

**Zion Chaplain Conference**  
**“How Firm a Foundation: Theological Challenges**  
**of Pastoral Care in Specialized Ministries”**  
**Norcross, Georgia**  
**October 22, 2010**

Luke 24:1-53

Mark 8:31

2 Timothy 1:1-14

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

It's very good to be with you. I greet you in Jesus' name and on behalf of my colleagues in leadership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

I come mostly to say words of thanks, just as you've been thanked by other speakers today for the extension of the body of Christ you are in your specialized calls. As Dr. Niedner mentioned and I know, sometimes you feel disconnected from, disregarded by and lacking a sense of affirmation from ELCA leadership. I hope my presence expresses some of that appreciation that we always have had, but that maybe you don't always hear.

In an exceptional lecture called “Pontiff, Prophet, Poet: What Kind of Leaders Will We Require?” John Thomas, former General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, asks: “is the pressing question today ‘what kinds of churches need pastors?’ or is it ‘what kind of mission needs leaders?’” He argues it is the latter when we think of mission as “*missio Dei*” – God's work in and for the sake of the world. He goes on to describe the kinds of leaders we need.

*Pontiffs, Prophets and Poets*

We will need leaders who are pontiffs. A pontiff is a bridge-builder. Bridge-builders don't impose uniformity; they seek to enable different communities to become a diverse community.<sup>1</sup> Right now in our relationship with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, we need bridge builders. You stand as pontiffs in that relationship, and we need pontiffs.

I want you who are in the LCMS to know of our commitment in the ELCA to continue all the ways that we witness to Christ and serve our neighbor, as we have done so well in the past. It's my prayer that we continue to work in response to fill the need with Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Lutheran Services in America, through chaplaincy, through Lutheran Disaster Response and through military chaplaincy.

I do not believe the world needs to witness more fragmentation in the body of Christ when the world itself has enough fragmentation. It needs to witness the unity of faith amidst the diversity of its expression. So thank you for being pontiffs.

The second characteristic that President Thomas mentions is that God's mission today needs prophets. Prophets who are truth-tellers in an age of massive deception. I felt in Dr. Shauna Hanna's Bible study that we were witnessing a prophet as Thomas describes it. I want to read Thomas' description of a prophet and then I think you'll concur with me that we were blessed by that prophetic voice today: “Prophets are truth-tellers, they

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<sup>1</sup> John Thomas, *Pontiff, Prophet, Poet: What Kind of Leaders Will We Require?* A presentation to the United Church of Christ Annual Consultation in San Antonio, Texas, February 20, 2002; p.5. Copyright © 2011 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). All rights reserved. This copyright notice must appear on all copies and reproductions. Copies may be produced for distribution within the ELCA by affiliated ELCA organizations.

discern truth for and within the community of faith... We will require leaders schooled in the theological disciplines and practiced in the spiritual disciplines lest the truth that is proclaimed be merely warmed-over political agenda or social ideology with a pious veneer.”<sup>2</sup>

And now here’s what made me think of you, Shauna: “The capacity to read Scripture critically and teach the Bible thoughtfully, to think and speak as theologians informed by the richly diverse traditions of the church through the ages, to pray and to meditate, alone and corporately, to listen to God and particularly to the oppressed and to those who are vulnerable—these disciplines are critical to resisting the deceiving and distorting voices that shout from beyond the church and that whisper within”<sup>3</sup>

The third characteristic needed for God’s mission today, he said, are not just pontiffs and prophets, but poets. In Dr. Niedner, we experienced leadership of a poet. Thomas says, “Poets, literal poets in some cases, but perhaps in most cases leaders equipped to use language and symbol, liturgy and song, ritual and sacrament, silence and dance to help us imagine a world that is more than marketplace, to claim a life that is profoundly connected and communal to see the world and one another as mystery to be worshiped rather than objects to be consumed.”<sup>4</sup>

Thomas also says, “Poets and liturgists are today’s evangelists, who enable us to see the improvisational God revealed in Jesus Christ and lure us into the company of those no longer satisfied with consuming or with living as competitive strangers to one another.”<sup>5</sup>

So thank you for letting me be in the presence of leaders who are pontiffs, prophets and poets. Listening to Dr. Niedner, I watched what I was going to say in a more linear way be magnified in a poetic way, as he said, “onto a canvas.”

