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FEBRUARY 2006

# The Lutheran Educator

The WELS Education Journal



# The Lutheran Educator

The education journal  
of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
edited by faculty of Martin Luther College

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## Letting students grow up

When I insist on driving my 16-year-old to school in bad weather, she fumes at me: “How will I ever learn to drive on icy roads if you never let me drive on icy roads?” My 14-year old rebels when we say “no” to TV shows that are rated TV-14: “But I am 14!” My 12-year old gets highly offended if I try to help him with ... anything. He wants to do it himself. And my 10-year old, well, she thinks she should have all the same privileges as her older siblings.

Kids want to grow up—sometimes sooner than we’re ready for them to do so. They are eager to learn by doing. They want to be trusted. They seek to forge ahead in life.

I wonder if sometimes we err by playing it safe, by restraining their youthful enthusiasm, by treating them like kids when they are developing into young adults. This can happen in school, too, if we lead children too much and don’t help them to become self-directed.

I’ve done some mixer activities and surveys with college sophomores in the general education history course that I teach. In one such survey, asked about their college experience thus far, 52% said they felt they were treated “like high-schoolers; classes have too much busywork, not much of which is useful.” In a mixer activity, students offered critique of classes they had in high school. Some representative responses: “The course was taught like we were 6th graders.” ... “We were made to repeat simple concepts over and over again.” ... “They tell you what to do and when to do it and don’t leave any decisions up to you.”

Studies of andragogy (beginning with Malcolm Knowles, 1970) indicate that adult learners prefer to pursue their own educational goals in their own ways, and in formal education wish to have a say in determining course goals. I’d like to suggest that such self-directed learning is a developed attitude and occurs along a continuum beginning already in early childhood. The more we allow children and young people to be active pursuers of knowledge and understanding on their own, the more they will become capable of handling the responsibilities of lifelong learning.

So what am I encouraging? Be bold, be daring, be a little risky sometimes in what you do with your students and what you let them do. Involve them in planning assignments, in selecting topics for focus, in demonstrating to the class what they’ve learned on their own. You think they will make a mess of things, but they just might surprise you. Maybe they’ll even teach you a thing or two about driving on life’s icy roads.

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## Excel In Godliness

John Schultz

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:8-9*

It was spring and the religion classes of a Lutheran high school chose the Philippians passage as the basis of a theme for the following school year. That summer, a faculty committee summarized the passage with the theme Excel in Godliness. This led to a discussion of Christian discipleship in subsequent faculty meetings and devotions. By virtue of their call, the faculty realized they were “equippers of disciples,” but what is a disciple of Christ? More personally, the question was asked, “Are you a disciple of the Lord Jesus?”

It is a no-brainer that those who would equip disciples of Christ must first be disciples of Christ. When we corporately say the confession of sins and the Apostles Creed, we are confessing with our lips that we are disciples. When we hear others make such a confession

and put that confession into practice, we can assume they are disciples. But are you a disciple of Christ? Only you and the omniscient God who reads the heart really know. As you examine yourself prior to the Lord’s Supper, you acknowledge and confess your sins and trust in the redemptive work of your Savior for the forgiveness of those sins and the promise of heaven. You walk away from the Lord’s table strengthened and assured that you belong to the Lord. You are a disciple of Christ! You raise your eyes to heaven and ask, “Lord, what would you have me do?” The answers are found in his Word.

Sin causes ugliness and squalor. It affects disciples too. Our thoughts are not always about good and healthy things. In our relationship with students, parents, and colleagues, we are prone to misjudge motives, think the worst, be plagued with lack of trust, perhaps even to neglect “speaking in love” to a brother or sister. “Oh, Lord, forgive me for your sake,” we pray. Listen to Jesus say, “Son [daughter], your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5). Again we ask, “Lord, what would you have me do?”

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice” (Philippians 4:8-9a). God through the Apostle Paul, makes clear the influence of one’s thoughts on one’s life. What occupies the mind will sooner or later determine speech and action. Paul’s exhortation to “think about such things” is followed by “put into practice” (v.9). As Christ’s disciples, we focus our thoughts on a higher plane. We think godly thoughts and put them “into prac-

tice.” With the Holy Spirit working in us, we can excel in godliness. “And the God of peace will be with you” (v.9). What a promise! As Christ’s disciples, we are assured that the “God of peace” will be with us as we walk the path of discipleship and equip other disciples for Christ.

Read some more: Romans 12:1-21

*Lord, through Word and Sacrament, cause us to focus on that which is godly. Give us peace of heart and soul as we equip your sheep and lambs for Christian discipleship. Amen*

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*John Schultz served as principal/administrator of Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School. He is currently retired and lives in New Ulm, Minnesota.*

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### The Echo

‘Twas a sheep not a lamb  
That strayed away in the parable Jesus told,  
A grown-up sheep that strayed away  
From the ninety and nine in the fold.  
And why for the sheep should we seek  
And earnestly hope and pray?  
Because there is danger when sheep go wrong:  
They lead the lambs astray.  
Lambs will follow the sheep, you know,  
Wherever the sheep may stray.  
When sheep go wrong,  
It won’t take long till the lambs are as wrong as they.  
And so with the sheep we earnestly plead  
For the sake of the lambs today.  
For when the sheep are lost  
What a terrible cost  
The lambs will have to pay.

C.C. Miller

# How to Web the Right Way

## Realize the Importance of the Web Without Drowning in Jargon

Michael Wendt

**T**HANKS TO THE WEB, we now have access to news from around the world as quickly as to the local newspaper. We can glean perspectives from *The Guardian* and *The Register* as easily as from CNN and FOX News. Every weekend, restaurants without web sites are being passed up for restaurants that take reservations online (à la OpenTable.com).

But this is about more than easier access to news media and educational resources. It's about more than planning the perfect night in Minneapolis from my desk in New Ulm. It's about a noticeable change in the way people work and play. Whether you think the Internet is an invaluable part of everyday life or you're troubled by its negative facets (or both!), I hope you realize how important it can be to your ministry. I want you to understand why you need it, why doing it "the right way" matters, and how to cope with the technical considerations.

### **Your church and school should already have a web site.**

The first and most important reason why you need a web site now is outreach. The web is a cheap and easy way to make information available to prospects. Reading doctrinal statements

and getting a sense of what your church is about without leaving home is attractive to the growing number of people that prefer self-service. I don't mean this in the sense of, "I serve myself and not the Lord." I mean this in the sense that for many people, if you can't find information quickly and easily online, it's not worth finding. For more people than you realize, lifting the phone and calling someone is not worth the effort. If I can't transfer money between checking and savings online, I'm going to find a new bank. If I can't order the part I need online from one vendor, I'll use another.

