

# knightwatch weekly



MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE

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Student Editor: Cameron Schroeder  
Luther HS / St. Paul-Onalaska WI

## A Heart for Ministry

*Ben Roekle (Shoreland / First-Racine WI) is a senior on the preseminary track, and he has a crazy story. Here's a bit of my interview with Ben!*

### So tell me the story of your heart, Ben.

The day after I was born, the doctor heard a heart murmur. Soon after, a cardiologist diagnosed me with several different heart defects. As I grew up, it became more and more difficult for my heart to keep up with the rest of my body. So when I was 2 years old, I had my first open-heart surgery, which didn't help much in the end. Even after two different pacemakers, the problems persisted. My oxygen saturation levels were getting lower and lower as my body grew, and it became difficult to do everyday things like walking around the block without becoming exhausted. The future was looking grim for me—I still had years of growth for my heart to try to keep up with. Soon the doctors offered the next solution: heart transplantation. My parents and I sat down with doctors, transplant recipients, and their families to ask questions and learn about the risks. Just three weeks later, I received a new heart!

Since the transplant, I am completely healthy and have no limitations or restrictions—besides not eating grapefruit, which is a small price to pay in exchange for the meds that keep me alive.

### What unique perspective do you hold now?

In the past few years, I have gained more and more of an appreciation for the life that I have. If it weren't for God's work through modern medicine, I may not be here today. There are a lot of transplant recipients out there that have lived for many years after receiving their new organ. However, the majority of transplant patients don't go long before needing another, leading to even more complications. These risks certainly make me very thankful for every day that I live a normal life under God's guiding and protecting hand.

### Did this experience affect your decision to train for ministry?

The gift of a heart transplant is awe-inspiring, but what blows my mind is that it isn't even the greatest gift from God that I've received. The gift of Jesus, his Son, is far greater—much more meaningful and lasting. This is what's led me to MLC to train to be a pastor. I believe I have a special reminder of God's grace in my life and of his greatest grace in Jesus. I want to share that with people—that the spiritual and physical eternal life we have through Christ is the greatest gift, and it's for everyone!

*Cameron here! Ben is an absolute light on campus. Last week's issue covered a Spanish Bible study he co-runs. He's also the president of the College Choir, and he just has a heart of gold. (No pun intended.) His medical story is certainly extraordinary, but he hit the nail on the head when he talked about the greatest gift we've ever received—the grace that comes through Christ. We can't wait to see how you use your unique story and experience to shine that gospel light here at MLC and out in the mission field!*



Ben's transplant operation went extremely well. He hung out in the hospital for a few weeks afterwards to make sure he was good to go. This is just a couple days after the operation.



Ben is engaged to Mollie Fischer (Shoreland / St. John-Burlington WI), a senior studying elementary education.