### *Figural Narrative*

So I’m just going to remind you of what you already know about the theology that I think is shaping your ministry, hearts and minds. And these are just really fragments of thoughts from along the way about what I see—and maybe wonder with you about—as key theological elements in past frontiers in specialized ministry. And again, this was exemplified in all of Dr. Niedner’s speech.

I think we need to keep asking ourselves, what is the figural narrative that is woven throughout our ministry? If you read philosophers, they declare that we are living in post-modernity. I think the end of modernity has been prematurely announced. Maybe we’re in trans-modernity because we’re not out of modernity. But one of the descriptors used by philosophers of post-modernity is the absence of and disparaging of any meta-narratives.

At most, you have micro-narratives—your own little fragmented story—and it’s a highly localized narrative. It tends to be a very turned-inward-upon-self narrative that is self-described individually, tribally or communally. And so there is disparaging of any meta-narratives, and yet we can’t be people of faith absent meta-narrative.

As I have accompanied and we have benefited from pastors in specialized care ministry—and I bet every one of us here has both offered and been the recipient of your

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 7.

ministries—I always want to ask, “What’s the meta-narrative?” You’ve been trained in the narratives of psychology. You’ve been trained in many meta-narratives that you incorporate, but as I’ve heard Dr. Niedner speak, and as I believe so deeply myself, if the paschal mystery is not the meta-narrative, then we have forsaken the heart of our call and our witness to the Christian gospel.

In “Seven Working Assumptions for Preaching in a Missional Church,”<sup>6</sup> Edwin Searcy presents seven working assumptions for preaching in a missional church that also apply to the ministry of pastoral care.

In this genre of preaching for a missional church, the preacher proclaims the truth of an alternative way of figuring things out. The Cruciform pattern of Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday provides the coherent narrative that is rehearsed in sermon, in liturgy, in all aspects of the congregation's life, and I would say in all aspects of your ministry. This movement from Good Friday’s aching loss through Holy Saturday’s forsaken absence to the astonishing newness of Easter day stands in stark contrast to the dominant figural narratives of our culture of satiation and self-reliant success.

In other words, the Church's testimony is pre-figured. The figural preacher—or I would say, the figural pastoral counselor—is like a figure skater whose sermons are practiced movements to the pattern figure of the cross.

Last week we experienced a layoff of 65 staff in Chicago, plus seven from our Mission Investment Fund and another five who will be called home as global mission personnel. How do you live in the midst of that deep loss if you don’t live in the figural narrative of God present in, with, and under the mystery of God, of Christ’s death and the promise of his resurrection?

In the midst of our layoff of those colleagues, another colleague, James Nelson, a very experienced hiker, went on a five-day solo hike in the Colorado mountains. He didn’t return when he was expected, and that began a massive search with some of the best rescue teams trained in the Colorado mountains with helicopters and dogs and on foot.

As James’ fiancé, Amber, who works with us as well, his father, mother and sister began to gather at the rescue center station, the chief of the rescue squad asked if he could call a chaplain. They indicated yes and he said, “Would you mind if he were Lutheran?”

Well, he called the local ELCA pastor, who also works as a chaplain with the rescue squad. He became the presence with them through the three days of the search that they ultimately had to call off because they found absolutely no evidence of James anywhere along that 26-mile trail or among the steep rocks that he was going to climb.

Pastor Scott could be present because of the figural narrative of the paschal mystery. He was being called to be the presence of God in Christ with those who were experiencing absolutely aching loss and an excruciating sense of forsaken absence, and yet—in the midst of that—could proclaim the astonishing newness of God in Christ, who gives life in the midst of death and forsakenness.

