stories of others and explore issues and ideas from a variety of perspectives, it challenges our own beliefs and ideas. When we live with and learn from people who are different from ourselves we are forced to question and explore our own assumptions about race, class, gender, and our own self-understanding and place in the world.

These are all excellent reasons to work for a more diverse community. As a college of the Lutheran church it is also appropriate that we look to the person of Jesus Christ as one of the main reasons that we work toward diversity at Augsburg. The text from Matthew provides us with a Christological foundation for diversity. It shows us how Jesus himself struggled with diversity. Today's passage from Matthew 15:21-28 is a very difficult text. It might seem odd to look to a text in which Jesus compares a foreign woman to a dog to talk about diversity, but bear with me.

At the beginning of the text Jesus and his disciples have withdrawn from the Jewish community and traveled to Tyre and Sidon, which are places where they could expect to encounter non-Jews. A crying woman comes to him, and Matthew identifies her as a Canaanite woman. You may recall that after wandering in the desert for 40 years, the Israelites were led by Joshua into the Holy Land, the land occupied by the Canaanites. This woman was a Canaanite and a pagan from the perspective of Jesus and his disciples.

The woman cries out to Jesus and asks him to cast out a demon from her daughter. As readers of the Gospel of Matthew, we have an account here of Jesus encountering diversity—someone very different from himself—in the Canaanite woman. What does Jesus do when confronted by someone who is radically different? Well...he ignores

her. The text says, "But he answered her not a word." Ouch! This is not one of those "feel good" stories that gets taught in Sunday school classes or etched into stained glass church windows. Jesus ignored her. He "answered her not a word."

What happens next? Well, the disciples certainly would not get asked to serve on the diversity committee at

Augsburg. What do they say? When confronted with a weeping foreigner, the disciples say, "Send her away, for she is crying after us." Even though the disciples often seem confused about who Jesus is, they are usually portrayed as compassionate—but not in this text. Like Jesus, they don't seem to know what to do when confronted by a person who has a different religion, language, gender, and background than themselves. This text reveals that diversity is hard, confusing, and uncomfortable work.

At some point, Jesus finally speaks to the woman. He says, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." At least he

speaks to her, but once again, neither Jesus nor his followers are good models for how to get along with people who are different.

But the Canaanite woman does not give up. She speaks again, and says "Lord help me." Clearly she has faith that Jesus can heal her daughter. But what does the Jewish Jesus say to the Canaanite woman? He says, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." That's tough! This text is so difficult that many New Testament scholars doubt if Jesus actually spoke these words.

We are used to hearing stories about Jesus where he is compassionate and welcoming. We like the stories where he pays attention to the sick, widows, and the poor. But that is not what's going on here. When Jesus encounters the crying Canaanite woman we get a glimpse of how challenging it really is to encounter people who are different from us, people who speak another language, people who have a different faith, people who come from another country.

... there is a Christian foundation for talking about diversity and for increasing the diversity of our community.

But the story is not over yet. This Canaanite woman will not take no for an answer. Even though Jesus has likened her to a household dog, she will not give up. I love how she pushes back against Jesus' refusal. She says, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." What a quick comeback! One medieval biblical scholar even "saw masculine virtues in the woman's behavior."

Her daughter is possessed. Jesus ignores and then insults her, but she refuses to be disregarded just because she is from a different religion, background, and gender than Jesus and his disciples. She fights to be heard. She fights for her daughter to be healed. She trusts that the Jewish Jesus can heal her Canaanite daughter in spite of his failure to acknowledge her.

Then something happens. Jesus changes his mind. Jesus changes his mind. He says, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." Now we don't often see this in the Gospels. Jesus changes his mind. His encounter with this foreigner, this pagan, this woman, leads to a change in him. There is also a change in the woman's daughter. Matthew tells us that she was "healed instantly."

What we see in this text is that authentic relationships can occur between people from different traditions, language, and cultures. But this text also gives us a glimpse into how easy it is to dismiss the possibility of having genuine, risk-taking relationships with those who seem radically other from ourselves. Diversity can be painful, in this case, of course, particularly for the woman who was ignored and insulted. But Jesus' willingness to be transformed and the Canaanite woman's insistence on being heard led to the healing of her daughter. At first the woman is ignored. Then the disciples ask to have her put out. Then Jesus compares her to a household dog. She persists and insists on being heard and her daughter is healed.

The story of the stubborn, Canaanite woman shows us that change can take place when we risk listening to one another and knowing one another. The story of the stubborn, Canaanite woman shows us that even Jesus had a hard time relating to someone who was different from him. The story of the stubborn Jesus—who initially ignores but then heeds the pleading woman—shows us

how difficult diversity can be. But it also gives us a glimpse of the healing and righting of relationships that can occur when we risk authentic relationships with those who are different from us.

Without reading too much into the text, it is fair to say that Jesus, the woman, her daughter, and the disciples were changed because the Canaanite woman and Jesus risked diversity. She was brave enough to approach a healer from another faith and a different region because she believed he could heal her daughter. And after initially ignoring her, Jesus was willing to listen and grant her request. Even though it was frightening, uncomfortable, and difficult, they risked an encounter with the other, and were transformed in the process.