I'm not at all suggesting that you stop canvassing or disband your evangelism committee. I'm suggesting that you be open to new ways of reaching out to people. Maybe you'll keep doing door-to-door or phone canvassing, but now you'll suggest to people that if they have questions after you leave, they might visit your web site. A church my company works with in Verona, Wisconsin, does this quite successfully. In the summer, they distribute water bottles that prominently display their web address. This opens the door for a few minutes of conversation and points the person to a place where they can do research on their own time. Nothing beats personal contact, but remember that the

web provides a unique and private opportunity for prospects to have exposure to your doctrine and your mission—which, hopefully, will bring them to your door.

While some would argue that the Internet is impersonal and diminishes the importance of human interaction, I suggest that an effective web site can actually encourage more fellowship within your church and school. I know that my home church worships on Sunday mornings at 8, 9:30, and 11. I also know that we worship on Saturday and Monday. But because I normally go on Sunday, I tend to forget when the other services are. Being able to find that information quickly online eliminates a whole array of lame excuses I might otherwise present: “I don’t want to be late, so I won’t go at all.” “I could call church and ask, but I don’t want to look dumb.” “I’ll just read a devotion at home.” “I’ll just go next week.” No, the web doesn’t eliminate sinful laziness and misaligned priorities. It does give me another chance to discover Bible studies I didn’t even know we offered. And it reminds me that choir is Wednesday at 7 and not 7:30. These are small things, but aside from the many other benefits of the web, isn’t it worth a few dollars a month to help out a few forgetful members and maybe see some new faces at Bible study?

The web can also be a great way to raise awareness about a new church building, a special mission project, or an urgent budget concern. In November, Martin Luther College sent two teams of students to New Orleans to

aid with cleanup and relief in the aftermath of Katrina. What a blessing it was that we could share journal entries, first-hand accounts, and heart-wrenching photos with people across the Synod within hours of receiving them from the teams. And I can’t tell you how much people appreciate MLC’s “MallCam.” A simple web camera pointed at the center part of our campus lets parents get a glimpse of students’ lives in New Ulm.

Finally, there’s something to be said for the ubiquity of the web. Web addresses are generally easier to remember than phone numbers, and they’re getting to be everywhere. People expect you to have a web site. In many areas, “My church doesn’t have a web site” is akin to “My church doesn’t have a phone.”

#### **Poorly-designed web sites drive people away.**

What follows is nothing new or revolutionary. Most of it applies to your print publications as well. The question you have to ask yourself is: “What does my web site say about my ministry?” Whether you think so or not, design is important. Someone out there is saying, “This school can’t even run a decent web site. Why would I send my kid there?” Either intentionally or subconsciously, people notice and are influenced by design.

One of the biggest “buzz words” in the last half decade is “branding.” Branding is the art of using effective and consistent design to leave an impression on your web site visitor.

Wendt

Please understand that I am not questioning the power of the Gospel. I am not saying that a church or school with bad design is spreading the Word less effectively than a church or school with good design. I am saying that the prospect to whom you just gave a water bottle is more likely to remember your church's name and web site if you use the same logo and typeface on both the bottle and the site. It's a simple thing, and it is certainly not more effective than sharing God's Word, but it may prompt further contact.

Professionalism matters. I hate to say it, but PastorTom4382@hotmail.com is not professional. Neither is a web site overloaded with "cute" animations and "pretty" script-type fonts. We're not in this to show that we just learned how to make our first web page. We're in this to show the world that God and his Word are important, and as such, if only out of respect, we're going to present God and his Word in the best way we can. Getting back to Pastor Tom's e-mail address: any web host will let you host e-mail accounts at your own domain. The address tom@risensavior.org is certainly more professional and memorable than the above.

Usability matters. Know your audience. If you're blessed to serve a congregation of Internet-savvy members, maybe some committee meetings can be avoided by sharing information online. If you're blessed to serve a congregation of mature members with little Internet experience, maybe it's only important to post a monthly calendar. If

you're blessed to serve a community of believers without regular Internet access, maybe much of this doesn't apply. But when you understand who you're trying to reach with your web site, you're more likely to make educated decisions about what kind of content to provide and how to organize it.

Relevancy matters. There's nothing worse than visiting a church web site in November and finding the monthly calendar from September. Not only is this entirely unhelpful to members, it's a big turn-off to first-time web site visitors. God is unchanging and everlasting. The youth group schedule is not.

#### **What's in a domain name?**

There are basically three things you need to launch a web site: a domain name, a web host, and the web site itself. Without getting extremely technical, here's a quick overview and some pointers to get you started.

Every computer on the Internet has a special, numerical address called an "IP address." This is how computers on the Internet find each other. Because IP addresses are not intuitive (imagine typing 204.11.208.102 every time you wanted to visit the WELS), we use domain names. When you type "www.wels.net" into your web browser, your computer asks a special type of computer called a "name server" to translate that domain name into an IP address. This process is called "resolving." Once your computer knows the IP address for the WELS, it can go find the web site.

With few exceptions, every church

and/or school should obtain a domain name. A good domain name should be easy to remember. If I can get to your web site by simply remembering your domain name and typing it in my browser, you've chosen well. If I have to use a search engine to find you, that's one more step between me and your content. An example: "risensaviorcolumbus.org" is a good name. "rsvr-ohio.org" is not. Things to remember:

- Companies that sell domain names are called "registrars." There are hundreds of them.
- Stick to "top-level domains" you've heard of (.com, .net, .org, .us, .info). These are most easily remembered.
- You should not have to register a domain for multiple years to get good pricing. If you can't get just one year for \$15 or less, look elsewhere. Some trusted, inexpensive registrars are Namecheap.com and GoDaddy.com.
- Don't be fooled by all the extras the registrar will try to sell you. You don't need them. If you're not sure about a particular add-on, ask your web host or developer for guidance.

**Choosing the right web host will save you time and money in the long run.**

Web hosts, like registrars, are plentiful. It seems like everyone is getting into web hosting these days. Your local phone company probably offers web hosting. If you have a cable modem, you could theoretically even host your own web site. How do you sort through it all?

Start by eliminating hosts that aren't

really hosts. There are a large enough number of companies whose primary business is hosting that it's probably not worth your time to look at the local phone company. Many charge too much and offer fewer features than companies that specialize in hosting.

Word of mouth is a great tool. Ask small businesses and churches around you whom they use. If they've had a bad experience, they won't be afraid to share it. Also, when considering a specific host, ask for names of existing customers. Don't be afraid to ask customers about their experience.

Avoid contracts. With so many hosts out there, you don't have to be tied down. If you have to commit to a year to get the best pricing, what else is hiding in the contract? Shouldn't the service alone make you want to stay?

Good customer service is priceless. Try it out before you open an account. If you have questions, ask. If you're consistently not satisfied with the speed or quality of their answers, look elsewhere. Also, while many hosts prefer e-mail correspondence, they still need to respect your preferences. It's perfectly acceptable to ask your host to work with you over the phone.

