

Spring 2012



Vocation Connections

Vocation:

“Our deepest calling is to grow into our own authentic self-hood, whether or not it conforms to some image of who we ought to be. As we do so, we will not only find the joy that every human being seeks-- we will also find our path of authentic service in the world.”

Parker J. Palmer

Inside this Issue

Page 2

ALIVE Team Reflections
~ Alisa Christensen
&
Bryanna Gauger

Page 3

Called to *Communio*
(continued)
~ Julie Massey

aaaaa

Retreat Seminar Info

Page 4

Before and After
~ Carrie Newcomer

Called to *Communio*

“We may not play together enough,” a colleague recently mused, while another acknowledged it can feel difficult to fit even a brief pause during Sacred Hour into the harried pace of our classes-in-session days. These colleagues were reflecting on the hard work of building *communio* on campus. They were noticing the ways we stumble, even in our good intentions. My husband and I share in marriage preparation ministry, and my colleagues’ comments caused me to recall the many times we have told young couples about the work involved in marriage. The daily effort. The vow “I do” is relatively easily uttered on one’s wedding day. But to say “I still do” seventeen years into the adventure – with deaths and dirty laundry, moments of forgetfulness or self-absorption, occasions of fear or neglect – that is where the effort comes in. So it is for our little community as we try to uphold a worthy vow, as we attempt to interact with one another in ways that reflect the values of *communio*. We cannot assume uttering the word is doing the work. The work of building *communio* is completed in myriad daily interactions.

My colleagues suggested two helpful ingredients in building the type of *communio* we seek. Just as a marriage cannot be sustained on mundane tasks and moments of failure, our deep experience of community needs nurturing if it is to flourish. Among the ways to nurture it are play and pause.

Playing at Communio

Years ago, when Campus Ministry was in charge of planning fall training for division student staff, we decided to incorporate what I termed “mandatory fun”! The students, understandably, gave us grief about the possibility of mandating fun, but the trip to the bowling alley was no less amusing or playful because of the dumb title. Play taps into another part of us – it moves us beyond our roles and responsibilities and lets us see one another as human beings who once enjoyed sandboxes and swings, Bigwheels and Battleship. I see this same playfulness with the crew of folks entering into the college’s Get Fit program. Perhaps because I am at the lower end of the group’s fitness spectrum, I sometimes resort to the role of court jester. But I’m not alone, and the participants on the whole welcome the chance to add some dance moves to our jogging, some whoop! to our “Burpees,” or some laughter to our inability to complete whatever form of brutality the trainer has in mind on a given day. This same willingness to play has been evident each summer on the Retreat-Seminar

(Continued on Page 3)

ALIVE Team Reflections



Four years ago, I received a letter in the mail regarding the ALIVE Team at SNC. This was just after I had made the decision to attend the school, and I was eager to get involved with things on campus. This in particular seemed like a good fit: keep my faith in my priority list, while getting paid! I took a leap of faith and applied, despite not really knowing what would come of it. Within the next few weeks, I had done a phone interview and was accepted onto the team. Even though I knew I was going to like my work, I had no idea that I would fall in love with it. Being a member of the ALIVE Team opened my eyes to the blessings of working on a team with such a great group of people and taking part of such amazing work. I experienced the

Divine in new and challenging ways, and helped others along their own faith journeys. It has changed my views on ministry – and the role that I see ministry playing in my life post-graduation. I look forward to applying my skills to whatever ministries lay in my future. Through the ALIVE Team, I have had some of my favorite experiences at college, made some of my best friends and joined a family that I will take with me to graduation and beyond.

Alisa Christensen '12

As I look back on my four years on the ALIVE Team, it seems like just yesterday I was an anxious, freshman apprentice who was away from home for the first time. Would I be able to make friends, survive college classes, or find meaningful ways to get involved in the community? These thoughts were interrupted by a polite knock on my door. When I opened the door, I found the smiling face of a fellow apprentice who timidly asked if I wanted to go down by the river and play a card game. In that moment, I realized I was not alone. As the year progressed, I got to know my teammates, grew in my role as an ALIVE Team member, and built relationships with a wonderful group of women who attended our weekly programs in Sensenbrenner. I saw the ways the ALIVE Team encourages everyone to openly examine issues of faith and vocation.

Over the next two years, I transformed from a shy, quiet freshman to an empowered sophomore and then a confident junior. My leadership skills grew as I worked with apprentices ministering to honors students in Bergstrom Hall. The ALIVE Team challenged my beliefs as I explored new viewpoints with the residents. I am grateful for how the ALIVE Team kept faith a part of my daily life through programs, reflections, and prayer opportunities.

