



**A
STATEMENT**

of the
Lutheran Church in America

**The Basis for Partnership
between
CHURCH and COLLEGE**



CONTEXT

From earliest colonial days until the middle of the nineteenth century most colleges and universities were established and supported by the churches. This commitment in the area of higher education was rooted in the conviction that both society and the church must be supplied with persons well equipped for leadership. It was a necessary commitment, because other segments of society, including government at all levels, gave scant attention to the provision of higher education.

In the past one hundred years, and especially in the past few decades, the situation has been reversed. Receiving wide and significant support, extensive public systems of higher education and non-church-related private schools have grown in strength and reputation and often overshadow the institutions related to the churches.

A variety of factors has intensified this trend, and there has been a spreading erosion of the numbers and identity of the colleges related to the church. These factors include a decline in the proportion of Christians in these colleges; the increasingly secularized character and outlook of the colleges; a diminishing ethnic consciousness; spiraling educational costs; the pressure on the colleges to expand in size, facilities and programs beyond the support the church can provide; and the commitment of the church's attention and resources to other compelling social concerns and issues.

All of this has caused persons in both church and college to question the wisdom of continuing the inherited relationships which bind them together. Indeed, many colleges and their parent churches have dissolved long-standing ties, going their separate ways with only a polite bow to their past association. Often this decision has been made by default,

with neither party perceiving the consequences, and the record is clear that, once the relationship has been broken, there is little likelihood it will ever be restored.

In view of the severe pressures experienced by the church and the college, it is perhaps surprising that the demise of a college or its disaffiliation with the church has not been the experience of the Lutheran Church in America, except in a very few cases. For this, the church is grateful, and it would pay tribute to all who have sustained the colleges and their ties to the church.

PURPOSE

This statement of the Lutheran Church in America has six purposes: (1) to define the separate but complementary function of church and college; (2) to affirm the college's important role as a servant of God the Creator; (3) to establish a rationale for the church's continuing role in higher education; (4) to assist the representatives of its synods and the colleges as they discuss and revise the "covenants" between them; (5) to offer material that may be used by the colleges internally; and (6) to make a contribution to the continuing study and debate about the purpose and the potential in the relationship of the church and the college.

It is the desire of the Lutheran Church in America to be linked significantly with colleges and universities which, in turn, desire a significant link with the church. This desire is not based on the belief that a common history is reason in itself for a common future; rather, it is rooted in the conviction that there are dimensions and resources in the relationship they have inherited which can greatly enhance the present and future ministries of both the church and the college.

THE THEOLOGICAL BASE

The living triune God is the Lord of both church and college. Their tasks, though different, are both God-given. God rules over both through the Word, and both are important in fulfilling God's will for creation.

Through the church God's love for the world is made known, as the Spirit leads us to the Christ who is the incarnate expression of God's will and grace. We do not look for truth in the abstract, for our crucified and risen Savior bears God's truth in his person, and he is the truth who makes us free.

As we respond to God's claim on our lives in trust and obedience, we are bound together in the church. As the communion of saints, we live under God's Word, being brought to repentance by God's judgment and being nourished by God's forgiveness. We are established in our identity as God's people in Holy Baptism and renewed in it as we receive the Lord's Supper. Our lives are joined as we instruct, admonish, correct, encourage, console and strengthen one another in the faith delivered to the saints.

All of this—to proclaim and hear the Word, to administer and receive the sacraments, and to share a common life—we must do as the Church of Jesus Christ. It is essential.

As God's people we are bound to God's Word for a purpose beyond our own advantage. The reason we have been called, our vocation, is to give glory to God by investing ourselves in God's purposes. Through the Gospel God calls us to a faith-motivated servanthood in which we are to show love for our neighbors.

As we carry out the God-given ministries of our ordinary days, we discern that God has woven into the fabric of all creation the desire and the design that

all people work together to tend this unfolding creation and to care for one another. As Creator, God reaches out to include all who are made and loved in God's purposes. Through God's Law all are called, including the saints; to a responsible citizenship in which they are to work together to promote justice and to enhance the life they have in common.

As we live and work with others, we discern the outlines of this design. We are set in families; we establish governments; we take our place in the structures of commerce and industry; we form organizations—colleges among them—to promote the public good. The Creator does not intend us to make a lonely way through life; God has provided us with companions and colleagues. It is God's will that we ally ourselves with all who are moved by reason and conscience to respond, even if unawares to God's law written in their hearts, as they seek to advance and improve the human condition. This association is God-given; this cooperation in the secular is God-pleasing. For the term secular means non-redemptive; it does not mean God-forsaken.