Ask about the host's Internet connection and power supply. Make sure they're connected to multiple Internet "backbones" so that your web site isn't likely to go offline. Make sure they have battery backups and diesel generators to power all of their servers for at least a day or two. (Incidentally, these are two of the biggest reasons why it is a bad idea to host your church or school's web

Wendt

site on your own Internet connection.)

Pay attention to pricing. If one host offers 300 MB of disk space for \$15 per month and another offers 3000 MB for the same price, be suspicious. Can the latter really guarantee that much space to all their users? If so, what are they sacrificing to make that possible? Also watch out for overage fees. Be wary of companies that automatically assess overage fees as soon as you exceed your allotted disk space or bandwidth.

Finally, unless you're working with a large corporation, you can probably get away with some haggling. Most small to moderately-sized web hosts are happy to give a non-profit or church discount—if you ask for it. It's also okay to ask for a free domain name if you're a first-time customer.

So how much should you be paying for hosting? It depends on what you're looking for. But based on how most WELS churches I've worked with use their sites, you probably shouldn't be paying more than \$15 per month. The average price that WELS organizations pay at my company is \$8 per month.

**Open source software is good for your web site and the church at large.**

Most hosting companies run one or both of two distinct platforms: Windows and Linux. There is a world of technical difference between these two platforms and an equal amount of politics from groups that favor one or the other. Two differences in particular stand out. The licensing costs associated with running a Windows server environment can be

very high. Linux is free to use. Windows is maintained by Microsoft and the programming behind it is “closed source,” meaning that you can't see it. Linux is maintained by a team of primarily volunteer developers and is “open source,” meaning that the community around it is encouraged to contribute improvements.

It has been my experience that open source software is good for churches. It allows me, the web host, to provide powerful tools (like photo galleries and content management systems) to churches for no cost. It also means that if I find a problem with one of these programs, I can usually directly contact the person or team who wrote it. This alone is a vast improvement from waiting on hold with a commercial software company, only to find that the bug will be fixed in the next version, which I'll have to pay more for.

Even if you don't want to talk to programmers yourself, understand that it's a good thing that your web host can. While there are open source programs that run on Windows and commercial programs that run on Linux, web hosts that run the Linux platform and stick to open source software can generally keep their prices lower than competitors using commercial software. More of your monthly fee can go towards customer service and research since there are fewer software costs for the host.

Those who have built a computer lab for their school knows that it's cheaper to do technology “the right way” the first time. Spending more money upfront is still less expensive than the

time and money spent on supporting old technology. I happen to think that open source software lies in a different paradigm. Don't equate open source with mediocrity. Not all open source projects are good, but you can usually tell what's what by the size of the community that supports the project.

At MLC, we're in the process of switching from an online learning package called "Blackboard" to a similar package called "Moodle." We're switching to Moodle because it works better. The fact that it will save thousands of dollars a year is just an added benefit.

#### **A good developer is worth the investment.**

Many web hosts will try to make things easier for you by offering you special deals that include "free" cookie-cutter design templates and content management systems (CMS) that let you edit the content of your web site with little technical know-how. Don't get caught up in the hype. First, using a design template eliminates almost all hope of establishing a successful image. The benefits of branding are all but lost. And CMS is a wonderful tool, but at this point, it's not revolutionary. There are no reasonable web hosts that don't allow you to use CMS. If a CMS doesn't come pre-installed, don't be afraid to ask for help. A web host saying that CMS is included with their package is like a restaurant saying they're different because they include water in the price of the meal. In reality, water is free at every restaurant. You might have to ask

the waiter for it, but it's free and his job, after all, is to serve you.

If you're feeling a little dazed at this point, that's okay. A lot of thought and planning goes in to creating an effective web presence. The fact that anyone can put information online is the beauty and the curse of the Internet. The good news is that no one expects you to remember all this technical information. There are plenty of web development experts to help you through the process. Many web services firms embrace a "full-service" philosophy. They will register your domain(s) for you, design your site, set up your hosting account, install a CMS, and turn control over to you—or simply help you with any step along the way. A good developer will take the time to understand your goal and will combine their expertise with your ideas to send just the right message with your web site.

The web is becoming more and more populated every day. The number of sources of information is increasingly rapidly. This means that each day, the importance of maintaining a relevant and well-designed web site also increases. Regardless of how you use the web, there is a culture that very nearly depends on it. Take advantage of this opportunity to web the right way. ♣

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*Michael Wendt (mike@modevia.com) graduated from Martin Luther College in May 2005. He works for MLC Network Services, where he rebuilt and now maintains the MLC web site using Plone, a popular open-source CMS. Michael is also the Operations Director of Modevia Web Services LLC, a web hosting and design firm he founded in 2002.*



**E**DU TECH 2006 is a national conference geared for the Christian educator facing the challenge of not only teaching but also learning in the 21st century.

The idea is to combine the efforts of WELS Communications Service and the Commission on Parish Schools to plan a conference that would give the participant a learning experience that enhances their ministry and to keep it within an affordable cost range. Whether you are teaching in the classroom, leading/planning worship services, working as support staff, or serving as a congregation lay-leader, the conference steering committee is intent on providing something you can take back to your congregation to help grow and strengthen his kingdom through

your service.

Various components of EduTech 2006 will seek to provide participants with valuable information by

- Presenting educators with some of the latest methods and concepts of teaching and learning,
- Explaining how teaching can be enhanced with the use of technology,
- Developing new and innovative strategies for your ministry field,
- Demonstrating how technology can become an integral part of ministry, and
- Equipping participants with the knowledge to use technology to expand their ministry.

The distinguished Dr. David Walsh, psychologist, educator, author, parent, and the president and founder of the National Institute on Media and the

Family, will deliver a keynote address about how and why mass media are as powerful as they are in shaping attitudes, values, and behavior. His presentation will focus on brain development, adolescence, the impact of media on children and the factors that influence school performance, literacy, and violence prevention. His presentation promises to be down to earth, understandable, engaging, and laced with warmth and humor.

Mr. David Warlick, director of the Landmark Project, has a new vision for the classroom that is changing our definitions of teaching, learning, and being educated in the 21st century. "The Three Ts of Teaching" will present ideas to turn the classroom into a dynamic, exciting and highly effective learning environment. Mr. Warlick says of himself, "In person, what I lack in looks, I

make up for in passion for a new kind of teaching and learning that rests on the practices that we know work, and the opportunities for exciting new learning experiences that are possible only now with the advent of information and communication technologies."

EduTech 2006 will be an opportunity for educators of all types to learn about innovative ways to teach and preach the good news of Jesus Christ," said Martin Spriggs, WELS Chief Technology Officer. "I'm excited about this kind of forum that will promote and facilitate idea sharing — all centered around the common goal of being the best stewards we can be."

For more information, visit the EduTech 2006 website: [www.wels.net/jumpword/edutech](http://www.wels.net/jumpword/edutech) or call the CPS office at 414-256-3222.

