Financial Review: Context and History

JULIA OLSON
M.A. SENIOR

Normally letters from the editorial staff would run on the inside of the newspaper, but in this situation, we feel it necessary to begin this issue with an explanation of our intent for some of the stories we are publishing.

Dear Reader,

When I started as Editor in Chief at The Concord, even I thought I was being a bit idealistic when I proclaimed the power of the campus newspaper. However, despite what may have been some mildly fanatical rhetoric streaming out of our office, I knew that I could feel something stir in my gut when I thought about the capacity this newspaper has. It’s not just words; it’s power; it’s on us to decide how to direct it. The Concord’s mission has been to bring transparency to this community, and it is the most widely circulated way for us, as students, to do it on campus. That is what is behind this particular issue of The Concord. For here, in these pages, we are publishing.

When we received this letter, we decided to print it verbatim, despite the fact that the writer did not sign it.

Open Letter to the Administration

Dear Luther Seminary Administration,

On November 15th, 2015, police shot unarmed Jamar Clark less than 10 miles from our campus, provoking horror and outrage from many members of our local community. Hundreds, at times thousands of people gathered to march, occupy, and peacefully protest every day from November 15th to December 2nd, and actions continued until December 13th. Dozens of ELCA church members, clergy, and seminary students are participating in this community response. James’s shooting was no isolated event, but the latest of many high-profile incidents of racialized police violence and willful withholding of evidence across the country which point to urgent systemic problems of racial injustice and have provoked a powerful nationwide response.

While the nation and our own neighborhoods erupt with questions, concerns, and opinions about racial equity, Luther Seminary has been noticeably silent. Since the shooting of Jamar Clark on November 15th, Luther as an institution has not made any public statements regarding this local crisis or the current state of racial justice in Minnesota or in the ELCA. The administration, staff and faculty at Luther have not made any public internal statements regarding recent events. The only time the name Jamar Clark has been spoken has been in chapel during the prayers of the community. We believe that Luther’s silence matters. Through this current silence and failure to engage community outcry, we as an institution are ignoring the witness of our neighbors to a despicable need for justice and community healing, and ignoring our own roles as faith leaders and members of this community. Ultimately, being silent communicates apathy, complicity and even acceptance of the blatant denial of human rights of God’s children. Not only are lives at stake, but how we understand and witness to God’s presence in the world is at stake. If we believe that the mission of Luther Seminary is to educate leaders for Christian communities called and sent by the Holy Spirit to witness to salvation through Jesus Christ and to serve in God’s world, then it is essential to our education that we examine how we are living out that mission in the context of our immediate communities.

While our seminary community surely has a diversity of opinions on the 4th precinct protests, we believe that our communal learning and wholeness would be best served by respectful conversation around these urgent local issues rather than fearful silence. We believe that all people of faith in the US must pay attention to the ongoing, growing witness of Black Lives Matter and others to systemic racism, and wrestle with this complex, incriminating for our lives and public. As Editor in Chief and as your fellow student, I want to encourage you to join in. Write a letter to the editor about your experience in light of our changing curriculum. Submit questions you want The Concord to ask in interviews. Write an op-ed about an idea you have for the future of Luther Seminary (maybe you’ve got an awesome food truck ministry hidden up your sleeve, or maybe you had an experience during CPE that gave you an idea of how communities work toward healing). Whatever it is, it’s valuable to this conversation and I urge you not to hesitate, my fellow students. Now is the time for our voices, here at Luther, to engage in truthful and meaningful conversation. Create with us new pathways toward truth in communication, and we students can truly have agency in reconciliation at Luther Seminary.

Julia Olson
M.A. Senior
Editor in Chief

If you would like to be part of the conversation on campus, please email contributions or story ideas to concord@luthersem.edu and we will give you $20 if we print your article, artwork, or poem. Now, more than ever, we need to all be participating in the conversation about what is happening in the world around us. Join us at the Concord as we look to the future of our newspaper, our school, our country, and the communities we will be sent to.
We Have Nothing to Lose But Our Chains

Birgitte Simpson, M.Div. Junior

On November 15th, Jamar Clark, a 24 year old black man, was shot by the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD). By the next day Jamar’s family took him off life support and Jamar died. Black Lives Matter (BLM) and the Minneapolis chapter of the NAACP began to protest and a specific list of demands were made. Over the course of the next 19 days, protesters made an encampment at the 4th Precinct of the MPD in North Minneapolis. BLM organized several mass gatherings, marches, and vigils, calling on the community to join them in holding down the precinct. At these gatherings, people of all colors came together to sing, dance, chant, and pray for Jamar’s family, for the Northside, for the state, and for justice. It was an almost festival-like atmosphere, where people from all walks of life came together to call for justice and embody democracy.

God has been at work in this city this holiday season. In the time that I have spent at the precinct, the mass gatherings, and the marches, I have seen the living God. There are two stories that I know will remain vivid in my memory. One happened just one day before the MPD came to dismantle the encampment with bulldozers. Katherine Parent, a Luther Ph.D. student and resident of North Minneapolis, invited me to come to a protest at the Government Center. There was a specific call for clergy, who were going to hold prayer during the protest and intercede if police made a move to arrest. Later in the day several of us returned to the 4th Precinct to hold down the camp. While there, I found myself— a Lutheran— in the middle of a conversation between five Jesuit novitiates and a young Muslim man. We talked about justice, equality, good food, and fellowship, while also laughing that we were the beginning of a joke— 5 Jesuits, a Muslim, and a Lutheran walk into a bar... It was a powerful feeling of fellowship amidst struggle.

The other story took place the week of Thanksgiving. I was scheduled to meet with Tim Schroeder and Richard Webb to talk about DRBC events when we found out there was going to be a march from the 4th Precinct to the Government Center. The three of us joined over a thousand others in marching through North Minneapolis, over Hwv 94, and up 7th street into Downtown Minneapolis. As the crowd approached Hennepin Avenue, chanting “Black Lives Matter!”, we came to Fair School for the Arts. It was about 4:00 in the afternoon and children were playing on the rooftop playground. As we neared the school, the kids and their teachers— most of whom were people of color— ran up to the fence and joined us in yelling “Black Lives Matter” as they banged on the fence. We all looked up, and I heard Richard start to chant “Your Lives Matter!” Immediately, the crowd around us picked up his chant. This crowd, over a thousand strong, was telling the world that we can no longer be blind to inequality; that while we want to believe that all lives matter, our country has yet to prove it to people of color.

God was present every day, every moment at those protests, working through every person present. God was there in the midst of the anger, turmoil, grief, passion, love, empathy, and complete humanity of that space. God continues to be present and working through those of us carrying on the fight for equality and justice. The God we proclaim, the God that our scriptures give witness to, fights for the oppressed and underprivileged. Our whole country needs our God to keep working through us. If there is one thing I have learned from this experience, it is what I heard chanted through the streets at all the BLM protests: “It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains.”