Let us go and do likewise. Amen.

Mary Elise Lowe is an assistant professor of religion at Augsburg College. She has degrees from Pacific Lutheran University, (BA), Luther Seminary (MDiv) and The Graduate Theological Union (PhD).



Entrance to prison cells at the Nazi concentration camp in Terazin, Czech Republic

The Dust of the Rabbi

DAWN LUDWIG

When I leave for work in the morning, I do not have to wonder if today will be the day that the secret police gun me down and kill me for leading people in a prayer for peace. That is why hearing the story of someone who took that risk has had a huge impact on how I see vocation.

It was a Sunday afternoon in May 2006, and I sat in a meeting room upstairs in St. Thomas Church in Leipzig, Germany. I had taken two weeks off from my work as program director of the Physician Assistant (PA) Graduate Program at Augsburg College to take a “vocation pilgrimage”—a trip through Germany and the Czech Republic to see significant sites from the Protestant Reformation, the Holocaust, and the “Peaceful Revolution” that brought an end to Communist rule in East Germany. Sitting around me at the table were 18 other Augsburg faculty members, and we were listening to a local pastor named Ulrich Seidel.

Seidel told us that for seven years in the 1980s people gathered every Monday at St. Nicholas’ Church in Leipzig to pray for peace. In Communist East Germany, religion

was not allowed, the government was oppressive, and public assembly was dangerous. Yet despite all that, Seidel and others continued their weekly public prayers. By the fall of 1989 the situation had become very tense, and the police were starting to use violence to break up the services. On October 9, everyone was sure that the police would fire on the people who came to the church. Before he left his house, Seidel hugged his wife and his children and wondered what would happen. Would he be killed? Would he be swept up in a mass arrest and end up trapped forever in an East German prison? Would his family be able to survive without him?

There were 70,000 people outside the church that night. They had no weapons, nothing to protect themselves. They each carried only a lighted candle, and they chanted, “No violence” and “We are the people.” To everyone’s surprise, an amazing thing happened. Unprepared for nonviolence, the soldiers were drawn into the crowd. Instead of shooting people, they talked to them. Within a few days, the government collapsed, and for the first time in decades, East Germans were free.

That was only one of the compelling stories our group heard during our journey in Europe. When we went to the ELCA Wittenberg Center, we met Renate Skirl, a Christian woman who had practiced her faith during GDR times despite the risk of losing employment or having her children taken away from her. In the same town, we visited the place where Martin Luther posted his “95 Theses,” an act so challenging to the powerful church in Rome that for a time Luther had to go into hiding. When we crossed into the Czech Republic, we visited the Nazi concentration camp at Terazin. We saw the dreary buildings, the prisoners’ bare wooden bunks, the “Tunnel of Death” that led to the execution field outside the camp walls.

All the experiences of the trip touched me deeply, but, in particular, I cannot forget Skirl and Seidel. Because their strength and their faith are so inspiring, these two are now embedded in my thinking and my being. Would I have the guts they did? Would I be able to say, “I am a Christian” in the face of death? Would I be able to claim my faith if it meant I would be denied daily necessities? I can say I would do it, but would I? Really?

I imagine that at the time they thought only of surviving and trying to live their lives as they believed they should. They were probably not thinking about how others in the future might be inspired by their actions. In many ways, they are like the disciples of Jesus. He took ordinary people from ordinary jobs and showed them how to live for the Kingdom of God. They were to love God with all of their heart, mind, and soul and in doing so, show that same kind of love to others. They had hard times and had to give up their families and means of living and trust Jesus to follow him. Two thousand years later, people all over the

world see the disciples as role models. And, ironically, these 12 men were actually pointing away from themselves and trying to persuade everyone to live as Christ lived. I see that same kind of faithful following in Skirl and Seidel. I can only hope that someday my faith will approach that level.

Hearing the stories of people who lived their vocations so courageously has deepened my thinking about my own calling. Vocation to me means following the Great Commission from God—to be in the world as a servant of God, to listen to God to find my talents, and then to use those talents to further the Kingdom. It is not one point in time; it is an ongoing journey. While the Great Commission may stay the same—“to go and make disciples of all nations”—the way in which we accomplish that task changes throughout our lives. And we all do it differently. God did not make us the same; we each have our own particular job to do. As we acquire different experiences and knowledge, God can use us in different places in our lives. And every day can be a mission. Every day, I can make the decision to keep my eyes open and wait for God to “surprise me” with how He is going to use



The market plaza in Wittenberg, Germany, the town where Martin Luther posted the “95 Theses” that sparked the Protestant Reformation.



St. Nicholas’ Church in Leipzig, Germany, where peaceful protestors challenged Communist rule in the 1980s.

Diane Clorvigen

Bruce Reichenbach

me for the day. It may be to hold the door for someone, shovel a driveway, write a thank you note to the cashier at the store, show patience with a student who is struggling, or help a patient understand her illness. Vocation is not limited to what I do at work. It also defines who I am. Vocation is the passion that drives us to use the gifts that God has given us to be the best we can be.

