

Pacific Lutheran University

Wild Hope Essay: 2020 Vision

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I can recall a conversation I had with my siblings on New Year's Eve about "2020 vision" and how 2020 was going to be a year for the books. This conversation included my younger sister who is graduating high school this spring and my younger brother who is graduating from junior high. In a matter of months, our academic and social lives were disrupted with the transition to distance learning, as well as the statewide lockdown. Fears and anxieties started to creep up on us, and we struggled with our new reality.

Going into this year with the motto "2020 vision" implied a year of perfection with all our goals in sight and within reach. Despite the unprecedented challenges we have faced thus far, I constantly have to remind myself that this vision can still happen. My sister is committed to going to PLU with me in the fall, and she is already so proud to call PLU her home, especially after seeing how our faculty and staff have handled distance learning. PLU's mission statement, "...to educate students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership and care— for other people, for their communities and for the Earth" ("About PLU") rings true to this day. PLU instills values in its students to be caretakers of the earth and each other.

I applaud PLU for creating the CheckFive social media campaign, where Lutes are challenged to take the initiative and check in on peers, classmates, or just someone we haven't heard from since being at school. Their message to "reach out" truly resonated with me and prompted me to arrange a Zoom hangout with friends that same week. Now, more than ever, it is so important to be there for each other and be that constant person for someone in the midst of all this ongoing change.

One thing that I have learned during my time in quarantine and social distancing is this: My capacity to serve may be restricted at this time, but my ability to serve remains the same. This is a time when I have come to realize that being adaptable is key; not just to survive, but to *live*. I have always believed that human connection is powerful and that one vocation that everyone should treasure and uphold is the call to serve others. The Wild Hope Center for Vocation at PLU writes, “We are *called* by new knowledge and experience, by other people, by pressing need, by global events and crisis, and-for many-by the numinous, a higher power, by God, into awareness that life is more than securing a comfortable existence for oneself.” Now, I veer away from saying that I am stuck at home; as the days keep passing by, I am increasingly aware that being at home is a privilege. It is when we dwell in being uncomfortable that we push our boundaries and reach new limits, opening doors for more opportunities to serve.

My family consists of many essential workers: doctors, nurses, cashiers, and mail carriers. In the past month, I had to leave my second home at PLU to step up and watch my cousin’s two young children while she is busy handling countless carry-out orders and when I am awakened by the cries of my aunt’s three-year-old son as she rushes off to work at the hospital. Sometimes I feel helpless, staring blankly at my computer screen, until I come across a video from doctors and nurses everywhere pleading for us to “help me, help you” by asking those who are not carrying out essential functions to stay at home. These anxieties are similar to those discussed in Lutheran theology; how we as humans sometimes feel as though we are not doing enough to be favorable in God’s eyes (“Serving Wholeness and Health: Lutheran Studies”). That feeling of helplessness can become overwhelming and ultimately trap us in our complacency, diminishing our own self worth.

It is terrifying when we cannot control the things that are happening around us during this pandemic. We can only do our due diligence and understand what we *can* control. Even something as simple as making a list before entering a grocery store is an act of service. By doing this you keep yourself from wandering the aisles and you are limiting your exposure to others. Another thing to take note of is to keep away from buying WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) products for families who rely on them for food benefits. Grocery stores are already struggling to keep up with the demand for everyday household items, so let's be mindful of each other.

As a person who has a grandmother with diabetes and a grandfather who is immunocompromised, the risk of contracting this virus is my worst nightmare. For those of us who have elderly family members or friends, think about picking up their groceries the next time you are getting some for yourself; this can be one of the ways you fulfill your vocation. Martin Luther reinvented the term 'vocation' to not only apply to religious people, but those who "enter and engage the world, especially those who are in need, powerless, or suffering" ("Discerning One's Calling: Lutheran Studies"). Other acts of service can be as simple as doing chores around the house to ease some stress off of the people in your family who are essential workers. My siblings and I always clean and do the dishes so my mom can rest when she comes home from work, as well as having dinner ready for my sister after she is exhausted from working 12 hours at the restaurant.

One of the blessings I am able to have is the ability to work remotely through my job at CCES as a Big Buddy. Although my time working alongside my Little Buddy at the local elementary school was cut short, I have had the opportunity to post videos for our greater

community on our Instagram page talking about themes of the week, such as perseverance and responsibility. With each video I discuss what the theme means and how it applies to the situation we are in today. At the end of every video I say, “Stay healthy. stay safe, and go Lutes!” It is my way of reminding our larger community and fellow Lutes that we are all in this together. The day will come when we are all sharing laughs in Red Square, constantly holding doors for each other (of course), and waiting in line at the Commons to beat the chapel break rush. That day will be a beautiful sight and truly set the tone for keeping the “2020 vision” alive.

Word Count: 1112

Works Cited

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“Wild Hope Center for Vocation.” *Pacific Lutheran University*, www.plu.edu/vocation/.