

NOTES FOR THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

Volume Eighteen, Number Two (December 2016)

"What we have loved, others will love, and we will teach them how."

(W. Wordsworth, from "The Prelude")

NOTES FROM READERS

>>What you think<<

Merry Christmas, Solstice blessings and Happy New Year! It has been a busy couple of months at Augsburg. The aftermath of the US election and the Advent season coincide in ways that have been fortuitous for our community as we seek to imagine together how to live good and faithful lives in a tumultuous world. We're doubling down on our public commitments to hospitality, justice and community-building, seeking renewed ways forward as a college dedicated to the public good – and it's hard work. I am grateful for all of you who share our commitments to reflective practice and faithful service. May your New Year be full of good things!

Occasionally, I (or my colleagues) refer to items from previous issues of Notes. If you have not been a subscriber previously, and wish to review our conversations, past issues of Notes are available on-line at www.jgacounsel.com. I thank my friends at Johnson, Grossnickle & Associates for their many years of abiding support for our reflective practice.

REFLECT ON THIS

>>Conflicted<<

Here is my third homily for the fall semester, concluding my series of "C" meditations.

Scripture: Psalm 46

The Word Awaited, Kate McIlhagga,

"Sometimes, I long to

call words of praise to me,

so that they may settle

like doves on my palm.

I long to coax them down from the trees

into my waiting hand.

Sometimes they come,
swift and powerful like hawks to the wrist of the falconer,
words of challenge,
fierce words of regret.

One time you came, the word.

Not at my call, you came
to occupy a cradle,
a grave,
my heart,
a universe.

You came to call me
to unleash words of comfort
words of hope.

Sometimes I hold out my empty hands and wait.”

I conclude my series of homilies for this fall semester with my third “C”. We began in September with the call to be convicted – held accountable for our fallen selves and called to a deep conviction to God’s work in the world. We then turned in October to the call to be concerned – Jesus’s challenge to his mother to answer “of what concern” are the needs of others and her simple call to obedience.

And here we are in these dark days of November, in this first week of Advent, the new church year, and I come reflecting on the call to be conflicted – and I imagine you think I’m going to talk about the election – and as tempting as that might be...

Instead, I am here this morning to suggest that a central theme of this Advent season is the reality that we are called to be conflicted, to live in the tensions that define the lives of God’s faithful people – people already saved by a baby in a manger, a teacher and a healer, a savior on a cross, a Christ risen indeed – and people still fallen, tempted by the urge to control our lives, to know all, to define success and truth for ourselves.

Our spiritual ancestor, Martin Luther, taught us the Latin phrase for this tension: *simul justus et peccator*, at once both saved and fallen, saint and sinner. It is a core part of our Lutheran Christian faith tradition. It names the paradox of living in the tensions. It forms us to deny the either/or demands of the world – are you for me or against me, are you conservative or liberal, I am right and you are wrong – and accept God’s claim upon us to be both/and people, navigating the complexities of life with the trust that only God has all the answers, that we are called to embrace and love our

neighbors even when we disagree. And it is hard stuff, this paradoxical, tension-filled, conflicted life we are called to lead.

And here comes this delightful poem from Kate McIlhagga, a minister and member of the Iona spiritual community in Scotland until her death in 2002 – a poem that juxtaposes these two aspects of our nature. “Sometimes, I long to call words of praise to me,” she writes, “to coax them down from trees into my waiting hand.” And sometimes they come, she continues, “swift and powerful... words of challenge, fierce words of regret.” Our longing to call the word, she suggests, often leads to challenge and regret.

But “One time,” she continues, “you came, the word, Not at my call, you came to occupy a cradle, a grave, my heart, a universe. You came to unleash words of comfort, words of hope.” One time, as the Evangelist tells us, the Word became flesh and broke into our history with words of comfort and hope and grace and truth. And there is nothing to do but hold out our empty hands and wait.

And waiting is hard, too. “Be still and know that I am God,” the Psalmist writes to the Israelites impatient with their God, tired of waiting, sure that they had been abandoned to lives of exile and slavery. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble... God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning comes... The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” Be still, be still, wait, have faith – and know that I am God. Wise counsel for our Advent journeys.

So what to do while we wait, while we live in the tensions, while we are conflicted? Surely it is not to do nothing, to wait passively, to stand by and hope for the best – our God demands “active waiting,” for in the tensions, in the conflicts, are the stuff of our lives of faith in the world. We are called to be conflicted, and our God has our back!

