

NOTES FOR THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

Volume Fourteen, Number Two (December 2012)

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

(W. Wordsworth, from "The Prelude")

NOTES FROM READERS

>>What you think<<

New Year greetings to my friends, far and wide. Abigail, the kids and I have recently returned from an once-in-a-lifetime trip to Vietnam and China – the second part of my sabbatical – to visit the kids' birthplaces. It was the best Christmas gift ever for all of us – a chance to reconnect with culture and place, to meet those who cared for our children when they were infants, and to celebrate our forever family and its links to good people around the world. As many of you may remember, I have written over the years in my Notes about our original visits to Vietnam in 2001 to find Thomas and then to China in 2004 to find Maya. I reread those posts before our recent trip and was struck by the themes that continue to inform our reflection and practice as parents. I include Kahlil Gibran's inspiring poem, "Love is Separateness" from *The Prophet*, at the end of these Notes, as a beginning point for reflections about our trip that will follow in a future issue.

Here are some lovely reflections on the last issue of Notes from long-time friend, Pamela Miller:

"Your *Notes* held such meaning for me. When I am asked the purpose of our lives, I respond that the answer has always been told to us: we are here to take care of each other and all that is in this life. How we choose to live this purpose is what we need to open ourselves to and understand that it will take many paths and turns, perhaps even retracing our steps at times. I have found that true in my life and for a while I struggled with it, and then finally accepted that I was making the choices I felt called to do. At this point I am more content than I have ever hoped to be. More needs to be done, and I still strive to be a better person. Yet I know I am on the journey meant for me.

I think of the exchange between Sarah and Fielding in Scott Spencer's *Waking the Dead*:

Sarah Williams: But... so few people get what they want. And the ones that do aren't really the lucky ones anyway.

Fielding Pierce: They're not? Who are?

Sarah Williams: The ones that do what they are meant to.

Thank you as always for giving us these times of reflection and thanksgiving."

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. The website version of Notes also includes helpful hyperlinks to sources for purchasing or subscribing to the various publications mentioned in Notes.

I thank my friends at Johnson, Grossnickle & Associates for their many years of abiding support for our reflective practice.

REFLECT ON THIS

>>To know because we are known<<

As I noted in the last issue of Notes, my summer sabbatical research is being presented in a series of chapel sermons here at Augsburg. Here is the second – more to follow.

Scripture assigned: Job 38: 1-7, 34-41

[The second of five chapel homilies on the gifts of the Lutheran tradition that ground the relevance and sustainability of Lutheran higher education in the 21st century, Augsburg College Chapel, October 24, 2012]

This morning, I continue with my series of homilies on the five charisms (or gifts) of the Lutheran theological tradition that I believe shape the sort of college we are – a college that is relevant and sustainable in the 21st century. A couple of weeks ago, I explored the nuanced Lutheran theological understanding of vocation that is at the heart of our educational experience – a way of thinking about the significance and purpose of our lives in the world that is based in the messiness of our everyday lives, that connects us to wider communities of commitment and practice, and that may require real sacrifice in service to God’s intentions for the world.

This morning, I want to go to the heart of our academic mission – to our commitment to humble and critical inquiry, another of the gifts of the Lutheran tradition. Apart from reminding you that we are part of a faith tradition founded by a university professor (!), I want to argue that there is a theologically-grounded way of knowing in our tradition that supports our bias toward the liberal arts as the most appropriate and important education in the 21st century.

So let me begin with a dinner table conversation at our home earlier this week. Thomas, our 6th grader, and Maya in third grade, were discussing their day at school. Maya excitedly told us that her class was studying the solar system and then she began to name the planets – in Mandarin Chinese, which is the language of instruction at her school! As we were prompting her to remember the planets, we came to Pluto, which of course is no longer considered a planet. Thomas tells me it is called a “dwarf planet.” Now when I was in school, learning the planets and solar system, Pluto was a planet. So what happened? I had an object lesson in scientific discovery right there in front of me. We developed a deeper understanding of how the solar system worked. We had better equipment and technology to test our hypotheses. We changed our minds about a previously held scientific fact. What we once had known, we now knew to be false. Human knowledge evolves. What a remarkable fact – what an essential gift in academic communities like ours. Pluto is no longer considered a planet in our solar system. Humbling for those of us who once learned otherwise. Critical for the progress humans make in seeking deeper and more accurate understandings of the truth.