This means that education in general, and the church-related college in particular, have an integrity and purpose grounded in the Creed's first Article, concerning Creation. The capacity to learn—to search into the secrets of nature and use its resources, to search into the mystery of the human and perceive our misery and grandeur, to search into the riddle of history and be stalkers of meaning—is possible because of God's goodness. The fact that sinners are not justified by knowledge or cultural refinement should not obscure the further fact that education is the gift of a loving Creator. Through it God would enhance and enrich people's lives. Through it God would inform, motivate and equip them to make human society what it is intended to be. Sound scholarship, careful research, and effective teaching honor God and serve God's cause.

This perception of education, grounded in the theo-

logy of the Lutheran church, establishes the freedom and significance of educational institutions. It affirms the college as a college, devoted to its primary task, blending together the differing talents and convictions of many persons.

This understanding also makes clear that it is both unbiblical and misleading to speak of "Christian" higher education or a "Christian" college. People, needing salvation, are baptized into Christ; institutions, entrusted with a secular task, do not need to be baptized to be faithful servants of God the Creator.

Thus, the term 'church-related' is to be preferred. It describes a college which chooses to be joined to the church for the enhancement of the work of both and for the advancement of the concerns they have in common.

CHURCH AND COLLEGE: COLLEAGUE INSTITUTIONS WITH A COMMON CONCERN

The majority of the Christians involved in higher education live out their calling to be Christ's people as teachers, administrators, staff and students in colleges and universities not related to the church. It is essential that they, as all others who have been baptized, be nourished in the community of believers. Normally this happens through their faithful participation in the life of a congregation. In addition, the Lutheran church provides specialized ministries tailored for their needs and circumstance. The provision of campus ministries represents the church's conviction that the church-related college is not the only setting for significant participation in higher education and effective preparation of Christians for their ministries in God's world.

There is substantial advantage, however, when the church as institution can join with another institution,

such as a college, which has its own demonstrated competence and stability. This steady collegiality allows for continuing dialogue, interaction and mutual service. There is also the advantage of the colleague institution's own access to and impact upon society. It is good not to be alone, and to have more than transient allies, when participating in a complex world.

Thus, church and college, although entrusted with different tasks, converge on a common concern. Both are charged by God the Creator, and held accountable to God for the fidelity of their efforts, to enhance the quality of life enjoyed by the human family and the care given to God's creation. Reason and conscience prompt the college, as it views the world around it, to accept this ministry of civil righteousness. This ministry is valid in itself; it is both God-given and God-pleasing.

The saints corporately, as and through the institutional church, lift their voices in concord and work in concert with other citizens in groups and institutions which also seek to promote justice and the common good. In the past this has led the church to establish and support a wide variety of agencies and institutions. In the areas of health and welfare, the church has provided through such organizations a priestly care for many persons with serious human and personal needs either caused or neglected by society. In the area of education, the college affords the church a potentially effective means, with dimensions yet to be realized, to exercise its prophetic concern that the structures and forces of society become wiser, more just and more compassionate. The college offers this possibility because it works with and has access to persons who can/will do much to shape the character, inform the mind, establish the policies and set the values of society as a whole.

As the church finds its direct services of priestly care less able to meet the varieties and dimensions of human need, and as its own institutional influence on society wanes, it must search for the best ways (1) in

which to be an informed and effective participant in those forums, organizations, institutions and settings which determine the nature and direction of society, and (2) by which its baptized laity can be equipped with consecrated competence for their ministries in the world. The colleges related to the Lutheran Church in America afford the church this access and are centers for this preparation.

(1) A Means of Access to the Secular World

The college as an institution can provide the church with a corporate forum in which to speak the truth in love and to bear a corporate witness to the sacredness of the secular world. This access is of heightened importance in a society which is divided and uncertain about its values and future. Three examples follow.

(a) The debate whether education should be "value-oriented" or "objectively neutral" (if the former, how?; if the latter, is it possible?) is a debate in which society has a large stake and in which both the church and the college have a significant interest. In its June 1973 final report, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education identified five major purposes of higher education in the United States today and for the prospective future. The fifth purpose was "the critical evaluation of society—through individual thought and persuasion—for the sake of society's self-renewal." Its fulfillment was evaluated as "quite uneven in the past and uncertain in the future." This judgment corresponds to the widespread confusion and disagreement regarding which philosophy of higher education should prevail in our day.

(b) The spreading influence of government-financed education and the potential monopoly of government-controlled education threaten the pluralism in educational philosophy and institutions which has been healthy for our society, has strengthened academic freedom and has preserved freedom of stu-

dent choice. When a state-sponsored system takes over education from the pre-school level through graduate school, it verges on being "the established church" for civil religion. Church-related colleges and other private institutions provide a creative and critical alternative.