**EduTech 2006 will be held June 26-29, 2006, at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh campus.**



## Introducing “Daylight”

John Boeder

*“I grew up in the WELS bubble. I don’t think I knew anyone who wasn’t WELS.”*

Have you ever heard that? It’s hard to fault anyone for how and where they grew up. God has determined our times and the exact places where we should live. The mythical WELS bubble isn’t so bad either. In it God strengthens faith and the desire to serve—sometimes in the public ministry.

But when it comes to sharing faith with people unlike us, or serving a mission or mission school in a different cultural setting, some graduates of MLC (or our predecessor institutions) have felt timid. Enter the Lord of the Church. He has opened doors for MLC students to share faith and experience ministry in our WELS mission fields, providing them with the practical experiences and social insights they need to better serve “outside the bubble.”

We call this Daylight, a program through which MLC students do short-term service and ministry projects—both to serve the church and enhance their ministry preparation. It is Daylight because we work while it is day to share Christ, the Light of the world.

What does Daylight look like? Enter

Mary, who taught an urban second grade class about the blessings of baptism. Later she learned that one second grader found out at home that she’d never been baptized. Not one to waste time, the little girl immediately sought out her pastor, and she and her siblings were baptized.

Enter Beth, who shared her faith and athletic skills at a soccer camp organized by a mission congregation in Canada. Her opportunity to rub shoulders and share Christ with kids of different cultures changed her outlook on life.

Enter Nathaniel, who canvassed hundreds of homes in the scorching heat of southern California. Seeing just one of the people he’d met that week worshipping on Sunday made it all worth it for him.

Higher education calls this service-learning. Reams of research have revealed the benefits of service-learning for students, faculty, institutions, and communities (e.g., Maryann J. Gray, Elizabeth H. Ondaatje and Laura Zakaras, *Combining Service and Learning in Higher Education* (2005)). At MLC we call it service to the Lord, part-time ministry for future ministers, Daylight.

The students' own comments reveal how helpful it is:

"It lets you leave the safe bubble of MLC to see what it is going to be like in the future when we become ministers."

"It is one of the best ways to learn the most practical things about being in the ministry."

"This experience firmly set my decision to be in the ministry. I love working with people and I couldn't have asked for a better summer where I experienced the joys and hardships with everyone I met."

"I believe that whenever I talked with a person at a door I was benefiting for the future. I learned how to deal with rejection and rejoice with the ones who were interested."

"I know that my faith has been strengthened through this experience. I know that there are amazing people in the WELS."

Students at our worker-training colleges have been doing service projects for years. With the help of mission-minded people throughout WELS the opportunities have increased. Today about 200-plus MLC students per year serve churches in over 17 different states. Some have done Travel-Canvass-Witness, a program of canvassing local neighborhoods for mission congregations. Some have promoted and taught Vacation Bible School for a week, a month, or an entire summer. Some have made evangelism calls. All have welcomed the experience and the opportunity to serve.

Join us at MLC in thanking the Lord

for the blessings of this program. What a joy to see the gospel bearing fruit in our students. What a privilege to be used by the Lord to share his gospel with those who don't know their Savior. What an experience for future church workers.

Could your church or school use MLC students for part-time ministry or service opportunities? Think of their gifts enhancing your work of sharing the Savior. Think of the insights your setting could give to future WELS called workers. Think of blessings to the kingdom of God—both now and in the future. ✝

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*John Boeder serves as the campus pastor and professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, MN.*

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through which MLC  
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their ministry  
preparation.*

## Wintering in Our Summer Notebooks: Part I—Wholeness and the Christian Teacher

Ramona Czer

**E**ACH SUMMER was the same. I'd plunge into it like a thirst-crazed nomad desperate for a lake, and thrash ecstatically in its cool depths, moaning, I'm saved, saved! Saved from what? Ah, from what I had become. Saved from the omnipresence of the parched and harried Other Woman within myself.

Sometime in January my double life would begin each year. The Other Woman would assert herself more and more until even the hope of spring was dead in me. Blind to reappearing puddles and swallows, I lived as if spring was a frivolous nothing. Who cared for that wisp of fairy dust, when close behind lurked her sister, the All-Powerful, Magical Summer. Only Summer really mattered. Only Summer when it arrived, for me around the twentieth of May, would usher in the most exotic blossoms and call home the most joyful birds to roost on my outstretched arms. Only Summer invited me to truly relax and be myself. Only that Wondrous Warmth and Freedom could finally banish my Hoyden Other Woman, also named Dogged Endurance and Duty, from the Magic Kingdom of my Teacher Summer.

But until that day, Winter reigned. I'd

slog along, using the Other Woman's bone cold presence within me to "get things done." True, I didn't much like the feel of her haggard grimace settling in on my face, and I didn't like the way she hunched my body over either, keeping me in that closed-up winter plodding that tries to block from warm middles all chilling winds even after the time has come to unzip coats, swing arms, and wear high heels, I knew she wasn't good for me, but feared if I banished her too early, I'd never be able to concentrate enough to read and evaluate all those papers I'd assigned or finish reading *Jane Eyre* for the fifth time or deserve my paycheck and therefore keep my conscience clear, crystal clear, like ice. Maybe I feared that if the Other Woman didn't keep my nose to the grindstone, I'd one day sniff the rich black soil coming to life all around me and run off into the fertile forests forever, leaving a huge pile of never-to-be-read papers lying on my desk, forlorn and untended to, a host of foster children wondering to themselves, "Did Mama ever really care at all?"

Sad how she ruled me, changed me. But I'd invented her to help me when the workload grew heavier and heavier, and I started ignoring my own projects

and creative mind play in favor of guilt-relief. She helped me feel good about that, because she was Responsibility, a lovely burden, worth sacrificing for. She became my martyr cause, my way of keeping a myriad of distractions at bay so I could concentrate and see “the end of the tunnel.” Unfortunately, I gradually began to notice that when I merged so completely with this Other Woman, that tunnel can be a pretty dark, joyless, lonely place to be. Only for so long will friends and family endure being told, “I have to finish all this, and no, I can’t take a moment for a cup of tea!” before they stop trying to drag us into joy.

My Other Woman is a confirmed social misfit who eventually kept at bay the very people I most hoped to serve: my students. Whenever well in her grip, I emanated stress and frantic hurry. If they’d hover after class to ask a question or continue a stimulating class discussion, with part of myself, I’d want to encourage them, knew I should take a deep breath and look them in the eyes and smile my willingness to be in the moment, but I could not somehow do it. The Other Woman made me gather my papers up willingly, check the clock a dozen times, keep my eyes glancing all around the room to make sure all the students had had their needs met by me, and keep checking to see if the next professor was coming through the door for class. I’d notice them noticing my face and body language turning into Winter before their very eyes, and smart young people that they were, they closed their mouths mid-sentence and

slunk away. I wanted to call after them, to tell them I really did care, please please believe me, but did I? Everything I was screamed, “Leave me be!”