This Advent, I am mindful that most of us are feeling more conflicted than ever. OK – just a few words about the election!! We’ve lived through a wrenching time in our history. No matter where you land on election results, all of us are feeling the pain of division, of a sense of loss of bearing, of fear for what will come, of a longing for well being and civility and common purpose. So, maybe Advent comes at just the right time for conflicted people, maybe this liturgical season is a gift to those whose longings have been frustrated and who need to be still and know that God is God – and know that our God has a plan for us.

It begins with the Advent call to turn again to the One who calls, to embrace what preacher and theologian Frederick Buechner calls the gift and demand of a “magnificent defeat.” He writes, “Power, success, happiness, as the world knows them, are his/hers who will fight for them hard enough; but peace, love, joy are only from God... And God is the enemy whom in one way or another all of us fight—God, the beloved enemy. Our enemy because, before giving us everything, he demands of us everything; before giving us life, he demands our lives—our selves, our wills, our treasures.” The magnificent defeat – born in a manger, won on a cross, redeemed in an empty tomb. God’s plan for God’s people.

And then God’s conflicted people are called to pursue God’s will and work in the world. For this work, I am inspired and challenged by the example of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who, in a stirring sermon in the throes of the civil rights campaign, called for God’s faithful people to be tough-minded – characterized by incisive thinking, realistic appraisal, and decisive judgment – sounds a good bit like the outcomes of a liberal arts education, an Augsburg education. But he didn’t stop

there. Yes, tough-minded, but at the same time, tenderhearted – not a naïve or sentimental concern for others, but a commitment to compassion and justice for all our neighbors – also core values of an Augsburg education. Tough-minded and tender-hearted – just the stuff of the conflicted life, and as King concludes, the very nature of the God who calls us, the God who loves us, the God whose Advent in our midst we mark in the days ahead.

Be still and know that I am God. Be still and know. Be still. Be. Be God's conflicted people in the world. Be tough-minded and tenderhearted. The Word has become flesh, indeed; the Word that comes to us in a manger – the Word, full of comfort and hope and grace and truth. Blessings on your conflicted Advent journeys. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.

>>StepUP at Augsburg: Overcoming the stigma of addiction!<<

The following is an excerpt from a chapter I recently wrote for a forthcoming book on different models for residence life on university campuses. As you will read, my story is about much more than college housing; it's about saving lives and overcoming the stigma of addiction on college campuses.

“It began nearly twenty years ago with one student, a student who went to a faculty member with a remarkable story. As he recounts it, the student told a faculty member that he was in recovery from addiction and that college was a really tough place for someone in recovery to negotiate. The faculty member responded with humility and compassion: “I don't know anything about recovery, but if I can help you succeed in college, we will go on this path together.”

And that is how the StepUP program at Augsburg College was created. A couple of years later, the student had graduated, the faculty member had learned about young people in recovery, and the college began the journey of creating what is now “the gold standard in collegiate recovery,” according to the White House Office of Drug Enforcement.

In many ways, the StepUP program reflects Augsburg's long-standing commitment to access and excellence for all of its students, now more than 3,500 strong. Our mission – “to educate students to be informed citizens, thoughtful stewards, critical thinkers and responsible leaders” – and our faith tradition – as a college of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), committed to educating students for service – both support the ways in which StepUP advances our mission on campus and in the world.

This is a chapter about residence life on a college campus – and I will illustrate how the StepUp program evolved into a robust living and learning community – but this also is a story about overcoming the stigma of addiction on a college campus – a stigma that many of our students face and that higher education leaders must address.

What is StepUP?: A Collegiate Recovery Community

The StepUp program officially began in the fall of 1997 with 23 students enrolled. The program focuses on young adults, ages 17-26, who wish to pursue an undergraduate degree. At that time, the college had no chemical-free living environment or formal support program for students in recovery, and the proposed StepUP program aimed to provide both.

Now serving more than 100 undergraduate students in a dedicated residential facility, the StepUP program is a recovery-based support program that provides structure for the students enrolled.

Students are required to attend classes, attend mandatory meetings with peers and counselors, and refrain from using drugs or alcohol. Entering students must be at least six months sober before entering the program and all students are tested randomly while in the program for drug or alcohol use. In addition, the college offers a wide range of academic support services for all of its students, including the Center for Learning Adaptive Student Services (CLASS), which provides accommodations for learning and physical challenges.

