



## Report from the Office for College Ministries, February 2014

Mike Blair, Amy Larson and David Vásquez, campus pastors

*In the reforming spirit of Martin Luther, Luther College affirms the liberating power of faith and learning. As people of all backgrounds, we embrace diversity and challenge one another to learn in community, to discern our callings, and to serve with distinction for the common good.*  
—Luther College Mission Statement

Luther College's ministry on campus and beyond is shaped by the spiritual practices identified in our mission statement: learning in community, discerning our callings, and serving the common good. This ministry does not happen in isolation, but is built on the collective work of congregations and faith communities that have engaged students prior to their college years and continue after college

As we seek to learn in community, we shape our life together around conversations in the classrooms, lectures, labs, rehearsals, practices, student/faculty conversations, mealtimes and community worship life. Dr. David Tiede, who is serving as Interim President, has brought renewed energy to this conversation of faith and learning. We invite you to join our conversation by listening on-line to our Weekday Chapel, celebrated Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 10:30-10:50 a.m. in the Center for Faith and Life and available online at <http://www.luther.edu/ministries/worship/chapel/>

As a college of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, we share in the church's call to share the story of God's grace shown to all creation in the Good News of Jesus Christ. One way we live that out is in our work of preparation and discernment for church leaders. College Ministries offers students the opportunity to share in t.r.e.c. (time to reflect and explore call), a small group ministry that helps students listen to their own call stories in the context of Biblical stories. Luther College continues to be a leader among ELCA colleges in alumni under 30 enrolled in the ELCA candidacy process.

Our commitment to Gospel themes of hospitality, grace and love of neighbor also compel us to listen to stories and testimonies of diverse faith traditions and perspectives. In life together we seek to affirm both a living Lutheran legacy and the community's spiritual diversity as foundations for building and renewing community. Interfaith dialogue is deepened on campus through various programs including Journey Conversations, a group interfaith contemplative practice developed by Pastor Amy Larson in partnership with colleagues on and off campus. The story of religion told in the larger culture is often cast in terms of polarization, exclusion and disengagement. As these currents and trends affect life on campus we seek to strengthen ministry and life together at Luther by building trust and deepening public discourse. We are approaching these goals through small group ministries, contemplative practices and conversations that invite listening, reflection, and response rather than judgment and reaction.

Our commitment to serve with distinction for the common good takes many forms and draws on the gifts of faculty, staff and students serve as resources to the larger church. Under College Ministries' emphasis on being a resource to the larger church many partnerships have flourished. Student Outreach Teams go out to congregations each semester to serve with worship leadership and partner with congregations in youth and young adult ministry. Students draw from their campus experiences as they serve in area congregations, camps, and other expressions of the church, such as Luther senior Hans Becklin current service on the ELCA Church Council. Amy Larson is sharing her work with synods and congregations on prayer and spiritual formation drawing on themes from her sabbatical project, "From Busyness into Openness: Holy Invitations for Hurried People." David Vasquez has authored multiple Bible study resources in collaboration with the ELCA Book of Faith initiative, Global Mission, the Latino Lay Academy and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services. He has also serves as presenter for ELCA Glocal Events around the country, reflecting on how biblical stories of migration speak to the many transitions of our lives. This work also addresses core questions for both church and college of how our communities serve an increasingly diverse and pluralistic culture. Mike Blair serves as co-director for Grace Institute for Spiritual Formation, a two-year continuing education program for church leaders seeking individual and congregational renewal through spiritual practices. Over 250 ordained and lay church leaders have participated in Grace Institute since it began in 2000. College Ministries partnered with the Alumni office and the President's Office in January 2014 to co-host "Blessed to Be a Blessing," a retreat for alumni to explore vocation in their third chapter of life. Luther continues to host WIYLDE, a week long summer camp of leadership and faith development with high school youth from ELCA congregations in Iowa led in collaboration with the ELCA synods of Iowa. On January 11, 2014, we organized "Hope Makes Us Live," a benefit concert to mark the fourth anniversary of the Haiti earthquake and to celebrate the musical and spiritual legacy of Luther alumnus Ben Splichal Larson. The concert featured the music of Peter Mayer and Hans Peterson and raised over \$4,000 to benefit ministries in Haiti.

The vitality of faith we see in students, alumni and ministry partners encourages and renews us in the work of building a community of faith and learning grounded in grace. Thank you for your partnership in ministry!