About one month after we returned from Germany, I participated in a mission trip that helped me see the connection between vocation and obedience. I went to Sheboygan, Wisconsin (not quite as exotic a destination as Europe...) and worked with 400 youth and adults to repair the homes of elderly or disabled residents. The trip included daily devotions on the idea of giving God “full service,” meaning to live like Christ as described in Philippians 2:1-18. Each day had as its theme a word related to service, and one of the words was obedience. The organizers asked a poet, Billy Mark, to provide words of wisdom for the workers. Mark pointed out that obedience is something we all do constantly. In each and every day and in each and every decision, we are obeying some kind of voice—either the voice of the world (including our own voices) or the voice of God. But we have the power to consciously choose which voice it will be. I want my daily choice to be to follow the voice of God.

During the vocation pilgrimage in Europe, we began each morning with devotions. In one of these sessions, the group reflected on “plans.” Someone asked, “How do you make God laugh?” And the answer was, “Make a plan for your life.” Like any human being, I want to know where I am going, but my plans have been twisted and changed so many times that I am not sure which part of my plan I am even working on anymore. It is really God’s plan I need to follow, not my plan. This example will explain what I mean. Two days before our church group was to leave for Sheboygan, one of the adult leaders had to cancel. I cried and began to panic. But then I listened to God and thought of an unlikely person—one of the PA students. Just the day before, this student had confided in me that she was very upset that she hadn’t been able to go on her church’s mission trip because it conflicted with the PA seminar in Nicaragua. I immediately called her and asked if she would be able to spend a week with the youth from my church. Lori rearranged her schedule, went on the mission trip with us, connected well with the youth, and had a

wonderful time. The trip also gave the two of us a chance to connect in a way we would not otherwise have done. Now, there is no other way to explain this except to say that God was reminding me that He was in charge—because I had been thinking that the plans for the mission trip were going quite well. But God put Lori in my path, and by being quiet and listening to Him, I was able to find the person God had planned all along.

I was so moved by the vocation pilgrimage that I wanted to continue to learn, especially about how the Jewish people were treated during World War II. So after we returned, I read *Night* by Elie Wiesel and enrolled in a class on the Hebraic roots of Christianity. I did not know what to expect except that I thought I would be learning about Judaism. Instead, I actually learned more about my own faith roots—the similarities between the two faiths and how one can believe in Christ but still practice elements of the Jewish faith because of the biblical principles the two traditions share.

The part of the course that truly struck a chord with me was about the development of rabbis. Of course, I had heard Jesus called “Rabbi” throughout the New Testament, and I always knew that meant “teacher,” but I really had no idea how someone became a rabbi. In biblical times all boys began learning the Torah at age five. By the time a boy was 12 or so, if he were truly gifted, he would continue learning the scriptures in Hebrew class. Then at age 15 or so, he would seek a rabbi and become that person’s *talmid* or disciple. He would eat and sleep and live with the rabbi, following him every step of the way, always learning, continually developing his understanding of the teachings of the Torah. He didn’t just want to learn what the rabbi knew; he wanted to BE like the rabbi. Gradually, he would develop his own *haggadah* (rabbinical way of teaching about God) and his own *yoke* (specific interpretation of the scriptures). Once the *talmid* reached the age of 30 or so—when he was ready—his mentor would confer upon him the authority to teach others and the student would become a rabbi. Very few made it through this process as it required complete and total servitude.

Others could tell with which rabbi a particular *talmid* had studied, as there was evidence of that rabbi’s *yoke* in the *talmid*’s teaching. Two thousand years ago, a student walked so closely behind his rabbi that the student was

usually covered with dust, both literally and figuratively—dust from the roads, and dust from the rabbi's teaching. So, to be covered with the dust of your rabbi meant that you were living so close to him that you were absorbing all of the knowledge that he had to offer.

Now, here is the scary part. If I believe in God and the Bible as the inspired word of God, then I believe I am called to be a teacher to others. In a way, I am to be a rabbi. I am to show others how to live through my own *yoke*. I am to show others love. I am to show students how to be a physician assistant. I am to teach them in such a way that they have my “dust” on them—that somehow after they have been given the “authority” to become a PA, my signature will be on them. If that is true, then I need to weigh very carefully every step and word of every day. As someone else's teacher, I am responsible for showing them the way to use their knowledge. But, since I am far from perfect, that concept is truly terrifying. I am not sure I am worthy of someone wanting my “dust” on them. That is way too much responsibility. I just want to teach. I don't want to be responsible for someone else's life. It seems like a curse and a blessing at the same time.

And who taught me? How am I showing the “dust” of my rabbi? Can others tell by listening to me who my rabbi is? And what about those who taught me to be a PA? Does their “dust” show in how I teach students and how I treat patients? What “dust” am I to leave on students—the dust of Christ or the dust of Augsburg College? Can I leave some of both? How do we teach others to love what we love? I believe that, for me, these are the questions at the heart of vocation.