The theological basis for this commitment to humble and critical inquiry is well described in our reading from the book of Job. I imagine most of you recall the longer story of Job. He is a good and faithful man, who is afflicted with all manner of suffering – physical, emotional and social suffering – apparently without explanation. His family and friends counsel him to curse this God he

professes to revere; Job himself cries out in agony and despair, seeking relief, asking for explanations. And now, finally, here comes the Lord out of the whirlwind, with these disquieting words:

“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched lines upon it?” And on and on.

This passage might be the source of deep despair concerning the relationship between the divine and humankind – it certainly has been interpreted that way through the centuries. Instead, I want to suggest that there is in this encounter a deep and abiding promise, and the theological grounding for what is at the heart of Augsburg’s academic aspirations.

Let’s begin with a simple – yet easily overlooked – aspect of this scene. God is answering Job. The God we worship is having a conversation with us. I think we take for granted how often the God of the Abrahamic religions is portrayed as in personal relationship with God’s creatures and creation. It starts in Eden, continues through exile and wandering in the desert, issues in commandments and promises, and for those of us in the Christian tradition is fulfilled in God made flesh in Jesus Christ. The idea of a relational God is at the heart of Lutheran theology and supports our belief that we are called into relationship with God, named and claimed and redeemed, so that we might be co-creators of knowledge and experience in the world. God calls us to ask our questions, to seek the truth, to work on behalf of the world. And God engages us in conversation through divine presence in the scriptures, in community, in our vocational journeys and in our using of our God-given gifts to seek the truth. God talks with us, God calls us, God is with us.

Then, of course, there is the seemingly stern message that God delivers to Job. So, is this an effort on God’s part to diminish human capacities, to play up the power inequalities or to intimidate? Perhaps it seems so from our perspective, but what does God say in this exchange with Job with which we might genuinely disagree? We weren’t there at the laying of the foundations of the earth. We can’t number the clouds or provide for all creaturely needs. What if, instead, we see in this conversation not a slap down of human capacities, but a promise that our God is in charge with a plan for all of creation and that God invites us to use our gifts and intellects to do and know what is within our God-given capacity and reach? In other words, to practice humility in what we don’t know and then get to work with all of our critical faculties and abilities to know more and more in service to God’s work in the world.

There is in this exchange between the Lord and Job the theological claims that underlie our commitment as an institution dedicated to humble and critical inquiry, to a liberal arts way of knowing and living. In my homily title, I’ve paraphrased a concept borrowed from educator Parker Palmer, who contends that “we know as we are known,” which is his argument that knowledge is relational and not about seeking the “truth out there” in an objective world waiting to be discovered. My version of Palmer’s formula is that the Lutheran theological position on knowledge means “we know because we are known.”

It begins with our relationship with the divine, whom we believe names and claims us at our baptisms, who has redeemed us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and who calls us to faithful lives in the world. We are known.

It then follows that our ways of knowing and living in the world are the faithful response of a grateful people, called to do God's work and be God's people in the world. We know because we are known.

The implications of this theological gift and claim are obvious in so many ways in our academic mission and educational experience here at Augsburg.

We are humble because we – like Job – are in conversation with the divine, the One who knows us, and we understand that our knowledge and actions are never complete, that there are many truths yet to be uncovered, that the truths that others have found may help inform ours, that we may be wrong and need to amend our knowledge. What a significant challenge this is to the competing ideologies that too often claim truth once and for all and thus polarize and stymie conversation and genuine learning. Our colleague at Capital University in Ohio, Tom Christenson, has written powerfully of a Lutheran way of knowing that is grounded in wonder, openness, recognition to connectedness, freedom, critical faithfulness, engaged suspiciousness – these are the ways of humility.

And we use our critical skills because we are not afraid of the answers we may find and live into. As those already known, we believe that God calls us to lives of asking questions, of seeking an ever more full and accurate understanding of the world and our experience, of giving away our minds and hearts to serve our neighbor in whatever our vocational journey. Martin Luther taught all of us to ask, “What does this mean?” The late Lutheran theologian, Joseph Sittler, has argued provocatively that the purposes of a liberal arts education in a Lutheran institution is to “annihilate innocence” about the realities of the world and human experience, so that we might live authentically as God's people, awake and vigilant to what we are called to be and do.

