



This I Believe

THINK & KEEP

A JOURNAL ON VOCATION, AUGSBURG COLLEGE, SPRING 2009



Untitled, Greta Sundquist, Watercolor, 2008

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Till&Keep is a journal published by Exploring Our Gifts at Augsburg College, a program for the theological exploration of vocation jointly funded by the College and the Lilly Endowment, Inc. It is made by and for members of Augsburg and the greater academic community who are interested in exploring vocation and the interplay between faith and learning. For more information on the journal and other programs sponsored by Exploring Our Gifts, contact the editor, Diane Glorvigen, at glorvige@augsborg.edu.

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"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.

Mark Tranvik, director, Exploring Our Gifts

Diane Glorvigen, editor

Betsey Norgard, production editor

Jen Nagorski, graphic design

This I Believe

AUGSBURG FACULTY AND STAFF MEMBERS SHARE THEIR CORE BELIEFS

Introduction

In May of 2008 twenty faculty and staff from Augsburg gathered for a two-day seminar called “Leading Lives That Matter,” facilitated by Phil Quanbeck II and Mark Tranvik, two faculty members from Augsburg’s religion department. The workshop was a project of Exploring Our Gifts, the Lilly Endowment grant at the College, and its goal was to form a community of learners dedicated to deepening their own sense of calling in life. The group read excerpts from *Leading Lives That Matter*, an excellent anthology by Mark Schwehn and Dorothy Bass, as well as Tolstoy’s masterful novella, *The Death of Ivan Ilych*. The discussion topics, which centered on Biblical and Lutheran understandings of vocation, stimulated a conversation that was lively, moving and candid.

At the end of the seminar, participants were challenged to craft a 500-word essay called “This I Believe,” an approach modeled on the popular series that airs on National Public Radio. The instructions were deceptively simple—their pieces needed to reflect their own sense of calling and be

grounded in some kind of personal experience that shaped or tested their convictions. As you will read in the pages that follow, the resulting reflections range from humorous to heartbreaking. They reveal people who have wrestled deeply with why they are here and what sort of power governs their lives. Some draw insights from extraordinary circumstances and others from everyday life. Some are more traditionally religious while others make allusions to a larger force that sustains all things. What unites the writers is a conviction that their lives share a larger purpose and that meaning in life is closely tied to service to others.

We hope you will enjoy these reflections and that they will prompt you to ask the same questions the Leading Lives That Matter seminar participants asked themselves: What are my core convictions? Why do I believe these things? And how do my beliefs shape how I act in the world?

Mark Tranvik

This I Believe

A God With No Limits

I believe that God is everywhere present, all-knowing, and all-powerful. For me, to believe otherwise would be to constrain a God for whom there can be no limitations.

My earliest memories of reflecting on the existence of God come from Sunday school where I recall God being described as omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. While I do not remember how these traits were explained, I do remember being charmed by the big words and awed by what I took them to mean at the time—that God was some great being with unlimited power and knowledge, possessing the ability to be everywhere at the same time. As I contemplated this combination of supreme capabilities, I was filled with a child's amazement. The capacity to create a universe, I reasoned, would certainly require a lot of power and knowledge. On some level, I wanted a God that was all these things. Upon further reflection, I began to wonder, "How can this be? How could anything be all of these things?" I don't remember ever really doubting the possibility; rather, I was perplexed. It was, to say the least, mysterious.

A series of introductory experiences in the study of science deepened my thinking and confusion. In a grade school science class I was introduced to the concept of infinity. I was told that the universe goes on forever, with no limits. I marveled at this notion of vastness. Each attempt to put it into perspective resulted in a conception that yielded some form of boundary, thus violating the idea of endless nature. Several years hence, while studying light in a high school physics class, I read about competing theories regarding the nature of light. One argued that light, like sound, travels in waves. The other claimed that light was comprised of tiny particles. While both positions appeared to be plausible, it seemed to me that they could not both be true. Later, I read that they were indeed both true. As I tried to resolve this apparent contradiction, I began to

reflect on how I experienced light, namely, my sight. Subsequent reading yielded explanations as to the mechanics of sight but offered no explanation of the conscious experience of sight—or any of our other senses, for that matter. My first-year college physics class exposed me to the rudiments of quantum mechanics and the idea that time and position cannot both be fixed simultaneously. In order to hold one factor constant, the other factor must be allowed to vary. Again, I was confronted with a contradiction without an apparent resolution. It seemed to me that the more deeply we probe, the more complex and full of wonder our existence reveals itself to be.

Through the practice of meditation I began to experience glimpses of the incomprehensible scale of the universe. For brief instants I have had the fleeting realization of a different kind of awareness wherein contradictions resolve themselves. Like the act of reflection and contemplation itself, this transcendental nature seems to break the bounds of time and place and, for me, requires a higher power beyond my grasp.

The apparent contradictions in our understanding that, for some, pit science against religion have had quite the opposite impact on my thinking. Through my amateur encounters with science and theology I see a complex partnership rather than an irresolvable discordance. I have come to the conclusion that the universe is filled with mysteries to be solved. There is far more to know than I have the capacity to know. Despite my ongoing attempts, the ability to truly understand our existence is beyond my reach. I am left with the belief in a creator and sustainer who is all-knowing, all-powerful, and everywhere present. How else could it be?

Tom Morgan

Give to Live and Live to Give

My grandfather, Hugh E. Berry, is the spiritual hero and mentor of my childhood. He grew up in a single-parent home in Detroit with his mother. His father struggled with the demons of alcohol and deserted the family. My grandfather told me stories of eating off orange crates in a two-room apartment and spending nights alone while his mother cleaned office buildings in Detroit. After finishing the eighth grade, my grandfather dropped out of school to work for the railroad as a telegrapher. He eventually moved to Buffalo, N.Y., where he met Lorna Seisser, soon to be Lorna Berry, my grandmother. Lorna grew up as the only daughter of a pharmacist. Hugh started a candy business at one time, wrote music (taught himself the piano and accordion), created a comic strip for the local newspaper, and was a salesman for the National Biscuit Company (Nabisco) selling to local mom-and-pop grocery stores. Hugh was poor, from a broken and alcoholic family. However, he made life fun, never minded getting his hands dirty, lived heartily in his child-like faith, and saw everyone as a worthy creation of God.

Hugh fashioned himself a preacher, although he never had the opportunity for education beyond the eighth grade. During my growing up years, he found a way to be the vacation preacher for two country churches about an hour away from home. I used to go with him on Sundays as he completed the circuit. I also went with him when he volunteered at the White Light Mission, and it was that experience, in particular, that truly shaped my understanding of philanthropy and my belief in generosity, along with teaching me about the richness of my own blessings.

The White Light Mission was located in a rather seedy neighborhood in downtown Buffalo, N.Y. In my childhood (1950s), it was mostly men who frequented the mission.

They were called bums, winos, and derelicts. People scoffed at them, calling them lazy good-for-nothings. They were thought to be dangerous. Today we call them homeless; we try to get them into shelters; we recognize that mental health plays a large role in the plight of street people.

My grandfather, though, was never afraid. Every Tuesday night, he picked me up and took me to the “worship meeting” at the mission. On a cold Buffalo winter night, men came to the mission in the hope of a bowl of warm soup and a slice of bread. However, there was a “price” they had to pay. First, there would be a hymn sing—yes, my grandfather loved to sing, too, and he led the singing. I accompanied on the piano. Then my grandfather would “preach” God’s love, forgiveness, and hope to a group of Buffalo’s most scorned and downtrodden and hopeless. Afterward, we always sat down with the men and enjoyed a bowl of soup and a slice of bread.

My mother was never pleased that my grandfather took me to this place filled with “those” people. Grandmother never understood why Hugh wanted to associate with those “bums, winos, and derelicts.” Without a doubt, however, my grandfather, out of his own poor and humble upbringing, understood both the needs and value of every person. And without a doubt, he taught me the worth of each of God’s creations, and he instilled his own sense of generosity in me in indelible ways.

Doug Scott

This I Believe

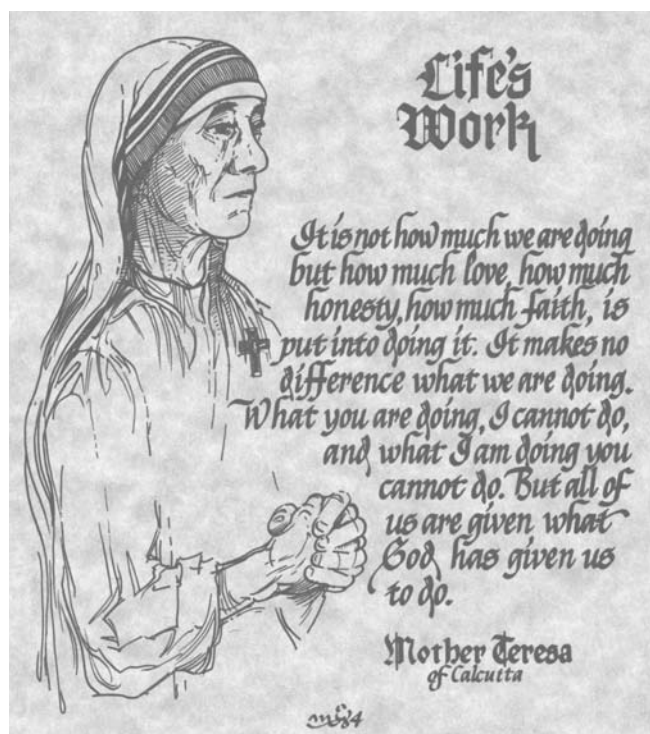
Love Builds Bridges

I believe in building bridges. These bridges span the chasms of indifference, distrust, and intolerance and help create compassionate connections with, and opportunities to serve, our fellow travelers.

My travels across these bridges began, primarily, as a selfish pursuit. I wanted to explore the world; I wanted adventure; I wanted to gain first-hand knowledge of other people and cultures. After graduating from college, I taught at Kodaikanal, an international school in southern India. Spending four months teaching and traveling throughout India was, indeed, an adventure. I toured the sites from the Taj Mahal to the southern beaches of Kovalam, purchased silver bangles and cotton saris, snapped hundreds of photographs, and enjoyed the spicy Indian cuisine. I was a guest in a beautiful, hospitable country and yet I played by my own, self-seeking rules.

Two years later I returned to India—this time as a volunteer for Americans for International Aid—to escort orphans from Calcutta to their adoptive homes in the United States. Since I was an aspiring writer, my second goal was to meet Mother Teresa and ask for an interview. As it turned out, I did meet Mother Teresa; however, I did not request an interview. God had other plans for me during my time in Calcutta.

Outside Mother Teresa's Home for the Dying I met Arup Das, a physician who volunteered his time at the home. He encouraged me to volunteer, as well, instead of just visiting it as a tourist or as a writer in search of a story. Together, we left the hot, dusty, boisterous Calcutta streets and entered into the cool, eerily-quiet Home for the Dying. I was now a guest in this land of the dying and I did not know the rules. I put away my camera and notebook. I watched Arup as he quietly spoke Bengali to some patients, gave medicines to others, and changed bed sheets and diapers for still others. I watched. I listened. I listened to stories of despair. I listened to stories of hope. My thirst for adventure and knowledge changed—slowly, or possibly in



Marvin Ellingson, Ink Drawing and Calligraphy, 1984

this instant—into something fuller, deeper. I wanted not simply to serve myself and know the other, but more significantly to serve the other and, in the process, more intimately know God.

Many mentors guide me on my journey of solidifying my beliefs and vocational callings. Some, like Arup, reveal through their actions their compassionate and loving service. Others motivate me through their collaborations in support of tolerance and justice, or they inspire me with their words and teachings. Mother Teresa wrote—and embodied—the phrase “love in action.” In the process of listening, serving, and loving we find our way to God’s land of faith and compassion. In this sacred space I know I often fall short. However, if I continue to listen, I hear a gentle voice. Is it God or a fellow traveler? The voice says, “There are many more bridges to build. Get busy.”

Lynn Ellingson

In the End, There May Not Be Answers— But There Will Be Comfort

I've been raised (and culturally conditioned) to believe in the power of the individual's will—the pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps kind of ruggedness that is rumored to have made this country great. Taken to its end, one might say that this philosophy ensures that there is nothing that can't be overcome if a person only tries hard enough.

*Persevere. Be steadfast.
Work hard. Play hard. Take responsibility.
What you put out you will get back.*

There is great satisfaction in much of my life from this shaping. While I don't make claims to have been the most successful marble in the bag, I know that my work ethic and type A strain have led to many positive outcomes. Yet I have also come to believe that all the power of my conscious striving and strength of will cannot change everything, cannot make the future certain, cannot provide the answers to all life's questions. I've learned this lesson, appropriately, the hard way.

When one of our daughters was 18 years old, she committed suicide. My grief was unimaginable, the pain intense and profound. I approached grieving, I suppose, like much else in my life.

Persevere. Be steadfast. Take responsibility.

Yet there was not much comfort in these admonitions and life beliefs. I could not will or work this away; I couldn't even seem to scream the screams that locked themselves in my chest. What was I to do now that the rules and standards with which I had lived my life were not serving me?

