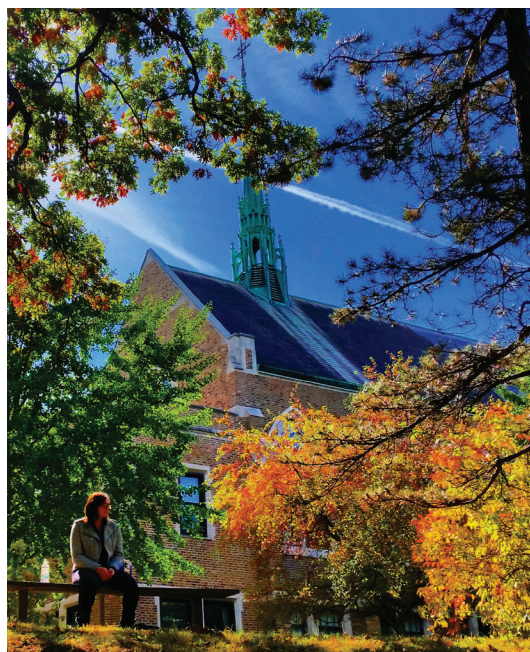




THE FIVE FAITH COMMITMENTS of Augustana College

INTRODUCTION: THE COLLEGE'S ROOTS FOR TODAY'S STUDENTS

An Introduction by Steven C. Bahls, President of the College



The Five Faith Commitments of Augustana College were unanimously adopted by the Augustana College Board of Trustees in May of 2004. They represent Augustana College's commitment to honor its roots as the college of the Augustana Lutheran Church, but in a way that meets today's students where they are. This means that the Five Faith Commitments are more than a sentimental retrospective on the college's relationship with the church. Instead, it is a document reflecting five fundamental values of the Augustana Lutheran Church and broader Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, as applied in the 21st century, which will guide us into our future.

During the process of developing the Five Faith Commitments, Augustana was confronted with the issue of what it means to be a church-related college. Roald Tweet, Professor Emeritus of English, has written and spoken about how Augustana "lives with a hyphen." He writes:

"Church-related" is even more ambiguous than "Swedish-American." Does the phrase imply that Augustana is trying to distance itself from close ties to the church, or does it imply that the College is trying to hold on to that relationship? Grammar texts are no help. One says the hyphen implies separation, another that it unites.¹

Part of "living with a hyphen" is to understand that the relationship is respectful of our history and is at the same time dynamic.

Though Augustana, like other church-related schools, will continue to wrestle with the hyphen in the years ahead, the adoption of the Five Faith Commitments strengthens the tie between the church and the college in a way that will enable the college to achieve its mission: helping students grow in spirit as well as mind and body.

When I was appointed president of the college, Brenda Czajka '75 Barnes, then chair of the Augustana College Board of Trustees, challenged the college community to be more deliberate in describing its relationship with the church. Responding to Barnes' challenge, I pledged in my inaugural comments that the college would "cherish" its relationship the church "as we engage in a dialog about the nature of our connectedness."²

Over the years, the college's relationship with the church had changed. Gone are the days when the majority of students and faculty are Lutheran. Likewise, several of the men and women who have chaired the Board of Trustees have been non-Lutheran. For these and other reasons, the college has modified its constitution to eliminate the requirement that the president be Lutheran. For decades, the college's campus ministries staff have been decidedly ecumenical. Though the college chaplain has

always been a member of the ELCA, the associate chaplains at the time the Five Faiths Commitments statement was drafted were then members of the Roman Catholic Church and Disciples of Christ. And though the college once viewed the church as its endowment, the church's contribution to the college's budget has diminished from about 20% of the budget to less than a quarter of 1%.

Despite these changes over the years, the college's connection with the church has remained an important one. And a recent (2012-13) survey funded by the President's Office suggests that students recognize and endorse this connection. The survey, entitled *Campus Religious and Spiritual Climate*, investigated student attitudes on these subjects across a spectrum of higher educational institutions. Results showed that Augustana students led their peers in valuing religion and spirituality as integral facets of college life and in welcoming interfaith activities and conversations. The college's strategic plan, unanimously adopted by the Board of Trustees in January of 2005, explicitly reaffirmed the college's relationship with the church, stating that the college is "enriched" by its relationship with the church "and the ecumenical traditions of ELCA higher education."³ We continue to believe this is so.

The initial work of developing a statement describing the connection with the church was assigned to the college's campus ministry committee. From the outset, the committee explored the relationship between the faith of our founders and the values of the college. The committee wrote:

Augustana's founders joined scholarship with religious zeal They dreamed of communicating a faith that would renew people's lives and energize the church. Many dedicated their lives to this dream. And, as scholars from the great Swedish universities of Uppsala and Lund, they brought high intellectual standards to that task. When they established a school for ministers and teachers, they insisted on academic as well as religious training. Dr. Conrad Bergendoff, President of Augustana College from 1935 to 1962, describes Augustana's founders this way: Embracing "deep religious faith," they "believed that there is an inseparable connection between faith and knowledge" and they built that belief into the institution that became Augustana.