There is also a movement afoot that seeks to introduce nontraditional pronouns in such contexts (e.g., “He” in lieu of “he” or “she”), but this has yet to see widespread acceptance— a common outcome for most intentional language reform movements. Personally, I find it preferable to avoid gendered language altogether by using gender-neutral pronouns or explicit references to antecedents. This has yet to see wide acceptance— a common outcome for most intentional language reform movements. However, this tends to draw attention to itself eventually and can seem contrived. In the past, academia was much more male-centered and tended to over-emphasize masculine pronouns, assigning masculine gender to not only the majority of generic subjects, but also to the persons of the trinity. Today this has changed, and many scholars make an effort to either avoid explicit gender when discussing God (e.g., “When God saw God’s creation...”) or use gendered pronouns where appropriate. A prominent example of the latter approach is Jurgen Moltmann, who argues that,

If believers are “born” again from the Holy Spirit, then the Spirit is “the mother” of God’s children and can in this sense also be termed a “feminine” Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is “the Comforter” (Paraclete), it comforts “as a mother comforts” in this sense it is the motherly comforter of believers. Linguistically this again brings out the characteristics of the Hebrew expression “Yahweh’s ruach.”

There was a specific call for clergy, who were going to hold prayer during the protest and intercede if police made a move to arrest. Later in the day several of us returned to the 4th Precinct to hold down the camp. While there, I found myself— a Lutheran— in the middle of a conversation between five Jesuit novitiates and a young Muslim man. We talked about justice, equality, good food, and fellowship, while also laughing that we were the beginning of a joke— 5 Jesuits, a Muslim, and a Lutheran walk into a bar... It was a powerful feeling of fellowship amidst struggle.

The other story took place the week of Thanksgiving. I was scheduled to meet with Tim Schroeder and Richard Webb to talk about DRBC events when we found out there was going to be a march from the 4th Precinct to the Government Center. The three of us joined over a thousand others in marching through North Minneapolis, over Hwv 94, and up 7th street into Downtown Minneapolis. As the crowd approached Hennepin Avenue, chanting “Black Lives Matter!”, we came to Fair School for the Arts. It was about 4:00 in the afternoon and children were playing on the rooftop playground. As we neared the school, the kids and their teachers— most of whom were people of color— ran up to the fence and joined us in yelling “Black Lives Matter” as they banged on the fence. We all looked up, and I heard Richard start to chant “Your Lives Matter!” Immediately, the crowd around us picked up his chant. This crowd, over a thousand strong, was telling the world that we can no longer be blind to inequality; that while we want to believe that all lives matter, our country has yet to prove it to people of color.

God was present every day, every moment at those protests, working through every person present. God was there in the midst of the anger, turmoil, grief, passion, love, empathy, and complete humanity of that space. God continues to be present and working through those of us carrying on the fight for equality and justice. The God we proclaim, the God that our scriptures give witness to, fights for the oppressed and underprivileged. Our whole country needs our God to keep working through us. If there is one thing I have learned from this experience, it is what I heard chanted through the streets at all the BLM protests: “It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains.”

There is also a movement afoot that seeks to introduce nontraditional pronouns in such contexts (e.g., “ze” in lieu of “he” or “she”), but this has yet to see wide acceptance— a common outcome for most intentional language reform movements. Personally, I find it preferable to avoid gendered language altogether by using gender-neutral pronouns or explicit reference to antecedents (e.g., “A professor can determine their student’s political leanings based on his use of pronouns.”). However, this tends to draw attention to itself eventually and can seem contrived. In the past, academia was much more male-centered and tended to over-emphasize masculine pronouns, assigning masculine gender to not only the majority of generic subjects, but also to the persons of the trinity. Today this has changed, and many scholars make an effort to either avoid explicit gender when discussing God (e.g., “When God saw God’s creation...”) or use gendered pronouns where appropriate. A prominent example of the latter approach is Jurgen Moltmann, who argues that,

If believers are “born” again from the Holy Spirit, then the Spirit is “the mother” of God’s children and can in this sense also be termed a “feminine” Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is “the Comforter” (Paraclete), it comforts “as a mother comforts” in this sense it is the motherly comforter of believers. Linguistically this again brings out the characteristics of the Hebrew expression “Yahweh’s ruach.”

There is also a movement afoot that seeks to introduce nontraditional pronouns in such contexts (e.g., “ze” in lieu of “he” or “she”), but this has yet to see wide acceptance— a common outcome for most intentional language reform movements. Personally, I find it preferable to avoid gendered language altogether by using gender-neutral pronouns or explicit reference to antecedents (e.g., “A professor can determine their student’s political leanings based on his use of pronouns.”). In this way, you can achieve true gender neutrality without drawing attention to your attempt to do so.

Layout Playlist

This is what we listened to this month while we put the newspaper together. Feel free to submit your own playlists for various activities and emotions.

Weezer - The Blue Album

Weezer - The Green Album

Rage Against the Machine - Evil Empire

Rage Against the Machine - Renegades

Music is an important part of our lives, let’s share it together!
The Fall of 2012

JENN HERRON
MA SENIOR

This is part 1 of a 3 part series that we are running, reflecting the past few years from a student perspective.

December 10, 2012 began like any other Fall semester day for most of us at Luther Seminary. Students went to class, chapel goers worshipped together, the Eatery lunch tables were full and buzzing with conversation. However, sometime during that lunch hour, everything changed. An all campus email announcement was sent out telling everyone to attend a mandatory meeting in the OCC Chapel at 2pm. That was it, that is all we knew for sure. Already bitter and mistrusting, they were coming up with all kinds of scenarios ranging from embezzlement to a hostile takeover of the institution. Bringing my strength of positivity forward, I suggested that maybe a donor gave the seminary millions of dollars. My positivity was appreciated but rejected. I guess we would have to wait to find out, at least until we went to class where our candid Professor Andy Bliese would certainly provide an answer. Well, he didn't. He was in the dark as much as we were. No one knew what to expect at 2pm.

The walk from the OCC Lecture Hall to the chapel was silent and serious. It was almost as if we were walking into a funeral but not knowing who had died. The chapel was filling up, the entire Luther Seminary community sat in silence waiting for someone to tell us what was going on. The Board chairman spoke first, he had travelled from the west coast to address some financial concerns, particularly a $4 million deficit concern. Not being a financial person, the details confuse me but basically this was a case of miss-managed money. There was nothing criminal about the situation which was a relief… sort of. After the chairman's preamble, Seminary President Bliese addressed the community with a heartfelt statement of what about my afternoon class that began at 1:30? Surely this could not be important enough to disrupt classes, I mean this is graduate school after all. What kind of news would warrant a total community shut down? Interestingly, my fellow students who had been a part of the Bockman Hall closure and forced to move into the apartments down the hill were speculating on making a break for it. Already bitter and mistrusting, they were coming up with all kinds of scenarios ranging from embezzlement to a hostile takeover of the institution. Bringing my strength of positivity forward, I suggested that maybe a donor gave the seminary millions of dollars. My positivity was appreciated but rejected. I guess we would have to wait to find out, at least until we went to class where our candid Professor Andy Root certainly would provide an answer. Well, he didn't. He was in the dark as much as we were. No one knew what to expect at 2pm.