After many, many sleepless nights and restless days, I lay in a semi-catatonic state on my bed one day. My husband had gone back to work and I was there alone. Slowly, as sleep finally began to encroach on the edges of my body, I felt a presence. It was a loving, comforting presence—the feeling of being a small child covered with a very soft, warm blanket, of being held in protective arms (the arms of God, perhaps?). There was something like a kind, gentle voice telling me that I could not fix this; I could not make it right—no matter how hard I willed or strove. I didn't find any answers that day, but I did find a deeply profound comfort that I am still at a loss for words to convey.

Now, when I feel the need to control or to fix or to strive too much, I return in my mind to that experience. I can feel the presence—the sense of being held—and it reminds me that while I don't have all of the answers and I cannot always make everything right, that too is all right.

Lori A. Peterson

This I Believe

Every Person Is a Part of God

I believe in God. I believe God appeared on earth in many forms at different times and places. I see God all around me in God's creation.

Based on my religious upbringing, I also believe that the soul or spirit inside me is a part of God. What is the difference between a living being and a dead being? While all that makes up a human or animal body is still there after death, something essential is missing. That something is the spirit and the energy, which is part of the supreme ocean of energy and the supreme spirit that we call God.

Because this supreme spirit exists forever, our souls live on after death. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the sacred scripture of Hinduism, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that the soul discards the body in the same way that we discard old, dirty clothes and that it takes on a new body, seeking new experiences and adventures in the universe. I believe that this cycle of birth and death continues until the soul moves beyond individual identity and understands that all existence is one.

The spirit comes to earth with a purpose, but it takes a good part of life for us to recognize who we are and why we are here. The difficulty often is that for much of our lives we are defined by others around us and by our unique circumstances.

The moment I was born, I became a son to my parents, a younger brother to my sister, a grandson to my only grandmother, a nephew to a lot of uncles and aunts, and a cousin to a lot of cousins. It was only slowly that I began to understand that all people are my kin.

As I grew from an infant to a child and started going to school, I became a student. What took me some time to realize is that I am a lifelong student, whether or not I am going to a school, college, or university.

At the age of 18 I started my first full-time job, and over the subsequent years I moved from clerical and administrative positions to professional positions. Each of these defined who I was in the eyes of others—a clerk, an administrative assistant, an analyst, a junior economist, an economist, a teaching assistant, an assistant professor, an associate professor. And yet I was always the same spirit inside.

When I got married, I became a husband, a son-in-law, a brother-in-law. And then, I became a father and began to learn what the experience and responsibility of parenthood really means. Then I became a grandfather—the pinnacle of happiness.

Now I know that being a father, a student, a teacher, and a scholar is my purpose in life. To help others prepare for life and find their own vocation is my vocation.

Ashok Kapoor



Photo by Sherilyn Young

People bathing in the Ganges, Kolkata, India

With the Day Comes the Strength

In the past year I've taken on a new role—that of “parent” to my own aging parents. I had no preparation for it, but I've discovered that a faith I have often taken for granted has come through to equip me for the challenge.

After living 1200 miles from my parents for more than 20 years, my husband and I were surprised several years ago when they unexpectedly moved to Minnesota to be nearer to us. Coincidentally, in the following year my brother and his family ended up in Minneapolis as well. Now, our family's proximity seems quite providential, for over the past two years, as my parents' health and well-being have deteriorated, the roles of parents and children have reversed.

My mother has gradually become reclusive and melancholy as arthritis compromises her always-on-the-go lifestyle. I've found myself trying to reassure her that everything would be all right, as she has always done for me.

As my father slipped deeper into dementia this past year, my brother and I found that we needed to become the decision-makers about his care, since my mother, exhausting herself, has been unable to accept the reality that physically she can no longer care for him.

I began to spend more and more time trying to help them. Some ways were easy—shopping, rides to appointments, taking over their financial responsibilities. Others I still struggle with—finding words to console my mother when she grieves the loss of the husband she has known for 64 years, and trying to explain to her the cruelty of dementia, which keeps her grief alive every day as their relationship becomes more limited.

Some coping resources have come unexpectedly. One day at my parents' apartment I noticed an embroidered plaque with the Swedish saying I remember my grandmother using when facing difficulties: “Kommer dag, så kommer råd—With the day comes the strength.” This became my morning mantra, but I soon realized it's no different than believing that in faith you are never given more than you can handle.

Last Friday in the car, my mother was telling me how things had gone wrong that morning and how she felt life was stacked against her. I told her I had just come from chapel where the scripture was Job 19, and President Pribbenow talked about how difficult it is to read Job without considering how small our own troubles seem in comparison. I instantly regretted the glibness of my response, but she perked up and told me how much the story of Job had always meant to her, and I was grateful for the serendipity of the moment.

So, what I've learned in this new role as parent/counsel is that the faith residing deep within me continually renews my confidence and resources. And I'm thankful for every gift that comes just when needed.

Betsey Norgard

This I Believe

Honoring Our Commitments Yields Hope, Love, and Joy

As the quiet music of the prelude filled the chapel, time stopped and I clearly remembered a moment from when I was 11: my father, hooked up to tubes and slowly sinking away while all of my siblings stood in stunned silence around his hospital bed; my mother, gently caressing my father's face and murmuring, "Sleep now, Francis, sleep."

As I looked up to see my bride—my lover and my friend—walking down the aisle, the solemnity and sadness of that past moment gave way to a new flood of feeling. The joy of the present and the promise of our future lives together overtook me. And so I cried. The contrasting emotions of happiness and loss put a smile on my face and a tear in my eye.

In mathematics we teach the immutability of facts and theorems and the powerful transcendence of symbolic language. Likewise, I now understand the immutability of commitment and the powerful transcendence and symbolism of the two simple words "I do." At my father's last moments, commitment's bounty was made manifest by the eight children that grew from my parents' love. I still see this love working in the laughter of my nieces and nephews, and I hope that someday I will see it reflected in my own children.

In a letter to his wife Emma, Charles Darwin wrote "... you will humanize me, and soon teach me there is greater happiness than building theories and accumulating facts in silence and solitude." I now realize that when I die, my life will be measured by the way I have nurtured and honored my commitments—to my wife, my family, and indeed, my work. This is no trivial mandate; too often I have experienced the tears, frustration, and heartache that result when my good intentions go unfulfilled. However, I become more human when I turn to my wife for forgiveness, redemption, and hope.



Two Leaves, Curt Paulsen, Digital Print, 2007

The strength of our commitments cannot be measured in tangible ways. Laughter cannot be quantified. Love cannot be counted. Yet I know that my parents' devotion to each other yielded riches, and I enjoy the dividends of that wealth. If I could choose a legacy to leave my children, it would be the hope, optimism, and happiness that stem from honoring our commitments.

John Zobitz

We Are All Teachers

I have had many great teachers in my life. My kindergarten teacher started me off on the right foot, and it just got better from there. My biology teacher in middle school first nurtured my love for the sciences, and my high school calculus teacher brought everything down to a level I could understand. My band teacher, and later my oboe instructors, helped me cultivate a passion for music that was almost equal to my love of science. Eventually the sciences won out, though, and I entered the field of medicine. I was surprised by how much teaching I did with my patients in clinic and by how much I enjoyed it—so much so that now my primary professional role is teaching medicine at my alma mater. I owe many of these achievements to the teachers who had such an enormous impact on my life.

When I became a parent, I received a new set of teachers. The first few months of our older son's life made us realize that Henry's development was not following the typical progression, and soon we began the daunting task of searching for a cause. That was when I began a journey into the "other side" of medicine—the receiving end—where I could only watch as a multitude of specialists literally began poking around for a diagnosis. Four years later we are still lacking a concrete reason for Henry's various cognitive and developmental delays, but we remain regulars at many specialty centers—speech therapy clinic,

special education classes, and the eyeglass repair shop, to name a few. All the people who work with us are now not only Henry's teachers, but mine as well. They have helped me develop patience and acceptance, expand my thinking, and realize that life is a gift.

Right now my most important teachers are my children. Henry has shown me how persistence, willingness to ask for and accept help, and unabashed love can see a person through anything. Every day he is amazed at the world around him, wanting to touch, feel, taste, and hug everything he sees. He has renewed my sense of awe. I have learned from him that I *need* to take the time to snuggle, play, love others unconditionally, and truly enjoy each day that we are given. Henry and his younger brother nearly exhaust me with their boundless curiosity, limitless energy, and reckless abandon, but they also overwhelm me with their kisses, hugs, and desire to share with me everything they experience. They remind me that life is wonderful and new, that we are all special, and that we are only limited by the boundaries our own minds impose on us.

So, I now believe that, whether we realize it or not, we are all teachers—young or old, from birth to death.

Brenda J. J. Talarico

This I Believe

The Power of Uncertainty

I believe in the power of uncertainty. Many times, uncertainty has led me to re-ask the foundational questions: who am I? why am I here? why is anything “here,” and not “nothing”? Just when I think I have a handle on the answers, life gives a twist, some new information or situation arises, and I’m no longer certain I know anything—much less anything significant. Uncertainty becomes the ground of humility for me. It also provides opportunities for creativity and the grace of wholeness.

Since I am a chemist, uncertainty holds an important place in my education, thinking, and approach to data and meaning. Uncertainty is inherent in all measurements, and the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle places limitations on our knowledge of subatomic particulate behavior. But this ambiguity is not crippling. I can still make statements about what I know and what level of confidence I have in that information. For example, the mechanics of baseball motion is well described, so I have every confidence in the description of a baseball’s motion. Electrons, however, are more elusive. Dependable mathematics reveals that electron behavior is not entirely defined. As a scientist, I gain a certain degree of predictability from the statistics on electron motion and behavior, but ultimately, I must do some experiments and make some observations. From the results, a picture of matter emerges, but it is as though I am looking through cloudy glass. Are these electrons waves? Are they particles? Why do they have some of the properties of both? How unsatisfying it is to need two mutually exclusive theories to describe a single entity such as an electron. Yet no certain math has been able to define an inclusive “theory of everything”—something that eluded even Einstein.

It is of course humbling to realize one’s limits. Yet in accepting that my questions are not entirely answerable, I am put in touch with my own finiteness. As a result, I become more open and receptive to reasonable alternative descriptions, solutions, viewpoints, and possibilities. Ultimately, uncertainty helps me be less judgmental and more accepting of others.

Uncertainty also opens a window of opportunity for creativity. The element carbon provides a good example.

Years ago, chemists were sure they knew all there was to know about carbon—there are two major allotropes, diamond and graphite, in addition to the amorphous forms such as coal. With such apparent certainty, the scientific community did not look any further. At least, I didn’t. I studied boron because carbon seemed to be so well described. There would be no fun in discovering what is already known (and certainly no publications, either). Like many others, I was surprised when C60 (buckminsterfullerene) and related carbon nanotubes were discovered in the 1980s. Certainty had made me blind to the potential for new discovery. I remind myself of this valuable lesson each time I think I know the one-true-right solution to ethical dilemmas.

For me, uncertainty keeps the BIG questions fresh. New ideas and potential answers stave off staleness in my spiritual and philosophical quest for wholeness and holiness. While I will likely never know the ultimate answers (if there are such things), a little new knowledge and discovery keeps the search going and forces me to think flexibly. For example, when viewing the behavior of electrons, I know when to use particle theory and when to use wave theory, even if I can’t use both at once. In the same way, I can entertain doubts about whether God exists and speculate about what this God might look like or how this God might behave. I am able to relinquish old, hurtful images of God left over from childhood and move to a new stage, developing stronger connections to God and more mature ideas about who God is and how God works. For me, God is no longer a physical supernatural being ready to love those who love him and curse those who curse him. As the source or foundation of all existence, life, and love, God is more abstract. But because of God’s nearness to all that exists, God is also more intimate. Just as electrons paradoxically combine the properties of waves and particles, God paradoxically combines abstraction and intimacy. While I can’t resolve this mystery, I appreciate the nature of an unsolvable problem and the discomfort that comes with it. In fact, it is this very discomfort that keeps the questions ever before me. In that sense, I have made my peace with uncertainty, recognizing it as a powerful tool for humility, acceptance, creativity, and wholeness.

Joan Kunz

Faith Evolves

I grew up in a family that did not go to church. Both my parents were raised Catholic, but my mother had a fight with a priest and decided to baptize us as Episcopalians. I am not sure whether or not my father believed in God, but he was definitely against organized religion. My mother believed in God and thought we should attend church, but she didn't particularly care which type of church it was or how often we went. I only mention all this to emphasize the influence that my grandmother had on my faith early in my life. Though she was raised as a Catholic, she later became an evangelical Christian. She loved to listen to the faith healer Kathryn Kuhlman on the radio, and from the day I could walk she was always handing out leaflets, citing John 3:16, preaching, and teaching me scriptures. It is my grandmother whom I thank for my Christian upbringing.

As I approached adulthood, my faith went through a series of stages. My father died when I was sixteen, and this plunged me into a period of melancholia, isolation, and reflection. Eventually I broke out of this brooding and entered a wild phase, which was much more fun. During this time I experimented with different philosophies and ideas. I listened to a lot of rock 'n' roll, which was somewhat unusual at the time, and in some odd way the lyrics seemed to lead me back to my faith.