This rather painful neglect of my wholeness, this shutting off of my creativity and playfulness from my nine-month school-year went on for years. Then something changed. Each summer it took longer and longer for me to banish my Other Woman self, and not just after springs when a confirmation or a graduation caused extra havoc. Now instead of my needing two weeks of sitting in a lawnchair inhaling Nevada Barr mysteries in the sun before I’d emerge from my stupor and be ready to think, plan, and write in my journals, I began to need three or four or more weeks. Some summers I’d hardly fill even one journal before school loomed again. I was dismayed. Was the Other Woman stealing my productive joyful summers as well as the other nine months of the year?

I began to hate her Duty-bound thinking, hate my fragmented life, hate the start of school, which I’d never felt before. I didn’t hate my job. I loved being able to teach and serve the Lord through serving the students he’d entrusted to my care. So how could I survive this split inside me? Would I have to give up the idea of being a writer-teacher, of being both a creative person and a thinking one? I was pretty sure that would be like a leopard wishing away its spots. That wasn’t going to happen. But what then?

God gave me a gift at last: my Summer of Wholeness Training. It start-

ed nonchalantly enough with my signing up for a week-long writing retreat that sounded like fun. My college would pay for it, and I'd have a whole week in the forests near Duluth writing with others. The workshop was called "Writing and Mindfulness" and would be led by the famous Minnesota poet/teacher Kate Green. I was keyed. Later that same summer I would also travel with my husband and ten-year-old son to live in a small apartment in Indiana, Pennsylvania, where for several weeks while Larry would work on his graduate degree, Brendan and I would tromp the parks and wilderness of Pennsylvania.

Those two experiences, my woodland workshop and our family's retreat to a simpler summer lifestyle, were so amazing and renewing and fed my creativity so well that as August neared I realized at last that I simply could not bear to be fragmented any more. I could not possibly go back to my old way of "giving up the fun stuff" when school started. My students would just have to have a writer-teacher instead of a teacher who dabbled at writing in the summer. My friends and family were just going to have to put up with Ramona going into her daydream writer-mode off and on all year. No longer could I put the real me on hold while the Other Woman did a pretty poor imitation of Joyful Service.

Ah, but how to change all of my old habits; that was the trick. All I could think of doing was using my summer notebooks to teach me how. And so I did. You will see some of those lists below. I share them because they really did work. All that scribbling really did

help me see the small things I could start right this minute to make creativity and my "future dream projects" a reality day by day, all year-round. By picking up my notebook and just beginning to notice what had happened to and around me (where I'd gone, what I'd done etc.) and then noticing what had happened inside me too, the rest seemed to come easily. What projects, I wondered, might spring from these experiences and inner changes? What baby steps are needed now, or begun already, to make them happen? Line by line I was winterizing my soul's work so that come winter, I could stay there in my summer notebooks, so I could share the whole me with my students, and so God could use the whole me to work his will.

Postscript: After a week at my Duluth workshop of scribbling exercises and private ramblings in my notebook, Kate gave us a last challenge. Ask yourselves a really hard question, something that's been troubling you lately but which you don't have the answer to yet. Write it down and make sure it really matters to you. Right away I knew what to ask, the central question of my fragmented life: How do I Bring My Spiritual/Creative Side & My Teaching Side in Sync?

Then Kate said, "Go back through your week's worth of notebook scribbles. Highlight phrases here and there without thinking, just grab and go, grab and go, looking for the barest whiff of an insight, metaphor, or baby beginning to the answer your subconscious mind just might have for you." Ten minutes later, she told us to stop

finding phrases. "Now take as many of those phrases as you like and write a poem that answers your question. Try to use ONLY your found phrases, although some "joining words" are legal. You're

writing down what your notebook is teaching your heart and mind. The poem may know more than you know." So this, friends, is my knowing summer notebook poem:

Carrying Wildness into My Classroom  
 A half-wild pet I accidentally fed  
 just enough to keep alive but hungry  
 needs holding. "Pick me up, it pleads.  
 Carry us both against your chest."  
 But how to do that in polite company?  
 How do we walk down the middle of the pavement,  
 not choosing the legal side for pedestrians,  
 or the other one for those who fly with wind?  
 How do we carry wildness with us daily?  
 Just breathe and float, like a jelly-fish,  
 And go touch those open wounds  
 Just under your peeling birch bark skin.  
 Won't it hurt?  
 Only too much.  
 Yes, you'll want to cover it from other's staring,  
 Explain away everything lovely about its strangeness.  
 But "only she who does nothing makes a mistake."  
 And when you're tempted to hum:  
 "If you go into the woods today, you better go in de skies,"  
 stay grounded, tear off that feral mask.  
 Kill it twice without a thought.  
 Underneath is the real pet you never had,  
 And baby needs mama strong.

In the notebook that follows  
 the letters indicate the topics  
 and the number indicates the  
 order of entry. (Ed.)

Czer

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>What happened outside me</b>	<b>What happened inside me</b>	<b>Plan inspired by what happened</b>	<b>Baby steps I'm taking now</b>
<b>A-1</b> I lived in the forest this summer more than ever before, especially during my week-long Writing Retreat at Cloquet.	<b>B-1</b> I discovered how happy I feel being in the woods!	<b>C-1</b> I walked a lot in the woods when I first came home but worried all that would change when school started. Then Larry found a new route to Mankato for me, via Judson River Bottom Road—a gorgeous, twisty, rustic road that goes past farms and fields and has a turn off where you can overlook the river and feel “in the forest.” Larry and I plan to go on hikes, perhaps with the children if interested, next spring/summer, day-long and even overnight eventually.	<b>D-1</b> I've been stopping at that turn-off and walking down to sit on a rock overlooking the river daily on the way in to work. It takes only 5 minutes longer to drive, but I also do my Bible reading there (15 min.). It's lovely! We bought and both began to read a book on hiking in Minnesota. We went to the Nature Preserve last Saturday, by motorcycle, and spent an hour walking in the woods and seeing some very old trees, a huge glacial rock, and the fall colors.
<b>A-2</b> I got lost several times in my forest wanderings, usually only temporarily and began taking along a few emergency supplies and feeling more and more comfortable allowing such “mistakes” to happen. When lost, I seemed to have more unusual & rewarding experiences than I'd ever had when sticking to the wide paved or gravel paths shown on every map.	<b>B-2</b> I've become braver (and also more prepared) about venturing further and even seeking harder terrain, deeper woods experiences (and in my journaling, more adventurous of the mind as well).	<b>C-2</b> I hope to have more	<b>D-2</b> I wrote “Lost to be

**A****What happened outside me**

**A-3**  
I learned about meditation, reading several books on it from both Christian and non-religious perspectives, and I practiced it several times at my Writing Retreat and later alone.

**A-4**  
My roommate at the Writing Retreat played the harp and shared her experiences and played for me and even let me touch her small lap harp.