The walk from the OCC Lecture Hall to the chapel was silent and serious. It was almost as if we were walking into a funeral but not knowing who had died. The chapel was filling up, the entire Luther Seminary community sat in silence waiting for someone to tell us what was going on. The Board chairman spoke first, he had travelled from the west coast to address some financial concerns, particularly a $4 million deficit concern. Not being a financial person, the details confuse me but basically this was a case of miss-managed money. There was nothing criminal about the situation which was a relief… sort of. After the chairman's preamble, Seminary President Bliese addressed the community with a heartfelt statement of what about my afternoon class that began at 1:30? Surely this could not be important enough to disrupt classes, I mean this is graduate school after all. What kind of news would warrant a total community shut down? Interestingly, my fellow students who had been a part of the Bockman Hall closure and forced to move into the apartments down the hill were speculating on making a break for it. Already bitter and mistrusting, they were coming up with all kinds of scenarios ranging from embezzlement to a hostile takeover of the institution. Bringing my strength of positivity forward, I suggested that maybe a donor gave the seminary millions of dollars. My positivity was appreciated but rejected. I guess we would have to wait to find out, at least until we went to class where our candid Professor Andy Root certainly would provide an answer. Well, he didn't. He was in the dark as much as we were. No one knew what to expect at 2pm.

The walk from the OCC Lecture Hall to the chapel was silent and serious. It was almost as if we were walking into a funeral but not knowing who had died. The chapel was filling up, the entire Luther Seminary community sat in silence waiting for someone to tell us what was going on. The Board chairman spoke first, he had travelled from the west coast to address some financial concerns, particularly a $4 million deficit concern. Not being a financial person, the details confuse me but basically this was a case of miss-managed money. There was nothing criminal about the situation which was a relief… sort of. After the chairman's preamble, Seminary President Bliese addressed the community with a heartfelt statement of what about my afternoon class that began at 1:30? Surely this could not be important enough to disrupt classes, I mean this is graduate school after all. What kind of news would warrant a total community shut down? Interestingly, my fellow students who had been a part of the Bockman Hall closure and forced to move into the apartments down the hill were speculating on making a break for it. Already bitter and mistrusting, they were coming up with all kinds of scenarios ranging from embezzlement to a hostile takeover of the institution. Bringing my strength of positivity forward, I suggested that maybe a donor gave the seminary millions of dollars. My positivity was appreciated but rejected. I guess we would have to wait to find out, at least until we went to class where our candid Professor Andy Root certainly would provide an answer. Well, he didn't. He was in the dark as much as we were. No one knew what to expect at 2pm.

The walk from the OCC Lecture Hall to the chapel was silent and serious. It was almost as if we were walking into a funeral but not knowing who had died. The chapel was filling up, the entire Luther Seminary community sat in silence waiting for someone to tell us what was going on. The Board chairman spoke first, he had travelled from the west coast to address some financial concerns, particularly a $4 million deficit concern. Not being a financial person, the details confuse me but basically this was a case of miss-managed money. There was nothing criminal about the situation which was a relief… sort of. After the chairman's preamble, Seminary President Bliese addressed the community with a heartfelt statement of what about my afternoon class that began at 1:30? Surely this could not be important enough to disrupt classes, I mean this is graduate school after all. What kind of news would warrant a total community shut down? Interestingly, my fellow students who had been a part of the Bockman Hall closure and forced to move into the apartments down the hill were speculating on making a break for it. Already bitter and mistrusting, they were coming up with all kinds of scenarios ranging from embezzlement to a hostile takeover of the institution. Bringing my strength of positivity forward, I suggested that maybe a donor gave the seminary millions of dollars. My positivity was appreciated but rejected. I guess we would have to wait to find out, at least until we went to class where our candid Professor Andy Root certainly would provide an answer. Well, he didn't. He was in the dark as much as we were. No one knew what to expect at 2pm.

The walk from the OCC Lecture Hall to the chapel was silent and serious. It was almost as if we were walking into a funeral but not knowing who had died. The chapel was filling up, the entire Luther Seminary community sat in silence waiting for someone to tell us what was going on. The Board chairman spoke first, he had travelled from the west coast to address some financial concerns, particularly a $4 million deficit concern. Not being a financial person, the details confuse me but basically this was a case of mis-
Life Together at Luther

EMILY STELLING  
M.Div. Junior

“The basis of the community of the Spirit is truth; the basis of human community of spirit is desire” (Life Together, 31). 

We believe that the seminary is in a state of transition as the deciding community (the board, administration, and faculty) discerns what the identity of the seminary is/will/should be, etc. While I acknowledge that the deciding community takes into great account the perspective of the current student and alumni populations (in fact, students are even labeled as influencers in the strategic planning committee’s diagram that explains how the deciding process works), I find it disquieting to enter into a new educational establishment where the deciding community does not actually allow students to vote on the identity changes. I understand that historically and typically this is not the case with any institution (be it corporate, governmental, or religious). I argue that in an educational setting, the best for the the whole. The deeper, more fundamental problem I have been wrestling with lately is not the way the strategic planning committee is set up for those who have more stake in the seminary (i.e. those with careers here) to decide pivotal matters concerning the institution at large, rather, I have been struggling with the notion of how this institution is preparing the new wave of ministers for the 21st century. I am unabashedly ardent when I say that I am concerned for my own experience here. There is tension in the air about how things used to be and how deeply affected the senior class has become in light of the dramatic changes in the community. The educational standard even has some professors worried about the future of the ministry, and I completely understand why. Recently I started to reread my personal journals on Martin Luther and Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s concept of community and there appeared a pattern between these two prominent thinkers: if something does not sit well within your conscience it is your duty to proclaim what you think is right. Over the course of my first few months I have undergone a remarkable paradigm shift: we must form this place in order for it to form others. As heirs to the ancient but always relevant mythology of the phoenix, it is import-ant practice for us to start a class with scripture. I think it is an ancient but always relevant scripture. Another element is dwelling in fellowship. Fellowship at Finkenwalde consisted of monasticism, which has nothing in common with the old but a life of uncompromising discipline. We need to learn how to learn. This article was written in response to last month’s front page article. Do you have a response to anything in this month’s paper? Please write us at concord@luthersem.edu and we would be glad to make your voice heard on campus as part of the ongoing dialogue about where we are going as a Seminary and as students. We look forward to hearing from you about your hopes and concerns about Luther Seminary on an ongoing basis.

We cannot lower our standard of either discipline. I understand the need for the seminary to assess and change our approaches toward our non-traditional students. I think that the seminary has done very good things in this regard. I just want to make it clear that while we assess and change the standard we must not lower it. I see Luther Seminary like the phoenix from mythol-ogy and fable, and most certainly NOT like the University of Phoenix. The identity question that was proposed to the seminary at the beginning of the year laid out two possible options for the future of the seminary: are we a seminary that is primarily residential that offers online learning or are we a seminary that is primarily online learning that happens to have some residential students? I argue adamantly for the first option. Part of the calling to gather in community is to be present in the actual reality of another. I fear, however, that may be thrusting my own human desires upon what I imagine to be a healthy community. Bonhoeffer says it better and more concisely: “He who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his intentions may be ever so honest…” (27). But I must proclaim what, in my mind, I see to be already present and true—that community does exist here but we must form this place (in terms of practical things) so that the Spirit that is already present here may be received for “the more thankfully we daily receive that which is given to us, the more surely and steadily will fellowship increase and grow from day to day as God pleases” (30).