For a few years I went through a fundamentalist stage, and my thinking was dominated by fire and brimstone, the end of the world, and almost an obsession with being "holy." But this phase had a positive side, too. It gave me a very strong sense that God was **ALIVE**, **personal**, and very real.

After a while I moved beyond fundamentalism, and my faith became much more open. I started exploring the relationship between political ideas and religion. I read about liberation theology and studied the works of Marxist Christians, right-wing conservative thinkers such as William F. Buckley Jr., and political philosophers such as Ayn Rand. I also thought much more about social justice and the need to end poverty. I had many Christian friends—from both ends of the political spectrum—and they engaged me in this line of questioning and searching.

By the time I was in my mid-30s, alcoholism had been wreaking havoc in my family for years. All my life I had assumed this addiction was just a matter of will, but during one of our many visits to the detox center, a nurse advised me to seek help from Al-Anon. I don't know why, but her advice hit me like I was Paul the Apostle on the road to Damascus! For several years I regularly attended 12-step meetings, and it has had a big impact on my life. The serenity prayer was real for me (my grandmother taught me that one, too), and it has been a great blessing for me. It has also helped me tremendously with my faith in Christ.

Currently, I am a non-practicing Episcopalian who enjoys the traditional aspects of the Christian faith. I am religious and spiritual and believe in most of the traditions, but I am no longer dogmatic when it comes to my own religious beliefs or those of others. After all, as scripture teaches us in Ephesians 2:10, all of us are "God's workmanship."

Steve Vacca

This I Believe

God Visits Us All in Different Ways

I am a Lutheran. As far back as I can remember, Martin Luther's words from the Small Catechism have formed the basis of my faith. When I try to articulate my beliefs, I hear Luther's words loud and clear: "I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ ..."¹ and further, "... my Lord ... has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature ..."² I quote using the language in vogue during my confirmation years. And I could go on and on quoting from the catechism—meaningfully, I must add.

I often repeat in my prayers the wonderful words found in the Gospel, "I believe; help my unbelief!"³ And the words in Romans chapter eight are an absolute foundation for my faith—nothing "... in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."⁴

I am most thankful that I had a conversion experience when I was a nine-year-old boy. Upon returning from the Lutheran Evangelistic Movement evening meeting where I had heard a hellfire and brimstone sermon, I was unable to fall asleep. I came down the stairs crying; Mother was doing her knitting. She asked me what was wrong, and I replied with a choked voice, "I want to be saved!" Bless her heart, Mother knew what to do. She took my hand, and we knelt side-by-side. Then she had me repeat a simple prayer after her, asking Jesus to come into my heart and set me free from my fears.

Since that day so many years ago, I have met many devout Christians who have never had a conversion experience. How could their encounters with God have been so unlike my own? I can only conclude that Gandhi was right—there are many different paths that lead to the mountaintop. And I am content when I realize that God's love is so vast and so devoid of limits that He can manifest Himself to each of us in unique ways.

Stephen "Gabe" Gabrielsen



Cross in Aran Islands, Curt Paulsen, Digital Print, 2008

¹ Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 345.

² Ibid.

³ Mark 9:24

⁴ Romans 8:39

Each Person Is Valuable

My dad died suddenly in 1997. I so clearly remember getting “the call” while at work. As I look back on the morning, it seems so surreal. On my way into work, I had talked with a high school friend. I ran into him by happenstance while he worked on a project in the area. He said he was heading home for the weekend and planned to stop in and see my dad at “the store.” Dad was very much alive. In a matter of hours, everything would change. Dad in the physical sense would no longer be with us.

It was such a pleasant coincidence that our paths crossed on that particular day. We hadn’t seen each other in ages, and we visited casually. He then went on to tell me what an impact my dad had on his life, a rather sensitive conversation for a big burly guy on a city sidewalk. He told me how Dad had talked him out of dropping out of high school. You see, he worked for my dad in his youth. This in and of itself was somewhat of a feat because my dad could be challenging. The terms stubborn and curmudgeonly come to mind. Somehow, amongst the orders and expletives, Dad must have convinced him that staying in school was better than the alternative. My dad, himself a high school dropout, didn’t want to see this young man make the same mistakes he’d made.

Readers jumping to the conclusion that this essay is in support of continued education would be, well, mistaken. While I do fully support lifelong learning, I truly believe in the value of human beings regardless of their station in life.

Let me explain. As a young person, especially in those “know it all” teenage years, I was embarrassed by my dad’s lack of a diploma. Small towns have their own sort of caste system, and my family was on a lower rung of the status ladder than doctors, lawyers, business owners, and

teachers—or so I thought. My linear way of thinking led from diploma to important job to great life. My average, workaday family didn’t drive fancy cars, own a big house, or “move in the fast lane”—the things afforded those who complete high school. I assumed everything centered on the elusive sheep skin. In my limited view on life, lack of a diploma equated with lower ranking and less importance. It’s funny how even a young mind quickly learns to associate work role with status and value. So much of our being is based on our work role. My definition of important jobs was based solely on titles. In retrospect, it’s one of those “what was I thinking?” moments.

Over the course of the visitation and funeral, I heard many stories about Dad with a common theme—how he affected others. In his own sometimes grouchy way, he had positively influenced others. With age (hopefully) comes maturity and understanding, and I’ve come to realize that his lack of a diploma didn’t diminish his value as a person. It did, however, change his perspective on the world, and it allowed him to use his experiences to help others. Over the years, I’ve come to realize that one’s diplomas, possessions, and connections neither improve nor diminish one’s value. Each person is valuable in his or her own right.

In my daily life, I try to be respectful of all individuals and appreciate their contributions to the world. It’s easy to ignore the laborers, the unglamorous, the day-to-day Joes that surround us. It’s easy to place ourselves above others because we wear the right clothes, drive the right cars, hold the right credentials. In the end, we need each other. Each person is equally valuable and important.

Sheila Anderson

This I Believe

Sheila Anderson is the director of academic advising at Augsburg College and a 2004 graduate of Augsburg's Master of Arts in Leadership program.

Lynn Ellingson is a graduate recruiter for Weekend College Admissions at Augsburg College, specializing in the master's programs in education and social work. She has degrees from St. Olaf College (BA) and Hamline University (MALS). She has worked as a flight attendant for Northwest Airlines, an adjunct instructor for local community colleges, and a freelance writer and photographer. She volunteered at Mother Teresa's Home for the Dying on two trips to Calcutta.

Stephen "Gabe" Gabrielsen is a professor of music at Augsburg College where he teaches courses in music theory and serves as the college organist. He has been a member of the faculty at Augsburg for 46 years.

Ashok Kapoor is an associate professor of finance at Augsburg College. He teaches both MBA and undergraduate finance courses. He has been living and teaching in the United States for over 35 years. Prior to that, he worked as an economist for the United States Agency for International Development.

Joan Kunz is an associate professor of chemistry at Augsburg College, where she has been on the faculty for 22 years.

Tom Morgan is the executive director of the Augsburg Center for Faith & Learning and a professor of business at Augsburg College. He holds a PhD in educational policy from the University of Minnesota, an MS in economics from the University of Oregon and an MBA in finance and operations research from the University of Denver. He serves on the steering committee for the Faith in the City collaborative and serves on the boards of the Augsburg-Fairview Academy, Seeing Things Whole, and Select Multimedia Resources.

Betsey Norgard is the editor of Augsburg Now magazine and works in the Marketing and Communication Office. She has a BA in international relations from American University and an MA in Latin American studies from Indiana University. She has lived in Brazil and Finland, and she is active in the Twin Cities Finnish community.

Lori A. Peterson is the director of Augsburg for Adults and an assistant professor in business administration at Augsburg College. Lori has a BA, MEd, and PhD from the University of Minnesota. She and her husband, Rob, live in rural Wisconsin, where they own and manage the Silkesnas Preserve, an environmental education and leadership center.

Doug Scott is the assistant vice president for development at Augsburg College. Doug has a BA in sociology/anthropology from Eastern University, and an MDiv from Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary (Philadelphia). He has served in the non-profit development field for 28 years. Doug lives in Northfield, Minn., with his wife, Grace.

Brenda J. J. Talarico is an assistant professor in the Department of Physician Assistant Studies at Augsburg College. She is a graduate of the program's third class (1999) and has been teaching full time in the program since 2003. She continues to practice as a PA in family medicine each week at HealthPartners.

Mark Tranvik is the director of Exploring Our Gifts and an associate professor of religion at Augsburg College. His academic specialty is the history and theology of the Reformation.

Steve Vacca graduated from Augsburg College with a major in finance in 1999. He works as a senior accountant in Augsburg's Financial Services Department and is currently studying for the CPA exam.

John Zobitz is an assistant professor of mathematics at Augsburg College where he has been on the faculty since September 2007. He has a BA from St. John's University and both an MA and PhD from the University of Utah.



Winter Garden, Tara Sweeney, Paris, 2008

A Random Walk toward Purpose

WILLIAM M. ARDEN

I closed the door of the laser laboratory behind me, took off my safety goggles, and blinked in the bright office lights.

It was 1969. With a degree in physics and math, I was working in the field of lasers and spectroscopy; I used to joke at parties that if I could still say “spectroscopist,” I wasn’t drunk. I certainly enjoyed it; I was born a geek, and playing with high-tech (and expensive) equipment was like living in a toy store.

But the fun was starting to wear off. The hours of patient fiddling with sensitive experimental apparatus were beginning to get to me, especially since it meant that I spent very little

time in the company of other people. Besides, the managers of the company kept committing my time and energy to projects that didn’t mean much to me. It was time to do something different, to be around people more, to accomplish something.



Skylab was exciting, challenging, and all-consuming. For two years in 1972 and 1973, I commuted from Boston to Denver; I worked in Boston and kept a suitcase under my desk, ready to leave on the next plane each time I got the phone call from Denver telling me that the next round of pre-launch testing would start in the morning. I spent days, nights, and

sometimes both (43 hours straight, one time) on the country's first orbiting space station, often with the crew of astronauts, as the only engineer from my company on the site. It gave me a sense of mission, a place for my energy, fascinating people to be around. But something was still missing.

Why do people switch from science to business? What drives them to make that change? There's a common perception that, from the point of view of science, the purpose of business is to fund scientific exploration; and from the business side, the purpose of science is to invent new products. When you think about it, the connections are much deeper and have much history behind them. Management theory has incorporated scientific ideas of systems, and modern business technology is built on the discoveries that led to the computer. Science is often inspired to create after learning about people's needs from market research, not only for the development of unnecessary new forms of toothpaste or bottled water, but also for more important purposes—new pharmaceuticals and innovative medical treatments, strategies for feeding the growing population of the planet, and ways to conserve the energy resources we still have.

Economists recognize that business is the interface between supply and demand, and that's true whether the suppliers come from science or religion or whether they come from manufacturing or services. Business provides methods to transform new discoveries into salable products, and it provides channels by which consumers can learn about and obtain these products. These far-reaching applications of business are visible all around us. For example, megachurch pastors clearly understand finance and marketing very well, and NASA's adoption of public relations methods, using dramatic images from the Hubble Space Telescope, has helped greatly in building public support for the sciences.

Maybe, I thought, I need to work on the bigger picture—a broader scope, something more productive to society. So I started my transition toward the business side. I returned to school, added an MBA to my master's in physics and began to move away from the laboratory into the office.

It was Christmas Eve 1984 when I stepped off the plane in Minneapolis. So far that December I had spent two weeks in Japan, come home overnight for a change of clothes, and left for two weeks in England. My projects were moving forward, and as the project manager I had the personal satisfaction of knowing that—even though they were based on breakthrough technologies—they'd be completed on time and within budget. My customers, both the Japanese and the British, were happy with our progress. I had never enjoyed a job so much. But it was Christmas Eve, and I had missed December at home, and I was exhausted.

"I know many of you have been wondering what's going on. This morning's meeting is to fill you in. You know the division has not been doing well; when your success or failure depends on one job at a time, it's difficult to keep up a steady cash flow. So I have to tell you that the Board of Directors has decided to eliminate our group. As division manager, I will do my best to make sure that none of the 36 of you will lose your job; I will commit to finding other places in the organization for you before I leave the company at the end of 1990."

It was the worst day of my life.

For over 30 years, I wandered the intersections of business and science, seeking (without knowing it) a deeper meaning in the way I spend my days. I often found it difficult to act in a spirit of good will in a corporate environment that stresses competition and profit. Please understand that I believe in business; I believe that it is possible to "do well by doing good," and that corporations serve a very useful purpose for society as a source of growth, jobs, and new solutions to society's problems.

Individual "purpose," though, was something that other people had—people who wrote books about higher feelings that I never experienced and had a sense of direction I never knew. I had never thought about a "purpose" for myself beyond trying to lead a good life (whatever that meant) and building a career, and I faced an

increasing sense of emptiness as I grew older. I didn't understand the source of my dissatisfaction (nor, in all honesty, did I consciously think about it very much), but it nagged at me in odd moments and in the middle of sleepless nights.



