

## NOTES FOR THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

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

(W. Wordsworth, from "The Prelude")

## NOTES FROM READERS

>>What you think<<

I am honored to let you know that I will receive the "Outstanding Fundraising Professional" award from the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) at its international conference on April 2. For many of my readers, AFP has been our professional home. Its mission to promote effective and ethical fundraising has inspired us to serve the public trust in our work. Much of my writing on ethics over the years has been an effort to help move the field forward in its more and more nuanced sense of how philanthropic fundraising is a form of public service. To be recognized by my colleagues and friends with this highest AFP honor is most meaningful. I hope many of you will be in San Antonio for the ceremony so that I can share this moment with you.

I'm thinking a good bit right now about how we think about work and how we promote the dignity of work of all sorts. In fact, the first two entries in this issue of Notes are a sermon and an editorial with overlapping messages about recovering a sense of why work matters in our communities and society. It happens to be a theme tied to Augsburg's historic theological and intellectual traditions. I welcome your thoughts.

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](http://www.jgacounsel.com). I thank my friends at Johnson, Grossnickle & Associates for their many years of abiding support for our reflective practice.

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## REFLECT ON THIS

>>Called to work<<

Here is my first chapel homily for the Spring Semester – the first of three on the threads of Augsburg's identity found in our theological and scriptural tradition.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12: 12-31a

This morning I offer the first of three homiletical meditations during the spring semester that focus on the theological and scriptural threads of Augsburg's history that define who we are today. I invite you into these meditations as we prepare to celebrate Augsburg's Sesquicentennial – its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary – beginning next fall. Later this spring I will reflect on our call to learn and our call to be neighbor. This morning I want to share thoughts on our call to work – a distinctive aspect of our Norwegian Lutheran heritage.

Do you know this PBS series, “This Old House”? It is one of my longtime favorites, perhaps because I barely own a hammer and did not inherit my dad’s handyperson genes... More meaningfully, I watch the show with great interest for what it teaches me about the complementarity of skills and crafts that combine to renovate the homes featured on the show. One week, it is the plumber whose work is featured with great respect and attention by others; the following week, a carpenter, then an electrician, then a structural engineer, then an interior designer, a landscaper, and so forth. The various skills – explained, held up and admired, put to work so that the project might proceed to its final form.

The Epistle lesson assigned for last Sunday, the Third Sunday after Epiphany, from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, offers a scriptural frame for my “This Old House” example. Here, Paul uses the body metaphor to charge the young Christian community at Corinth to respect each other’s gifts, arranged as individual members of the one body, with the same care for each other, with honor paid each member so that the body might rejoice. The church itself is lifted up as the body of Christ with its individual apostles, prophets, teachers, healers, leaders, even miracle workers – each individual called to the work for which he or she is best equipped, combining to live as a community, dedicated to being God’s people in the world.

This is such a compelling image of humans working individually and together that it may be difficult to imagine how Paul’s call to be the body of Christ was lost in the centuries that followed, but lost it was as the church became more and more institutionalized and stratified. Where the gifts of individual members often were diminished in the name of a hierarchy of roles and skills. Where the clergy and other religious orders took on more of the responsibility and privilege, relegating laypeople to lesser work.

And then along came Martin Luther, himself steeped in the religious orders of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, an Augustinian monk, but one troubled by what he witnessed in the practices of his fellow clergy and the Roman Catholic Church – especially their greed and corruption. When his calls for reform were ignored, he set about to recover Paul’s vision of the body of Christ with its complementary individual members. From his perch as a university professor, he set about to honor the work of the laypeople in his part of Germany. He translated the scriptures into the German language so that all people could read and benefit. He created and supported businesses in the town of Wittenberg, so that the economy would support the needs of all citizens. He created a community chest so that when there was a crisis for an individual or family, there were resources to help. He wrote with great passion about the dignity of work across all professions and crafts – cobblers and printers, students and shop owners, even shepherds as he wrote in this Christmas sermon from 1521: “Behold how very richly God honors those who are despised of men...Nor could the angels find princes or valiant men to whom to communicate the good news; but only unlearned laymen, the most humble people on the earth...God chose poor shepherds, who, though they were of low estate in the sight of men, were in heaven regarded as worthy of such great grace and honor.” For Luther, we are all called to the work God intends for us.