**A-5**  
While living in Indiana, Pennsylvania, this summer with Larry, I had unending choices about what I could do with myself each day,

**B****What happened inside me**

practice inconsistent with Christian teachings at all, but is the sister of prayer! I discovered it's an excellent tool for helping to calm me and to help me focus when I'm feeling "scatter-brained." I want to study these concepts further and do it more regularly. The practice of meditation also helped me see the need to simplify my life (not just to have more time for creating myself, but because it felt so GOOD to just daydream, muse, and to simply be in the moment, much as it seems Jesus was throughout his ministry on earth, neither rushing

**C****Plan inspired by what happened**

adventurous kinds of walks in the future. But I also am trying to make connections about this concept to my writing and other "adventures" in art and music, etc.—such as learning to take more risks with genre and metaphorical thinking.

**C3**

I've meditated for 10-15 minutes perhaps three times a week since coming home from my workshop. I hope to begin doing 30 minutes a day every day soon.

I'm studying the concept of meditation from a biblical perspective as

**D****Baby steps I'm taking now**

Found on the Journey to Pith" about getting lost in our writing as the true way to make discoveries of the mind and heart that can lead to truly original prose. This became my philosophy of writing statement which I give out to my composition students every semester now.

I'm telling more stories to my students about my mistakes and circuitous processes so they sense how messy and recursive significant learning often is, even for adults.

I'm trying new and somewhat scary ventures, like playing harp, dabbling with watercol-

Author

<div>A</div> What happened outside me	<div>B</div> What happened inside me	<div>C</div> Plan inspired by what happened	<div>D</div> Baby steps I'm taking now
<p>where and for how long to go adventuring, which routes to take, what small things to pursue for our little apartment, etc., more than I've ever had (or taken anyway) in our typical, ordered homelife.</p>	<p>nor tarrying, yet always alive to each moment and truly with each person encountered).</p>	<p>part of my Bible study. I have an idea for a Christian primer on meditation to help interested people get comfortable with its precepts: Now the Eye of My Eyes Are Opened, a meditation alphabet book with pen and watercolor sketches and/or collage designs, quotations, and brief explanations of key meditation words.</p>	<p>ors, and last night I walked through Flandrau to meet Larry at the pavilion at 9 p.m. because he was there at a faculty-student party—in the total dark. I discovered there was plenty of light to see by, and it was truly magical. I took two flashlights along (my teenage daughter insisted on the backup one), but needed neither one.</p>
<div>A-6</div> <p>I had a lot of musing time with Brendan, not doing so much as just being with him. On our numerous walks, we started inventing a complex story about a bear who keeps a diary and how he came to be trapped by an elfin king in this beastly bear body.</p>	<div>B-5</div> <p>It felt so fun to have more freedom and to make more everyday small choices on my own as my son and I traveled within a thirty-mile radius of Indiana, having various kinds of small adventures daily. It made me realize that I'd be feeling a bit hemmed in (and perhaps at times resentful) of my daily</p>	<div>C-4</div> <p>I decided to take harp lessons at Bethany. I knew Norma, my friend the librarian had begun taking lessons last year and enjoyed them a lot and that they'd be</p>	<div>D-3</div> <p>I've begun doing semi-meditation whenever I'm outside and needing to focus—concentrating on my breathing, practicing "being in the moment."</p>

Author

<b>A</b> <b>What happened outside me</b>	<b>A-7</b> I didn't write much! Though I did scribble ideas and notes in notebooks a lot.	<b>A-8</b> I got used to not spending much money to have fun.	<b>A-9</b> I bought a book on how the various aspects of the forest are interrelated, vegetation, weather, land forms, animals, man's intervention, etc. and read it often.	<b>A-10</b> I sketched and painted quite a bit more than I expected to, esp. in my journals.
<b>B</b> <b>What happened inside me</b>	grind at home.	<b>B-6</b> I realized how valuable and time-consuming one-on-one adventures are—and how much my ten-year-old's insights and ideas delight me and how much more willing he is to talk maturely with me as we're "out and about."	<b>B-7</b> I discovered I don't have to write big things to be growing and changing! I can percolate and think and daydream and NOT feel guilty!	
<b>C</b> <b>Plan inspired by what happened</b>	free. I'm looking into the possibility of maybe saving enough (or more likely taking out a small loan) in order to buy a used harp by next summer. Added Note: a year later I did indeed buy a 26-string folk harp, new but on time-payment plans, and I practice now almost daily. Recently, I played in church and for some low-key events—I love this instrument more each day!			
<b>D</b> <b>Baby steps I'm taking now</b>	<b>D-4</b> I came up so far with 23 of the 26 words needed for the alphabet book, and I'm thinking about the art look to accompany the words. I've tried to simplify my teaching methods to allow me time for writing during the day, and I've started taking more time to just rest and think, instead of doing, doing, doing. I started a teaching journal to help me remember my thinking so I don't stress out about forgetting my good ideas. I'm gathering all of my best handouts for a self-published textbook to use for my			
		<b>C-5</b> I'm trying to recapture that feeling of "freedom" and "choice" into my everyday life, even		

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Czer

B

### What happened inside me

**B-8**  
I loved this guilt-free feeling and decided I want to control my own and my children's spending on nonessentials more in order to save money but also so we experience this rewarding "creative" feeling more often (like planning a Halloween party where we CAN'T spend more than \$10 on supplies).

B-9

I've begun asking questions of people who know about nature—Chad H. who is a bird-watcher, John S., a biology teacher here—even though I feel dumb. I'm trying to really notice my

B

### What happened inside me

immediate environment and the inter-connectedness of its elements instead of just enjoying its aesthetic beauty.

B-10

I found out I'm VERY moved and inspired by line and color and want to do art regularly!

C

### Plan inspired by what happened

my SCHOOL life—not just saving it for summers.

I'm trying to give Larry more of that same feeling of "freedom" too, not expecting him to fit into my schedule or the kids' schedules so rigidly. I bet it will help our relationship a lot. Already, he has loved the freedom of having the motorcycle and being able to get around where and when he wants during the day. And he hasn't shut ME out at all—in fact he loves having me with him on it.

C-6

I want to write Bear

D

### Baby steps I'm taking now

Composition and Creative Writing courses, one that focuses on the ideas of Christian creativity and the use of the communicative arts for the good of our fellow human beings and in service to our Risen Lord.

D-5

I called the director of instrumental music at Bethany who arranged with me a lesson time and have had three lessons now.

For the first 2-week period, I didn't practice ONCE because it was difficult to find time to get over to the band

C

Plan inspired by what happened

Diary with him before we forget the details.  
We will continue, God willing, to read together this year.

C-7

I'm putting a lot less pressure on myself to "write" daily—instead I'm trying to get used to capturing small perceptions and chipping away at projects as I'm led to work on them.