"I haven't had that much fun in a job in a long time!," I thought as I left the classroom. It was September of 2003, my first night as a teacher. I'd spent the last three hours discussing marketing with a class of evening graduate students, working adults pursuing master's degrees in management. I felt exhilarated and wired, and I was sure it wasn't only from the gallon of coffee I'd consumed during an afternoon of terrified preparation. No—there was something more going on. Something about this evening had touched me very deeply.



When I began teaching, I thought that my feelings of elation and satisfaction were coming simply from undertaking a new venture in life. Nonetheless, I enjoyed it so much that I began making plans to move to a new career, driven by an impetus I didn't entirely understand.

As the newness wore off, I began to recognize that there was something deeper going on—something that touched core values in me that had been long neglected. I came to see teaching not only as a new career, but also as a foundation for significant changes in my life—a grounding on which I could build and explore values I had felt but never identified. The results have been far-reaching changes in lifestyle, health, relationships—and those sleepless nights.

At Augsburg, I have been immersed in the ideals that drive this college, many of them captured in Augsburg's motto, "Education for Service." I find that I am developing a sense of purpose grounded in good will and service, and, in little ways, I am starting to see the effects. Not long ago I received the following note from the employer of one of my students:

Dear Professor Arden,

I just wanted you to know that the paper Lindsey researched and wrote was more than an academic exercise. I felt that the process of looking at our marketing plan and re-evaluating it was very helpful to our law firm. We feel that Lindsey's ideas will be valuable in generating new leads and keeping more clients. I thought this was a very practical exercise, and keep up the great work as an instructor.

In this third career, I am finding a satisfaction in life that I never had before—and I am beginning to understand why. It's a way I can "pay the rent for my place in the universe" through the contributions of my students to society and the world.

Bill Arden teaches marketing, management, and international business as an assistant professor of business administration. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees in physics and an MBA. He came to Augsburg after 35 years in engineering and management in the commercial sector and occasionally loses track of which career he's in right now.



Judgment, Grady Christopherson, Taormina, Italy, 2008

Living Martin Luther's Values as a Prosecutor

MICHAEL O. FREEMAN

Every day I try to figure out how to live my faith within the challenges of my job as a prosecutor. My work as a regent at Augsburg College initially inspired this ongoing attempt to reconcile my faith and my profession. As a college of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Augsburg challenges students to explore their faith and live their calling in daily life. It encourages them to compare their beliefs to those of others in a supportive and inquiring atmosphere. Since my fellow regents and I were urging students to take such journeys, I felt obligated to take one myself. Moreover, I believe our faith encourages us to share our spiritual journey without reticence—even though such sharing might not be easy for a Norwegian-American Lutheran like me.

Before I describe what I have discovered about the role of faith in the work of a prosecutor, let me explain exactly what the job entails. To put it briefly, we charge, prosecute, and convict those who commit crimes against society. The police set the stage by investigating and arresting an alleged criminal. Then prosecutors independently review the facts to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to prove that this person committed the crime. If so, a charge is made, and eventually a trial or plea bargain is undertaken. If the accused is convicted or accepts a plea agreement, then this person must make amends to society by paying a fine or serving a prison term. Throughout this process, prosecutors need to make many judgment calls. The issues and circumstances of the cases often challenge

fundamental values, and the prosecutor must be prepared to sort through complex situations and make decisions about right and wrong.

Martin Luther and His Values

I am not a theologian or biblical scholar, but, as a committed Christian and Lutheran, I believe that Martin Luther's teachings and example call us to live out our faith. As I think about what Luther taught, I am struck by three profound concepts that we can use in our daily lives. First, our salvation comes from God's gift of grace and not as a result of our good works. Second, our purpose in life is to do good in the world by loving and serving our neighbor. Lastly, God is pleased by all work that is done well, not only work done directly within the church.

All three of these concepts were deeply challenging to the Catholic Church of medieval times. For one thing, the church taught that people fell into two classes. The first group was composed of the special people called by God—priests, monks, and nuns. They were God's chosen ones, and through their work and self-denial they were able to earn an afterlife with God in heaven. For everyone else, salvation was not guaranteed, and these people could only try to earn salvation by doing extraordinary good works, making pilgrimages to Rome or the Holy Land, or paying large sums of money for indulgences.

Luther's interpretation of grace flew in the face of the Church's teachings. He asserted that good works do not bring us salvation. Instead, it is God's grace that saves us—not gifts to the Church, or extraordinary sacrifices in the name of God, or exalted status, or believing that we have a special call. This grace, earned by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, is God's gift—freely given to us when we believe.

For me, grace is an overwhelming and humbling concept. Even though I am constrained by the limits of human understanding, I see how grace frees me, and all of us, to move on to God's work in our own daily lives. Luther's

teachings on grace show us how the death and resurrection of our Risen Lord enables us to live a meaningful life.

Luther also challenged the Church by developing a new concept of vocation. He proclaimed that the world consists of the Kingdom of the Left (which is the church) and the Kingdom of the Right (which is the secular world). Both of these kingdoms, he claimed, have value in God's eyes. It

follows, then, that all people, no matter what their occupation, have the potential to do good works to the glory and honor of God—not to save our souls, since God through his grace has already done so, but to please God and help our neighbor. Luther was saying that, in essence, all of us are God's church in our everyday lives; we can bring God's goodness to all we do—even if we are not pastors or ministers, even if we have not pledged a life of poverty, and even if we do not travel to Jerusalem. And God's church is not limited to our worship on Sunday; it includes all we do in our everyday life—as long as we do it well.

And just to be sure that we understood what he meant, Luther used the now familiar example of a cobbler, a maker of shoes. God is not interested in having the cobbler make shoes with crosses on top, Luther said; God wants the cobbler to make good shoes and sell them at a fair price.

Luther and Prosecutors

How do these concepts and values apply to those who work in the criminal justice system? How does God's goodness manifest itself in situations that have dimensions of evil? How do we honor God's promise of redemption when our job inevitably involves condemnation? For answers to these questions, I turned to the writings of Martin Luther.

Of course, Luther would not have been familiar with the modern concept of a prosecutor, but the world in which he lived had dark and violent elements just as ours does today, so he grappled with some similar moral questions. I discovered a parallel to my own situation in his 1526 treatise, "Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved."¹ Luther begins by making a distinction between an occupation and

If we believe in
redemption—
and as
Christians we
must—we
cannot give up
on people.

¹ Martin Luther, "Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved," *Luther's Works*, vol. 46 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967).

the person who holds it, and he specifically states that the profession or work of the soldier “... in itself ... is right and godly, but we must see to it that the persons who are in this profession and who do the work are the right kind of person, that is, godly and upright ...”² Then, after reiterating the role of grace in conferring righteousness before God, he asks whether the Christian faith is compatible with being a soldier and going to war. Finally, he concludes as follows:

*... the very fact that the sword has been instituted by God to punish the evil, protect the good, and preserve peace ... is powerful and sufficient proof that war and killing along with all the things that accompany wartime and martial law have been instituted by God. What else is war but the punishment of wrong and evil? Why does anyone go to war, except because he desires peace and obedience?*³

What Luther is saying to me, then, is that the office of the prosecutor, if done properly, is one way that God cares for his creation. Prosecutors can use their offices to protect people from evil. The “sword” of the prosecutor is the authority to charge and convict those who break the rules of society. But, how do we do this job with righteousness? How do we emulate the cobbler who makes good shoes for a fair price?

First and foremost, we must remember that when we prosecute people, we are saying that their actions are bad; we are NOT saying that they are bad people. Christians believe that all people are made in the image of God. In practical terms, this means that when we are making charging decisions, it does not matter how many previous crimes the accused may have committed. Instead, we must determine if there is sufficient admissible evidence to prove this bad act. Good people can commit bad acts, and a person with a history of bad acts may well be innocent of this one. This concept sounds simple, but it is not always easy to put it into practice.

Secondly, we must act calmly, deliberately, and as fairly as possible—not out of anger, malice, or haste. Just like everyone else, the people we believe have committed these crimes are children of God, and—even if they have acted

poorly—we need to treat them fairly and with respect. To be certain that we do this, we must make sure the prosecutor’s work is as transparent as possible. We must share all evidence with the defense in a timely manner, and we must be as circumspect, straightforward, and honest as possible. Shortcuts are not acceptable. We must take the time to deliberate with our peers about hard decisions; we must talk about justice every day.

Most importantly, we must never lose hope. If we believe in redemption—and as Christians we must—we cannot give up on people. Of course, we must use common sense and make sure the public is protected, but even with such restrictions, we can take many specific steps to help offenders.

Adult Offenders

One of the major ways we can help adult offenders is by providing chemical dependency treatment in our prisons. More than half of those convicted have serious problems with substance abuse. Sending drug addicts to prison without help for their addiction means they will be more likely to re-offend when released from prison. Even more important, it ignores God’s vision and our duty to take action that is in tune with redemption.

We can also support and encourage adult offenders by offering education and job training. Most convicted criminals have little education and few job skills when they go to prison, and the majority of these people eventually return to society. Training benefits the community because it helps reduce recidivism, and it benefits the offenders because it gives them the tools to live more responsible and productive lives. Moreover, if we are truly committed to loving our neighbor, providing education is simply the right thing to do.

Lastly, prison inmates who want to practice their faith should be allowed that opportunity. We must provide worship services, as well as access to pastors and lay ministers, for a variety of established religions. We must also be sensitive to those who practice religions that fall outside the mainstream. For example, Stillwater Prison has instituted sweat lodges so that our native brothers can worship in the way their tradition mandates. If we believe

² Ibid., 94.

³ Ibid., 95.

that our own lives can be transformed by faith, then it stands to reason that the same could be true for offenders.

Juveniles

In the case of juvenile offenders, we must engage the community to help raise the child. We need to reach out to these children with specific programs at their very first mistake. Since virtually all juveniles who commit felonies have a history of status offenses—truancy, curfew violations, smoking, and underage drinking, to name a few—we need programming that targets these behaviors. Prevention of elementary school truancy should have particularly high priority. We must practice tough love, helping young people understand that we are not merely punishing arbitrarily but rather protecting the society of which they and their families are a part. We must aim to help offenders wake up and amend their behavior before negative patterns become more deeply engrained.

Where gun violations are concerned, we must set clear expectations for both parents and children. We need to educate society that guns and children do not mix.

The Right Decision?

Let me conclude by describing a difficult charging and sentencing dilemma I faced a few years ago. Tragically, a four-year-old boy found his father's gun in a bedroom closet and accidentally shot and killed his six-year-old brother. Imagine the suffering of the family members who experienced this irreplaceable loss. Was there a need for further involvement by the law? Was punishment appropriate? I struggled with these questions and ultimately decided to charge the case but also simultaneously announce a plea bargain. Instead of jail time, the parents were required to do 200 hours of

community service, sharing with other parents the need for gun safety and the importance of protecting their children. Did I act in accordance with Luther's values?

Each day of my job as a prosecutor tests me, but I draw strength from outside myself. I could not do my daily work without God's love and grace. When I am called upon to act, I know I can trust in God's mercy and understanding. Daily prayer, Sunday services at my church, and the communion of my brothers and sisters at Augsburg help me greatly. I owe many debts of gratitude—to the voters of Hennepin County for giving me their trust, to my very supportive family for sustaining me, and to God for giving me the opportunity to live a challenging life.

Michael O. Freeman works in Minneapolis, Minn., as the Hennepin County attorney. In that role, he serves as the chief executive of Minnesota's largest public law office and provides leadership to a staff of 400 employees, including 160 attorneys. He has a BA in history from Rutgers College and a JD from the University of Minnesota Law School, and he has completed a program in executive leadership for state and local government at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Freeman served as a member of the Augsburg College Board of Regents from 2000-2008. As a committed Christian with a passion for public service and justice, he is challenged daily to live out his calling as a prosecutor in the sometimes dark world of the criminal justice system.

This article was adapted from an address that Freeman delivered at Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, Minn., on April 16, 2008.



The Discovery of Moses, Tintoretto (1518-1594)

In the Footsteps of Giants

MATTHEW MARUGGI

Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him for three months. When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she

took pity on him. "This must be one of the Hebrews' children," she said. Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, "because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

Exodus 2:1-10

When I was young I was fascinated by the stories my parents told me of their lives as children. These anecdotes centered on growing up in a poor Italian immigrant neighborhood in Rochester, N.Y. The stories that most intrigued me were about my maternal grandparents and great-aunt and great-uncle, who collectively set up household with seven children between them. The two men worked on the railroad, and the two women cared for the children while running a corner grocery store attached to their house.

My maternal grandmother, Rosa, and my great-aunt Pierina were especially fascinating characters to me. As the priest said at my grandmother's funeral, "Rosa was one of those little old Italian ladies who was really a giant." This characterization applied to my great-aunt as well but in a slightly different way. Pierina was warm and nurturing, with a sense of hospitality that made her home inviting to everyone who entered. Rosa, although she was almost illiterate in both her native language and English, was an independent thinker and a shrewd businesswoman, and she could curse like a sailor. In fact, those words are the only Italian words I know! Together, Rosa and Pierina struggled to have a successful business while caring for their children. At the same time, they were known for extending credit at their store to people who could not pay for the food they needed for their families. Their home became a way station for people in need, including recent immigrants and victims of domestic violence. My mother said that she would often awake to find someone new sleeping on the couch or sharing the breakfast table.