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<sup>6</sup> Edwin Searcy, *Seven Working Assumptions for Preaching in a Missional Church*, (University Hill Congregation; Vancouver, British Columbia) 2010.

### *Basic Chords*

As many other narratives beckon and call you to become central, I hope that you keep the paschal mystery as the figural narrative of your ministries. Where Christ is present, your presence is an extension of God. The Gospel is a literal narrative that can be lived through Luke, chapter 24, where Jesus rises from the tomb, appears to his disciples, and ascends into heaven.

My unfulfilled dream from college on is that I could play the blues like Lazy Bill Lucas and have B.B. King backing me up on the guitar. Lazy Bill Lucas was then about 80 years old. He was a blind blues player who played in clubs in the Cedar Riverside area of Minneapolis, where Augsburg students shouldn't go. But Lazy Bill could play the blues like no one I have known.

I can't play the piano or the guitar, but I do know this much: if you're going to play the blues, you first need to learn the chords before you can do the riff, before you can jam. If you don't return to the chords and all you're doing is riffing and jamming, pretty soon you may be entertaining yourself, but no one else will be drawn into the music. I am afraid our communication about this church sometimes is heard by the people both in it and on the outside as noisy riffs that leave them lost and disinterested because we've lost the capacity to know and return to the basic chords.

When we are busy with the riffing and improvising of our lives, we may not hear to trust the base chords of God's grace and God's love. But God does not abandon God's creation, bending low and meeting us where we are in the bedlam and beauty, the chaos and creativity, and the suffering and rejoicing of being human.

Mark 8:31 says, "Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (NRSV).

In Luke 13:18-21, Jesus reminds us that the Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, like yeast (NRSV).

In John we hear, I am the light of the world. I am the bread of life. I am the Resurrection and the life. I am the Shepherd of the sheep (NRSV).

What are the base chords in your ministry as a chaplain? Remembering and reconciliation are central theological themes in ministry. Much of chaplaincy occurs in times of trauma and tragedy, when people feel isolated, anxious, terrified of the future, disconnected from community. Memories can be painful but we remember for the sake of re-remembering. Remembering is in service of re-connecting, meaning not just to escape or condemn our present, but to draw us closer to another in the life of Christ's community, the church.

[PLEASE NOTE: A portion of the bishop's presentation was not recorded. It begins again below.]

### *Transformation and Inclusion*

We're not of one mind in this church. And then people hold with great sensibility and authority interpretation their understandings of the place of gay and lesbian people in the church. But what has irritated me most is those who have left saying that the ELCA forsook the gospel of repentance and transformation for a gospel of radical inclusion.

I don't understand that bifurcation of the gospel, particularly as Paul described it to the Corinthians. Just listen to this and help me understand how you separate a gospel of

transformation from a gospel of radical inclusion: “From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view, even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view; we know him no longer that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God” (2 Corinthians 5:16-18, NRSV).

That’s about as radical a gospel of transformation as you will ever hear, right? Then Paul goes on: “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them” (2 Corinthians 5: 18-19, NRSV).

That’s about as radical a gospel of inclusion as one can come up with: the whole creation reconciled to God through Christ. Paul goes on, “[A]nd entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:19-20, NRSV). Entrusted to you is both this radical gospel of transformation, since you are an ambassador for Christ, and this gospel of radical inclusion, since that message has been entrusted to us. So our remembering is for the sake of reconciliation.

At the Saint Paul Area Synod, the staff was hopelessly stuck one day. We used a Jewish psychotherapist four times a year to keep us healthy. (By the way, any system that thinks the lead person should be the one keeping it healthy—you all know this, but too many lead staff people think that their job is to keep the staff healthy, when they’re usually the cause of the incident.) Most of the pastors in the synod that wanted calls were absolutely irritated with us that we hadn’t produced calls for them, as if the district and the synod are the employment offices for the clergy unions. We also had several conflicted congregations in which we were involved in resolving their conflict. We weren’t doing well.