I am thankful for the gifts God has given to this Christian community. We cannot gaze back on what once was and drool at the sight because at one time Luther (if you are still following my silly analogy) was known to be a strong, magnificent phoenix. Now we are shaking our ashes off and unfolding our wings. I have hope that we will fly again. Bonhoeffer wrote to his older brother Karl about his decision to accept the offer to head the underground seminary. He wrote about his position in light of the seminary education system at the time: “The restoration of the church must necessarily depend on a new kind of monasticism, which has nothing in common with the old but a life of uncompromising discipline…” I believe the time has come to gather people together and do this.”
Interview With Michael Morrow

RENE MEHLBERG
M.DIV. MIDDLE

I had the pleasure of sitting down with Michael Morrow, Luther Seminary's Vice President of Finance and Administration to learn his perspective of what led to Luther's "Financial Crisis", what was learned in that process, how systems have been updated, and his outlook on Luther's finances moving forward.

Michael Morrow has been Luther Seminary's Vice President of Finance and Administration since October 1, 2014. He said, "I would be a middler, but without an expected graduation date." The majority of Morrow's previous background and experience has been in finances within the healthcare industry, including 24 years with Blue Cross & Blue Shield of MN. When I asked him, "What brought you to Luther?" he said he was working out of town and would need to move, but came across the job and realized it was the "right place to be now." He applied and was hired.

"Plumbing" is what Morrow answered when asked "What do you oversee?" This plumbing includes Facilities, Office of Technology, Business Office, Auxiliary Services (including dining services), and the outsourced relationship with the investment fund company which oversees/manages the Endowment Fund. One can understand why Morrow refers to his job as plumbing because if it's working well, everyone is happy and you don't realize it's there. However, plumbing needs ongoing care and maintenance, and when it's not working properly, people make noise and it needs to be fixed.

I asked Morrow to "Paint a brief picture of the financial situation when you arrived." It was two years after the crisis hit and Morrow lifted up the work of his predecessor, Interim Chief Financial Officer, Bill Frame, who did a lot to stabilize the volatile situation by having cash on hand, partially through the selling of assets. Frame replaced the CFO who resigned at the time of the crises. Morrow shared that Luther continues to be more and more stable, but there is still much more work to do to reach the goal of 2.5% of revenue that can be used to keep up with maintenance costs and to have funding for new programs and growth.

As a "post financial crisis" student, I wasn't clear on how the crisis happened or how Luther pulled itself from the "depths of Sheol." I knew it was financial; I had heard there wasn't enough cash to pay bills. I heard the Endowment gave a loan to the seminary as a bail-out, but that the loan needs to be paid back. This was my chance to learn the truth.

Before I got to that truth, a little "financial education for dummies." In my past profession experience, I have worked with budgets, accounting, annual reports, Endowments, and have a cursory understanding of finances. However, when it comes to finances and financial practices and reports, I am reminded of a West Wing episode title inspired by Mark Twain: Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics. You need the financial best practices; yes, there are auditors; but similar to theology when preachers may spin the Gospel to say what you want it to say, you can make numbers and reports say what you want them to say or what you want others to believe. From listening to Morrow, here is what led to the financial crisis.

Luther Seminary Administration was using Endowment money beyond what was agreed upon by the Board using a process that was not optimal as it was not open and transparent.

Some money gifted to the Endowment was spent before being deposited in the Endowment fund account.

The way Luther Seminary was doing accounting misled people to think there was a balanced budget when there truly wasn't.

The financial reports also excluded depreciation costs, which is a way of allocating the cost of a building or equipment over its useful life. Morrow pointed out there is about $1.3 million a year of depreciation costs.

Student enrollment was decreasing (meaning there was decreasing) while operating expenses were growing.

People were not receiving all the right information.

Administration was not looking at things as they should which created blind spots, and blind spots create dangerous situations.

In Morrow's words, the financial crisis was a long-time in coming, as there were approximately 3-4 years where Luther was bleeding cash. Morrow shared a very graced-filled point as he said, "We don't know what we might have done in a similar situation."

Morrow listed a number of checks and balances that are now in place to prevent another financial crisis including:

- Luther's Board restructured, forming a finance committee of 11 members which meets almost monthly.
- The Board partnered closely with the Interim Leadership (CFO Bill Frame and President Rick Foss) to make changes, which were Board led.
- There is increased reporting. Morrow provides a monthly report to the Board, Faculty, and Administration.
- Financial transparency is a practice that is lived out.
- New financial auditors were hired in 2014.
- A thorough review of past financial reports, Luther Seminary needed to do a restatement of prior year results (re categorizing money). This explains the variance of beginning and ending balances of some annual report numbers.
- So, was there a bailout? Where did the money from the sale of the apartment go? What will happen to revenue received from future property sales?
- Morrow clarified the Endowment "bailout." In the end, there was a $7 million advance given to the Endowment (from the earnings that can be spent) to Luther Seminary to cover expenses and to stop financial bleeding and to gain some stability. The agreement, made by the board, is that the $7 million needs to be repaid with interest by 2023. With the sale of the apartments, $6 million has already been paid back. The remainder is being paid in equal installments with interest by fiscal year 2023.
- The sale of the apartments totalled $8.5 million. The remaining $2.5 was used to strengthen Luther's cash reserve.
- Morrow shared that the Board will make decisions on future revenue received from property sales but it will support strategic initiatives and the long-term operating health of Luther Seminary.
- Morrow also shared how the sale of property is fitting many financial needs. The sale of the apartments was a band-aid solution; selling the surplus property is good stewardship while it helps Luther Seminary move forward to strengthen the long-term reinvestment needed to thrive.

In reflecting back on the financial situation of when he started to today Morrow shared, "It was very tight, and we were very worried. We weren't sure if we'd have enough cash on hand, but we did better than anticipated." Now, after 14 months on the job, "We're more stable. We're okay in the short term, but we need to firm up for the long-term. We need to get funds to reinvest for the future."

I was very impressed with Morrow's use of "we," which was noticeable throughout the interview. He has embraced the Lutheran community. He feels responsible for the success of the institution and its students.

I asked him, "Why should the students listen and trust you? Why should the students listen and trust Luther Seminary?" Morrow shared that students should listen to him as the health of the seminary depends on the financial status and that's what he's communicating. He said, "It's up to me to earn their (the students) trust. I need to earn their trust every day." In regards to Luther Seminary, Morrow shared Luther is committed to put the student experience at the top of the agenda. "We're here to educate leaders for Christian communities. Students need to listen to the Seminary's words and judge us by our actions."

In closing Morrow shared that it's fun to be at Luther, he's glad to be part of this community and will be for a goodly while.

Please know that Michael is very open to talking with and getting to know students. His door is open, his email is accessible, and he is active in the community in daily chapel or the cafeteria or hosting students for holiday meals.

THE CONCORD STAFF
Editor-In-Chief Julia Olson
Layout Editor Peter Clark
Copy Editors Kayla Christenson Emily Stelling Emily Martin Emily Kuenker Eric Christenson Sam Chamberlain

December Student Events

Dec 16-Community Meal, Food Shelf Donations Welcome! Last Day of Classes, Fall Semester
Dec 17 & 18-Final Exams
Jan 4-J-term begins
Jan 16-Boundary Workshop 9am-1pm in NW 100
Jan 18-Community Day, Community Meal, Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Carrie Smisek, M.Div. Senior

@Andrew: “Look teacher! What large stones the temple had! And what large buildings!”
@Yeshua: “All the better to worship with.”