After developing an initial draft of the Five Faith Commitments, the campus ministry committee sought comments from the college community. Some mistakenly feared that the Five Faith Commitments signaled that non-Lutherans were to have a lesser role in the mission of the college than Lutherans. To address these concerns, the committee modified the Five Faith Commitments to expressly recognize that the college "welcomes faculty and staff, regardless of creed, who will advance our mission, and the college celebrates the diverse contributions they make to our mission." As Tom Christenson, author of *The Gift and Task of Lutheran Higher Education*, notes, non-Lutherans can (and often do) carry the Lutheran yeast into the dough. Christenson argues correctly that the task of maintaining Lutheran identity is "the responsibility of all—Lutherans and non-Lutherans."⁴

In developing the Five Faith Commitments, the campus ministry committee explored how the heritage of the Augustana Lutheran Church and its relationship with its colleges might inform today's relationship.

This heritage is reflected in the Five Faith Commitments, which in the past 10 years have become an essential part of this college's identity.

President Steven C. Bahls, 2015

THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT FOR THE FIVE FAITH COMMITMENTS

The Lutheran reform movement of the 16th century originated in the intersection of the academy and the church. Out of this movement arose theological themes which shape our life as a college: (1) the goodness of creation and the continual, creative presence of God in the world, (2) recognition of God's unconditional love (grace), and (3) humanity's response to this grace, which entails the responsible use of human freedom.

The founders of Augustana College envisioned their school as an embodiment of these themes. As Dr. Conrad Bergendoff, our fifth president, declared, Augustana was a "profession of faith." Its original purpose, as specified in the college constitution, was to train Lutheran ministers and teachers to serve the burgeoning Swedish immigrant communities in America.

This faith is embedded in its name, "Augustana," a Latinized version of the German word "Augsburg." The term refers to the Augsburg Confession (in Latin, *Confessio Augustana*), written in 1530 by Philip Melancthon as a definitive statement of Lutheran doctrine at a time when schism plagued the church. The Augsburg Confession invited reconciliation among divergent views rather than focusing on theological differences. When Swedish immigrants to the United States formed their own national Lutheran church body, they named it the Augustana Synod after the Augsburg Confession. The document's conciliatory approach shaped the strong ecumenical spirit found in the Augustana Synod (which gave its name to the college). "While it [Augustana] is a denominational institution, it is not sectarian in any narrow sense of the term," the college catalogue of the early 1900s read. That spirit of openness remains central to Augustana College's vision and mission today.

Augustana's founders joined scholarship with religious zeal. Some, disillusioned with the Lutheran state church in Sweden, which seemed more political than religious, came to America fired with missionary fervor. They dreamed of communicating a faith that would renew people's lives and energize the church. Many dedicated their lives to this dream. And, as scholars from the great Swedish universities of Uppsala and Lund, they brought high intellectual standards to that task. When they established a school for ministers and teachers, they insisted on academic as well as religious training. Bergendoff describes Augustana's founders this way: embracing "deep religious faith," they "believed that there is an inseparable connection between faith and knowledge" and they built that belief into the institution that became Augustana College.

In the spirit of this tradition, the college has formulated its mission statement: Augustana College, rooted in the liberal arts and sciences and a Lutheran expression of the Christian faith, is committed to offering a challenging education that develops qualities of mind, spirit and body necessary for a rewarding life of leadership and service in a diverse and changing world.

The Five Faith Commitments articulate how a Lutheran expression of the Christian faith is lived out at Augustana. While these commitments can be shared by those of different religious and non-religious traditions, in our case each commitment springs from Christian theological soil nourished by the Lutheran reform movement.

Martin Luther believed that God is revealed in unlikely places—including a barn in Bethlehem and on a cross outside Jerusalem. Having learned to be surprised by this, members of Augustana enter into interfaith engagement with curiosity, anticipation and wonder.

Luther understood Christian freedom to comprise both freedom from having to save oneself, as well as freedom for a life of service to neighbors in need. Augustana College is called to social justice out of a sense of liberation and gratitude.

Christians put worship of God at the center of their lives. Luther democratized worship, put the Bible in the hands of everyday Christians, and considered beautiful music to go hand in hand with prayer. Augustana commits to spiritual exploration out of these sensibilities.

As both pastor and professor, Luther called faith a “living, busy, and active thing.” Out of this spirit and the Christian quest for “faith seeking understanding,” Augustana commits to ongoing reasoned examination of faith.

Finally, the Lutheran reform movement understood God to call not only church leaders, but every person to work according to their giftedness and the world’s needs. Out of this understanding, Augustana educates for vocation and supports vocational discernment.