Now let us jump some 275 years ahead to the Lutheran church in Norway in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Though much good had occurred in the years following Luther’s reform movement, it also was the case that the Lutheran church is now more institutionalized and stratified. In fact, the Lutheran church has become the State Church in Norway (and other Northern European countries). And there were reformers at work, calling God’s people back to the Gospel and to the vision of the body first described by Paul.

One such reformer was Hans Nielsen Hauge. Born in 1771, Hauge had a spiritual experience at age 25 that led him to believe that he was called to preach the gospel and to fight against the ways in which the established church in Norway did not create healthy and just communities. Inspired by the idea of the spirit of community practiced by early Christians, Hauge sought to put the idea of common and shared economies into practice in Norway. Hauge was a skilled businessperson and entrepreneur, who would preach the gospel on Sundays and then live out the gospel by creating new businesses in which work was valued. He saw that demands for efficiency and increased production often took precedence over caring for workers and valuing their vocations. He emphasized stewardship of material goods. “The good and the wise live and use their talents, strength and fortune for themselves, so that they can shape it for the good of others; they are stewards and look for possibilities.” He focused on full employment, encouraging business owners to create jobs so that fellow citizens could experience the dignity of working to support themselves.

As is often the case with reformers, the powers that be charged Hauge with crimes against the state and church, jailing him for most of the last twenty years of his life. He died in 1823. But his influence was secure through the businesses he had created, the workers he had encouraged with his preaching and leadership, and the challenge he had brought against a church that separated the faith it preached from the works it supported.

The founders of Augsburg Theological Seminary (then College, now University) were Haugeans, Norwegian Lutheran immigrants who fled from Norway to seek better lives in a new country. These were individuals who believed in the dignity of work as a gift from God and who sought to create healthy economies and communities in their new homes. Here in Minneapolis, the neighborhood around us was first settled by these Haugeans who created businesses to serve their neighbors and institutions like Augsburg and Fairview Hospital to meet the various needs of a growing population.

Now, some 150 years later, we are inheritors of the Haugean vision for reform: building healthy economies and institutions, valuing work as meaningful and worthy of respect, and embracing our roles as stewards of God’s many gifts to us. And there are partners in this work that inspire and challenge us to secure that vision.

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whose 90<sup>th</sup> birthday we marked earlier this month, took up the cause of all workers late in his life. His speeches on the dignity of labor – especially focused on garbage and sanitation workers – resonated with the ideas of his namesake, Martin Luther, who lifted up work as a gift from God in our vocations. Former President Barack Obama, speaking in South Africa last summer, said “The pace of change is going to require us to do more fundamental reimagining of our social and political arrangements, to protect the economic security and the dignity that comes with a job. It’s not just money that a job provides; it provides dignity and structure and a sense of place and a sense of purpose.” Spoken like a true Haugean and Auggie!

I recall when I first suggested that our friend Gladys Strommen honor her family’s legacy at Augsburg by funding the creation of the Strommen Center for Meaningful Work, she was a bit confused by the idea of meaningful work – it is a counter-cultural notion in 21<sup>st</sup> century society with our individualistic, celebrity culture where formal educational credentials often take the place of Medieval hierarchies. . . But as she explored the idea with us over the next few months, she came to understand that this is exactly what Augsburg stands for. We believe in what we call a three-dimensional education – helping students to make a living, make a life and build a community – three aspects of work that the Apostle Paul, Martin Luther, Hans Nielsen Hauge, the founders of Augsburg, and a cloud of witnesses since know can never be separated from each other – an

education that equips the next generation as reformers of our social and political and religious arrangements.