I am not sure how I will know if I am making a difference in someone's life. It may take years to see how my words or actions have affected a person, and that is a long time for a person who lives in a society that values instant gratification and immediate feedback. But I do know that as a teacher, I need to engage the students where I find them. Students are faced with daunting tasks each day, and often they feel overwhelmed or have difficulty seeing the larger picture ahead of them. That is where a skilled teacher can be most effective. If I am able to recall a time where I was feeling overwhelmed, the student may be able to learn from my experiences. Relating the situation to something real for the student will have the greatest

impact, and being real with the students is one of the most important and rewarding aspects of teaching.

I tried to look at how I was changed and how my teaching is different because of my pilgrimage. I believe that every experience in my life shapes me into who I am. I believe that I am living my vocation right here at Augsburg because I have the opportunity to shape the lives of twenty-eight students each year, and they in turn have the opportunity to impact thousands of lives by providing quality health care in the community. Augsburg is the right place for me, not because it is where the PA program resides, but because it is the place that has provided me with the opportunity to grow in my vocation.

And I am not on this journey alone. I am surrounded by people who make me who I am by supporting me—the PA department faculty and staff; the College faculty, staff and administration; my family and friends; and, most importantly, my Lord and Savior. People who will continue to question me and make me question myself—including the students—are all around me. I hope that if I listen to their questions and am open to change, I will always be looking for ways to serve others in a way that is pleasing to God.

I do not know what the future holds, but I believe that for now I am where I need to be—encouraging my students to see their profession in terms of service to others, and shaping my teaching through the example of the greatest Rabbi of all. In that process, I hope to leave some “dust” of the Rabbi on each student.

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Masjid in Jerusalem

Sharing Blessings

PROFILE OF AN AUGSBURG GRADUATE TAHERA MAMDANI

I migrated with my family from the sun-drenched country of Kenya to the United States in the early '70s. We reached Minnesota at the end of November, but playing in the snow was no fun for me. I did not know about warm clothing or long johns, and winter boots and rain boots looked the same to me. However, many of our new neighbors welcomed us warmly, irrespective of our ethnic differences, and helped us at every stage as we adapted to the harsh Minnesota winters and learned to navigate multilane highways and traffic-congested downtown Minneapolis. They certainly held in their hearts what Simone Weil, early 1900s teacher and philosopher, said: "The love of our neighbor in all its fullness simply means being able to say, 'What are you going through?'" Not all were that friendly, though. I vividly recall how other neighbors slowly drove by our house, which was located in a very white suburban community, to check out "the foreigners." But my father believed in meeting curiosity and suspicion with dignity and graciousness, and his polite and courteous demeanor promptly earned him many friends, both in the neighborhood and at the window factory where he worked.

For our family, trying hard to belong in a new neighborhood community produced mixed feelings. We quickly adjusted to the new culture and surroundings; however, my father was strict and insisted that we maintain our traditional culture as well. For example, we continued using the native language, Cutchi, at home; and to this day, my mother still wears long cotton dresses and bloomers, just like the women in *The Little House on the Prairie*. During my teenage years, it was a struggle for me to maintain a balance between my parents' expectations and those of the school community, but I am grateful to my parents for the foundation they gave me. They fulfilled one of the important responsibilities of parenting—passing on to the next generation a code of ethical behavior. They instilled in me their religious values of honesty, civility, self-control, fidelity, concern for others, and respect for legitimate authority.

After graduating from high school, I attended college for two years, but I did not get the opportunity to complete my degree because I got married and raised a family. I did attempt to return to college when the children were older, but juggling a full-time job, a family, and school was very taxing. Besides, returning to college occupied a lower priority for me than being an attentive, loving, and caring parent for my two children. Parenting was the most important aspect of my life. This is the tradition of the East Indian culture in which I was raised.

Since I had decided to delay higher education, I turned to volunteerism. I became involved in various activities at my children's parochial school. Besides giving me a way to support and nurture the students, it allowed me to meet other parents who shared the same values and faith. Also, I found a positive role model in the assistant principal. She inspired me with her perseverance and unselfish commitment to God, her family, and her community. She worked long hours, stayed calm during stressful times, and always thanked God for everything she had. Working closely with her for almost three years taught me a lot and helped me think about what I really wanted to do in life and how I could live out my calling to be a better servant of God. These words of George Bernard Shaw describe how I came to feel: "I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community, and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can." I guess that is why I liked to work for non-profit organizations. They gave me a way to serve the community and make it a better place.

Over the years, I worked for several employers performing various accounting and office administrative duties. Gradually, I began to feel that I could provide better service to my employers if I had additional training. Dressing up in the morning for work, I would think about an old television advertisement—"StarKist doesn't just want tuna

with good taste; StarKist wants tuna to taste good. Sorry Charlie!" That statement seemed like a message to me—beckoning me to return to college.

My desire to pursue further education became even stronger when I passed up some very appealing volunteer opportunities. Over the years I had been approached by various non-profit organizations seeking women to

diversify their board membership. One of the positions was on the board of directors at my children's parochial school. Another offer of board membership came from an agency that serves displaced women and children. A third offer came from a speakers' bureau whose mission is to eliminate stereotypes of Muslim Americans. In all three cases, I reluctantly declined. I did not feel qualified to serve as a board member. I did not have confidence in my intellectual skills, and I felt inadequate with only a two-year Associate of Arts degree. Not only that, I did not feel ready to make a long-term commitment to these organizations because of my goal of returning to college.