(c) The behavioral and physical sciences are rapidly investing society with awesome new capabilities which give birth to perplexing questions and which can easily be turned to harmful use. These ambiguous advances intensify the need for institutions and individuals which are both fully competent and committed to humane values.

The college as an institution has access to the settings in which such issues are studied and debated through its participation in government or foundation-sponsored studies and seminars; in accrediting groups and professional associations; through the research and publications of its faculty; through special programs and conferences to which it can attract influential scholars and leaders. The church encourages the college to recognize and take advantage of this access and the seminal role it can play in society.

(2) A Place for Fostering Responsible Citizenship

The success of a church-related college has often been measured by the number of pastors and congregational leaders it produces. The church needs such persons for its own life and witness and should not disregard or undervalue this contribution the college makes to it.

However, the church's larger expectation of the college is that it seek to produce men and women who are motivated and equipped to be responsible citizens in the many occupations and professions which are necessary to society's well-being. To reflect upon

the purpose for which we live is the common task of all segments of the college community. The faculty must take the lead in this matter, and all should recognize that the college years are a critical time for students, as they select and establish the perspective which will color their lives and work. How does the college attempt to prepare them well to be ethical and capable in their future positions? To understand their citizenship in global terms? How does the college prod and help all who have a part in its life, whatever their creed, to view life with awe and to regard work as the opportunity for service?

The church's further hope is that participation in the church-related college will lead many persons to see responsible citizenship as an expression of their baptismal identity. The college has an unmatched opportunity to illuminate the secular settings in which men and women live out their Christian vocation. What does it do to provide a mature encounter with the affirmations of the Christian faith and with the claim of God on our lives?

The college serves God's world well when it consciously and deliberately prepares people to be responsible citizens. It serves both the church and God's world well when it consciously and deliberately prepares Christians to live their baptism in the world.

DIALOGUE AND INTERACTION

A college is a valuable colleague of the church in a further important way when it provides a setting in which theology, with its understanding of God's Word, and other academic disciplines, with their understanding of God's world, probe and illuminate each other. Such dialogue and interaction should be clearly evident both within the college community and in the college's relationship to the church.

For this to take place the college must be encouraged and free to root itself in secular learning and must be prodded and assisted toward its integrity and excellence as an institution of higher education. Fruitful dialogue and helpful interaction are possible to the extent that both partners are able to be full partners.

As the college thereby fulfills its essential calling, it enables the church to reach into the mind and heart of society. By developing a continuing interaction between the insights of faith and the various areas of knowledge, and between the traditions of faith and the currents in society as a whole and the youth culture in particular, the college prods and assists the church to proclaim a message and present a ministry that are culturally and intellectually pertinent. This interaction can lead the church to fresh effectiveness in the way it thinks, speaks, worships, and serves. It can be a factor in the renewal of the church, enlarging its fidelity.

For this to take place the college must also be committed to such dialogue and must engage the personnel and create the structures and occasions which will cause it to be an expected, normal part of the college's life. Both church and college must be committed to give this dialogue and interaction a prominent and continuing place in their relationship.

SHARING OF RESOURCES

The church provides the college with a constituency from which it can obtain students, faculty, administrators, trustees and financial support.

The college provides the church with a pool of talented and trained persons in many fields.

The church and the college, as institutions, also provide each other with a steady colleague that has its

own information, influence, experience, property, connections with the rest of society and a host of other resources upon which the other can draw. The tradition represented in its ties with the church can help the college retain a distinctive character and commitment among the many schools which seek to attract students and support from the general public.

We urge the synod and the college to be imaginative and aggressive in identifying and establishing new ways in which they both can take better advantage of all of this potential. Synodical leaders and college leaders should be encouraged to look to each other for assistance when their institutions have internal needs or new opportunities to serve society.

In the conviction that there is a significant potential in the church-college relationship, we affirm the importance of the financial support the church gives to the colleges. We are grateful for the many church members who make direct gifts and bequests to the colleges and for the gifts and grants made by congregations, synods and churchwide agencies. Through all of these the Lutheran Church in America strengthens the colleges which are related to it.

When the financial support provided the college from the synodical budget is designated for the general support of the college, it functions as general operating income and represents the church's conviction that the ministry of the college is pleasing to God the Creator and useful to society. The synod, its congregations and their members may also make designated grants to specific programs of the college which provide services to the church, promote the dialogue and interaction described above, or otherwise advance the relationship of church and college. If, however, the synod decided or was encouraged to subsidize only the "religious pieces" of the college, this practice could foster the false division between secular and sacred which dishonors the triune God who is Lord of both church and college.