@Nathan: “For David, I chose an extra virgin olive oil from a small town in Shiloh. #prophetscrets”
@Jezebel: “Trying out the new MAC product line. Excited for the makeover!”
@Yahweh: “Man, @Shadrach, @Meshach, and @Abednego are on fire!”
@HeavenlyChorus: “@Yahweh, yeah they are!”
@Yahweh: “@HeavenlyChorus No, seriously, they’re on fire. Go help them.”

@Esther: “Researching new fashion tips on Pinterest. Send me your ideas! #Beautifyingforthesecrets”
@MotherMary: “@Jesus I’m here, but they have no wine.”
@Jesus: “@MotherMary Fine.”
@Jesus: “@servants Fill some jars with water.”
@Servants: “@Jesus but…?”
@MotherMary: “@servants Just do it!”

Scribbler’s Sidebar

Meeting in the Aisle
Eric Christianson, MA Senior

You were born in a flash of light and aged as the sun spun around you.
You met her in the aisle surrounded by shelves.
You met again in another aisle surrounded by pews and all your friends.
You lived happily ever after but only until
They came for her at dawn in a militaristic horde, the gleam of violence in their weapons and in their eyes.
You protected her with your life, sacrificing yourself for her.
Your sacrifice created a barrier around her protecting her from harm and they could not penetrate it.
You ascended upward through and across the dimensions and became enlightened though only in one sense.
Your power grew as death was unable to contain you. Mana flowed from you, its essence channeled by your will.
You looked upon the Earth and saw her weeping not appreciating the life you spared, rather only pitying herself.
You wept also, but in a rage and with the rage was shame, for you knew you could not blame her
Your power grew and as it did, so did her years. After time,
She transcended across the dimensions and never again would see you, or you her.
You attacked in a sorrow that one could mistake for anger.
You rained death upon them but their cries of agony did not satisfy you.
You returned to the Earth, your heinous might barely containable by your now mortal body; no longer as if a god.
You had a choice to make, either let your power wane, or let it tear you up.
You opted for the former and though the gap between you and mortals narrowed, you were still greater than any man.
A challenger appeared and somehow
You knew He was the one that sent them
He was the one that orchestrated your pain, your sorrow, your demise.
His sadistic smile, His cruel knowing

Word Nerd

1. the vindication of divine goodness and providence in view of the existence of evil
2. a theological construct that attempts to respond to the idea that God cannot be both omnipotent and omnibenevolent
3. an epic poem written by Abraham which details God’s arduous journey home after winning the Trojan War

struck up a cacophony of negative emotions inside you, consuming you.
You fought for centuries in a crusade of vengeance, leveling the terrain and shattering the skies.
You threw yourself at Him in a berserk kamikaze, while He showed no signs of effort. Realizing his treachery, You ended it yourself and in a burst of light somehow outlined by darkness, You joined the matter flying into the air and disintegrating.
The shadows surrounded and enveloped you, and You became no more.
You awoke standing up.
You thought to look back; Imagining yourself turning around.
You didn’t know how to respond to the idea God cannot be both omnipotent and omnibenevolent.
You didn’t know how to respond to the idea God cannot be both omnipotent and omnibenevolent.
You didn’t know how to respond to the idea God cannot be both omnipotent and omnibenevolent.

Please submit poems or melodic prose to concord@luthersem.edu
Seasons Greetings Dear Readers!

Happy Secular Shopping Festival days are upon us once again. It’s that magical time of year when we forget all the bad things we’ve done over the past 12 months and imagine that we deserve new stuff. Why suffer the guilt and shame that comes with kissing your sister when you can lose yourself in bottle of peppermint schnapps? Why regret that awkward, yet surprisingly stimulating encounter with that older gentleman behind Tim and Tom’s when you have his number written in still visible ink on back of your hand? This is a season for indulgence not reflection and preparation! Get out there and sin a little!

It is a time of short tempers and family arguments. Every December I look forward to cursing the old ladies holding up the returns line at Target. Don’t they know you can’t return used cat litter?

I’m even more excited to throw drunk punch es at my equally drunk, racist cousin who insists that “Donald Trump knows his sh*t.” Every family has one of those jerks. Hell, you might be that jerk. Jerk.

I don’t know what it is but there’s something different about this holiday season. Perhaps it’s because we’ve finally won the war on Christmas. I know I rejoiced when those secular-humanist, fascists at Starbucks took baby Jesus’ image off their holiday cups and replaced it with a more season appreciate image of Kanye West making it rain. Praise Yeezus!

Yes, friends, I’m super stoked about all the gifts that people are giving me this year. I can’t wait to get my new 75” TV so I can watch “documentaries” in glorious 4k! While everyone is spending a buttload of money to satisfy my bastard desires, I’m looking to maximize my returns on the season. I’m going to save so much cash by doing all my shopping at the weird bookshelf in the basement of Gullixon Hall. Who wouldn’t want a beat up, out dated Presbyterian hymnal or a Portuguese Bible? Those books only cost a quarter but they’re really free. Ain’t nobody watching!

We at the Noncord wish you the very worst this shopping season. May your days be cold, your nights dark and lonely. And may the love of stuff, which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds Christ Mammon.

Les Phaith
Noncord Editor in Chief

The Noncord needs people who want to write moderately humourous articles, preferably also moderately topical and definitely non-libelous. Unlike the Concord, we don’t pay, but we do have lower standards, so there’s that. Anyway, this is mostly to fill space, so y’know, find someone to give your article to...or not. Whatever.
EDWARD SNOWDEN

Student council meetings are notoriously secretive. Ask one of your reps what happened in the latest meeting, and you’ll likely be met with a blank stare. To say that President [REDACTED] “benevolent” regime lacks transparency would be a gross understatement. Meeting times and places are changed constantly in order to keep outsiders from infiltrating them and learning the disturbing nature of what occurs. To be sure, our lives as Luther students are shaped by dark forces beyond our control, and I, for one, am tired of not knowing the truth.

Luckily for you, dear reader, (and unluckily for [REDACTED]), the student council’s gatekeeper, who will most likely receive 39 lashes on his bare behind for this) I was able to able to scale the impenetrable wall of mystery guarding the secrets inside. (I was also able to hire out opposish-jargon. And YES, [REDACTED].

All in favor say, ‘I’m a kiss-ass.’ All opposed, go [REDACTED] yourselves. Let the record show that the buzzword sub-committee passed without opposition-jargon. And YES, [REDACTED].

Put your hand down. You can have the floor now on the condition that you go ahead and crawl out of my ass."

Unsettling stuff, I know.

What’s worse is the secrecy around the fate of dining services. The public has been led to believe that the future of dining services is unknown and uncertain. This is a lie that has been put upon the public by the dark forces that control all aspects of seminary life.

Documents uncovered by me, and set to the New York Times and the Guardian, detail a sinister plot to run Dining Services into the ground. The “financial crisis” of 2012/13 was manufactured in order eliminate the Eatery. The so-called crisis provided the cover needed to close Bockman Hall and set the framework for selling the apartments. Eliminating demand for the Eatery’s services predictably resulted in cutbacks in service, further crippling the struggling kitchen. As the leaks documents reveal the end goal of this plot was to shut down the Eatery to make way for a Chic fil A.