Our Jewish psychotherapist looked at us and said, “This is probably not appropriate for me, a Jew, to ask you Lutherans, but do you people believe in the grace of God or don’t you?” [Laughter]

And then she did something interesting. She said that she wanted us to go off for twenty minutes and think back over our life experiences, and upon what experiences we might draw to give us some wisdom, encouragement and insight for going forward together in a difficult time.

When we came back after twenty minutes and started sharing the memories of those life experiences, we learned about each other’s life stories in ways we had never taken the time to learn. Then we suddenly realized that in the collective memory of the staff was a great, rich wisdom reservoir upon which we could draw both insight and courage for getting through a difficult time. It was remembering for the sake of reconciliation. It was remembering for the sake of finding a way through that would be healing, not dividing.

I remember a story told to me by Phyllis Anderson, president of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. She, her husband and children were backpacking in Norway. They were above the timberline and had gone off the trail to pitch a tent for the night. In the morning, they awakened to fog so dense they could not find the path. Calm gave way to anxiety. They began searching for something that would reassure them that they were not lost, something that would point the way for them. They finally came upon a pile of stones, a cairn. Someone had gathered scattered stones and had piled them up so they

could become a marker, orienting those who were lost, searching or simply needing a reminder that they were still on the path.

A cairn—stones once scattered, now gathered, become like living stones. “Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy (1 Peter 2:10, NRSV). [L]ike living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5, NRSV). Scattered stones, gathered in baptismal waters, become a cairn, a marker, pointing the way. A cairn can also be a monument or a memorial—in a sense, inviting the ones standing in its presence into a life beyond theirs, into a time, a story, that transcends the present moment and narrative of their lives.

Could that possibly be an image of the vocation of chaplains? A cairn of living stones, Christ the cornerstone, a marker, and a living memorial?

### *Communal Lament and Joy*

This is very much a part of your ministry, but the interplay and the inseparable dance between lament and joy are expressions of Christian goodness. I don’t think we do particularly well with either one as Christians. It’s often said of us as Lutherans that we could grab despair out of the jaws of joy at any moment. But I’m not sure we do any better with lament, either, especially public lament.

Emily Townes is an ethicist who has done a sermon on the book of Joel that Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, a Lutheran ethicist has quoted: “Communal lament is the assembly crying out in distress to the God in whom it trusts. . . . Deep and sincere communal lament . . . names problems, seeks justice, and hopes for God’s deliverance. Lament . . . forms people; it requires them to give name and words to suffering.”<sup>7</sup> But there’s another word for us, a word from God for us who are wondering if God hears our lament. God’s promise, God’s invitation to life defined not by lamenting, but by faith. A life of faith marked by remembering.

Listen to Paul writing to Timothy, “I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, . . . I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you” (2 Timothy 1:3-6 NRSV). God’s invitation is to remember. So what is the nature of our remembering these days in our calls to servant leadership? Remembering often is infected by the virus called nostalgia. So remembering becomes a way of escaping the harsh realities of the present. Remembering becomes a nostalgic longing for an idealized past that more than likely never existed. Such nostalgia becomes a buffer against living, engaging in service and witness in the present while anticipating God’s promised future.

For others, the past holds an enculturation of the Christian faith that serves as an idealized model that must be imposed on all Christians today. The reverse side of the coin is the past as the point of reference for our reactivity that condemns any and all impurity and error and—yes—oppression in earlier times and in so doing rejects all of the past. It matters not whether this enculturation is some supposed consensus of the apostolic age or the confessional orthodoxy of 1580 or the immigrant pieties of our 19<sup>th</sup> century ancestors.

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<sup>7</sup> Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, *Public Church for the Life of the World* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, 2004) 68-69.

When viewed in this way, the past functions like a cold, hard stone of judgment and condemnation, rather than as a living stone, a life-giving witness built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, the cornerstone.

Listen to how differently remembering functions in the letter to Timothy, “[W]hen I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy” (2 Timothy 1:3-4 NRSV). Such remembering is in service of re-union, or re-membering within the body of Christ. This is a very different way of remembering.