These stories are the inheritance left to me by my forebears. Each person leaves behind a legacy that lives on in his or her family and in others whose lives he or she has touched. The legacy of Grandma Rosa and Great-Aunt Pierina is one of hospitality—being a welcoming,

compassionate presence in the lives of individuals and in the life of the larger community. It becomes my task, two generations later, to discern how I can live out those same values in my own life with my own family.

**... we are all
called to do the
great work of
God in our
particular
circumstances,
no matter how
insignificant we
might perceive
ourselves to be.**

In Exodus 2:1-10 we have a family story from the Judeo-Christian tradition—and an exciting one at that! In this story of Moses' birth, we have ordinary people doing extraordinary things, a theme we see over and over again in scripture. They are, in fact, giants of faith. They are people who answered the call of vocation, which, according to theologian Paul Wadell, is to participate in the great work of God—loving our neighbor, seeking justice, serving one another, and caring for all life. Wadell's definition challenges us to view the ordinary settings in our lives with a new lens by questioning ourselves: How can I do good here? How am I needed? How can I help?¹ We all must be attentive to what theologian Karl Barth refers to as "places of responsibility," any

circumstance or moment in life when we can cooperate with God in doing good.² The women in this story certainly answered this call. What can we learn about our own vocations from their actions? What is the legacy these giants leave us, and how can we walk in their footsteps in our lives?

In order to better understand the context of this story, let's back up a bit to the first chapter of Exodus. The story begins with a despotic ruler who imposes forced labor on the Israelites living in Egypt and then issues a death decree on all their newborn male children. In this dire context, we meet Shiphrah and Puah, two midwives who defy Pharaoh's orders and thereby further the great work of God through nonviolent noncooperation—pretending that the Hebrew women deliver too quickly for them to be able to carry out Pharaoh's decree. They set the stage for the next set of women who discover their places of responsibility.

¹ Paul Wadell, *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 83-84.

² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics 3/4*, ed. and trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961), 602.



Rosa Parks in later life

All the primary characters in this story are women, who are not known for being the primary actors in much of Hebrew Scriptures—or Christian Scriptures, for that matter. If it were not for the action of women in the book of Exodus, Moses would not have survived. Moses' sister, who we later learn is named Miriam, really takes the initiative in this situation—she creates the plan that saves her brother. She follows the basket down the river and offers her mother as a wet nurse for Pharaoh's daughter. The actions of Miriam tell us something important about vocation: we are all called to do the great work of God in our particular circumstances, no matter how insignificant we might perceive ourselves to be. Miriam is young, female, and a slave, yet she still has the courage to find a way to move the work of God forward. As Paul says in Romans 2:11, "God shows no partiality" and is not a "respector of persons." In order to truly live out our vocations in the world, we have to believe in our original blessedness as beings made in the image of God and then have the courage to act on that giftedness.

Vocation elicits solidarity, calling us to be responsible for one another ...

Another woman in this story also teaches us something about vocation—Pharaoh's daughter, who demonstrates that sometimes carrying out God's purpose requires transgressing boundaries. While Miriam has the courage to initiate the plan, it is Pharaoh's daughter who brings that plan to fruition. She is willing to transcend the divisions of class and ethnicity to cooperate with God in doing good. God uses the alliance between the lowly and the powerful to move forward God's purposes in the world. This coalition-building teaches us something else about vocation—the call of vocation is never just about God and me. It is about the wider world. Vocation elicits solidarity, calling us to be responsible for one another, or in the words of Pope John Paul II, to see the other as "a sharer on par with ourselves in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God."³ Pharaoh's daughter is moved by compassion to defy her father's decree because she recognizes the common humanity she shares with the baby.

Two women in the 20th century provide modern-day examples of how people can live out their vocations. The first is Rosa Parks, the African-American woman who made history on a city bus in Montgomery, Ala., in 1955. In defiance of dehumanizing Jim Crow laws, she refused to relinquish her seat to a white passenger. When later asked why she chose to engage in this act of civil disobedience, she replied, "I wanted to be treated like a human being."⁴ Despite being surrounded by a system that told her she was less worthy than others, she recognized her giftedness and understood that she, too, was made in the image of God. I believe that her actions, as part of the wider civil rights movement, were cooperating with the great work of God in bringing about a more just social system.

³ John Paul II, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis: On Social Concern," in *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, ed. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), 421-422.

⁴ Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 33.

The second woman is Dorothy Day, cofounder of the Catholic Worker Movement, who set up Houses of Hospitality for the urban poor and homeless and broadly advocated for a more socially just and peaceful world. Day, who grew up solidly middle class, spent almost half a century living in community in New York City with the poorest of the poor, wearing secondhand clothes, and eating donated food. Harvard psychiatrist Robert Coles remembered the first time he went to meet Day; he waited since she was in conversation with a woman who was dirty, disheveled, and drunk. After noticing his presence, Day excused herself and went over to Coles and asked, “Are you waiting to talk with one of us?”⁵ Because she consciously lived out the belief that “God is not a respecter of persons,” Day did not assume that she was the important one. She realized that part of vocation is solidarity—seeing the other as an equal sharer in the banquet of life. All her actions stemmed from this ideal.

What do these giants of faith teach us? What can we learn about our own vocations from Miriam, Pharaoh’s daughter, Rosa Parks, and Dorothy Day? How can we live out their legacy, following in their footsteps in doing the great work of God in our own lives? First, we can believe in our own giftedness. We can believe that the divine spark resides in us and that we can never underestimate our ability to make a difference when we find ourselves in those places of

responsibility. As St. Teresa of Avila reminds us, “Christ has no body now on earth but yours; no hands but yours.”⁶ Secondly, we can look for opportunities to create solidarity, to form alliances and transgress boundaries in order to affirm our common humanity. Here at Augsburg and in the larger society, these boundaries might be created by differences in religion, class, or race. In this post-election era, there might be divides caused by political leanings. Despite these differences, how can we all work together to do the great work of God of loving our neighbor, seeking justice, serving one another, and caring for all life? How can we walk in the footsteps of these giants, not along the banks of the Nile, or the bus stops of Montgomery, or the streets of New York City, but right here on Riverside Avenue? May we each have the courage and grace to act in our own places of responsibility.

Matthew Maruggi is an assistant professor of religion at Augsburg College. He has a BA in religious studies and psychology and an MA in theology from the University of Dayton and an EdD in critical pedagogy from the University of St. Thomas.

Maruggi delivered this talk in the chapel at Augsburg College on November 18, 2008. The text has been edited for publication.

⁵ Robert Coles, *Dorothy Day: Radical Devotion* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1987), xviii.

⁶ Teresa of Avila, quoted in Dorothy M. Stewart, *The Collection of Christian Prayers* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 74.



Oh les Vaches!, Tara Sweeney, Watercolor, 2006

Our Vocation to Love Creation: Francis of Assisi and Martin Luther

BRADLEY P. HOLT

Posing the Question

Many of us are disturbed by signs of global climate change. We read with dismay of the melting of ice in the polar regions and on mountains, including Mt. Kilimanjaro in Africa. This is only one of the many ecological concerns that trouble us. The disappearing of species, the ending of the oceans' fish stocks, the clouding of the air over China and its eastward drift, the growth of deserts, the pollution of waters, and the burning of the world's rain forests are all potential threats to the future of the world as we know it.

The first question is whether Christians need to see these developments in connection with their vocations. At Augsburg we have talked much about the "vocation triangle," the way God, self, and world are related. We have agreed with Frederick Buechner, the frequently quoted

author, that "the place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."¹ The ecological dimension of vocation, I believe, is that all three of these—God, self, and world—relate to the health and stewardship of creation. It is God who has created the world and called it "good." It is God who set humans in a relation of stewardship to the rest of creation in chapter one of Genesis and asked the first humans to care for the garden in the second chapter. Jewish tradition calls this responsibility *tikkun olam*, or mending the universe.²

Care for creation is both a personal and communal responsibility. Individually we make economic decisions that have great impact on the environment, in our choices of transportation, housing, food, and recreation. Shall we drive a car wherever we go, or use public transport? Shall

¹ Frederick Buechner, *Listening to your Life: Daily Meditations with Frederick Buechner*, compiled by George Conner (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 186.

² See the periodical *Tikkun* and the Christian use of this theme in Daniel Erlander, *Manna and Mercy: A Brief History of God's Unfolding Promise to Mend the Entire Universe* (Mercer Island, Washington: The Order of Saints Martin and Teresa, 1992).

we build our houses in an energy efficient way, or go for the cheaper alternatives that will cost more in the long run? Shall we eat lots of meat—which takes great amounts of water, crops, and energy to produce—or eat lower on the food chain? Shall we use our bodies to exercise in the open air, or sit on the couch watching high-powered machines race while we eat munchies?

But many ecological problems cannot be solved simply by individual choice. They are matters for the society as a whole to address. How can wild habitats be preserved from the human pressure for more and more land? How can more efficient cars become the standard for all nations? How shall we produce enough electricity, given the downsides of all types of generation, whether they be fossil, biomass, nuclear, or wind? Obviously these matters must be addressed by both the private and public sectors.

As a whole, the Christian tradition has failed to make the love of creation a significant theme. There are many reasons for this. One is the ambiguity of the term “world” in the Bible. Especially in the writings of John, we see the Greek term *kosmos* used in both positive and negative ways. Most of us are familiar with John 3:16, which indicates that God loves the world. But some have been more influenced by I John 2:15, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world.” It is obvious that this second meaning of *kosmos* is not about loving other people, or pets, or sunsets. The writer goes on to define what he means by “world” as lust and boasting—in other words, the way that human society is organized against God.

Another reason for neglect of this theme is the fear of idolatry. The religions around Israel had idols representing bulls or snakes, seeming to worship the creature rather than the Creator (to use Paul’s phrase). Many ancient religions feared or adored the sun, moon, and stars. Perhaps the first creation account in Genesis 1 was written precisely against this practice. But to avoid worshipping creation does not mean that one does not appreciate it and care for it. It is this appreciation and care that is an appropriate love for all that God has made. An inappropriate love would include deification, exploitation, hoarding, or undue attachment.

If we give a positive answer to the first question (Is an appropriate love for creation an authentic aspect of

Christian vocation?), the second question becomes this: Where in the Christian tradition do we find the teachings and examples that will help us to fulfill our vocations in regard to creation? Two of the most influential figures of the second millennium, Francis of Assisi and Martin Luther, are of great significance for this question.

In spite of many differences, they do have some striking similarities. Both worked in small towns, Assisi and Wittenberg, respectively. Both rebelled against their fathers to enter a religious calling. Both were reformers of the church. Both engaged extensively in preaching. Both loved music. In both cases there are historical problems in dating their conversions. Both suffered severe pain and ailments in their adult lives.

But on the other hand, they are very different. One turned out to be a mendicant preacher, the other a priest and professor. One was given explicit approval by popes and later canonized a saint, whereas the other was condemned as a heretic and excommunicated. One lived in the warmth of the Italian countryside, the other in the northern forest across the Alps. One eventually invented a new kind of religious order, the other eventually condemned all orders. One is remembered as a joyful poverello who wrote very little, the other as a combative teacher of theology who published works that now number scores of thick volumes.

Francis of Assisi (1182-1226)

Francis was originally named after John the Baptist, who lived in the wilderness. After a youth of leadership in worldly pleasure, he was changed and became a leader in spiritual pleasure through his marriage to “lady poverty.” He had heard the voice of Jesus instructing him to repair his church, and after a literal obedience to that command, placing stones at San Damiano, he became the repairer of the church community at large. Originally repulsed by the smelly lepers, he came to love and serve them. His father’s cloth business would have led Francis also to become part of the upwardly mobile middle class, but he chose instead to identify with the poor and lowly. The most decisive and dramatic event occurred in public when before the bishop and people of Assisi Francis stripped off all the beautiful clothes given by his father and claimed only “our Father who art in heaven” as his new parent. His striking lifestyle of carefree dependence on the heavenly Father and discipleship to Jesus attracted a following, a band of young men who like Francis wore very simple clothes and no

shoes. This following became the order of “little brothers” or Friars Minor, commonly called the Franciscans. Late in his short life of 44 years, Francis retreated to a favorite mountain, La Verna, and there, after a vision, he began to experience the wounds of the crucified Christ, later called the stigmata. Not long afterwards he asked to be placed naked on the naked earth to take his last breaths.

All of this would not have led Pope John Paul II, very early in his pontificate, to name him the patron saint of ecology in 1979. No, it was Francis’ unique connection with creation and care for creatures that did so. Even as a youth, Francis was known for taking great pleasure in the outdoors, singing as he wandered into the forests of the Spoleto Valley. But following his conversion he was extraordinarily connected to the birds, several lambs, and even a cricket. In Greccio he arranged for an ox and an ass to be present for a Christmas mass that is presumably the origin of the nativity scenes or crèches of today. It was in his final illness that he composed the most remarkable of his known writings, the “Canticle of the Creatures” or “Canticle of the Sun.” We have very few writings of Francis, and this one is deservedly the best known of them. It is based on biblical and apocryphal models, namely Psalm 148 and the Song of the Three Young Men (Daniel 3). Below is Francis’ canticle.