Here at Augsburg, I find example after example of how the gifts of our Lutheran way of knowing shape our common lives. Whether in our deep commitments to open and candid teaching and learning in the classroom, to interfaith dialogue and living, to civil discourse around pressing social and political issues, or to engaging with those of different viewpoints and experiences in our neighborhood – in all of these ways we are practicing what we believe. A quick example of how humble and critical inquiry is lived out: A couple of summers ago, I had the privilege to help mentor Juve Mesa Rodriguez in an undergraduate research project which looked at the history of Augsburg's relationships with its neighbors here in Cedar-Riverside. Juve did his research work, exploring census data, reviewing histories of the college and neighborhood, and speaking personally with neighbors about their experiences with Augsburg – in other words, learning to think critically. But Juve also did more. He asked tough questions about Augsburg's values and the power and cultural dynamics between the college and our immigrant neighbors. He challenged how Augsburg had sometimes behaved in the neighborhood. I remember a couple of conversations where Juve clearly was nervous that I would find these tough facts unpalatable. But this was not meant to be a naïve claim that all was well – and always had been. Juve also learned about humility because he walked with his college, even when it did not live up to its highest aspirations and values. Humble and critical inquiry – the heart of our academic mission – a gift of our Lutheran tradition.

It seems fitting this week especially to lift up someone we regularly welcomed to this chapel, Professor Emeritus Vern Bloom (who would sit here on my right as a member of the chapel brass group!), who passed away last weekend, and who embodied this commitment to humble and critical inquiry. A fine scholar of sociology and social work, Vern asked tough questions about the realities of human experience in society, and found in his critical research and practice evidence of injustice

and a lack of attention to the most vulnerable in our midst. And then he went to work – humbly challenging Augsburg and all of us to live up to our values as a college that embraced access and hospitality and justice. We have Vern and those who joined him in the 1970s for Augsburg’s longstanding and groundbreaking commitment to making our campus more accessible, especially for those who are physically disabled. Humble and critical inquiry – a gift that shapes our Augsburg community.

Tom Christenson says it even more eloquently when he challenges us as Lutherans to tell the “the Whole Human Story in depth and breadth honestly - to be radical truth-tellers” – and at the same time (here’s that “both-and” Lutheran thing again!) to stand together in a community of hope. Radical truth telling and a community of hope. Humble and critical inquiry. So, that’s what happened with Pluto! Thanks, indeed, be to God. Amen.

PRACTICE THIS

>>Fundraisers and the good life (Part 2)<<

[The following is the second part of an essay I have drafted to be included in an updated version of *Ethical Fundraising: A Guide for Nonprofit Boards and Fundraisers* (Wiley, 2008), edited by colleague Janice Pettey. This essay is an opportunity to offer my thoughts on the arc of ethical work within the fundraising profession over the past three decades.]

So what does the good life look like for fundraisers - other than meeting goals and closing gifts? The research undertaken in the development of the Ethics Assessment Inventory (EAI) offers us a beginning point to answer this question. As detailed elsewhere, the EAI project began by asking fundraisers this question: "Think of an AFP colleague whom you consider to be highly ethical. Describe the behaviors of that person which lead you to this conclusion" (Shoemake, 2011). The 2,528 answers received were sorted and categorized by a group of our peers and ultimately six responses were recommended as of the highest order. We might look at these six characteristics of ethical fundraisers as our professional "virtues."

We claim that: "An ethical fundraiser aspires to: Observe and adhere to the AFP Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice (and other relevant laws and regulations); Build personal confidence and public support by being trustworthy in all circumstances; Practice honesty in relationships; Be accountable for professional, organizational and public behavior; Seek to be transparent and forthcoming in all dealings; and, Be courageous in serving the public trust.

Here then are six virtues, if you will, of the ethical fundraiser. Here is the basis for good, moral habits. Here is the "stuff" of a good life for fundraisers. We observe the rules. We are trustworthy, honest, accountable and transparent. And we are courageous. The issues are how we define these virtues, how we respond to the challenges to living this way as professionals, and how we support each other in making the choices and developing the habits that bring order and harmony to our professional lives.

Allow me to take each of these three issues in turn as the foundation for understanding fundraisers and the good life.

First, defining the virtues. I want to commend my colleague, Robert Shoemake from the Center for Ethical Business Cultures at the University of St. Thomas, whose article in this volume provides an overview of how the EAI was developed. Once the six characteristics of ethical fundraisers were

identified, Shoemake understood the need to provide an initial definition of those characteristics. In what follows, I borrow from his definitional work (Shoemake, 2011) as the starting point for defining the virtues associated with ethical fundraisers. Though Shoemake offered his definitions in alphabetical order, I want to argue that there is a certain rank order to the virtues that is important for understanding their integrated role in defining the good life for fundraisers.