Originally, the StepUP program housed its students in existing townhouses on campus. Though housed in a chemical-free community, these townhouses were part of a larger residential complex that was not chemical-free. This was a challenge on both philosophical and practical levels. In 2005, Augsburg made plans to construct the Oren Gateway Center, a multi-use facility, and to include dedicated space for the StepUP program (both its offices and residences) in this new building. The 106 beds in the Oren Center (half of the total residential beds for students in recovery in the country) are designed in community settings, with bedrooms surrounding common living rooms and kitchens. The building is designated as chemical-free, both in the residences and in the other spaces in the building, which include classrooms, administrative offices, a bookstore and café. The Oren Center opened in the fall of 2007.

The StepUP program is part of a network of collegiate recovery programs (CRP), originally begun at Brown University in the 1970s. Texas Tech University and Rutgers University opened programs in the 1980s, and the StepUP program followed in the mid-1990s. Texas Tech, Rutgers and Augsburg are still recognized as pioneers and leaders in the network, even as dozens of other schools have joined the network and sought ways to serve students in recovery within the context of their missions and contexts (Botzet, et al., 2007; www.collegiaterecovery.org).

There now is considerable research that shows how these CRPs are effective. Importantly, they are not treatment programs; they are student support programs and there are two key factors to the success of CRPs. Students often come to StepUP on referrals from treatment facilities, and at least six months sober they now need the support of a strong community, a community that creates a social network to meet the belonging needs of students. The community also helps to provide multiple opportunities for sober and safe recreation, serving as a sort of “counter-culture” to the traditional party scenes that define the college experience. In addition, CRPs have program staff trained and experienced in addiction disorders. These counselors provide both addiction counseling and support for co-occurring mental health challenge students often face (Harris, et al., 2007; Botzet, *ibid*).

StepUP has several factors that make it distinctive in the collegiate recovery network. First, it is recovery-in-residence. It is not simply a student organization; it is a 24/7-support community. Second, it has professional counseling services at a ratio of 19 students to each counselor. Third, the program focuses on leadership development and has its own student governance system with a Leadership team that partners with staff to guide and improve the program. Fourth, Augsburg’s specialized support services for academic and learning challenges offer unparalleled support for StepUP students who may present with such needs. Finally, the location of Augsburg and its StepUP program in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul mean that the program benefits from a rich and robust recovery community with a history of chemical dependency treatment and recovery resources at institutions such as Hazelden Betty Ford and the Retreat (www.augsburg.edu/stepup/frequently-asked-questions).

[Why StepUP?: Overcoming the Stigma of Addiction on Campus and Beyond](#)

Each fall, I have the opportunity to welcome new students into our StepUP program, and in getting to know these young people, it is clear to me that they do as much to enrich and shape Augsburg as the college does in support of their success. This is a critical aspect of how we overcome the stigma of addiction on our campus and beyond. There are lessons to learn about how to support recovery efforts in various settings.

Our intersecting stories weave a social fabric for our lives. People leading lives of recovery are wonderful storytellers. The stories are often full of heartache and tragedy and recklessness before they turn to healing and redemption. But this is what life looks like —stories of all sorts — depictions of reality that we must tell and hear, recognizing the messiness that often marks our personal and common lives. The sharing of our stories helps us understand what Stephen Crites, Wesleyan University professor emeritus, called “the narrative quality of human experience.”

We embrace the deep ties between what we believe and how we live our lives. This is about belief in the higher power—the deep and spiritual experiences that fundamentally change our perspectives, our relationships, and our values. The concept of “vocation” —or calling —is powerfully integrated into the Augsburg educational experience. We believe that our lives have significance and meaning and that our higher power is working through us to accomplish good in the world.

We affirm that the opportunities to be in community, to be educated, and to be known and loved carry with them the obligations to be of service to others, to give back, and to know and love our neighbors. At Augsburg, the idea of education for service is at the heart of our character as a college. Education, thus, is so much more than what we learn from books or in classrooms; it is our life in community and in the world. What we learn about ourselves and from each other in all of our relationships leads us toward living as people who know that life is a gift.

We are committed to learning to “pay attention” and helping each other to attend to the most important people and values in our lives. We all live in a world full of temptations and distractions, so how do we learn to pay attention to the most important people and values? Here is a lesson I have learned so well from getting to know our StepUP professionals and students; they have taught—and continue to teach—me that paying attention to your spirituality, to your higher power, to your powerlessness, and then to the family and friends who love you are at the core of recovery and all of life.