*Most high, all powerful, all good Lord!
All praise is yours, all glory, all honor, and all blessing.
To you, alone, Most High, do they belong.
No mortal lips are worthy to pronounce your name.*

*Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures,
especially through my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day;
and you give light through him.
And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor!
Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.*

*Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars;
in the heavens you have made them, precious and beautiful.*

*Be praised, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
and clouds and storms, and all the weather,
through which you give your creatures sustenance.*

*Be praised, My Lord, through Sister Water;
she is very useful, and humble, and precious, and pure.*

*Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom you brighten the night.
He is beautiful and cheerful, and powerful and strong.*

*Be praised, my Lord, through our sister Mother Earth,
who feeds us and rules us, and produces various fruits
with colored flowers and herbs.*

*Be praised, my Lord, through those who forgive for love of you;
through those who endure sickness and trial.
Happy those who endure in peace,
for by you, Most High, they will be crowned.*

*Be praised, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,
from whose embrace no living person can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin!
Happy those she finds doing your most holy will.
The second death can do no harm to them.*

*Praise and bless my Lord, and give thanks,
and serve him with great humility.³*

What is distinctive in Francis’ version is first of all his ascription of siblinghood to all the creatures. They are all brothers and sisters. If we are all created by the same Father/Mother God, then we must all be related. Notice that it is not only the animals who are thus related to us humans, but also the huge realities in our world, the elements that the Greek philosophers determined as the elements of all reality—the air, water, fire, and earth. In addition, the celestial lights are also related to us—the sun, the moon, and the stars. With the concept of family comes the concept of ethical responsibility. I cannot treat my sister as if she did not matter to me. I cannot treat my brother unjustly. If the earth is my mother, I must revere and honor her, according to the Ten Commandments.

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Martin Luther is presumably better known to the readers of this periodical than is Francis. He was the young man who intended to become a lawyer, later became a monk and then a professor. In the course of his lectures he came to a new understanding of how people are made righteous before God, not by special works such as joining a religious order, going on pilgrimage, or obtaining an indulgence, but rather by the sheer grace of God. His emphasis was on trusting that Christ was the appropriate

³Translated by Bill Barrett from the Umbrian text of the Assisi Codex.

Redeemer of the world, rather than on obedience to the letter of Christ's teaching. Having put one's faith in this Redeemer, one's life of freedom from the Law would show service to the neighbor.

Since he lived about 300 years after Francis, Luther was aware of the famous saint and his orders. But it is unlikely that Luther knew very much detail about Francis' life. He had almost nothing complimentary to say about the Italian.⁴ But he was most critical of the way the Catholic Church of his day exploited Francis and other saints as magnets of devotion. He argued that the biblical figures like Abraham, Joseph, and Christ were of more importance than the saints, and he disagreed with the attempt to make Francis' life a replication of Jesus' life.⁵ Luther complained that the founders of Catholic orders called attention to themselves instead of to Christ and should have acted like John the Baptist, who pointed away from himself. He wrote,

*Francis should have done that too and said: "Dear friends, I choose to be poor, wear a grey cowl, and gird myself with a rope. But I do not ask you to follow my example, much less to imagine that you merit salvation thereby. All that I do, I do for your good. I cast aside all cares and all other affairs that I may preach to you unhindered. And my message to you does not revolve about my monastic rule or my order but about Christ, the Savior of the world, who took your sins upon Himself, bore them and atoned for them with His body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24). This Man's message and Gospel is what you are to hear from my mouth; I teach none other than Christ, who is our true Abbot and Lord."*⁶

Ironically, it is quite possible that this is exactly what Francis did, but Luther probably never heard it that way because of the tendency for the Church and for the Franciscans to glorify him as the greatest saint of all, thus ushering in a new stage in salvation history. Luther argued strongly that "all believers in Christ are saints," and that living an "ascetic and horrible life" did not make one more acceptable to God.⁷

**Luther claimed
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In all of his critical comments about Francis and the Franciscans, however, Luther shows no awareness of Francis' teaching about creation. He does not comment on the "Canticle of the Creatures" quoted above, nor does he mention Francis' personal relationship to the animals. His criticisms all revolve around the major issue of justification and the distortions he believed had taken the focus off of Jesus and his saving action. As he saw it, the emphasis was now upon humans and their ascetical works, including joining religious orders.

Luther's concept of vocation rejected the usage of the past, which regarded God's call as an invitation to join the clergy or an order. He claimed that all Christians have vocations, and that the maid sweeping the floor had as great a vocation as the priest or nun. This concept was connected to his views on the priesthood of all believers and the orders of creation. Thus parenthood was a vocation, as was the commission to be a mayor, soldier, or business owner. And here we come to the contrast with Francis, who could hardly regard his businessman father as having a true vocation from God. Would Luther have praised Pietro Bernadone? Perhaps not, but his role as a part of the rising middle class would not have set Luther against him. Was he greedy? If so, this was a moral fault,

⁴ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: Lectures on Genesis Chapters 6-14* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), 2:327. "I do not think that Francis was an evil man; but the facts prove that he was naïve or to state it more truthfully, foolish." (I wish to thank Abby Ferjak for research assistance with this section of the paper.)

⁵ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John Chapters 1-4* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), 22:65.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁷ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: Lectures on Galatians 1535 Chapters 5-6* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955) 27:83.

but it did not mean that his vocation was not an honorable one.

The place where Luther shows a special insight about our vocation to care for creation is found in the *Small Catechism*, in his explanation of the first article of the Apostle's Creed. There he says, "I believe that God has created me and all that exists, that he has given and still preserves to me my body and all its members, and provided me with food and clothing, home and work, and all things needed "

What we see in this short passage is an understanding of our own bodies as part of divine creation. This is an insight that Francis did not seem to have until late in his life. He is well known for calling his body "brother ass." This was not said so much in affection as in annoyance. One of his earliest writings begins with these words:

*All those who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with their whole strength and love their neighbors as themselves, who hate their bodies with their vices and sins O how happy and blessed are these men and women while they do such things and persevere in doing them*⁸

Later in the same document he contrasts these people with those who do not do penance,

*... who practice vice and sin and walk after the evil concupiscence and the evil desires of their flesh, who do not observe what they have promised to the Lord, and who in their body serve the world through the desires of the flesh, the concerns of the world and the cares of this life.*⁹

What might this mean for our vocations today?

I propose that there are blind spots in the teaching of each

of these two writers, and that each perspective needs the other. That is, in some respects Francis had an appreciation of creation that Luther did not. Francis could relate to air, fire, water, and animals as siblings, who were therefore worthy of our care and affection. Luther, on the other hand, saw even his own body as part of creation in a way that Francis seems to have ignored. The honoring and care of our bodies as creations of God is a gift from Luther's *Small Catechism*.

**I propose that
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There are some aspects of vocation that are common to all people and others that are distinctive to individuals or groups. All people are called to love creation, that is, to preserve, protect, nourish, and honor the network of creatures on which our very life depends. We are called as human beings to care for creation; all of us are charged with the same task. All of us are called to live in a sustainable fashion, consuming only what can be replaced.

But each of us may have a different gift and vocation for this *tikkun olam* to happen. For example, scientists, from cosmologists to entomologists, are called to spend their lives studying the many different aspects of this creation. Engineers are called to develop technologies that will give us sustainable energy. Artists are called to convey the beauty of the earth. Public officials enact and administer laws to protect the earth. Others, including preachers, are called to rouse the rest of us to care for the air, water, earth, and creatures when this is not happening. Still others are called to think, to seek understanding of our place in the universe, and to provide a rational theological/philosophical basis for care of the earth.

Francis and Martin were such people. Each had a renewing vision for his own time. Each vision appears incomplete to us today. We need both for a rounded understanding of our vocation to care for creation as stewards of God's majesty. Both of them would call us by their example to praise God

⁸ "Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance (The First Version of the Letter to the Faithful) (1209-1215)," *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, Vol. I *The Saint*, Ed. Regis Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short (New York: New City Press, 1999), 41.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

with all our voices in music, but also to praise God by our way of relating to the creatures around us.

In light of the discussion above concerning Francis and Luther, we could say that all of us are called to care for our marvelous bodies, even when we do not regard them as marvelous. We are all called to nourish, exercise, and preserve from harm the gift of health, which means in practice that we are all called to eat our veggies, walk instead of drive, and wear seatbelts, for example. We are all called to praise God for the wonder of our physiology and the wonder of the cosmos. But as individuals some will be called to become physicians, some research scientists, some pastors, some ministers of therapeutic massage, some leaders of hikes for children, and so forth.

We can be grateful for the leaders of the past, even as we accept their teachings with critical reflection. They point us to insights about God, ourselves, and the world so that we may respond to God's love by living in light of our vocations.

Bradley Holt is a professor of religion at Augsburg College and a Lutheran pastor. He was selected to join a National Endowment for the Humanities Seminar in Italy for six weeks in 2006 focusing on Francis of Assisi, and he is leading a course on Francis' spiritual practices in 2009.



Mural near the U.S./Mexico border: "If we don't think differently, everything will remain the same."

Cross-Cultural Encounters: Clues for Vocational Transformation

ANN LUTTERMAN-AGUILAR

Introduction

Have you ever studied abroad? If so, did you experience a dramatic reaction like the woman quoted below?

I got the feeling I became a new person after being in Mexico—so much so that I shaved my head before I came home so that the whole world would know that I was not the same person. I felt so strongly in my heart that so many fires had been lit and so many questions had been asked that had never been asked before, that I couldn't go home and have people say that I was on vacation in Mexico, that it would be such a tragedy for people to assume that I was the same, because in my heart of hearts I knew that my life would never be the same politically, mentally, emotionally.

—Hillary Mealman, 2003

You may not have shaved your head, but did you consider your semester abroad “life-changing”? If so, how did it change your life? While you may have felt that the study abroad experience was transformative at the time, did that perception remain the same or change over the ensuing years?

What are alumni's perceptions of the impact of study abroad later in life? What are the long-term impacts? These are some of the many questions that I am exploring in my doctoral research regarding the ways in which intercultural encounters shape people's vocations. Specifically, I am exploring the ways in which intercultural encounters between citizens from the United States and Mexico conducted in the context of Augsburg's Center for Global Education (CGE) study abroad programs in Mexico

have impacted the vocations of the participants from both countries.

CGE has long assumed that intercultural encounters can help students discover their vocations within a global context and lead lives of commitment to the global common good. In fact, it used this premise as the foundation for its part of the College's proposal for the Lilly Endowment grant for the theological exploration of vocation. This conviction that study abroad can play an important role in vocational development is sustained by the findings of the Common Fire study of 100 people who led lives of commitment to the common good. Although the authors concluded that there is "no 'Gandhi pill,'" ¹ they found "constructive engagements with otherness to be the single most critical element undergirding commitment to the common good" in the lives of the people who participated in their study. ² Nonetheless, there is still very little research about the ways in which cross-cultural experiences shape the participants' understandings of their vocations.

Key Vocational Questions

Although in everyday language "vocation" has become synonymous with occupation, career, religious life, or ordained ministry, the term—which comes from the Latin roots *vocare* (to call) and *vox* (voice)—means "calling." Implicit in the definition of vocation as calling is the belief that there are three key components—the caller, the one(s) called, and the one(s) served. In Christian language, these elements are often framed in terms of God, self, and other. All three of these components need to be addressed by any comprehensive study of vocational discernment. Therefore, while I am interested in exploring people's perceptions regarding the ways in which their participation in intercultural encounters in Mexico have led them to affirm old callings as well as discover new callings, I chose not to limit my focus only to what people feel called to do. I also wanted to learn about their views on who or what is calling them, their understandings of their own identities as people who are called, and their perceptions of the world and people who will benefit from their calling. For this reason, my questions were intentionally broad in

scope. I examined people's perceptions of the ways in which these cross-cultural encounters have affirmed, challenged, and/or changed their views of God or the divine, themselves, and the world.

The Survey and Response Rates

Since the Mexico site is the oldest CGE site, I decided to focus my study on graduates of the Mexico semester programs and Mexican partners. My first step was to send a survey to all graduates of CGE's semester-long programs in Mexico between 1979 and 2005 for whom CGE had contact information. Next, I asked similar questions of Mexican community partners. That initial data helped shape the follow-up questions for in-depth interviews with members of each group. I contacted over 550 people, and the response rate was 59%, which is significantly higher than the few comparable studies. ³

Future articles will discuss the survey findings in more depth, and they will also analyze the findings of the interviews with Mexican participants. However, in this article I will focus on the former students' perceptions of the impact of the program on their understandings of their vocations, focusing particularly on their understandings of God, themselves, and others.

Survey Findings

Nearly three-fourths of the respondents indicated that their semester in Mexico had a large impact on their lives. Over half said it "provided a new sense of direction," while nearly a quarter stated that it "changed [their] live[s] completely." Similarly, almost two-thirds said that the semester had a large impact on their sense of vocation, while another third stated that it had at least a moderate impact on their vocations. This means that the vast majority of participants felt it had a moderate-to-large impact on their vocations.