Adherence (or observance) This is the base line for a moral life - following the rules and living as if they matter. Ethical fundraisers act according to the highest standards of the profession, not because they have to but because they know it is the right thing to do. The importance of adherence as a virtue is not so much the legal aspects of observing the AFP Code of Ethical Principles and Standards - as important as such observance is - it is the understanding that the code and standards reflect a positive depiction of the sort of profession we aspire to be and the sort of world in which we want to live. In other words, what is important in adherence is not simply that I don't do something because the code says so. For example, the code says don't take donor lists from one organization to another when you change jobs. I would go further to say that the virtue of adherence says that I so understand and respect the need for healthy organizations, and I appreciate how transience in jobs can potentially threaten organization well-being, that I would do anything in my power to protect the needs of the organization I am leaving. My career decision does not override the need to honor organizational mission and public trust.

Trustworthy Trust is at the heart of the relationships that fundraisers create and sustain in support of mission-based organizations. We all know what damage can be done to otherwise good and noble work by breaking trust with the mission, values and constituencies we serve. There are countless examples in our society of individuals manipulating a relationship for their own inurement, and thereby calling into question the trustworthiness of an entire organization (and occasionally, the entire philanthropic sector). I believe that the concept of trust and trustworthiness has various components: it is about trust in competence (and thus the need for fundraisers to be technically rigorous); trust in interpersonal relationships (and thus, fundraisers must be particularly careful of relationship boundaries); and trust in organizational integrity (and thus, fundraisers must hold their organizations to a high standard in trustworthy policies and procedures). Trust also impels us to attend to relationships on various levels - from individual relationships to organizational ties to the public good and trust. No one individual or organization is perfect, so trust can be strained if not broken, in the course of our hectic and complex daily lives. At the end of the day, broken trust may demand another moral skill that seems in short supply - the ability to ask for and offer forgiveness.

Accountable This seems so obvious, but often runs counter to the demands of the marketplace and the world in which we live. Fundraisers have multiple accountabilities - in fact, part of the distinctive aspect of our professional work is that we reside on the boundaries of an organization, linking its mission and programs with donors and volunteers and their values and commitments. I think of fundraisers as having a role as consciences of the philanthropic community, being willing to ask tough questions and hold all parties accountable for their responsibilities and actions. We must honor organizational mission and strategy, of course. We also must honor donor intent and interests. We live in a society in which most people wait for accountability to be demanded, rather than pursuing it proactively. As a virtue, accountability demands of fundraisers intentionality around taking responsibility, not waiting to be asked. For example, a recent situation in my organization called into question whether or not we were honoring donor intent in our handling of various restricted funds. When this issue was called to our attention by fundraising staff and others, we were challenged as an organization to take responsibility for circumstances in which we had been lax

and to establish policies and procedures to live up to a higher standard. That is pursuing accountability, rather than waiting for it to be imposed.

Honesty and integrity Honesty in our various dealings is always the moral path and integrity in our relationships is grounded in both trust and honesty. Speaking the truth in the midst of a gift negotiation may be difficult to do. We've all been there in situations where a gift seems so close and when the donor asks that tough question about the program's impact or outcomes, we are tempted to fudge the results and slant the truth. In the end, if honesty is not practiced in all of our dealings, then we will live a lie - whether a small or big lie - and ultimately know that the integrity of our relationships is fragile. Many of us know that public perceptions of fundraisers are sometimes stereotypical - watch your pocketbook when the fundraiser is around, or don't tell that person on the plane next to you that you are a fundraiser for fear they'll clam up. We must overcome these stereotypes not by continuing to skirt the truth with some self-justification, but by practicing the virtue of honesty in all we do. No matter what the stereotypes may depict, ours is noble work, helping to support worthy organizations and causes, and we are a privileged profession, witnesses to and facilitators of moral acts of generosity and vision. What reason do we have to be less than truthful? Ultimately, a lack of honesty insinuates itself into the very fabric of our communities, leading to a breakdown in the integrity of our mission and work. That is too high a price to pay for not telling the truth as it undermines the public trust and values.