So in these days when the teachings and practices of the past are being brought back to our collective memory, we will serve each other and the body of Christ well by recognizing how such remembering the past, such living memory, can function not just to escape or condemn, but to draw us closer to one another in the life of Christ and life in Christ.

I really believe that’s what we as the ELCA are called to do. I believe this will continue to be a challenging time for Lutherans globally around how the past is remembered and used. Let our contribution be a deep respect for the past—a remembering—as a path to renewed intimacy with one another through a common faith in Jesus Christ. Yes, to remember is to be renewed and remembered in the mind of Christ is to be recalled to one life in Christ.

Our remembering is to be re-minded in the sense of Philippians 2, “If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ... Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2: 1-2, 5 NRSV).

You must hear your own call in this. But my question today is, “Why are we not standing in the public square weeping over Jerusalem today?”

My first call was in public housing in North Minneapolis, a community of 3,800 people who lived in poverty; we lived in the church building. That community taught me how communal lament and communal joy form a people of faith and how that shapes their public witness.

Every Sunday morning in the narthex we had two big posters on tripods. One said, “In pain.” One said, “In joy.” When you entered, you listed your pains and your joys. And part of the offering—which wasn’t very bountiful with dollars—was to carry forth the joys and the pains of the community that became the intercessions of the day.

The people were invited to pray and, that literally became communal lament that named and gave form to our communal suffering. But rolling throughout those laments were profound experiences of joy, as the writer of Hebrews talks about, “[l]ooking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross” (Hebrews 12:2, NRSV). As Dr. Niedner said, “Joy that is born out of the wonder and the giftedness of life.”

Joseph Sittler once said this about grace: “What I am appealing for is and understanding of grace that has the magnitude of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The grace of God is not simply a holy hypodermic whereby my sins are forgiven. It is the

whole giftedness of life, the wonder of life which causes me to ask questions that transcend the moment.”<sup>8</sup>

I think we’ve lost something in the Lutheran Christian witness when we’ve lost something of the wonder of God’s grace in the giftedness of life that frees us to ask questions that transcend the moment. But Luther taught parents to teach their children the core of the faith and then to ask, “What does this mean?” He understood that grace frees us to ask questions that transcend the moment. We just need to ask if we are a witness to one another and to the world as Lutherans right now. Are we hearing the wonder of God’s grace in Christ, freeing us to ask questions, or is it more that we are making allegations and accusations about and toward one another?

There was a popular bumper sticker recently. It said, “The Bible says it, I believe it, that settles it.” One ELCA pastor’s guerilla warfare was to go around parking lots with a magic marker and change the last line: “The Bible says it, I believe it, that *unsettles* it.” [Laughter]

I had a Jewish friend who was a tour guide instructor, and I used him in confirmation instruction. He said that he never understood how Christians approach the meaning of the sacred scriptures. He said that, as a Jew, he would go to the scriptures, assuming there will be more questions than answers, and this will put him on a search of the community. He would go to the rabbis, the Talmud and the teachings to explore those questions. He said, “You Christians seem to come to the scriptures with all of your questions, even those that were never comprehended by the biblical writers, and you manage to get them to give you your answer.” That’s the wonder of grace.

### *Fear, Forgiveness and Freedom*

The last thing I want to talk about today is fear, forgiveness and freedom. You know all about that. You probably have ministry as much at the locus of anxiety-ridden culture in lives as anybody. I keep thinking of the biblical witness, how God had to send messengers into the midst of fear simply to say, “Do not be afraid.”

How much of your ministry is to be those angels? And why is that? Because unless God sent messengers to push back the walls of anxiety, God didn’t have space to do much. Every time God was going to do something radical, it was preceded by God having to send folks saying, “You’re not going to be ready for this if you’re turned in on yourselves over your anxieties. So let’s push a little of that back and give you some space to work with Mary here.”

So Gabriel said, “Fear not. You’re about to hear something that will give you a major anxiety attack, but we’ll push that back, and then we have news for you. You’re going to be the mother of our Lord.”

You know those examples and can add more. Then how much of your ministry is to give God space?