Three of Augsburg's current staff—Mary Laurel True, Jim Trelstad-Porter, and Marissa Machado—all attribute much of their own vocational development to having participated in a CGE semester program in Mexico.

¹ Laurent A. Parks Daloz, Cheryl Keen, James P. Keen, and Sharon Daloz Parks, *Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 17.

² *Ibid.*, 215.

³ IIE's study of alumni who had studied abroad between 1950 and 1999 had a 25% response rate, while Hadis' study of New Jersey college students who studied abroad between 1997 and 2002 only had a 14% return rate. See Mary M. Dwyer, "Charting the Impact of Studying Abroad," *International Educator* 13 (Winter 2004): 1 and Benjamin F. Hadis, "Why are They Better Students when They Come Back? Determinants of Academic Focusing Gains in the Study Abroad Experience," *Frontiers* Vol. XI (August 2005): 57.

Mary Laurel True is now the associate director of Augsburg's Center for Service, Work, and Learning. She stated that her participation in the very first Mexico semester program, which occurred in 1979, changed her life "entirely." The program had a particularly large impact on her beliefs about God and her vocation, and she discovered new callings that semester. She explained, "After my semester in Mexico, I changed my major to Spanish and was much more interested in global social justice issues." True pointed out that, in many ways, her semester in Mexico brought her to Augsburg and helped prepare her for her current work:

I came to Augsburg College and experiential education (where I've been for 17 years) because of CGE! I learned about Augsburg College and its commitment to experiential education. Augsburg College (and those associated with it) has changed my life and has been the most important factor in my life besides my family.

Similarly, Jim Trelstad-Porter stated that his semester in Mexico 20 years ago gave him a new sense of direction. Five years after studying in Mexico with CGE, Trelstad-Porter returned to Mexico as an instructor and CGE program coordinator. Later, he moved to Minneapolis to work in the CGE Minneapolis office, eventually becoming the director of international student advising at Augsburg. Like True, he related his current work to his study abroad experience:

The fact that I am still working for Augsburg College can be traced directly back to my participation in the Mexico semester program. When I work with international students I try to challenge them with the big questions so that they might further their own vocational exploration while being in the U.S. I include in the orientations some reflection on issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and nationality.

Marissa Machado, Augsburg's coordinator of international admissions, credited her 1996 Mexico semester with having helped shape her current career:

I am able to speak Spanish, which I learned on my trip to Mexico. I also work with many international Hispanic/Latino students... My semester in Mexico has helped me be a better worker with them... This experience motivated my career more toward a job working with international students where I could utilize my bilingual skill.

On a more personal note, Machado added that she married a man from Puerto Rico: "My love of the language and culture was ignited in Mexico and I knew my future would be spent with a person who could identify with this."

While True, Trelstad-Porter, and Machado all continue to work with people from diverse international backgrounds in their jobs at Augsburg, their comments are similar to those of former students who are currently living out their vocations in many different contexts all over the globe. One of the most significant impacts that former students report

is an increased understanding of global issues and a new or deepened commitment to responsible global citizenship. These are key components of the third aspect of vocation—the world to which we are called.

That to Which We Are Called

Given Augsburg's mission of educating "future leaders in service to the world," it is essential for students to gain an understanding of the complexity of the world's peoples and problems because "we can't change a world we don't understand."⁴ Therefore, an increased understanding of the world is a vital vocational discovery. Not surprisingly, more than four-fifths of the survey respondents stated that the Mexico semester program had a large impact on their

**... my semester
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stereovision in
place of
monovision.**

⁴Dean Brackley, *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times: New Perspectives on the Transformative Wisdom of Ignatius of Loyola* (NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2004), 165.

understanding of global issues, and almost as many reported a large impact on their commitment to responsible global citizenship. Other large impacts reported by students included their understanding of poverty, views of economic justice, and understanding of differences among cultures. Moreover, nearly half the respondents reported a large impact on their understanding of issues related to race and ethnicity, and another third reported a moderate impact.

The comments of the survey respondents put these results into personal terms. Carmen Crockett, who is a graduate of Luther College and the daughter of Augsburg computer science professor Larry Crockett, reported,

Mexico provided me with a new worldview that made my needs and my wants less important in the grand scheme of things and reminded me that God wants us all to remember that our small community and our sizable country isn't all that matters and that our vocation should reach beyond our own borders.

Similarly, Karin Matchett (1988) said that “my semester in Mexico changed me in the sense that it expanded my worldview and gave me stereovision in place of monovision.” Trelstad-Porter elaborated on this same expansion of thinking:

Living with a host family in a somewhat “majority world reality” environment personalized and made real the issues we were studying. It helped us understand why it mattered so much if there was a slight change in tortilla or public transportation prices. It helped us understand why the pressure is so great to risk emigrating to “el norte” (the north).

Many alumni reported a newfound interest in becoming an advocate for immigrants. For example, True stated that she has been able to draw on what she learned 29 years ago in Mexico in her work as a bridge between Augsburg and the many immigrants who live in the Cedar/Riverside community. She said, “I learned how to be in another country and how it feels to be outside one’s own comfort zone and speaking a foreign language. That changed how I’ve treated refugees and immigrants since my CGE experience.” In 2007 True received the Woman of the Year Award from the Anne Pederson Women’s Resource Center for building bridges between East African women and the College.

Among other things, Augsburg promises to give students an expanded vision of the world (multiple perspectives), through facilitating discovery, engaging other cultures, appreciating difference, and developing a systemic view. The survey results and alumni comments suggest that the CGE Mexico semester programs have successfully contributed to achieving this goal. A significant number of respondents reported the development of an expanded vision of and commitment to the world, a greater appreciation for difference, a global perspective, and a commitment to active citizenship.



Photo by author

A sculpture at the U.S./Mexico border symbolizes pushing down the walls that divide people.

The One Who is Called

Former students also reported that, in addition to shaping their worldviews, their Mexico semester had a large impact on their view of themselves. More than 90 percent stated that it had a moderate-to-large impact on their identity. Comments indicated that the students felt their experiences in Mexico helped them develop new values, cultivate cultural self-awareness, and come to terms with their own positions in the overall social framework. For example, Trelstad-Porter stated that the semester “provided me with tools for social analysis and helped me to understand better my social location (e.g. class, gender, ethnicity, nationality) in the world.” Similarly, Machado stated that the Mexico program helped her address her social position as a white woman from the United States who grew up in a small town in Wisconsin. Her favorite part of her study abroad experience was her homestay with a Mexican family, and she described the experience movingly:

My host family experience was like no other. It was an amazing life journey to have the opportunity to live like a family, and it helped me understand the cultural differences from my Midwest upbringing. It was my first face-to-face confrontation with my “whiteness.” I was able to begin to see the global world from many different angles. How my life is mine, but there are many rich cultures that can influence me and help me grow into a better understanding of myself and my vocation.

Alumni also reported large impacts on many different aspects of their behavior and choices. A strong majority reported a moderate-to-large impact on their interaction with people from backgrounds different from their own. Others reported a similar impact on their career choices and discovery of meaningful work, while even more reported an impact on the way they do their current work. Many perceived significant impacts on their volunteer work, community involvements, friendships, political participation and/or activism, consumer behavior, and environmental behavior. One alumnus stated, “I’m not in the job I’m in today because of my experiences in Mexico, but I am the Person that I am today because of it.” Another wrote, “My general feelings about the program are probably best summed up by CGE’s own quote: ‘See the world through another’s eyes, and your world will never be the same.’ Mexico is where I left a part of myself, and where I found a part of myself.”

Augsburg alumna Jeanette Clark, who studied in Mexico in 2005, is currently studying at Luther Seminary and working with immigrants, most of whom come from the state of Morelos where she studied. She reported that the program provided a new sense of direction for her call to ministry and that participating in biblical reflection/action groups and other experiences influenced her view of the world and the church. She described this process eloquently:

I believe studying abroad greatly benefited my experience as a youth and family ministry major. Through my Liberation Theology course, I was able to see the power of faith in creating social change. I saw the importance of connecting to others within communities ... Completing my internship abroad allowed me to improve my Spanish language skills and cultural competency ... This has and will continue to influence my work in the church. In the USA today, our congregations are slowly realizing what we should have realized all along: In order to be the body of Christ, we must strive to walk alongside our neighbors from other cultures. I am so grateful that my time abroad enabled me to begin such a path.

Similarly, Augsburg alumnus Camilo Power, whose mother Kathy McBride is the CGE co-director in Nicaragua, stated,

My semester in Mexico in the fall of 2000 was an essential part of my life as an undergraduate student. It gave education a whole different meaning; before that semester I didn’t even know if I really belonged in school. It provided the necessary fuel to successfully finish my undergraduate years and to follow a career path with a social responsibility. The confused student that enrolled in CGE Mexico in the fall of 2000 just finished his graduate studies. Thanks, CGE!

Power reported that the program had a large impact on his beliefs about God, as well as his understanding of global issues, global citizenship, vocation, poverty, culture, and identity. He described his internship with the Independent Human Rights Commission of Morelos as particularly inspirational: “The work there helped me understand issues related to land problems facing indigenous populations in Mexico.” Overall, the semester in Mexico affirmed his choice of international relations as his major

and inspired him to study abroad in Cuba, Northern Ireland, Nicaragua, Namibia, and South Africa. At Augsburg, Power became involved in the Coalition for Student Activism. After graduation, he worked as an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer, a staff member for the Minneapolis Legal Rights Center, and a Hispanic community worker. Power now lives in New York City, where he is a programme officer for Miguel d'Escoto, the president of the general assembly of the United Nations.

The Caller

Although the most notable impacts reported by alumni relate to the vocational questions about oneself and the world to which one is called, well over half indicated a moderate-to-large impact on their beliefs about God or the divine. Many of the alumni who did not grow up in a religious tradition reported developing a new sense of spirituality, breaking their stereotypes of religious people and becoming more accepting and appreciative of the positive roles religion can play in society. Those who grew up in religious homes often reported that the Mexico program impacted their religious beliefs, faith, and spirituality by helping them to develop a deeper relationship with God; reject exclusivist understandings of God; expand their understanding of God as one who is concerned about economic, political justice, and the body as well as the soul; and become active in a faith community.

A number of survey respondents elaborated on the impact of study abroad on their view of God. An alumnus who studied in Mexico 19 years ago said, "For me the most significant impact the program had was to force me to critically examine my faith, which was at times a painful experience, but in the end, immensely rewarding. While this was by no means the only faith-shaping experience I've had, it was quite significant." Maggie Choe, who had

lived in several different countries before studying in Mexico in 1996, also reported that the program had a large impact on her faith and beliefs about God. She said, "The program gave me a political voice, the awareness, the confidence to link the everyday things to the big picture. Exposure to liberation theology also changed my personal relationship to God." Another student stated that the program's emphasis on the development of critical analysis

skills helped move her from "blind faith" to a more profound, socially aware faith that involves a commitment to social justice. Marne Day, who studied in Mexico in 2004, stated:

One impact my semester in Mexico had on me was changing my perception of faith and religion. The theological component to the studies was just an extra to me when I signed up for the program. Before coming to Mexico, my perception of religion was that it was important and good for individuals to have faith, but that it had historically had a harmful impact on the larger world by dividing people and establishing ordained prejudice. But as we learned more about liberation theology and people organizing for social justice through their faith, I began to see the positive role religion has the potential to play in society.

St. Olaf alumna Rebekah Menning reported that her experiences in

Mexico helped enlarge her view of God and reject previous exclusivist notions:

I remember so many of the speakers—the nuns in La Montaña that had the strongest sense of vocation I've ever experienced. Nacho [an indigenous spiritual guide] had the largest spiritual impact on me—by far. Our time at the sacred site he shared with us was utterly transforming—his spiritual energy was so pure, so open, so wise... It was one of the first times

For me the most significant impact the program had was to force me to critically examine my faith, which was at times a painful experience, but in the end, immensely rewarding.

that I considered the idea that perhaps other religions are tapped into the same truth, the same God that I just so happened to know through Jesus. I remember being both scared and relieved by what that realization meant for my faith.

Heidi Quezada-Hoffman, who received both her BA in political science/international relations and her MA in leadership from Augsburg, reported that she began participating in church as result of experiences in Mexico back in 1999. She especially recalled her host mother, who was active in a base Christian community group that drew inspiration from Latin American liberation theology and that advocated political participation as a means to promote the construction of God's reign on earth. Those experiences had a large impact on her own vocation and helped her develop new ideas about global citizenship. Unlike the other students in her group who were single, Quezada-Hoffman came to Mexico with her husband and daughter and was pregnant with twins. Despite a scary medical emergency, she described her semester as life-changing: "I will never forget how Doña Naty went above and beyond for me after I got out of the hospital and was on bed rest for several weeks. She cared for me like a daughter and cared for my daughter like a granddaughter." She added, "I learned so much about the culture and the country. This was especially important to me because my husband is from Mexico and my kids are one-half of him! The semester helped me to better understand my husband's culture/beliefs and ... to meet my in-laws for the first time!" Quezada-Hoffman is currently a policy aide for the City of Minneapolis, as well as a Sunday school teacher and community activist.