C-8

I'm making a budget and trying to stick with it.  
I'm making things out of odds and ends just to prove to myself I can.  
I tell myself to wait

C

Plan inspired by what happened

until the NEXT time before buying anything over \$10, esp. clothes.

C-9

I want to become more aware, more knowledgeable, and USE what I learn somehow to help others understand nature and our relationship with it.  
I want to write a story about Cabelas and that amazing frozen-moment display of theirs, using some of my new-found understandings maybe about a small animal that gets trapped inside accidentally and his/her adventures.

D

Baby steps I'm taking now

director's office where the harp is kept, but when he wouldn't be there, then to get into the office since it's locked (I have to find someone to unlock the door), and then to meet with this strange, huge instrument that is nothing like a piano and which is rather intimidating! But the next week I practiced three times, and now I've figured out a way I think I can practice almost every weekday, and today I practiced and felt more joy than fear. My teacher keeps pushing me towards a full-size concert harp, but I really want to own a

D

Baby steps I'm taking now

much smaller harp I could take with me anytime I want to.

D-6

I've allowed myself to purchase small things more often (like my purse-sized Bible) without "asking permission."  
I've organized my time so I have more pockets of doing nothing to give me that same feeling, and I don't get so hyper about "sticking to a schedule" or obsessing about inconveniencing L. if I want to stop off somewhere impulsively.  
Interestingly, L. has not minded these

Czer

C

Plan inspired by what happened

**C-10**  
My Now the Eyes of My Eyes Are Opened book idea will include my own art.  
I want to use graphic elements more as a teacher, on my syllabi but also as I teach.

D

Baby steps I'm taking now.

changes and in fact seems to like the more relaxed, assertive me (usually). Go figure! (So perhaps I've been my own worst enemy all along when I felt overly controlled by my environment or unable to "find time to write"—how sad.)

D-7

We're not writing the book yet, but we have read many books together.

D-8

I've made a Writer's Notebook, which is loose leaf, and begun notes for several projects in it.

D

Baby steps I'm taking now

I came up with a set of baby steps for each project so that when I have a few minutes I can do something to move one or more projects along. A couple of the projects are just compilations of old materials anyway, so why not use spare moments to start gathering!

My goal is every night I can I'll putter on one project, and so far I feel a nice, easy-going, fun relationship with these projects, NOT one based on ambition or guilt. And I've puttered with almost every one at least once in the last few weeks.

D

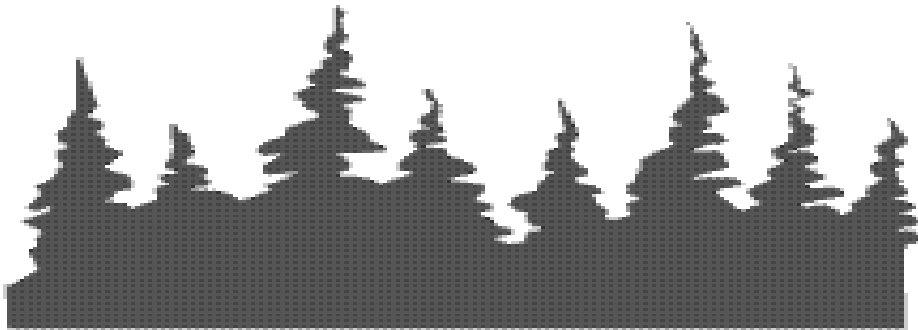
Baby steps I'm taking now

I made a bird cage for my office out of materials that probably cost less than \$7—it's lovely, I think. It hangs from the ceiling and has four birds in it (fake ones—no upkeep).  
I spent \$5 or less on all but one piece of clothing or shoes I bought all summer! And I got some pretty cute stuff.

D-9

I began a sightings journal (animals, birds, nature wonders seen on my trips to school etc.) and keep it handy under my seat in the car.  
I also keep my forest book right there with

Czer




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D

**Baby steps I'm taking now**

the sightings journal so I can look up facts, identify trees, etc, and keep my binoculars nearby as well.

I bought a used book on trees to help me identify them better (Allie used it for her biology leaf project).

I think my 9-11 Green Bird poem was inspired partly due to my forest experiences.

I visited Cabelas and took notes and sketched several of the animals.

D-10

I bought a lap desk and filled it with my art supplies so I can putter in the evenings (learn to make borders, draw

D

**Baby steps I'm taking now**

graphics to add to my teaching handouts, play with lines more freely, etc.)

I put my watercolors and a pen in my purse so I can dabble whenever I feel the urge away from home. Creative impulses will be nourished, not denied!

Czer

## Two innocent questions about teacher training in the WELS

Philip Leyrer

ONE LOOKING to earn an education degree needn't look long or hard. Scores of colleges and universities—public and private—in this country and abroad offer them, and at many of these institutions the tally of education majors tops that of all other majors.

And the tally is likely to increase. The current U.S. school-aged generation is among the largest in American history, outstripping even the prolific “Baby Boomers.” Experts who track job trends report that teachers are and will be in demand especially, of course, in our nation's most populous areas.

Against the backdrop of this reality stands Martin Luther College at New Ulm, MN. With over 600 hundred students enrolled in its studies in educational ministry programs, MLC is the vehicle for maintaining the WELS' 125 year tradition of training teachers for service in schools owned and operated by WELS congregations.

Here let us apply a rhetorical device sometimes called the innocent question. It's the inquiry of a person who either is or plays the role of the uninitiated. His or her “innocent” question is designed to cut to the heart of one's motive or rationale. Many a parent has used it on the son or daughter who comes in way after curfew and gives the flat tire (or

one of its many variants) excuse. “Let me see if I understand, changing a tire takes 2 and a half hours?” Let's try an innocent question: “Why would the WELS devote considerable resources to training its own teachers when teacher education is so readily available in so many places?” One thoughtful conclusion is this: “The WELS must be interested in a teacher training that is not available anywhere else.”

And that is right.

Does such a conclusion suggest that the training available elsewhere is somehow inferior? Not at all. In fact, evidence abounds of the effective work other colleges and universities do to train teachers. Martin Luther College professors have grown under the instruction and supervision of teachers at other colleges and universities. The benefits of their graduate work—in public universities and other private colleges—inform their teaching at MLC on a daily basis. In addition, MLC students carry out clinical and practicum experiences in the public schools at and around New Ulm. There they learn first hand of the devoted and effective service public school teachers offer consistently.

All of which only presses the question harder: Why, then, go to the effort of

training your own teachers? The answer remains. The WELS believes a distinct teacher training program is worth the expense. Distinct may not mean superior; it does, however, mean that such training is not available anywhere else.

And so the second question: What makes teacher training at MLC distinct?

From MLC's mission, to prepare men and women for the public ministry of the WELS, flows its instructional philosophy which is arguably the most important point of distinction. Much could be said of this philosophy, but, in short, it shapes the way MLC students see themselves and the way they see their future students.