THE FIVE FAITH COMMITMENTS OF AUGUSTANA COLLEGE

The Five Faith Commitments comprise (1) interfaith engagement, (2) social justice, (3) spiritual exploration, (4) reasoned examination, and (5) vocational discernment:

1. INTERFAITH ENGAGEMENT: Augustana College celebrates God’s regard for the worth and dignity of all persons.

- Recognizing that we learn from one another, even in moments of disagreement, Augustana encourages collegial dialog among people with diverse religious and non-religious identities, cultures, and life experiences.
- Augustana welcomes persons of all ages, genders, sexual orientations, races, colors, creeds, ethnic backgrounds, and levels of physical ability, to participate fully in college life.
- Augustana Campus Ministries offers hospitality and programming that is ecumenical and interfaith.
- Augustana works to maintain diversity within the professional and student staff of the college, including Augustana Campus Ministries.
- Augustana recognizes and supports the formation of groups by students from different Christian traditions and from different world religions by providing a welcoming academic community, spiritual advisors, and appropriate space for worship and reflection.

2. SOCIAL JUSTICE: Augustana College encourages the development of a campus community that seeks justice, loves kindness, and acts with love and humility.

- Augustana commits to making our campus and the wider world a more livable place for all persons by loving and serving the neighbor and by acting against injustice and intolerance.
- We prioritize engagement in the Quad Cities community, which is for us a focus for our concern and learning.
- Through student groups, offices, and programs, such as Campus Ministries, Interfaith Understanding, Micah House, and the Freistat Center for World Peace, Augustana shows students ways to serve others, and to advocate for justice and peace.
- Augustana seeks to embody the ideals of justice, peace, civility and love in our institutional practices and relationships. To that end, Augustana seeks to develop fair and charitable policies shaping how we relate to each other, the surrounding community, and the earth.
- Augustana models and encourages its faculty, staff and students to be responsible stewards of resources.
- Through curricular and extracurricular activities, including its Center for the Study of Ethics, Augustana seeks to inspire the community to discuss issues of ethical significance.



3. SPIRITUAL EXPLORATION: Augustana College provides a context in which every student might ask meaningful questions about life, morality and spiritual practice.

- Augustana funds and staffs a strong Campus Ministries program, one that encourages members of our campus community to explore religious commitments and existential questions.
- Campus Ministries offers regular opportunities for Christian and interfaith worship, including weekly services and a weekday time when the whole campus community can join for reflection.
- Augustana supports extra-curricular study groups which explore religious topics with intellectual rigor and honesty.
- Primarily through Campus Ministries, Augustana provides spiritual care and nurture, including counseling and mentoring, to the entire college community.
- Augustana seeks to model behaviors which are consistent with a faith-filled, ethical and examined life. Members of the college community encourage each other to conduct their work, community involvement and interactions with one another in ways that demonstrate the centrality of these values.
- Augustana uses prayer and religious music at many of its central events, such as the opening convocation, baccalaureate services and commencement.

4. REASONED EXAMINATION: Augustana College encourages our campus community to wrestle with ways in which faith and reason challenge and enrich each other.

- Augustana’s faculty and staff help our students lead the “examined life” by exploring their values and beliefs, while at the same time challenging them to act ethically.
- Augustana supports discussions of faith and belief both inside and outside the classroom.
- Augustana maintains a strong Department of Religion, which offers courses in which religious beliefs and practices are evaluated in a critical, scholarly way. A course in Christian traditions is required of all students.
- In keeping with the Lutheran tradition of higher education, Augustana stimulates free inquiry and cherishes academic freedom on our campus.
- Augustana provides for ongoing campus conversations about the ways in which our Lutheran heritage and theological tradition shape our approach to faith and learning.
- Augustana recognizes the ways in which creative endeavor—in writing, music, drama, dance and the visual arts—enriches our understanding of faith.

5. VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT: Augustana College affirms that work and career—indeed, all human effort—are aspects of an understanding of vocation, a concept the Lutheran tradition in higher education helps illuminate.

- With the leadership of CORE (Careers, Opportunities, Research, Exploration), Augustana offers guidance to our students in developing a sense of vocation, including ways for students to test their sense of calling.
- Incorporating service-learning opportunities in the academic curriculum and in student life, Augustana helps our students develop qualities necessary for servant leadership in community, church and world.
- Augustana encourages Campus Ministries, CORE, the pre-seminary studies program, and interested faculty members to serve as resources for students who are discerning a call to active ministry in the church.
- Various offices at Augustana work with congregations and other faith-based organizations to provide learning opportunities for the church and community.
- Augustana expects its president to regard leading the college as a calling. The constitution stipulates that the President of the College be a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or of a denomination to which the ELCA is related through ecumenical agreements.
- Augustana hires other chief administrators, regardless of creed, who support and will nurture the church-related mission of the college.
- Augustana welcomes faculty and staff, regardless of creed, who will advance our mission, and the college celebrates the diverse contributions they make to our mission. Augustana has long recognized that Lutherans and non-Lutherans alike are important to advancing our mission.

¹ Dag Blanck and Michael Nolan, *On and Beyond The Mississippi: Essays Honoring Thomas Tredway* (Rock Island, Ill.: Augustana Historical Society, 2004), page 4.

² Steven C. Bahls, Inaugural Address: Liberal Arts Education and Courageous Servant-Leadership [October 10, 2003].

³ Authentically Augustana: A Strategic Plan for a Premier Liberal Arts College [2005].

⁴ Tom Christenson, *The Gift and Task of Lutheran Higher Education* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004), page 14.

Augustana College