We are called to work. I can't wait to see what's next! Thanks be to God. Amen.

>>The dignity of work<<

As Augsburg University prepares to celebrate its Sesquicentennial – its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary – we are returning to our historic roots to find the important threads of relevance to our mission and identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The recent partial shutdown of the federal government, leaving more than 800,000 federal workers without pay, prompted us to consider the influence of one Hans Nielsen Hauge, a late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century Norwegian lay preacher and entrepreneur, on the founders of Augsburg.

Born in 1771, Hauge had a spiritual experience at age 25 that led him to believe that he was called to preach the gospel and to fight against the ways in which the established church in Norway did not create healthy and just communities. Inspired by the idea of the spirit of community practiced by early Christians, Hauge sought to put the idea of common and shared economies into practice in Norway. Hauge was a skilled businessperson and entrepreneur, who would preach the gospel on Sundays and then live out the gospel by creating new businesses in which work was valued. He saw that demands for efficiency and increased production often took precedence over caring for workers and valuing their vocations. He emphasized stewardship of material goods. “The good and the wise live and use their talents, strength and fortune for themselves, so that they can shape it for the good of others; they are stewards and look for possibilities.” He focused on full employment, encouraging business owners to create jobs so that fellow citizens could experience the dignity of working to support themselves.

The founders of Augsburg Theological Seminary (then College, now University) were Haugeans, Norwegian Lutheran immigrants who fled from Norway to seek better lives in a new country. These were individuals who believed in the dignity of work as a gift from God and who sought to create healthy economies and communities in their new homes. Here in Minneapolis, the neighborhood around Augsburg was first settled by these Haugeans who created businesses to serve their neighbors and institutions like Augsburg and Fairview Hospital to meet the various needs of a growing population.

Now, some 150 years later, we are inheritors of the Haugean vision for reform: building healthy economies and institutions, valuing work as meaningful and worthy of respect, and embracing our roles as stewards of the many gifts we've been given. And there is important work to be done.

We have a crisis of work. In particular, we have a growing crisis of meaningful, and dignified and sustainable forms of work. In a 2018 speech in South Africa, President Barack Obama captured the urgency and complexity, “The pace of change is going to require us to do more fundamental reimagining of our social and political arrangements, to protect the economic security and the dignity that comes with a job. It's not just money that a job provides; it provides dignity and structure and a sense of place and a sense of purpose.”

Others have joined Obama in spotlighting the crisis of work. The Ford Foundation has recently launched a new program, The Future of Work focused on, “The nature of work is changing – and at

a magnitude that we have yet to fully grasp let alone respond to. Many types of workers are affected by these seismic changes but...women, people of color, migrants, and people with disabilities disproportionately bear the brunt, exacerbating inequality overall.”

The crisis of work is prompting re-affirmation of the dignity and value of work across partisan divisions. In his new book, *The Once and Future Worker*, Oren Cass, Mitt Romney’s policy advisor in 2012, echoes Obama’s stress on the importance of work with purpose and meaning. Cass calls for “productive pluralism” in which educational systems develop highly diverse pathways to different kinds of jobs and careers, so that “people of diverse abilities, priorities, and geographies...can become contributors to their communities.”

Regional partnerships will be needed to respond to this crisis by generating jobs with good wages, benefits, and stable work environments with public purpose. A promising feature of such partnerships will be developing and expanding “public work” approaches to workforce development, creating good jobs in metropolitan regions. Public work is collaborative work animated by public purpose and aimed at public impact. It involves bringing together diverse constituencies within communities, often in unlikely partnerships, to work across differences to solve problems and create things of lasting public value. It also means educational programs such as Augsburg’s Strommen Center for Meaningful Work that prepare college graduates with the skills and capacities to work in such ways.