In a way, turning down these offers inspired me to move forward. As writer and teacher Peter F. Drucker said, "Unless commitment is made, there are only promises and hopes; but no plans." I realized that it was time for me to take action to pursue my educational goals. After so many

years, I finally mustered up the courage to return to college to finish a four-year degree.

Part of the greatness of this country is that even individuals like me—people who have been in the workforce for a long time—have the chance to go to college. Since I could not quit my job and go to school full time, I searched for a college that held classes on weekends and could accommodate non-traditional students. I applied to Augsburg College and was grateful to God to have been accepted. My family was very supportive of my aspirations.

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All four of us understood that we would need faith in God, dedication, determination, and cooperation to get through this demanding time, but we believed that the long-term outcome would be satisfaction and reward.

Augsburg was a safe haven for me. Since it is a small community campus with a strong emphasis on religion, vocation, and ethics, I felt at home. I continued to wear a *hijab*, a headscarf religiously enjoined on Muslim women, and I found that both professors and students were very understanding and accepting of who I am. Along with nurturing the intellect, the campus culture emphasizes individuality and uniqueness so that we can all appreciate the diversity God has bestowed on us.

The College provided exactly what I needed—an open forum for learning in a supportive environment. With the help of caring and outstanding faculty, I explored new ground. I learned about financials, gained data and human resource management skills, and cultivated my ability to organize and “think on my toes.” I discovered how to turn ideas that did not work into learning opportunities and how to improve strategies to make them succeed. My business management class provided real-life examples of how to motivate employees to work hard not just for external rewards, but for intrinsic ones as well. My accounting classes taught me the details of proper bookkeeping procedures and internal controls. I learned how to organize, manage, and analyze data in Management Information Systems, and my quantitative statistics class greatly improved my analytical skills.

Being at Augsburg has allowed me to explore my full potential, and it has given me the confidence to better myself so that I can be of service to others. I feel motivated and energized and look forward to volunteer opportunities that lie ahead at non-profit businesses or organizations that enrich and strengthen the community. It is important that I share the blessings bestowed by God.

Already, I am applying the education and training I obtained at Augsburg. I can now be a contributing member on boards such as Islamic Resource Group (IRG), and Sisters Need a Place (SNAP). I have come up with several ideas for after-school activities that will provide safe and healthy alternatives for students so that they don't have to go home to an empty home, especially when both their

parents work. So far, I have helped write several grants for my children's school and successfully secured funding for a sports program and playground equipment replacement. I have also been providing income tax services to minority-owned small businesses and low-income families, drawing upon what my accounting classes taught me about internal controls, revenue recognition, and cash flow. In addition, until recently I worked at Northern Voices, an independent non-profit school located in Roseville, Minnesota, which serves deaf and hard of hearing children from infancy through age five. Since it is a small school, I wore many hats and juggled many tasks as the administrator. Despite all of the challenges of working with a tight budget and “having to do it all,” there was an enormous amount of satisfaction in knowing that my work was important and affected the lives of young children. It is my faith and belief that God blesses those who serve the underprivileged.

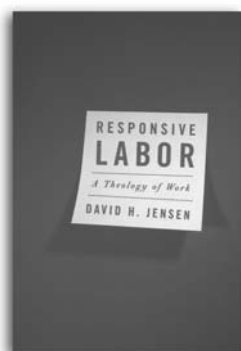
Completing my degree at Augsburg has been a wonderful and pleasurable experience, and it has inspired me to continue learning. Since I wish to continue serving non-profit businesses, my long-term objective is to complete a master's program in public and non-profit administration, God willing. I wish to resume giving more time, energy, and talent toward the betterment of the community.

My love for children and humanity continues to be strong. I want to serve and make a difference! I am considering moving back to East Africa and applying for a position with Red Crescent, a worldwide humanitarian organization, to help underprivileged communities in the African nations. In the words of anthropologist Margaret Mead, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Tahera Mamdani graduated summa cum laude from Augsburg College in 2006 with a major in accounting. In April 2008 she will graduate from Metropolitan State University with a master's degree in public and not-for-profit administration. She enjoys working for small companies and, for the past decade, in the not-for-profit sector. She is married and lives in Fridley, Minnesota, and she is eager to return to her many volunteer activities.

Exploring the Theology of Work

BOOK REVIEW
PAUL LUTTER



Responsive Labor: A Theology of Work, David H. Jensen, Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.

Three questions serve as the focus of students' writing and reflection throughout KEY 490 "Vocation and the Meaning of Success," an interdisciplinary capstone course for seniors that is taught collaboratively by faculty from the Business and Religion Departments at Augsburg College—Who are you? Why are you here? What will you do? Of these three questions, it is the third that most often piques the students' interest, in part because of the timing of the question (it emerges during the final third of the course) and in part because of what the question implies. In essence, this question asks students to reflect not only on *what* they will do but also *how* they will go about doing it. Asking students to envision what they will do encourages them to imagine their relationship to the world. Asking them to describe how they will go about doing it helps them consider what role God plays in how they will live out their vision. Usually, students can quickly describe what they hope to do after they graduate, but they often express confusion at the notion that their faith in God relates to their future work. And these are people who have spent an entire semester intentionally considering the relationship between vocation and success!