Transparent This is rather a "buzz" concept these days, but the fact that it ended up as one of the six virtues of ethical fundraisers strikes me as meaningful and provocative. This is about accountability and honesty and trustworthiness, of course (this begins to show how these six virtues are interrelated), but it points to an even more demanding standard. Yale Law professor, Stephen Carter, has written about the demands of moral life by outlining three steps needed to live with integrity. First, you must reflect on the values and issues raised by a moral situation. Second, you must act based on your reflections. And third, you must be willing to stand up at the end of the day and be accountable for both your reflection and action - even when it didn't go well. This, for me, is the sort of claim that transparency makes upon ethical fundraisers. Yes, we should be open and clear in our communications and procedures. Yes, we should respect the wishes of donors, providing accurate and complete information about our organization. But more than that, we should live as professionals who have nothing to hide and who understand that as "public servants," we have a special obligation to live our lives out in the open, to not hide behind whatever boundaries or policies or social norms that might otherwise provide cover. Ethical fundraisers are an open book because their work serves the public.

Courage The final virtue of ethical fundraisers is perhaps the most provocative and unexpected, but in the end, it seems almost commonsensical that those of us called to this work - this work in service to the public trust, this work guided by the values and virtues described herein - will be in many cases, living and working against the grain of the world's norms and expectations. And that takes a huge amount of courage. Following the rules, telling the truth, being open and accountable, and building and sustaining trust in all our dealings, sets the bar high for our professional lives. As a long-time member of the AFP Ethics Committee, I have witnessed case after case of our professional colleagues succumbing to the temptations and demands of the business of our lives - temptations to skirt the truth and manipulate relationships; demands to meet goals and close gifts; expectations to do what is needed to succeed, not what is right and good. Thus, the claims of moral courage may be the highest standard of all, tying together the other virtues to offer a pathway to the good life. No one said it would be easy, only that it was the right thing to do, the right way to live.

With these brief definitions of the virtues of ethical fundraisers in mind, our second challenge is to name the obstacles to living the good life. And they are myriad. Allow me to suggest three primary challenges we face in our lives as fundraisers that seem to me central to our ethical work ahead.

(1) No one taught us how to do this work. I'm not joking. Perhaps the core challenge to pursuing the good life in our professional work is that we live in a society where we are expected to just get the job done and there are fewer and fewer opportunities to learn a different path. Perhaps you took a required ethics course in college - or maybe you went to a parochial school where ethics training was part of the culture - or maybe you grew up in a family that took the time to think together about what is important and how we should behave. But more and more, it is the case that we have few training or opportunities to practice ethical reflection and virtuous living. I often find myself leading ethics workshops with experienced fundraisers who have never taken the time to think through an ethical situation, to imagine different ways of responding to the situation, and to consider the implications of their actions (or lack thereof). These are good people, good professionals, who often fall into the trap of choosing the expedient or worse simply because they've always done it that way. Living the good life - thinking about it and making the right choices - takes practice.

(2) Our professional work is often judged by external standards, not internal rewards. The historic genius of the professions in America is the dynamic between expertise and serving the common good. At their best, professionals understand that they have a technical expertise that is needed by patients or clients or students - or the wider public. They are given a privileged status in society because of this expertise and are expected to live up to a higher standard because of it. Part of that higher standard is the obligation to give back to society, to use your expertise in service to the world, even to take on public leadership. When this dynamic between expertise and service is in balance, professionals find their happiness in the intrinsic rewards they receive, by the sense that they are doing what they are called to do - this is what Aristotle meant by the good life. When, however, as is more and more the case, professionals are defined more by the economic goods their work engenders than by those intrinsic rewards, it is hard to live a good life. Meeting the bottom line, beating the competition, securing the perks of success in an upwardly mobile career - these are external rewards and standards that are often sources of temptation to cut corners, to manipulate relationships, to do whatever it takes to get more. The good life is difficult to navigate when the standards of success are more about vice than virtue.

(3) Our professional work revolves around relationships and resources that often entangle us in the most intimate aspects of peoples' lives. Robert Payton once suggested that one of the central challenges for fundraisers is that "the currency of our work is often 'currency'" (Payton, 1988). When we work with donors and volunteers giving so deeply of themselves with time and talent and financial resources, we are drawn into a web of social and psychological dynamics that can be very difficult to navigate. Some of the most vexing ethical dilemmas we face in our work are related to what we know about peoples' lives (think about confidentiality), how we maintain appropriate boundaries in our relationships (think about getting too close to a prospective donor or coming to think we ought to live in his/her world), and how we balance the needs of our organizations with the needs of donors and volunteers (think of honoring intent or not telling the truth about our organization's fallacies). It is hard to pursue the good life when the very nature of our work places us in situations where our decisions and actions are inextricably bound up with someone else's values and gifts. Virtue requires moderation between extremes. Our professional work often situates us amidst extreme circumstances - and it is hard to avoid the force with which those extremes pull us away from the moral path.