MLC education students understand that they will be teaching in a classroom one day, but they know that classroom has been raised and supported by the offerings of fellow Christians who have made a choice. Their desire is that their youth receive a Christian education distinguished by its adherence to confessional Lutheranism. And they are looking for help. Specifically, they are seeking teachers trained to deliver this kind of education to their children and young adults and they regard those teachers as called servants, that is, spiritual leaders, among them. That understood, the congregation does not hire the teacher but issues a divine call to the teaching minister who will aid them in their spiritual growth. The teaching minister views himself as under this call from God's people, different from being under a contract to a school district

The MLC teacher candidate will learn

all about a child's physical, emotional, and psychological development and how she might use this knowledge together with teaching methodologies to help him achieve academic and social success. But he is also taught that his students have one more component to their being, a spiritual one, that deserves greater care. Specifically, the child's relationship with his Savior Jesus Christ is the highest concern of the teaching minister. The viability of that relationship, she understands, affects all other aspects of her students' lives and is the sole determinant of where that child will spend eternity. Delivering sound instruction, credible test scores, social adroitness and many other skills all are important and worthy of the teacher's earnest efforts. However, to excel at these and to ignore the relationship with Jesus is to deliver an education that is at odds with what the people who have called them expect and with the mission of the congregation they serve.

This critical relationship with Jesus, she also understands, is strengthened through exposure to and the exposition of the word of God. And so the MLC teacher candidate is taught to let that word permeate her teaching all day, grace her conversations on the playground, and be the boom and the balm in her classroom management. He understands that the people who have called him want this word integrated into every aspect of their children's' school experiences, and he is taught to apply that word as he teaches science, as he prepares them for their forensics

meet, and as he corrects and encourages behavior. Philosophically, she accepts and embraces the standard that God's word is central to all instruction and all activity in the school she serves.

Such a philosophy is simply not present in the teacher training programs at other private and public colleges. That other institutions do not approach their training from this philosophy is not a defect in their program but an indication that they are preparing future teachers for a different setting and purpose.

### **The bond**

When students labor under the same philosophy, a bond among them inevitably develops. They know that the people they eat, study, sing, and perform with are aimed at the same goal. While they may not all know each other personally, they do know they share a desire to serve in the ministry. Quantifying this bond is difficult, but it is significant. It is what allows MLC's athletic teams to be competitive against teams from larger schools. As one MLC coach put it, "Our guys are united in their faith and in their purpose, something other teams don't have, and that shows up in the way they play together on the field." It steers many a classroom discussion, and it prompts late night conversations about the classrooms and congregations they will one day serve. It is also the support that carries many through times of doubt.

One of the strongest links in this bond is a reality all of them have accept-

ed even if it is unspoken among them. They have made a choice to place their lives at the disposal of the church. They will accept assignment to a location and a slate of duties that meets the church's needs as opposed to their individual preferences. Put another way—where the church needs him is his preference. For over a century, the WELS has come to depend on this reality. For unless candidates are willing to go where they are needed, some congregations may not be served. This willingness is a strong part of the bond MLC students share, and it creates among them a mutual respect and trust.

Does all this commonness of purpose create some kind of elite or abnormal society? A visit to MLC's campus would suggest otherwise. MLC students pull all-nighters, play video games, argue, root with passion for their favorite teams, and oversleep their classes. One looking for a rarefied atmosphere at MLC is likely to be disappointed. The bond they share does not empty students of their personalities nor does it create sanctified behavior; it does, however, draw them together in a way that keeps them focused upon their goal, reinforces learning outside of the classroom, and lays the groundwork for a network of support that proves invaluable after they have left MLC.

### **The faculty**

That all MLC faculty members share a common faith with each other and their students is worth noting, but it is not necessarily a point of distinction. Other

Christian colleges can say the same. Praise God. What distinguishes MLC faculty from others is that they have come from the same field of service for which they are preparing their students. Through formal and informal study, they have developed a competence in the subject matters they teach, but they are not career professors. A portion of their ministries have been spent in the classrooms and congregations their students will one day serve. Their lessons, then, are regularly punctuated by references to congregational service. They are able to use personal experiences (with appropriate anonymity applied) as case studies in their classes. They can warn students of the spiritual pitfalls that are unique to the public ministry and encourage them with their personal memories of the rewards. Finally, they understand that modeling ministry is as much their responsibility as is getting others ready to serve.

This kind of “been there” quality among faculty is difficult to duplicate in other undergraduate institutions. Given the outcome for which the MLC teacher candidate is being prepared, the insights to ministry all of their professors can share is a point of distinction that must also be counted as a strength.

### **A matter of preference**

Of course, sin is present at MLC and has its deleterious effect on these points of distinction. MLC students and faculty regularly give ample evidence that their flesh is weak, that the devil is persuasive, and that the world is influential. Sadly

and wrongly, some students misinterpret their ministerial candidate status as a pass to sin boldly or as a merit badge to declare nobler standing than others. The notion that founding and operating a school of ministry is a way of keeping future called workers pure is wholly misguided. And so is the claim that a college of ministry is somehow better than another college.

Not better, but distinct, nonetheless. In the earliest years of our synod’s formation, our founders believed that educating youth in a Bible-centered environment was a priority the church must assume. Lutheran preschools, elementary schools, and high schools and the training of teachers to staff them grew out of that commitment. Today, the WELS operates the fourth largest private school system in the United States. Numerically its fortunes have risen and fallen over time, and debates over its merits have followed. The commitment, however, has remained. Of the tens of thousands of teachers who have served in these schools, the vast majority received their undergraduate training at Dr. Martin Luther College and Martin Luther College. A small minority have come from other training and, in accord with the Conference of Presidents’ resolution, have pursued synodical certification. Their able service is proof that a policy which limits service in the WELS teaching ministry exclusively to those who have been graduated from (D)MLC would also exclude the faithful service the church has enjoyed from effective non (D)MLC graduates over time. As a church, how-

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ever, the WELS continues to believe in the importance of a Christian education on all levels that is distinctly Lutheran and in the value of providing a distinct training for the teachers who will serve in their distinct schools. Simply put, the WELS prefers, special considerations aside, that its teaching ministers receive their undergraduate training at the college they have established for that purpose.

We can only thank God for the way he has blessed the WELS with a strong worker training system, the hallmark of a church that prizes its doctrine and practice. It is a gift of grace. May healthy debate about curriculum and policy at out ministerial schools continue and so refine them. No perfect system exists; however, WELS schools have received willing candidates as they have need

and the distinct training they have received has been a blessing. And the need for distinctly trained teaching ministers will continue which could lead us to a final innocent question for the young person who desires to serve his church as a teaching minister but is thinking about attending a college other than MLC: Given that the church you wish to serve has invested in a college that is designed to prepare you for the ministry you desire, and given that your church has declared this training is preferable, what would be your reasons for attending another college? ❖

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