

## Grounded and Growing in Word and Worship

Word and worship are touchstones at MLC. The unchanging Word of God and confessional Lutheran worship are what ground us. At its best, confessional Lutheran worship has always used a variety of instruments and sounds to sing the new song of faith (Psalm 150:3-5; Psalm 98:1). And confessional Lutherans always seek to encourage each other in God's Word (1 Thessalonians 5:11). Grounded in this heritage, our Worship Ensembles and our Hilltop Small Groups are helping us grow.

**Worship Ensembles:** Several times a month, students like **Ellie Slangor** (*MLS / Hope-Saint Charles MI*) and **Micah Schibbelhut** (*Luther High / St. Paul-Onalaska WI, pictured*) lead the chapel music with a small worship ensemble. Instructor Judy Martens explains that the students help choose the music and musicians—sometimes opting for traditional hymns in modern settings and sometimes newer hymns and anthems.



Professor Craig Hirschmann teaches a 1-credit course in Worship Ensemble Methods and Materials, and his students also provide chapel music. About 200 students—one-third of the student body—ask if they can join a worship ensemble. "I utilize as many as I can," Instructor Martens says, "and they do wonderfully."

Ellie is grateful for the opportunity. "I wouldn't have had this unique experience of serving with so many other talented singers and musicians if I hadn't come to MLC. I've learned how to work together with professors and classmates to coordinate a worship service that involves many moving parts, taking special time and effort to involve each musician's unique knowledge and abilities. I'll take these tools and resources with me wherever the Lord sends me."



**Hilltop Small Groups:** If you're looking for authentic Christian friendships, you'll find them at MLC. One new way students are creating community is through Hilltop Small Groups. Launched by SCLA grads **Andy Raasch** (*Salem-Stillwater MN*) and **Micah Boehm** (*Crown of Life-West St. Paul MN*), these groups of 6-10 students meet weekly for Bible study, spiritual discussions, and prayer. "We share highs and lows," Andy says. "We pray for each other and minister to one another. This is where bonding and burden-bearing happens."

About 1 in 6 MLC students belong to a small group, and more will be forming next year. "It's about filling your cup," Micah says. "We're all believers, but there's always a need for the gospel and for authentic relationships."

**Mariah Schultz** says her small group is the highlight of her week. "I'm so grateful to have a close community of girls who support and care for each other. We have deep conversations about Scripture, ask questions we might have on our minds, and then apply it to our lives as college students and future teachers in the ministry." *Pictured: Mariah Schultz (DSA / Divine Savior-Doral FL), Heidi Schmidt (ALA / Shepherd of the Hills-Tucson AZ), and Dora Grubbs (MVL / St. John-New Ulm MN).*