Phase 2 of this insidious scheme includes moving all the offices and classrooms out of Northwestern in order to sell the land to Hobby Lobby. Stay tuned for more dispatches—that is, if I haven’t been “taken care of”...

RUDOLPH THE EXPLOITED REINDEER

BUDDY the Elf

There are many cherished stories that we associate with Christmas. Perhaps the most famous is the story of Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. You no doubt are familiar with the Rudolph story from the titular song and the 1964 classic stop-motion TV movie. We’ve all grown up with this tale of the oft-mocked, underestimated, differently-abled reindeer. It is so familiar, so much a part of our cultural identity that the story has largely been unquestioned. The story of Rudolph remains largely unexamined. In light of current trends in popular culture which seek to purge the historical record of all that is ugly or unjust the time has come for us to expose the terrible truth about the Rudolph narrative that has been forced upon us by those captains of industry at Montgomery Wards.

We generally understand the story of Rudolph as a classic underdog story, as the reindeer equivalent of Rudy. Like Rudy, everyone underestimates Rudolph because of a defining physical characteristic. But that is where the similarities end. Rudy was eventually allowed to prove himself on the field and you might think Rudolph got the same opportunity to show his off his reindeer skills. I challenge you to think again.

This is a not a feel good story about the downtown kid overcoming incredible odds. This is an ugly story about a cold, uncaring society in which the value of a person is determined solely by their utility. Consider the facts.

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer had a very shiny nose. So shiny in fact that if you saw it you’d likely think it was glowing. This colorful protuberance was enough for Rudolph to be roundly mocked by his peers and routinely excluded from all the reindeer games.

This pattern of systemic discrimination continued through the whole of Rudolph’s life. The established authority of the North Pole, the so-called ‘Santa’ Claus, did absolutely nothing to stop this abuse. The red-garbed patriarch of the North allowed a differently-abled individual to be mocked, shunned and abused for years and made no effort to stop it. As the song goes, “all of the other reindeer used to laugh and call him name’s” cause they’re a bunch of dicks.

Perhaps dear St. Nick was unaware of the injustices happening under his own cherry colored nose though this is unlikely. If he knows which children had been bad or good then surely he must know that his very own reindeer were among the worst of the worst in their unceasing violations of the 8th Commandment. That he allowed this type of behavior to persist is serious charge that must be taken into account. Yet this negligence is not the only thing Santa has to answer for.

As the story goes on an especially foggy Christmas Eve, Santa determined it was too dangerous for him to navigate his way across the roof tops. He was about to call off Christmas when he heard the muffled sobbing of a broken Rudolph coming from a dark corner of the stable. Seeing the glowing nose of Rudolph, Santa decided to conscript him into service. Upon hearing this news all the other jerk reindeer suddenly realized their “love” for Rudolph and “shouted out with glee.”

Let’s not dance around what really happened here. Rudolph was a differently-abled individual who was unjustly subjected to a life of ridicule and shame. Mocked on the streets and in his own home, Rudolph never knew the gifts of a soft touch or a kind word. The one person who could have put an end to all this negligently allowed this sickening abuse to persist. What is worse is the Clause regime's exploitation of Rudolph.

Only after being turned into a glorified flashlight was Rudolph deemed to have any worth in the eyes of society.

The next time Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer plays on the radio or TV do the Christina thing. Quickly turn it off then immediately be rate anyone who protests. Condemn them for supporting an abusive society that marginalizes and exploits the most vulnerable among us. Check their privilege and their hate.
Find this blank space ugly? So do we! While the staff of the Concord would like to make it clear that we are not responsible for the content of the Noncord, we are responsible for laying it out and want our sister organization to grow and prosper in her own way. So please consider contributing your own satirical articles, photoshops, infographics, or drawings. Seriously, would it kill someone to draw something for me to put here? I came up with the blank back page as a JOKE for lack of content? Sorry? What’s that? Oh, my editor is telling me that spoils the joke and makes us look unprofessional. Anyway, I need things to put here, and I need you to send us those things.

Thanks,

-The Layout Editor
Movie Review: Mockingjay, Part 2

ERIC CHRISTENSEN
MA SENIOR

It was either this movie or Spectre and I assume a greater amount of people are interested in The Hunger Games. And for good reason— the book series is the latest and greatest in young adult dystopian science fiction. Some may balk and claim that Divergent is at least more recent if not greater. But that series doesn't have the simple, attention-grabbing plot summary that The Hunger Games does: a future in which kids are forced to fight to the death. It's the inevitably action-packed spiritual successor to classics like The Giver.

The short version of this review is that if you've seen the other three Hunger Games movies, you owe it to yourself to finish the series- Mockingjay Part 2 does not disappoint. If you're interested in this movie but haven't seen the others, you’ll obviously need to get caught up. And if you’re not interested at all, then I guess just go watch Spectre (only if you’ve seen all the other Daniel Craig Bond films- trust me).

Obvious decision of whether or not to see it aside, there is plenty more to say about this movie. It, as well as the rest of the series, is one of the few film adaptations of a novel that isactually better than the novel. Before I get killed, let me explain. The book's first-person point of view limits the story in two important ways. One, we don't see or hear anything that Katniss doesn't. Two, if anything truly perilous happens to her, the narrative is instantly cut off by Katniss's inability to describe what knocked her out or what happened immediately after. I remember this happening in the neighborhood of three times in Mockingjay alone.

That's not to say Suzanne Collins did a poor job narrating the novels. The first person narrative lends itself well to the young adult genre, as being stuck in the cockpit of the protagonist's mind gives us access to all of the raw emotion she experiences. It also does well to convey the sense of confusion and danger one would feel in the midst of the situations in the books and movies. For example, there is a character death scene toward the end of Mockingjay that reads almost like a dream because it’s so vague and foggy. This is actually realistic from Katniss's point of view. But an attempt to represent it in a visual medium would have left us with some disorienting found-footage kind of thing, which no one wanted from these movies. But in the film, it plays out as a well- choreographed, comprehensible action scene. One thing that these movies excel at is presenting action in a way that we can actually follow. Too many action movies these days film their scenes with a thousand cameras, wait to have the editors cut it up into takes so fast you may as well be reading a comic book like it's one of those sketches you can shuffle to make it move. This is not so with Mockingjay. All of the action is as clear and understandable as it is flashy and entertaining.

The last thing I want to mention is the ghost of Philip Seymour Hoffman. Not only did I get to hear of his death around the release of the first part of Mockingjay, I was worried for how this last movie would turn out in his absence. The editors did an amazing job. Hoffman's actual acting would have obviously been preferred- his lines are few, short, and subtle. But they actually sold me on the idea that his character was there, despite how creeped out I was the first time I saw him.

In closing, if you figured you were probably going to go see Mockingjay Part 2, do it. If not for Jennifer Lawrence, then for the ghost of Philip Seymour Hoffman.

Property continued from page 3

Luther owns approximately +/- 24 acres of land and 215,000 square feet of buildings used for classrooms, administrative functions, and ancillary services. In November 2014, Luther sold a large portfolio of apartments on the most westerly border of the campus.