What does this confusion tell us, and what is its source? Some believe this confusion is symptomatic of certain

strains of postmodernism that mistrust organized religion or God. However, I think this answer might be too simplistic. While postmodern thought might influence the ways in which some students answer the question, I'm not convinced it is the sole factor. In fact, often the students who have the greatest difficulty seeing the connection between vocation and success are also those who have most actively practiced their faith, and in many cases still do so. At the end of last semester when the students presented their portfolios (based on their answers to the three questions I've already mentioned), I was struck not only by the number of students who were raised in a particular faith tradition, but also by how many of them hope to make practicing their faith an integral part of their life after college.

When I listened to these same students talk about what they plan to do, I noticed how many of them talked about work as if it were the sum total of a person's life. In such a view, work becomes the reason for every other activity. Work is not simply the means by which people fuel their greed; rather, work becomes the "boundary and basis"¹ of their entire lives. When combined with a belief in God and a desire to live out one's faith, this understanding of work could imply either an idolization of work or an attempt to earn God's favor (works righteousness). These students did not create this interpretation independently, of course; their idea of work and its meaning has been modeled by the larger society. Confusion at the idea that vocation and success are related indicates a need for a new conception of work that clearly describes the connection between the two.

Scholars in a wide variety of fields have noticed this need for a new articulation of work, and as a result significant works have emerged from several disciplines or interdisciplinary contexts. A number of theologians have made

¹ I have adapted this phrase from Oswald Bayer, "Justification: Basis and Boundary of Theology," Christine Helmer, trans. in *By Faith Alone: Essays in Honor of Gerhard O. Forde*, Joseph A. Burgess and Marc Kolden, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 67-85.

important contributions to this conversation in the past decade, among them M. Douglas Meeks (*God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy*), Miroslav Volf (*Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work*), and Kathryn Tanner (*Economy of Grace*). Each of these volumes has brought vocation and success into closer proximity to one another in a way that invites other disciplinary voices into further conversation with theology, thereby widening the discourse.

In his book *Responsive Labor: A Theology of Work*, Presbyterian theologian David H. Jensen is concerned that too wide a chasm has been formed between faith and world, between vocation and success, between God's work and human work. Instead of seeing these elements as separate and unconnected, Jensen sees them as interactive and reciprocal. In other words, as God works, so the world (i.e., humankind) responds. He writes,

... the God of Christian faith works: creating, sustaining, redeeming, and making all things new. What is redeemed in Jesus Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit elicits our response. Though human work can never detract or add to the work God has already accomplished, it can be an offering for others and for God; when our work draws its life from the triune God, we also contribute to the life of the world.²

Jensen bases his definition of work not on the notion of "compulsion," which he sees as equivalent to "workaholism," but on the notion of "obligation," which he sees as "response."³ The reason behind Jensen's emphasis on obligation and response becomes clear when he writes: "The God who creates the world in love graces us with relationships—to other creatures, to the created order and to God's very self. God's work of creation elicits our response because God entrusts us with obligations ..."⁴

To argue his interpretation of "responsive labor" Jensen first examines how it is born out in biblical and theological traditions. While he briefly describes the way vocation is developed in Luther's work, Jensen's real interest is in

exploring how the Reformed and Roman Catholic traditions understand the concept of work. He then spends a chapter describing "God's work for us," where he describes the work of the Holy Trinity and what this means for our own work. The next chapter deals with the work of the people, which Jensen defines as "liturgy, Eucharist, and gestures of good work."

In the final chapter Jensen returns to the Roman Catholic tradition to discuss responsive labor as "subsidiarity" and to the Reformed tradition for its emphasis on "covenant."⁵ He explains subsidiarity as follows:

... [t]he function of local communities and institutions, then, is not to bolster the voice of the largest institutions, as if one's allegiance to the national government trumped all local interests. Rather, the drive is the reverse: larger, national institutions exist so that local communities may more fully flourish. The accountability of structures ... always flows back to the local faces and relationships that enable life in community.⁶

It is not surprising that in his emphasis on covenant, Jensen highlights the response—or mutual accountability—both between God and humans and also between ourselves and other people. "We live out God's promises and respond to them, in no small part, in our relationships with other people. Love of God is a mere platitude until it is put into action in human community."⁷ For Jensen, the concept of God's "covenant people" includes everyone, and we ought not rest until this ideal is realized. He writes:

Our efforts will not bring about the reign [of God] but they do offer one form of response, one eruption of thanks and praise to the One whose work only ceases when God will be all in all. Human labor, too, can be one expression of praise, but for that praise to be heard, the household must also be attentive to the working gifts of all God's creatures.⁸

² David Jensen, *Responsive Labor: A Theology of Work* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 2.

³ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 118-121.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 121.