These, then, are simply a few of the obstacles to fundraisers living a good life. But if it was easy, then I wouldn't be writing this essay and we wouldn't need ethics training or inventories or books. I think it is important for all of us to take a deep breath and admit vulnerability when it comes to the ethical challenges ahead. Humility may be the most helpful virtue we learn to practice. We'll make mistakes. We'll take two steps back after one forward. We'll be tempted to do just what it takes. And we'll enjoy the rewards we reap from our work, even if they come with a price.

But there are things we can do if we genuinely hope to grow as ethical fundraisers and pursue the good life.

First, we can find opportunities to practice ethical reflection and living the good life. I often tell students not to take on the entire challenge at one sitting. Begin with the Ethics Assessment Inventory (EAI) and be honest with your answers. When you see your results, reflect on what they may tell you about your own values and those of your organization. Create opportunities to engage in conversation with professional colleagues - either in your workplace or through our professional associations - about ethical situations - not necessarily always dilemmas you face, but also how you are perceived by peers, what you hope to accomplish in your professional life, what sort of world you'd like to live in. Talk about how much you like baseball, even as you consider whether or not you should take the baseball tickets you've been offered. And consider how in your own professional life, you might do a better job of following the rules; being trustworthy, honest, accountable and transparent; and perhaps taking a courageous stand on something that you've always thought you should. Practice is the only path to the good life.

Second, we can create communities of moral deliberation in the organizations you serve. The good life is not possible without a network of support for the choices you make and the virtues you seek to live out. I have written elsewhere of specific strategies to create these communities of moral deliberation (Pribbenow, 2011) - involve your colleagues in crafting an organizational ethics statement or use a tool such as administrative case rounds or clearness committees to create safe places for ethics conversations. The point is that this cannot be solitary work. This is why the EAI asks you to share your perceptions of your own ethical situation, as well as that of the organization you serve. The organization in which you work is not the only community of which you are a part. Other so-called communities of memory - family, religious community, school, neighborhood and professional association - all play a role in your life and offer important resources for learning about and practicing the good life.

Finally, we can remember that the work we do as professional fundraisers is a form of public service (Pribbenow, 1994); that is, we serve the public trust by engaging people and raising funds in support of the missions of our organizations - missions that reflect the most deeply held values of our society. Whether education, the arts, social service, health care, the environment, or faith-based communities, each of the organizations we serve seeks through its mission-based work to be a force for good in society. We have the privilege to serve those missions with our professional expertise and personal commitment. Our organizations deserve our very best - both technically and ethically. Our noble work on behalf of organizational missions calls us to a higher standard, a standard that I have chosen to call "the good life."

We have choices. What will you choose? The good life awaits.

PAY ATTENTION TO THIS

>>Resources for your reflective practice<<

Former Target Corporation exec Nate Garvis (with colleague, Gene Rebeck), has penned *Naked Civics: Strip Away the Politics to Build a Better World* (www.nakedcivics.com, 2012), whose provocative title is a good indicator of Nate's perspective on the powerful role of organizations in shaping our world.

With a similar aim, Sojourner's CEO Jim Wallis will soon publish his newest, *On God's Side: What Religion Forgets and Politics Hasn't Learned about Serving the Common Good* (Brazos Press, 2013), which seeks to recover the ancient wisdom of John Chrysostom, who wrote "This is the rule of perfect Christianity, its most exact definition, its highest point, the seeking of the common good...for nothing can so make a person an imitator of Christ as caring for neighbors."

>>Love and our children<<

In the spirit of this season of light, I repeat these powerful words from Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet*, which have become a creed for Abigail and me as we raise our children. The poem reminds us that the work of stewardship is not about possession, it is about love.

["Children or Love is separateness"]

Your children are not your children

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts,

for they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,

For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which

you cannot visit, not even in your dreams,

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.

For life does not backward nor carries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,

and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.

Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;

for even as He loves the arrow that flies, so He loves

also the bow that is stable.

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>>Topics for upcoming issues<<

- Reinventing governance
- Lutheran identity and higher education (continued)

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