Now as a senior, I have taken on the role of team coordinator during my final semester at St. Norbert. I am enjoying the opportunity to make my ideas a reality while leaving my mark on the ALIVE

Team. I see my role this semester as a motivator, empowering members of the team in their work in the residence halls. I still witness the ALIVE Team as a group that meets students where they are spiritually, going on a faith journey together as students. As a result of my experience on the ALIVE Team, I have learned a lot about myself. I am able to examine my strengths and areas for growth. Only time will tell how I will use this knowledge to do something I love and make a positive impact on the people around me.



Bryanna Gauger '12

(Continued from Page 1)

on Vocation. If you've not yet experienced "The Name Game," which on at least one occasion left two now-tenured faculty and myself rolling on the floor, there is still time to register for this summer's offering (snc.edu/vocation). And for those hesitant to get their inner sandbox on, you should know The Name Game is in the optional, recreation part of the schedule!

Pausing for Communio

Some years ago, Paul Wadell and I received a letter from a colleague who had participated in the Retreat Seminar on Vocation about fourteen months prior to her writing us. She explained it had taken some time to reflect on her calling. But she had finally figured it out. Her vocation, she stated, was "to reflect to others the joy God takes in their existence." On first glance, I was touched by the depth and beauty of this wise woman's words. As I considered her letter further, two things stood out for me. First, it took her over a year to come to this insight. A year of sitting with questions, mulling, praying, letting awareness swim in the gray for some time and ultimately emerge in the light. Without pause she might never have arrived at such clarity and conviction. Secondly, the way she identified her calling superseded committee meetings or to-do lists, job titles or responsibilities. What she identified was a way of *being* that she could take into the classroom and the discipline meeting, her home or her church, an interaction with a large group in the midst of heated debate or a single student searching for a way through a dilemma. If you and I are to arrive at the same type of deep insight, we need opportunities for pause. Waking early to a still house, giving ourselves permission to be fed by the wisdom of a Last Lecture, or entering into a small handful of days with colleagues interested in more deeply exploring calling – these are a few of the ways we might allow pause into our busy and demanding lives. I am convinced the more we honor our individual need for sacred pause, in our lexicon *contemplation*, the more fully we can enter into a deep experience of *communio*.

I hope, as the season turns to springtime glimpsed and promised, you might find space in your life for play and for pause. As you enter these holy places, even as divine interruption in the 9-to-5 grind, may they help you celebrate the goodness of your being and allow you to more fully offer that goodness in our shared search for *communio*.

Julie Massey
Senior Director for Mission & Ministry

Register for Retreat Seminar: June 11-13

The retreat seminar is a retreat that introduces faculty and staff colleagues to the concept of vocation as it relates to their personal and professional lives. The format of the retreat includes input, personal reflection, small group discussion, and communal prayer. The retreat is held at the Norbertine Center for Spirituality, St. Norbert Abbey. In order to help the retreat participants slow down and enter into a more contemplative space, they are asked to stay the first night at the Abbey. This year's retreat will take place June 11-13 and will be facilitated by Paul Wadell, Becky Welch, and Julie Massey. There is no cost for participants. Preference is given to full-time employees. To learn more or sign up for this retreat seminar see the link on the Vocation homepage.



Before and After

The dust settles after a hit and run
Bewildered by the damage done
I don't know why we choose the roads we travel
Or how a life could get so unraveled.

Once a trick of light made me believe,
A red fire was blazing from every tree.
We held hands as the evening gathered.
I forgave myself for what I didn't ask her.

Chorus: We live our lives from then until now,
By the mercy received and the marks on our brow
To my heart I'll collect what the four winds will scatter
And frame my life into before and after.

God said Cain where is your brother,
And who will tell his grieving mother?
Jacob dreamt an angel called his name
And he never was the same

Chorus: We live our lives from then until now,
By the mercy received and the marks on our brow
To my heart I'll collect what the four winds will scatter
And frame my life into before and after.

I once saw the sky filled with falling stars
Bumped my head in the dark and it left a scar
Held on too tight before I let it go,
Then forgave myself for what I didn't know.

I've stretched my soul over fifty states,
I have lived on fumes and religious cornflakes,
And once I dreamt my shoe had grown thin and battered,
And forgave myself for what didn't matter.

Chorus: We live our lives from then until now,
By the mercy received and the marks on our brow
To my heart I'll collect what the four winds will scatter
And frame my life into before and after.

Lyrics by Carrie Newcomer, from the 2009 album *Before & After*

Vocation Connections

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