Augsburg is immensely proud of its StepUP program and the impact it has on the students and families it serves, as well as the way the program extends the college’s mission. It has proven to be an effective housing strategy, with strong returns on our investments in dedicated residences. At the same time, it reflects the college’s deepest values around meeting students where they are, educating them for lives of meaning and purpose, and then watching with great joy the difference they make in the world.

PRACTICE THIS

>>Gentle and generous with each other<<

Here is the statement I shared with the Augsburg community on the day after the US election. May its sentiment guide our common work in the months and years ahead.

“Dear Augsburg community,

As I reflect on this morning after our national election, I am buoyed by the words of honorary Augsburg graduate and renowned teacher, Parker Palmer, who reminds us that we have choices about how to respond to the dynamics of our democracy. He distinguishes between “hearts broken apart” – shattered beyond repair – and “hearts broken open” – embracing the tensions and opening our hearts to the promise of co-creating our lives together. For our community – with its distinctive mission and values – I firmly believe that our hearts must be broken open as we journey forward.

Certainly today we affirm that the people of our democracy have spoken and elected a new president, who will assume his duties in a seamless transition of power. That is a hallmark of our country and no matter our own electoral choices, we must embrace the fact that a president has been elected – our 45th in 240 years – and that he will take up his duties on January 20, 2017. Our democracy works.

At the same time, the rancorous campaign just ended has made many of us uneasy and anxious and threatened. President Trump has responsibility to respond appropriately to those fears and work diligently to heal the deep fissures in our republic. We will hold him accountable for that duty.

But as we also know, the work of our democracy does not belong solely to a president or congress or government; it belongs to us. And especially for our community, with its remarkable commitments to hospitality, justice and equity, the work of democracy is ours to claim and undertake.

That is what we will do. First, we will come together in classrooms, residence halls, chapel and other spaces to explore the meaning of this election, to learn from each other, and to make plans for the future. Please take advantage of the many spaces where such conversations will occur. We will continue to be generous and gentle with each other – my charge to the community earlier this semester – as we deal with our diverse emotions and thoughts.

And then, we will get to work, challenging each other to live up to our highest aspirations as Augsburg College, where we educate students (and each other) to be “informed citizens, thoughtful stewards, critical thinkers and responsible leaders.” In order to spur imagination and resolve on this important work, I am pleased to announce that we will make available new peacemaking and innovation grants to fund ideas for responding to the fear and hate that so many of us are experiencing. I will be pleased to receive requests that address such issues as Islamophobia, support for our immigrant neighbors and undocumented students, deliberative dialogues about pressing social issues, advocacy for higher education policy that values equity and justice, and so forth. Brief requests and proposed use of funds should be sent to Leif Anderson (andersol@augsborg.edu) and, if approved, will be funded on a rolling basis throughout the rest of this academic year.

I urge you to take care of yourself and your friends in these stressful days. Take advantage of the many services we provide as a college to talk with someone about how you are feeling. Though it is difficult sometimes, take the long view, embrace the work of co-creation, and keep the faith.”

PAY ATTENTION TO THIS

>>Resources for your reflective practice<<

The 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation continues to be the occasion for wonderful new books. I recently read Andrew Wilson's intriguing *Here I Walk: A Thousand Miles on Foot to Rome With Martin Luther* (Brazos Press, 2016), which details a sort of Protestant pilgrimage and so much more. Parts of the book were originally shared in lectures at Augsburg by Andrew and his spouse, Sarah Hinlicky Wilson.

As always, I have the latest from prolific Wendell Berry, whose 2014 and 2015 Sabbath Poems are included in *A Small Porch* (Counterpoint, 2016).

>>The time being<<

W. H. Auden's haunting prose poem, "For the 'Time Being,'" concludes with the following powerful words. He does not bury the lead – the Way, the Truth, the Life – but read on and see how Auden propels us back into the world – the land of Unlikeness, the Kingdom of Anxiety, the World of the Flesh – with a promise of life transformed.

"He is the Way.

Follow Him through the Land of Unlikeness;

You will see rare beasts, and have unique adventures.

He is the Truth.

Seek Him in the Kingdom of Anxiety;

You will come to a great city that has expected your return for years.

He is the Life.

Love Him in the World of the Flesh;

And at your marriage all its occasions shall dance for joy."

>>Subscription information<<

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>>Topics for upcoming issues<<

- Citizenship and work
- Chief strategy officers

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