Introduction

I had the rare privilege in the summer of 2012 to be away from campus for a sabbatical – literally, to enjoy Sabbath time away from the roles and routines of daily life for renewal and refreshment. During the six weeks we spent in Chicago, we had two objectives.

The first was to spend good time as a family exploring Chicago, a city we love. Mission accomplished, I can report, as our bucket list was filled with lots of time in museums and neighborhoods, on beaches, and with family and friends.

My second goal was to engage in research on the relevance and sustainability of Lutheran higher education. I explored the literature written during the past fifty years about Lutheran higher education in America and set out to test a hypothesis that the charisms (or gifts) of our Lutheran theological tradition have helped to make us institutions with particular identities and character that are more needed than ever in our world.

The five homilies in this monograph were given in the Augsburg College chapel during the 2012-13 academic year and reflect on five of the gifts of the Lutheran tradition that ground the relevance and sustainability of Lutheran higher education in the 21st century.