Luther is currently in negotiation with a developer to sell/partner on another 5 acres at Como and Eustis (the ball field) as well as approximately 2 acres at Como and Luther.

BREAKING NEWS from MyLutherNet on 08 December 2015: "One of the initiatives we’ve been exploring is the sale of some underutilized land. To that end, we have agreed to sell 1.6 acres of land to Ecumen on the southeast edge of campus off of Luther Place. Most recently, we have focused on the upper campus and have finally come to an agreement.”

Potential buyers for the ball field are still being explored.

Renovations are planned to “move” Luther into approximately 125,000 of space within a renovated Bockman Hall and with modifications to the other two major buildings of Gullixon and Olson. Gensler is the architecture firm selected by the Property Task Force to work with Luther Seminary on the renovations and is in active, on-going conversations with Gensler.

Related, yet separate from the Property Task Force, is a group of staff focusing on providing on-campus or near-to-campus housing options for residential students as on-campus housing options have been identified as a priority.

Luther has leased space to Augsburg College for their physician’s assistant program for a term of 5-years.

There is a student representative on the Property Task Force.

Students have been invited to public information forums and to share thoughts, ideas, and input.

Students receive communication on the Property Task Force via MyLutherNet.

Know that the work of the Property Task Force is ongoing and the whole committee is dedicated to continuing Luther’s mission for the students of today and in the future. The work will probably extend beyond the initial date of December 31, 2015, as originally written in the charter. My student voice at the table is always welcome and appreciated, which speaks volumes. When multiple voices are needed, the Property Task Force has asked. The most recent was in October with input for Gensler’s design process. Keep an eye-out for future opportunities. Please feel free to talk with me about any questions or concerns you may have about the Property Task Force.

Bockman Guy’s Corner

First, a thank you to the staff of the Concord for giving me this unedited corner of the paper to write in. Apparently, many of you have found my missives to be of some interest and I hope you've figured out how to format them in a more print-friendly manner.

I am glad that Scippy the squirrel was returned safely, and I hope that this is the end of the horrible squirrel mangling perpetrated by the Concord staff. I also hope that the paper can continue to remain silent on such divisive issues as the current presidential campaigns. Such concerns are best left to baser publications until such time as the administration takes an official position. It is not the business of a student newspaper to so clearly promote though independent the whims of those in positions of scholastic and ecological authority. What good could come of such free thinking? It might be axiomatics not only for good thinking but also for good writing and for good prose, but it might be also axiomatics not all things and all things at all times.

Sincerely,

The Homeless Guy Who Lives in the Attic of Bockman
Let’s Talk About...Feeling Like a Fraud

EMILY MARTIN
M.Div. INTERN

I was sitting in Dr. Lewis’ class when I first heard the term “Impostor Syndrome.” It felt like she was reading my mind when she described it. Impostor syndrome “...occurs among high achievers who are unable to internalize and accept their success. They often attribute their accomplishments to luck rather than to ability, and fear that others will eventually unmask them as a fraud.”

It’s a stressful experience because you often sit in paralyzing fear in most of your classes. You fear that it’s only a matter of time before someone figures you out. This fear can manifest itself in many ways including hesitation to complete and turn in assignments, a lack of classroom participation, fear of professors and their feedback, insomnia, and isolation. The overarching fear is that at any moment, with any class discussion, or with any assignment you turn in, the professor will pull you aside and explain to you that perhaps you should reconsider seminary.

So why am I bringing up this terrifying experience? Because if it has a name, other people must feel it too and I don’t want you to think you’re alone when you’re experiencing it. By definition, those who suffer from impostor syndrome do so in silence. Since a major part of the syndrome is the fear of being discovered, it isn’t talked about. And that is the true problem.

And this true problem exists especially in grad programs where the student is also gaining experience in their context: think seminarians, medical students, counseling students, etc. We’re thrown into the deep end of the water, where the question isn’t necessarily, “Can I survive?” but instead, “Am I even a swimmer?”

In this article, using this platform, I’m setting aside my fear, and disclosing that I have dealt with impostor syndrome since the day I turned 18. I doubt my ability, doubt my decisions, and in my application to Luther Seminary. I doubt myself on every single paper, which resulted in me writing them in panic just hours before they were due. I called it procrastination. But no, it was fear. Stomach-churning fear. Nearly two years into studying here, I was finally handed the language to be able to talk about the way I was suffering. If any of this sounds familiar to you, if any of my experience sounds like your experience, I urge you to talk to someone about it. Bring it up with your faculty advisor. You won’t be the first person. If you have a problem with internalizing your successes, hang those high scoring tests and papers up on the fridge. Display your achievements, not so other people will be impressed, rather so you will be reminded that you have the capacity to be successful.

Why reach out? Reach out so you don’t have to suffer in silence. Reach out because, as a mentor of mine has said, “Imposter syndrome doesn’t just go away after ordination.” When it comes to things like impostor syndrome, we have to develop ways to overcome the experience, because if we don’t care for ourselves, how can we care for others?

Impostor syndrome is not something to feel ashamed about. It’s not a flaw, it’s an understandable fear. It’s also a fear you don’t have to deal with on your own.
Beacons of Hope:
The Dead ELCA African Descent Strategic Plan

STERLING LYNK
M.DIV. JUNIOR

Ten years ago, the ninth ELCA Churchwide Assembly adopted the ELCA African Descent Strategic Plan. Blacks represented 13% of the U.S. population but they only made up 1% of the ELCA’s membership. The expectation was for the plan to be “a living document intended to stir imagination and ministry initiatives beyond what is presented on its pages.” We were aiming to achieve racial equity! We measured our progress in the number and percentage of Black ELCA Lutherans by 2015. It is a well put together document with specific goals. It includes clear action items for ELCA-affiliated institutions like seminaries. Despite this, we failed to achieve its purpose. The number of ELCA Blacks shrank and membership still hovers around 1%.

I use the word “we” instead of something like “the ELCA” or “them.” This is intentional. With the adoption of the plan all ELCA-ers are responsible for its success. “ELCA-ers” includes parishioners, staff of ELCA-affiliated institutions, and all students at ELCA seminaries. None of us get to dodge accountability on this one. It is this accountability that I point to as my primary source of authority to speak about this subject. I derive secondary authority from my racial, cultural and professional background. I am a bi-racial Black man. The story of my Black family is told in Alex Haley’s Roots. I am the former COO for the Urban League of Greater Madison – a non-profit that seeks to improve the lives of Blacks through education, employment and entrepreneurship.

While the writers of the ELCA African Descent Strategic Plan aspired for it to become a living document, it failed to do so. I suggest that the only way for this plan, or any plan with similar aims, to succeed is for it to achieve life.

There are two primary ways for a static document to become a living document. The first way is for the document to frequently be changed. Living organisms adapt to their circumstances and living documents do the same. As the Executive Director for the Madison Area Down Syndrome Society I updated our plans monthly. They were living documents. Sometimes the changes were small. Sometimes the changes were radical. The plans changed because the organization and the world around us changed.

The ELCA African Descent Strategic Plan adopted in 2005 is not periodically updated or edited. The ELCA has changed, the world has changed, but the plan has not changed.