Walter Brueggemann says that fear does three things to us: it turns us inward, making us preoccupied with ourselves; it makes us distrustful of others, especially those in leadership; and finally makes us downright anti-neighborly toward others, especially those most different from us. Yet, into a culture and individual lives consumed by fear

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<sup>8</sup> Joseph Sittler, *Gravity and Grace: Reflections and Provocations*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986) 14.

you come with the word *forgiveness* and the word *freedom*, into which the Holy Spirit brings, creates, and sustains faith. It's really the confidence of faith that you bring, and the Holy Spirit creates the gospel.

I think in an anxious culture, fundamentalism becomes hugely attractive, and we have to be aware of how seductive it is. Listen to Douglas John Hall in *Bound and Free: A Theologian's Journey*, "Fundamentalism, whatever the origins of the term, has come to mean a position of such exactness and certitude that those embracing it—or, more accurately, those embraced *by* it—feel themselves delivered from all the relativities, uncertainties, indefiniteness, and transience of human existence. They are provided, they feel, with a firm foundation—a *fundamentum*—greater than their own finitude, greater than any observations of any of the sciences, greater than the collective wisdom of the race."<sup>9</sup> Then Hall reminds us, "God does not meet our need for security only with a simple refusal and rebuff. God offers us an alternative to certitude. It is called trust. God reveals Godself as one who can be trusted. Certitude is denied; confidence is made possible. Consider that word: *confidence*. Literally, in the Latin, it means living with (*con*) faith (*fide*)."<sup>10</sup> Hall concludes, "Now faith is a living thing—it is a category of the present. It is not a once-for-all accomplishment. It is not a possession, like a Visa card, that some have and others don't. It is an ongoing response to God, to the world, to life."<sup>11</sup> In other words, faith is the alternative to the certainty of fundamentalism.

### *Ecology*

The last image I want to give you is the metaphor of ecology to help us understand the church today. If Paul used the image of the body of Christ, I think ecology works very well today. But the church is an ecology of interdependent ecosystems that's predicated upon the viability and sustainability of life within the ecosystems. This is determined finally on the basis of its interdependence with the rest of the ecology.

The ELCA, which is perplexing to some, has chosen to define ourselves first on the basis of our relatedness to others in the body of Christ, rather than what sets us apart. From our foundation in the late 1980s, we adopted the statement of ecumenism, believing that the Lutheran Confessions are the best proposal Lutherans could make to preserve the unity of the Western church. When we come to our full communion partners, we begin with the Confessions. The move toward these relationships is first and foremost to define ourselves on our relatedness to others in the body of Christ, and then on our distinctiveness.

We have six full communion partners now. We take our ecumenical and global relationships within the body of Christ very seriously because we, as the ELCA, are one ecosystem within the ecology of the one holy Catholic and Apostolic church. And we know enough about the interdependence of ecosystems within an ecology to know that the body of Christ will not thrive if we think we are the sum total of that body and turn inward upon our own preservation as the ELCA.

Now, why do I want to go here with you? I'm not a scientist but I've learned that ecotones are those areas where two ecosystems come up against each other. The

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<sup>9</sup> Douglas John Hall, *Bound and Free: A Theologians Journey* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, 2005 )100.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid 100, 102.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid 102.

ecosystem of a forest comes up against the ecosystem of the plains, and sometimes—where there's been a forest fire or damage—there's this rupture of the ecotone where these two ecosystems come together.

Often it's in the ecotone that new life forms emerge. The image I have of pastoral counseling in the specialized ministries in which you are engaged, is that you're often present at ecotone places, where people are coming out of one ecosystem of their culture, their language or their faith, and they're suddenly finding themselves up against the other.

I love the time I spent in Brooklyn at the Lutheran Medical Center. They have one chapel where Jews, Christians and Muslims can pray in the same hospital. This chaplaincy is done where people are encountering ecosystems that are foreign to their own, yet it's often right there among the new immigrants where you come to present and proclaim the good news of new life. New life emerges, and that's the image I have of the work that you are called to do.

Thank you.