



The Five Faith Commitments of Augustana College

1. Augustana College offers every student the opportunity to develop a life-shaping spirituality.

- Augustana funds and staffs a strong Campus Ministries program that encourages members of our campus community to explore spirituality in a variety of ways.
- Campus Ministries offers a variety of weekly opportunities for Christian worship.
- Augustana provides times and spaces for other forms of spiritual reflection by persons and groups, including a weekday time when the whole campus community can reflect and worship together.
- Augustana supports extra-curricular study groups which explore a variety of religious topics with intellectual rigor and honesty.
- Augustana, primarily through Campus Ministries, provides spiritual care and nurture, including counseling and mentoring, to the entire student body.
- Augustana seeks to model behaviors which it believes to be consistent with a life that is faith-filled, ethical and examined. 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 welcomes the use of prayer and religious music at many of its central events, such as opening convocation, baccalaureate services and commencement. This is done as an expression of the College's identity and not exclusion.

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

- Augustana's faculty members 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 Religion Department, 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.
- Augustana, in keeping with the Lutheran tradition of higher education, seeks to stimulate 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's constitution provides 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.

3. Augustana College affirms that work and career—indeed, all human effort—are aspects of an understanding of vocation, which the Lutheran tradition in higher education helps illuminate.

- Augustana, with the leadership of its Center for Vocation Reflection, offers guidance to our students in developing a sense of vocation, including ways for students to test their sense of calling.
- Augustana helps our students develop qualities necessary for servant leadership in community, church, and world through incorporating service learning opportunities in the academic curriculum and in student life.
- Campus Ministries, the Center for Vocational Reflection and interested faculty members are resources to 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.

4. Augustana College celebrates God’s regard for the worth of all persons.

- Augustana welcomes persons of all ages, genders, sexual orientations, races, colors, creeds, ethnic backgrounds, and individuals with disability, to participate fully in all aspects of college life. As such, recognizing that we learn from one another, Augustana encourages collegial dialogue among people of different faiths and cultures, even in moments of disagreement.
- 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.

5. Augustana College encourages the development of a campus community which seeks justice, loves kindness and acts with love and humility.

- Augustana joins various local, national and global efforts to make the world a more livable place for all persons.
- Augustana, through Campus Ministries, the Center for Vocation Reflection, and the Freistat Center for World Peace, makes students aware of ways to serve with faith organizations and other groups that 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 just policies in how we relate to each other and the surrounding community.
- Augustana models and encourages its faculty, staff and students to model the responsible stewardship of resources.
- Through curricular and extracurricular activities, including its Center for Ethics, Augustana serves as resource to inspire the community to discuss issues of ethical significance.

Appendix One: Five Faith Commitments in Historical Context

The Lutheran reform movement originated in the intersection of the academy and the church. Out of this movement arose theological themes which shape our life as a college:

- The goodness of creation and the presence of the divine in the world;
- Human freedom and responsibility in response to God's grace, and
- The continual creative activity of God in this world.

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

Augustana's faith is embedded in its name: "Augustana," a Latinized version of the German word "Augsburg." This 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 emphasizing exclusivity. 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 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.

Reviewing our history suggests five core values that characterized the life of the Augustana Synod:

1. encouragement of personal piety
2. commitment to higher education
3. practice of servant leadership

4. pursuit of ecumenism
5. engagement in world missions

These values remain central aspects of Augustana College today and are expressed in the preceding faith commitments.

Appendix Two: Statement by President Steve Bahls about the Lutheran Expression of Higher Education at Augustana College.

The purpose of the Five Faith Commitments is to stimulate a discussion of what it means for Augustana to be a church-related college and to start to develop a common language as we talk about our church-relatedness. While we recognize that the church and the college are not, as institutions, identical, the Commitments recognize the importance of our church-relationship. It is an aspirational document that examines how our church relationship informs the ways we help students grow in mind, spirit and body.