I was originally drawn to this book because of its description of work as “responsive.” That word suggested to me that the author would emphasize the twofold Christian freedom described by Martin Luther (“A Christian is free lord of all, subject to none; a Christian is dutiful servant to all, subject to all”).⁹ In this view, the grace of Jesus Christ frees the Christian to be responsive to the needs of the neighbor through stewardship of the gifts that God has freely and fully given each person. However, that is not what I found in Jensen’s book. While Jensen is sympathetic to Luther’s emphasis, he goes a step beyond Luther’s work, tailoring the discussion for modern society. Ultimately, his goal is to describe what Christian life looks like in response to this question: “What are you going to do now that you don’t have to do anything at all?”¹⁰

When in the future students in KEY 490 seem bewildered by the idea that vocation and success are related, I will draw on Jensen’s book to illustrate one of the ways one may conceptualize this connection. In this way, I will hope to invite students to see their own work as “responsive” to their neighbor, to all of creation, and to God, who, in Martin Luther’s words, “has created me together with all that exists.”¹¹

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⁹ Martin Luther, “The Freedom of a Christian (1520),” *Luther’s Works* 31:344.

¹⁰ Lutheran theologian Gerhard O. Forde asks—but does not answer—this question in his book *Justification by Faith—A Matter of Death and Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).

¹¹ Martin Luther, “Explanation to the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed,” *Book of Concord*, cited in Oswald Bayer, “I Believe That God Has Created Me with All That Exist: An Example of Catechetical-Systematics,” trans. Christine Helmer in *Lutheran Quarterly* 8/2 (1994) 129-161.

The Augsburg Center for Faith and Learning

In the spring of 2002, the Lilly Endowment, Inc. granted Augsburg College a marvelous opportunity to expand the College's commitment to connecting faith and learning. Their grant of \$2 million over a five-year period allowed the College to create Exploring Our Gifts. In the fall of 2005, the Lilly Endowment awarded Augsburg a generous sustainability grant, matched by the College, to help support the program for an additional three years.

Exploring Our Gifts focuses on helping students, faculty, and staff discern their vocations in service to God and the world. The results thus far have been wonderful, with hundreds of students, faculty, and staff benefiting from a wide range of new programs and academic opportunities, described in the project summaries that follow.

We are now turning our attention to the future to ensure that this important work and the benefits it provides to the College community continue beyond the life of the grant. Our goal is to clearly signal that the Christian faith informs and inspires how we prepare students for their lives in the world. To this end, the College is currently developing the Augsburg Center for Faith and Learning, a lasting presence on campus that will build upon the spirit, momentum, and accomplishments of Exploring Our Gifts.

The identity and shape of this new program are already emerging. The purpose of the center is to provide resources to faculty, staff, and students that enable them to organize faith and learning within the framework of calling. The role of the leadership of the center is to guide the College in the exploration of vocation as understood within the Lutheran tradition, with the Bernhard Christensen Chair of

Religion and Vocation (an endowed chair in the religion department) providing a theological vision grounded in the mission of Augsburg. The programmatic focus of the center is three-fold:

- **Scholarship and teaching:** This program promotes excellence in scholarship and teaching by encouraging faculty to examine how the Christian faith is linked to particular disciplines and how this may be communicated to students. Included here are critical conversations and seminars about vocation, book discussions, and the nurturing of leaders for the College's keystone courses.
- **Student exploration of faith and vocation:** Students will be given the opportunity to think about life and learning within a vocation framework. Many of the current Exploring Our Gifts programs for students will be continued.
- **Congregations and alumni:** The Augsburg Center for Faith and Learning promotes relationships with congregations, encouraging them to be learning centers that reflect theologically on vocation. This program also aims to deepen connections between the College and alumni with a strong sense of calling.

The goals of this new program are both inspiring and ambitious. It is work that has the potential to be truly transformational, both at the individual level and the institutional level. There will be many opportunities for friends of Augsburg to contribute to this effort in many different ways, and we welcome your partnership as we continue to build the Augsburg Center for Faith and Learning.

Exploring Our Gifts Projects

THE ACTIVITIES OF AUGSBURG'S LILLY GRANT

Theme 1 – Vocation as a Life Approach

Vocatio Worship

Each month of the academic year Augsburg sets aside one chapel service for the Vocatio Chapel, a series in which speakers preach about how vocation has played out in their own lives.

Quest 24 (Vocation Quest Retreat)

Once a year a small group of underclassmen leave campus and spend a day at a local retreat center. Guided by the project's leaders, they study vocation and engage in exercises that help them discover their gifts, strengths, and passions. These retreats stimulate important discussions and help initiate newer students into the vocation conversation.

Student Vocation Assessments

Augsburg's Center for Service, Work, and Learning uses student vocation assessments as a tool to increase students' self-awareness and help them reflect on their life purpose and spiritual journey.

Theme 2 – Vocation as a Curricular Focus

International Exploration

Each year, with the help of Augsburg's Center for Global Education, Exploring Our Gifts sponsors two study-abroad seminars that enable participants to explore vocation in an international context.

Lilly Scholars

The Lilly Scholar Program provides a scholarship and a special seminar for students who have an interest in becoming ministers or church leaders. This project allows students to explore the field of ministry and to reflect on whether they are called to this form of service.