While the number of students who reported significant impacts on their faith is lower than the number reporting significant impacts on other factors, more than half of the respondents said that they had experienced important discoveries that have shaped their lives. In *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith*, James Fowler argues that people's personal vocations are related to their understanding of who God is or their "core story" of what it means to be Christian. He writes:

A religious core story enables us to see and comprehend our lives in relation to the life, history,

and intentions of God. It provides a context of ultimate meaning for the events and relations of our lives; it gives us decisive images by which to interpret what we suffer and sustain and guide us in what we hope.⁵

Many respondents modified or transformed their core religious stories in meaningful ways because of their exposure to indigenous spiritualities, Latin American liberation theologies, speakers and host family members who demonstrated a profound Christian faith through their political activism and community involvements, as well as to students from diverse religious backgrounds. By studying Christianity in a different cultural context, the students expanded their questions about who God is and what God might be calling people to do. For example, as students discovered a new understanding of God as a God of justice and liberation, they found God calling them to become more engaged in the transformation of this world. This research suggests that the CGE Mexico semester program has helped numerous students strengthen their commitment to "living faith" and fulfilled the Augsburg promise of helping them in their quest for deeper understanding and faithful lives centered in the love of God.

Conclusions

While the faculty and staff of Augsburg's Center for Global Education don't always use the language of "vocation," I believe that the results of this study support the premise that well-designed international education can help students uncover new understandings of three key aspects



Social work majors study in Mexico.

Photo courtesy of the Center for Global Education

⁵James W. Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 94.

of their own vocations—the world they seek to serve with their gifts and talents, their understandings of themselves, and their understandings of who or what calls them.

Clearly, one of the most important and transformative components of the semester in Mexico was the opportunity to engage directly with people who have suffered from oppression but who continue to work to improve their own lives and those of the people in their communities. In *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, Sharon Parks writes, “It has been said that in the life of faith, ‘God is always revising our boundaries outward.’ A primary way this occurs is through an encounter with the other, in which an empathic bond is established that transcends *us* and *them*, creating a new *we*. This grounds commitment to the *common* good, rather than just to me and mine.”⁶ Alumni of CGE’s Mexico semester programs clearly experienced this outward revision of their boundaries as they began to feel direct links to the issues impacting people’s lives, creating a sense of interconnectedness across lines of difference and thereby fulfilling the words of Ephesians 2:19, “We are strangers and aliens no longer.”

Students’ encounters with speakers and host families not only helped them put faces to social issues and provided a new sense of urgency about them, but these encounters also helped provide role models of people who are engaging in social analysis and developing new ways of thinking and acting that can lead to change. One student quoted the slogan on a mural at a shelter for immigrants near the United States-Mexico border, which says, “If we don’t think differently, everything will remain the same.”

The survey results suggest that study abroad programs can play a pivotal role in helping students think differently about themselves, God, and the world and thereby make significant contributions to students’ discovery of vocations that will make a difference in the world today.

Ann Lutterman-Aguilar is the Mexico site director for Augsburg’s Center for Global Education (CGE), and she teaches courses in religion and women’s studies. She has worked with CGE Mexico since 1993.

⁶ Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Youth Adults in their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2000) 139.

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 students 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 semimonthly 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. In March 2009, more than 40 Augsburg students participated in a service project in the Gulf Coast region.

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.

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.

Augsburg Center for Faith & Learning Development

A key objective of Augsburg’s second Lilly Endowment, Inc. grant is the creation and implementation of the Augsburg Center for Faith & Learning (ACFL) to sustain the work of Exploring Our Gifts after 2010. Augsburg is currently engaged in fundraising with the goal of creating an endowment 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.

Interreligious 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 periodically hosts public forums with speakers from other faith communities such as Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, and Native American.

Website Development for the Augsburg Center for Faith & Learning

The purpose of this project is to create a web presence for the Augsburg Center for Faith & 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.

AUGSBURG COLLEGE
**Exploring
Our Gifts**
Reconnecting Faith, Life, and Vocation

Augsburg Center for Faith & Learning

History

In the spring of 2002, the Lilly Endowment, Inc. awarded Augsburg College a \$2 million grant to expand the College's commitment to connecting faith and learning. As a result, Augsburg developed and implemented Exploring Our Gifts. After four years of successful programming, the Lilly Endowment awarded Augsburg a generous sustainability grant, matched by the College, to help support the project 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 have been universally transformative, with hundreds of students, faculty, and staff benefiting from a wide range of new programs, individual and community experiences, and academic opportunities.

Where We Are Going

Augsburg College is committed to continuing this important work beyond the life of the Lilly grant. To this end, the College has created the Augsburg Center for Faith & Learning to embody and build upon the convictions at the heart of Augsburg's educational mission:

To nurture future leaders in service to the world by providing high quality educational opportunities, which are based in the liberal arts and shaped by the faith and values of the Christian Church, by the context of a vital metropolitan setting, and by an intentionally diverse campus community.

Our Purpose

The Augsburg Center for Faith & Learning (ACFL) strengthens Augsburg's commitment to the theological exploration of vocation. To achieve this, ACFL promotes and supports activities that

- lie close to the heart of educational enterprise

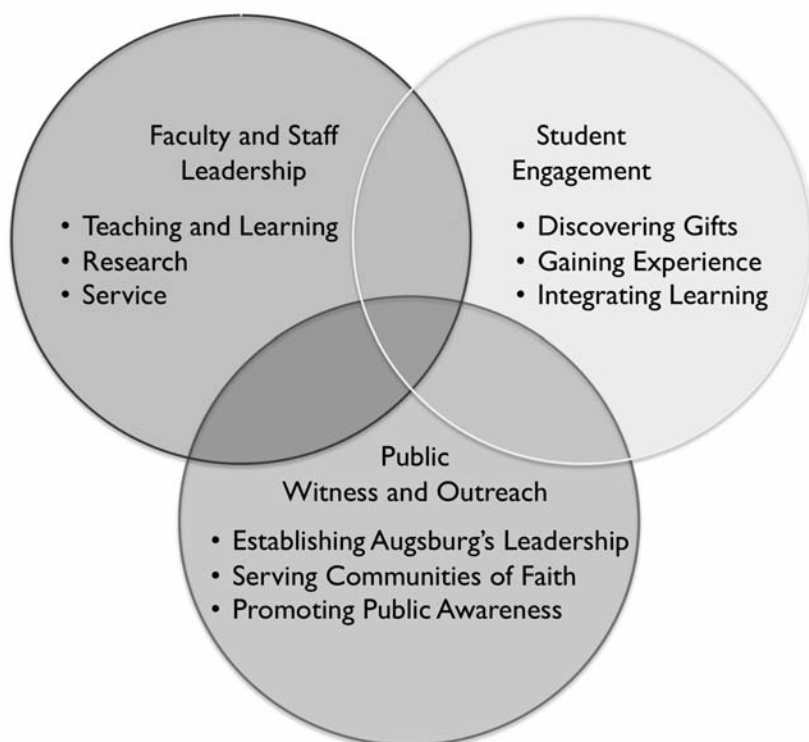
because Augsburg embraces the Lutheran conviction that educational excellence is centered in vocation;

- guide Augsburg into the future by the lessons learned from Bernhard M. Christensen:
 - Christian faith liberates minds and lives,
 - Diversity strengthens vital communities,
 - Inter-faith friendships enrich learning,
 - The love of Christ draws us to God, and
 - We are called to service in the world;
- enhance the capacity of the College to nurture vocation in every learning environment with resources and relationships that will yield fruitful results;
- keep the vision of Augsburg's distinctive educational excellence alive and lively in curricular discussions and outreach to the community; and
- advance Augsburg's common commitments, operating as dynamic catalysts within its curricular "Arch" and serving the natural sciences, social sciences, fine arts, professional studies, and the humanities disciplines of its Liberal Arts Foundation as a means of distinguishing the College's teaching, scholarship, and service.

ACFL Goals and Program Emphasis

The work of the Augsburg Center for Faith & Learning is designed and organized to achieve the following goals on behalf of Augsburg College:

- establish Augsburg's leadership in the theological exploration of vocation
- articulate and guide the fulfillment of the Augsburg Promise
- live out the lessons of Bernhard Christensen
- encourage reflection on what it means to be human
- promote discernment of individual and institutional vocation



The diagram above provides an overview of the focus and intended program outcomes for the Augsburg Center for Faith & Learning. As the diagram indicates, the ongoing work of the Augsburg Center for Faith & Learning will focus on three primary areas of activity prescribed by our Lilly grant.

- **Faculty and Staff Leadership**—Developing curricular and programmatic offerings to guide the theological exploration of vocation by
 - modeling discernment of vocation
 - exploring of the intersection of faith and academic disciplines
 - hosting campuswide dialogue on the meaning of faith and learning
 - supporting travel to conferences and workshops
 - facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration
- **Student Engagement**—Supporting discovery and development of talents and gifts, discernment of vocation, and exploration of calling through
 - curricular and co-curricular offerings
 - providing scholarship support

- internships and service-learning experiences
- offering Dependable Strengths workshops for gift exploration and discernment
- implementing Seeing Things Whole into undergraduate and graduate curriculum
- organizing Book of Faith study groups
- **Public Witness and Outreach**—Promoting Augsburg's leadership in the pursuit and realization of individual and institutional calling by
 - promoting faith and learning in a world of diversity
 - Christensen Symposium
 - Pastoral Leadership Certificate Program
 - interfaith dialogue
 - Book of Faith study materials and workshops
 - conferences to promote the vocation of a Lutheran College
 - conferences to promote theological exploration of vocation

Please contact us if you have any questions or comments:
acfl@augsborg.edu

Artist Biographies

Grady Christopherson is a first-year student at Augsburg College, and his anticipated graduation date is June 2012. His arresting image of the ancient Greek theatre at Taormina, Judgment, is one of the photographs he made during a recent study abroad experience in Sicily.

Marvin Ellingson (1923-1991) owned a graphic design business, worked as art director for WTCN-TV, and worked in the medical graphics department at the Mayo Clinic. He received his art education from the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. His true passion centered on his calligraphy and photography; his art reflects his Christian beliefs and illuminates positive, hopeful messages. His daughter, Lynn Ellingson, is the author of "Love Builds Bridges," the written piece on page four that accompanies his ink drawing and calligraphy of Mother Teresa.

Curt Paulsen is an associate professor at Augsburg College, where he teaches both graduate and undergraduate courses in social work, as well as a Master of Arts in Leadership course that he co-teaches with his wife, Cathy. His professional experience includes a 17-year stint as a consultant on the Pine Ridge Reservation, agency administration, radio production, consultation with profit and non-profit organizations, and private practice. In addition, Paulsen is an accomplished photographer. His beautiful and evocative digital prints have been exhibited at the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Augsburg College, the Red Wing Framing Gallery, and the Warrior's Work Gallery in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

Greta Sundquist is a student at Augsburg College. Her major is studio art, and her anticipated graduation date is June 2010. She created the striking watercolor that appears on the cover of this issue of Till & Keep. In her words, the piece "was based purely on my artist's instinct and what colors called to me." In general, Sundquist's artwork draws upon and explores abstraction, movement, improvisation, and the interplay of contrasting colors.

Tara Sweeney is an exhibiting artist and illustrator who has been teaching courses in studio art and design at Augsburg College since 1990. A lifelong delight in learning languages and crossing borders has inspired her to make art while wandering the world. In addition to teaching studio art courses and writing for the fine arts, she leads study programs abroad such as "Art and Spiritual Practice in Italy," a May 2009 course she will teach with Brad Holt, a professor of religion at Augsburg. She earned undergraduate degrees in studio art and design from the University of Wisconsin in 1978 and received an MFA in visual studies from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design in 1997.

Sherilyn Young is a development assistant at Augsburg College. A graduate of the University of Minnesota with a BA in German studies, she has also completed coursework for a minor in Spanish from Augsburg. Before coming to Augsburg she worked as a community organizer with St. Paul and Minneapolis neighborhood organizations. Her love of travel recently took her to India, where she made many extraordinary photographs, one of which compliments Ashok Kapoor's written piece on page six, "Every Person Is a Part of God."

Artwork in This Issue

Cover:



Untitled
Watercolor, 2008
Greta Sundquist

Page 12:



Cross in Aran Islands
Digital Print, 2008
Curt Paulsen

Page 4:



Ink Drawing and Calligraphy,
1984
Marvin Ellingson

Page 15:



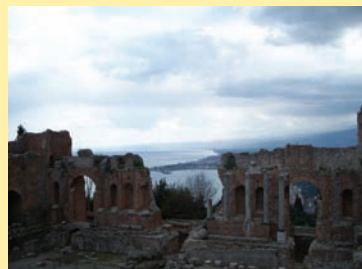
Winter Garden
2008
Tara Sweeney

Page 6:



People bathing in the Ganges,
2008
Sherilyn Young

Page 18:



Judgment
2008
Grady Christopherson

Page 8:



Two Leaves
Digital Print, 2008
Curt Paulsen

Page 26:



Oh les Vaches!
Watercolor, 2006
Tara Sweeney

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