The Augustana Board of Trustees challenged the College community to engage in this discussion as it determined that we do not always speak as clearly and forthrightly as we might about what it means to be church-related. The Five Faith Commitments creates a useful reference point for our ongoing discussions and our statements about how we view ourselves as a church-related college. Members of the College community may describe the relationship in different ways, though I anticipate that there will be important common threads in the explanation. Likewise, each of us possess different talents and passions, so each of us will advance the Five Faith Commitments in different ways. We take pride in the richness and complexity of our self-understanding, and we are good stewards of the Lutheran tradition of valuing plurality.

Roald Tweet, Professor Emeritus of English, has written and spoken about how Augustana “lives with a hyphen.” Part of “living with a hyphen,” Dr. Tweet argues, is struggling with the 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.*

Part of “living with a hyphen” is to understand that the relationship is respectful of our history and is at the same time dynamic. From early in its history, Augustana has taken a decidedly ecumenical approach to its calling. The College’s second president, T.N. Hasselquist, noted: “Openly and honorably we can confess that we cherish a very healthy openheartedness both in relationship to other Christian denominations and to contemporary culture as well as learning in general.” Dr. Bergendoff, the College’s fifth president, viewed Augustana as a profession of faith. He wrote that the College’s founders believed that “no education is worthy of the designation ‘higher’ which ignored the profoundest experiences and loftiest aspirations of mankind.”

The College’s seventh President, Dr. Thomas Tredway, wrote about what the church-relatedness of the College means in the classroom. He wrote that there are no “Christian courses of study, no

Christian geology, no Christian literary criticism.” He then noted that Christian faculty members at Augustana enrich student learning by bringing “insights arising from his or her Christian thought and experience to bear upon the discipline being taught and studied.” Nearly twenty-three years ago, Dr. Tredway wrote: *Most of the ideas, issues and events that make our college in Rock Island so interesting do not come simply from either Athens or Jerusalem. They arise in the complex net that is the life of this and any institution, and they are usually subtle and tricky. I hope, though, that it is useful for us to recall that our classical heritage is the source of our commitment to our principal mission: The liberal arts education of thoughtful people; and that it is our Christian heritage that reminds us that even these, our highest ideals, are subject to the judgment of God.*

The evidence is clear that Augustana, because of how our faculty and staff interpret our mission, has a dramatic impact on the lives of almost all of our students by helping them find their vocation. About 46 percent of our first-year students think it is important that they develop a meaningful philosophy of life, but upon graduation 80 percent believe it is essential. For many, the Lutheran expression of higher education has helped them develop a philosophy of life influenced and enhanced by spirituality. As important, we know that only 34 percent of our first-year students think it is important to influence social values, but when they graduate the percentage increases to 76 percent. For many of these students, the programs that emanate from Augustana’s church-relatedness helped them explore and develop a passion for their vocation. Though our students are of many faiths and will find different vocations, they will be bound together as persons who have been inspired during their years here to be passionate about justice, love kindness and act with love and humility.

I believe that our founders, if they were to consider the Five Faith Commitments within the context of today’s students and today’s society, would be proud of the College. They would find in the Five Faith Commitments strong evidence of Martin Luther’s views about vocation. They would recognize the College’s mission to help students not just to develop academically, but to grow in mind, spirit and body. Lars Esbjörn, our first president, would be proud to discover from the Five Faith Commitments that the College has not separated itself from worldly concerns, but is engaged in the world. President T.N. Hasselquist, our second president, would not be surprised to learn that his commitment to ecumenism has flourished at the College. Dr. Bergendoff would see that Augustana remains a profession of the faith of our founders in a dynamic, and therefore relevant, way. And Dr. Tredway would be pleased to find that the Five Faith Commitments support our faculty in continuing to encourage students to wrestle with the relationship between Athens and Jerusalem, right here in Rock Island.

The Augustana community has reason to be proud that we are making the benefits of the Lutheran expression of higher education available to all—Lutherans, Catholics, Evangelicals, other Christians, Jews and Muslims, and even those students with no professed faith. Just as our founders believed both Americans and Swedes were necessary for the best faculty, they would be proud that today’s faculty is religiously diverse, yet is united in a commitment to help students grow in mind, spirit and body.

It is a privilege for me to serve as the president of Augustana as we engage in this important and on-going discussion of the nature of our church relationship within the context of a premier liberal arts college.