Such new work force development involves engaging professionals in larger public purposes. Professionals who move beyond the narrow focus of their businesses, organizations and disciplines, towards seeing themselves as “citizen professionals,” capable of leadership in transforming work sites and larger communities into collaborative, inclusive, empowering and purpose-filled environments. Such citizen professionals are inspiring models in a time when low wage workers and professionals alike often feel like “cogs in a machine,” as *New York Times* reporter Noam Scheiber put it last year in “When Professionals Rise Up More than Money Is at Stake.”

At Augsburg University, our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary is a moment to be faithful to the traditions that have shaped our history even as we seek to be relevant to the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century society. The dignity of work – championed by Hans Nielsen Hauge more than 200 years ago – may be more relevant than ever for his ancestors.

## PRACTICE THIS

>>The logic of planning<<

We’re working on Augsburg’s next strategic plan and have been challenged by some of our advisors to be more explicit about the logic that leads to our core strategies.

We start with a vision and our mission, of course, and then we make an important move – a move we have not made before – to our **theory of change**. Here is what we say:

“We believe that individuals, educated in a student-centered, diverse and equity-minded community using innovative and high-impact practices, will live and work as citizens dedicated to a better world.”

It is a deceptively simple statement, but has in it all of the lenses we need to then set **Key Change Pathways and Practices**:

- Equity leadership and inclusive excellence
- An accomplished faculty, dedicated to teaching
- A culture of innovation and learning

Only then do we articulate **Core Strategies and Goals**, by which we'll accomplish the change we want to see in the world:

- Strengthen Augsburg's three-dimensional education – educating students to make a living, make a life, and build community
- Advance Augsburg's public purposes
- Grow Augsburg as a sustainable university

There is, of course, much more to all of this, but I have been intrigued by the depth of conversation this logic has made possible about our common work in the years ahead.

PAY ATTENTION TO THIS

>>Resources for your reflective practice<<

I'm always looking for good thinking about the concept of abundance and its relationship to various aspects of our common lives. Recently, friend and colleague David Tiede shared John Bogle's *Enough: True Measures of Money, Business, and Life* (John Wiley, 2009). Bogle, who created the Vanguard family of investment funds, has wise words about how greed and moral collapse threaten our society.

Augsburg professor Jeremy P. Myers has published *Liberating Youth from Adolescence* (Fortress Press, 2018), his challenge to the church and all of us to see young people as creative contributors to the life and work of communities.

I have in the past recommended "Sightings," the online commentary on religion and public life from the Martin Marty Center at the University of Chicago Divinity School. In honor of Marty's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and the Center's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, many of the comments have been compiled in *Sightings: Reflections on Religion in Public Life* (Eerdmans, 2019), edited by Brett Colasacco.

Finally, the essay on "Democracy and Higher Education" that I wrote last summer for the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) Guardians Series has now been published. It is available as a PDF at <https://www.agb.org/reports/2019/renewing-the-democratic-purposes-of-higher-education>.

>>Mary Oliver<<

Poet Mary Oliver's death earlier this year reminds us of the many ways in which she enriched our lives with her elegant poems, often using examples from nature to address our human circumstances and aspirations. Here's a favorite and a call to "read the whole story":

## Breakage

I go down to the edge of the sea.  
How everything shines in the morning light!  
The cusp of the whelk,  
the broken cupboard of the clam,  
the opened, blue mussels,  
moon snails, pale pink and barnacle scarred—  
and nothing at all whole or shut, but tattered, split,  
dropped by the gulls onto the gray rocks and all the moisture gone.  
It's like a schoolhouse  
of little words,  
thousands of words.  
First you figure out what each one means by itself,  
the jingle, the periwinkle, the scallop  
    full of moonlight.

Then you begin, slowly, to read the whole story.

Source: *Poetry* (Poetry Foundation, 2003)

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>>Topics for upcoming issues<<

- Culture change
- Big ideas!

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