Theme 3 – Vocation as Education for Service

Church Leader Development (Camp Stipends)

Since research shows that many church leaders were inspired early in life by a significant camp experience, the Church Leader Development project provides programming and a stipend to encourage students to spend a summer working at a camp.

Lilly Internships

Each spring this semester-long project provides eight students with hands-on experience at faith- and service-based organizations combined with a bi-monthly seminar focused on exploration of vocation.

Alternate Spring Break

This project gives students the opportunity to engage in an off-campus community service project during spring break. These service experiences take place in three locations—the Gulf Coast, Southeastern Minnesota, and the Twin Cities.

Augsburg College Youth Theology Institute

High school youth come to the Augsburg campus for a week during the summer for intensive study of a theological theme. A youth and family ministry faculty member and a Campus Ministry associate facilitate the experience, and current Augsburg students serve as mentors. Activities include readings, discussions, and site visits. Each student writes a reflection paper at the end of the institute.

AUGSBURG COLLEGE

Exploring
Our Gifts

Reconnecting Faith, Life, and Vocation

Theme 4 – Developing Vocational Awareness in Faculty, Staff, and Students

New Faculty Orientation

The goal of this project is to introduce the concept of vocation to new faculty in an overt and focused manner. Activities for participants include a vocation session at the general orientation, year-long seminars, and an end-of-the-year retreat.

Professional Development

The Professional Development project provides opportunities for Augsburg staff and faculty members to explore their own sense of call and to examine how it applies to their work at the College. This project provides book discussion groups for faculty and staff, a vocation seminar for current faculty, and “Critical Conversations” (discussion groups for faculty around vocation-related themes). In addition, this project supports the work of individual departments as they develop the vocation component of the senior keystone courses in their majors.

Forums

One of the aims of the Lilly Endowment grant has been to make vocation a part of the “public” language of the campus. In past years the Forums project has brought some prominent public figures to campus to speak and engage in discussions with members of the Augsburg community. Currently, it draws upon faculty and staff members to give luncheon presentations on their own understanding of what it means to be called and what this calling means for work, family life, and civic responsibility.

Center for Faith and Learning Development

A key objective of Augsburg’s second Lilly Endowment, Inc. grant is the creation of the Augsburg Center for Faith and Learning (ACFL) to sustain the work of Exploring Our Gifts after 2010. Augsburg is currently in the first stage of fundraising (articulating the case and developing timelines) and so far has secured \$2.1 million in cash and pledges toward its \$8 – 9 million goal for the ACFL.

Till & Keep

It is important to have a written forum on vocation that can serve as a resource for the Augsburg community and its alumni as well as a vehicle for outreach to external audiences. To that end, Exploring Our Gifts publishes the

annual journal *Till & Keep*, which contains reflections on vocation from faculty, students, staff, and friends of the College.

Inter-Religious Dialogue

As a community that is genuinely interested in theological reflection on vocation, Augsburg welcomes the opportunity to join with non-Christians in exploring the concept of calling. To that end, Campus Ministry will host public forums with speakers from other faith communities such as Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, and Native American. The first such forum took place in March 2008.

New Projects

Periodically, members of the Augsburg community approach the Lilly Advisory Board with ideas for one-time projects that are consistent with the goals of Exploring Our Gifts. The Board has set aside some funds for such initiatives. Examples of some special projects that have been supported are as follows: an internship at the Lutheran Summer Music Academy and Festival, partial support for a research project on the ways in which intercultural encounters shape participants’ understandings of their vocations, and partial support for a student-led alternative spring break service trip to New Orleans.

Web Page Development for the Augsburg Center for Faith and Learning

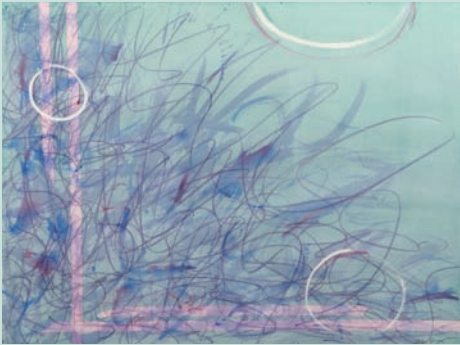
The purpose of this project is to create a web presence for the Augsburg Center for Faith and Learning. This website will contribute to the mission of the center by providing a forum for public communication.

Confirmation Program

The goal of this newly designed project is to reach out to congregations in the community by providing confirmation programming. Professors in the youth and family ministry major will create an event—probably in the form of a one-day, on-campus “Reformation Day”—that celebrates the Lutheran Reformation and increases awareness of Martin Luther and his theology of vocation.

Artwork in This Issue

Cover:



Abstract-I
Watercolor and Colored Pencil, 2006

Laura Henry graduated from Augsburg College in December 2007 with a double major in art history and studio art.

Page 4:



Le Matin
Watercolor, 2006

Tara Sweeney is an assistant professor in the Art Department at Augsburg College. This work of art is her creative response to walking Le Chemin de St. Jacques pilgrimage in France.

Page 18:



Sienna Vineyard
Digital Print, 2003

Curt Paulsen is an associate professor in the Social Work Department at Augsburg College.