The second way to become a living document is through meaning. Living documents are meaningful to people and are useful in informing response to the current context. This is the way that scripture and the U.S. Constitution are living documents. The best way give a document this kind of meaning is through social mechanisms that force it to be considered, interpreted or acted on. I do this meaning-making as the current Board President of a trade association. I open every meeting with a restatement of the same four strategic questions. I then frame every issue before us with those questions. There is no forgetting about those four questions. The ELCA African Descent Strategic Plan is all but forgotten. Where it is well known, it does not seem to be all that meaningful but my perspective may be limited by my experience.

Let’s assume that it’s worth fixing the ELCA’s diversity challenges. Let’s also assume that I am right about the need for any written diversity plan to be a living document. What then are the concrete next steps? I offer these:

1. We need to review and update the ELCA African Descent Strategic Plan. I am told that this is happening and I hope that rumor is true.
2. The updated plan must be reviewed, measured and updated each year.
3. Implement mechanisms that keep the plan before our leaders, parishioners and staff members. Expect context-appropriate action.

Complaining about a problem without offering a solution is just whining. Offering a solution but not offering to help is wasteful. I offered a solution so now I am offering to help. Since you are responsible too, I invite you to join me if the Spirit moves you.

Can someone, at least, point me towards someone, besides Luther’s own Richard Webb, who is working on this stuff? I am looking to be useful.

Bread Ministry

DEAN SAFE
M.DIV. INTERN

My classmates around campus probably know that one of my deepest God-given identities is that of a baker – working with my hands to craft artisan loaves of bread. I began baking in college – the kneading process was more a means of therapy than anything else. It soon became something I couldn’t give up, as every loaf baked became more than just an act of sharing with others – it became a spiritual practice, and later on, a vital part of my ministry. This continued to be shaped during my year at Holden Village and now in seminary. I’ve taken this spiritual practice – something that connects me to God, helps me to see God’s abundance, and is very much a practice of prayer – out into the world.

Away from the seminary this year, I am serving as intern pastor at Zion Lutheran Church in rural Pelican Rapids, Minnesota. Part of my ministry there has been developing “The Bread Project” with a core group of parishioners in conjunction with our local Food Shelf. Our group gathers once a month for an evening, where we bake anywhere from 5 to 10 loaves and donate them for distribution to the community the next day. During our baking session, we’ll have dinner together and also a conversation centered on food and faith, or an educational component – viewing a documentary, etc. We’ve had some great conversations about why we do what we do, and how food is so ingrained in being a part of a community – church and in other expressions. The Bread Project has been a really neat way to do outreach – we gather together about 15 people each time, some who have never baked bread, others haven’t been involved in our congregation before – and do something tangible for the good of our world.

I find baking bread to be one of the most concrete expressions of God’s love and mercy for us, given to us – we can gather from the earth, from creation, and make something with our own hands and pass it on to those who are in need. Jesus talks about feeding the hungry and caring for the widow and orphan – and our Bread Project does just that, being given and broken for the people who need it most. When our group gathers to bake, we open with prayer, and when we pull the loaves from the oven, we say a blessing for those who will be nourished.

So – in whatever you do, in whatever form your ministry takes, look for ways to gather community and unleash God’s love as it breaks in upon your people. I’ve found it to be one of the most tangible expressions of the Spirit’s movement in the world through Christ’s calling. The Bread Project is how this happens in my context – where is God breaking through in yours?

Page 13! That’s right, we’ve updated the Concord to a whole 13 pages, thanks to your contributions and willingness to be involved. Let’s not stop here! Help us make a 20 page paper next month!
I understand that God is with the poor and the alien and being immersed in this stuff all the how God is with us in our suffering, I may just paper or sit through one more sermon about hope. And there is nothing more pow-ful, more resilient, more enduring, than that yet be coming. And there is nothing more pow-erful declaration of faith that my tradition offers. It is present with us. To me this is the most power-ful way of telling you all what bone I have to expect. I walked into the meeting and noticed actions. That was until I met the Green Team.

When I attended my first meeting with the Green Team in October, I was not quite sure what to expect. I walked into the meeting and noticed that I was one of three students present among many faculty and staff. It did not take long for me to realize that I had joined the ruddiest group on campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people.

So, it is my commitment to get the word out: be part of the Green Team because as called leaders in God's church we are given the responsibility to be stewards of the earth and to take care of it. It is faithfulness to commit to monthly meetings, that is perfectly fine! The goal is to become more aware of what we are doing to (and with) God's beloved creation. If the month-ly meetings are not doable then take Professor Schifferdecker's class on the Bible and Ecology this spring.

The Green Team officially formed last year and is made up of staff, students, and faculty. This year, the Green Team sponsored a “Day at the Prairie” in September, helping with prairie restoration at Dean Craig Koester’s family farm near Northfield. Last Earth Day, the Green Team hosted a special prayer service to commemorate believe that God is with me when I’m not suffer-ing; I have to believe that. Even I, an Enneagram 4 (for those of you who have not yet or don’t plan on taking CPCE this means that suffering and mel-ancholy are my bread and butter—if seminary is a Winnie the Pooh story, then I am totally Eeyore) understand that there must be more to the Chris-tian life than suffering and pain. Where is God when things are going relatively well? Where is God when I’m happy?

I believe these two questions, where is God in our suffering and where is God in our happiness, are actually interconnected. It goes back to this concept of hope. The context of the theology of the cross, this hope is an act of defiance. It is ob-serving the darkness all around us and defiantly proclamation that a light shines in the darkness and the darkness will not, shall not, does not overcome it. It is not a vapid sense of optimism, but rather the faith that darkness and despair do not have the last word. In the context of a theolo-gy of happiness, to have hope takes on a new the-ology of happiness, this hope takes on a new mea-ning. Rather than an act of defiance, it becomes a statement of reality. It becomes a tool that allows me to claim the truth that when God created the world, God said it was good- it was tov. It allows me to claim that goodness exists and is inherent in the created order as well as in my own body- and I claim this not believing that all evidence points to the contrary, but rather that the evi-dence supports this premise.

I understand our theology of the cross. I under-stand why in a world such as ours, fraught with violence and fear, we must talk about suffering and pain and what role our God plays in them. But at the same time, I want to claim my tov. I want to claim it for the world; I want to claim it for my community; I want to claim it for myself. Fellow theologians, we have work to do.

-Emily Kuenker, M.Div. Junior

Bone to Pick: Claiming Tov

Okay, typically I like to have some sort of quippy way of telling you all what bone I have to pick this month, but today...today I’m just going to come right out and say it: this church needs a theology of happiness like I need twelve extra hours a day to work on finals.

I was questioned recently, while having a con-versation about love at Luther, if and how sem-inary education is responding to the violence and pain and what role our God plays in them. That was until I met the Green Team.

When I attended my first meeting with the Green Team in October, I was not quite sure what to expect. I walked into the meeting and noticed that I was one of three students present among many faculty and staff. It did not take long for me to realize that I had joined the ruddiest group on campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as campus. The passion and deep devotion that the team of nature-lovers demonstrated throughout the meeting made me realize that I can make a difference as one person by being in partnership with this passionate group of people. It became clear to me that this group cares deeply for their theologically-based ecological commitments as camp...
Luther Theological Seminary

Gullixson Hall
October Crossword Answers:
