



There is something unique and exciting about Muhlenberg College. If you ever have the fortune to set foot on campus, you'll soon encounter beautiful Egnor Chapel, prominently centered on the College green. Once this chapel was packed with students and faculty attending daily chapel and Sunday worship. But that, like many things, has changed. Like our neighboring communities, church attendance has diminished. So if we were to "judge" the vitality of the church or a *college of the church* simply by looking through the chapel window on Sunday morning, we might be alarmed.

But that sense of alarm quickly dissipates when we take the time to **live** on the Muhlenberg College campus. The founders of the ELCA college network were intentional about creating academies where the intellectual development of their children would be disciplined and engaged. That continues to be central to the mission of Muhlenberg. But we are an ELCA college, and so as a *college of the church*, we do more than nurture the brain—we also pay attention to the spirit. Martin Luther was fully aware of the complexity of putting the academy and the church in the same space. But this is the unique and exciting way the Lutheran church has always lived, and it is a model we continue to embrace today.

While the college pays strict attention to elements of the academy, it also takes the spiritual development of the students seriously. When Muhlenberg (then the Allentown Seminary) was founded in 1848, German Lutheran students filled the college. They were the critical mass in society. But 2018 is a different reality. Pluralism has replaced monolithic social and religious structures and Muhlenberg reflects this change. Jewish, Roman Catholic, Hindu, Muslim, and Protestants from many denominations flock to this place. They come to learn and they come to be nurtured in spirit. As in society, Lutheran students at Muhlenberg live with young adults from many spiritual traditions. It is a microcosm of the world in 2018. This diversity enlivens matters of faith through conversation, shared space, and dialogue.

Life on the Muhlenberg campus has been exciting and inspiring. In the past year, we've seen students, faculty and staff accomplish amazing things.

- Our theatre program named among the best in the nation by the Princeton Review; the department has been among the top 12 on the "Best College Theater" list in nine of the last 10 years.
- Over 60 students conducted paid, independent summer research, working closely with faculty mentors.
- The illness and later passing of football coach Mike Donnelly spurred hundreds of students to register as bone marrow donors.
- We announced several new cooperative agreements with leading professional and medical schools, opening doors of possibility to students prepared for advanced degrees.
- Student athletes broke individual and team records in a number of sports.
- And, in tribute to our founding, we hosted an exhibit on campus celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

We see this new paradigm, one of pluralism *and* academic rigor, as an asset to life at Muhlenberg. We invite you to join us in our endeavor to create and to keep reforming Muhlenberg as an exemplary *college of the church*. And we ask you to seriously consider sharing this resources with future college students in your synod.

On behalf of the college  
Pastor John Gorder, interim chaplain  
April 2018