SOME SPECIFIC MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED IN "COVENANT" DISCUSSIONS

The nature and expectations of the relationships between the synods and the colleges have been defined in the "covenants" they have established. These agreements are meant to be reviewed at regular intervals of not less than four or more than eight years. This statement of the Lutheran Church in America is presented to the synods and the colleges to assist their representatives to identify and develop both the purpose and the potential in the church-college relationship. In addition to the preceding material, questions such as the following should be discussed.

FOR THE CHURCH-RELATED COLLEGE

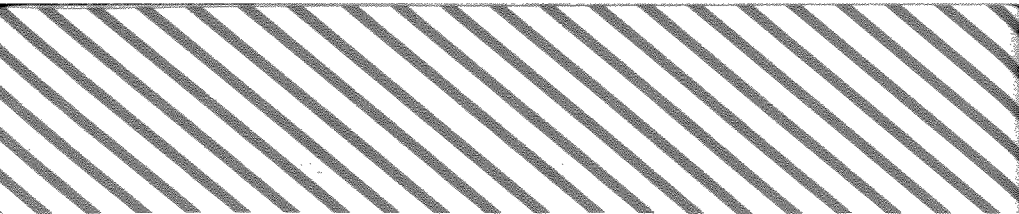
1. In the area of INSTITUTIONAL INTENTION:
 - a. Is there a clear statement in the official documents and important publications of the college of the college's relationship to the church and the effect of that relationship upon the character and program of the college?
 - b. Does the purpose, form and effect of that relationship receive the continuing attention of the faculty, administration and board of the college, and of the synods to which it is related?
 - c. Does the college meet the standards for recognition established by the Lutheran Church in America?
2. In the area of PROGRAM:
 - a. Is there freedom for study, inquiry and thoughtful expression, creating a forum for honest and careful scholarship and divergent views?
 - b. Is there regular consideration of the values by which persons live and participate in society?

- c. Are study and debate of the goals of society encouraged?
 - d. Is there an institutional commitment to provide the means for a clear and attractive presentation of the Christian faith?
 - e. Is the area of religious studies the peer in strength and respect of the other academic disciplines?
 - f. Do the other academic disciplines have a concern for theological issues and is there provision for their interaction with the theology of the church?
 - g. Does the chapel program provide opportunities for significant worship, clear witness, opportunities for service and the development of a shared life of Christian faith?
 - h. Is there a significant student aid budget which encourages enrollment of students with financial need who show promise of responsible citizenship?
 - i. Is there a program of continuing education for laity and clergy?
3. In the area of PERSONNEL:
- a. Is there a significant number and core of Lutherans (and/or other Christians) in the student body, on the faculty, in the administration and on the board?
 - b. Is there a diversity of religious commitments and perspectives in the college community, a diversity which is intended to stimulate religious discussion and not to avoid it?
 - c. Are there specific, key positions on the faculty and in the administration which are held by Lutherans (and/or other Christians)?
 - d. Is the college's church-relatedness presented clearly to all who are offered positions on the faculty and in the administration, and to all prospective students?

- e. Is there a strong chaplain who has the solid support of the college and effectively uses his or her official position at the center of the college's life?
- f. Are ethical reflection, theological perspective, and interdisciplinary discussion encouraged by the presence of a theologian in the college community?

FOR THE CHURCH AS IT RELATES TO THE COLLEGE

- 1. Is there a clear statement in the official church documents and important publications affirming the relationship of the colleges to the church?
- 2. Does the church have a theologically-based statement which affirms the basis and the purposes of its relationship to the colleges?
- 3. Does the church affirm the college's primary function to be an educational institution of high quality?
- 4. Does the church view the college as a means by which it can express its concern for the care of creation and the well-being of the human family?
- 5. How are congregations helped to see the college as a valuable colleague which shares and advances the church's concern for society?
- 6. By what means does the church inform its members about the accomplishments and needs of the college?
- 7. Does the church provide members of the college board who work to enhance the college as an institution of learning and to promote its relationship to the church, and does the church hold them responsible to do both?
- 8. Is the church committed to provide appropriate financial support to the college?
- 9. Does the church encourage its best youth to seek admission as students?



The synod and the college, as they review the "covenant" between them, are urged to affirm the authenticity of each other's ministry and to identify ways in which they can assist each other to fulfill their respective callings and to respond to their common concerns. Maintaining an institutional separation, they should seek those forms of functional interaction which will be faithful to God's will by serving the needs and enhancing the life of the people and world God loves.

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