

Ministry in Daily Life for Resurrection Lutheran Church
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“One thing I ask of the Lord; one thing I seek;
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life;
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord
and to seek God in the temple.”
Psalm 27:4 (ELW)

This verse from Psalm 27 has been a guiding Scripture passage for my sense of vocation for many years. This Psalm reflects three aspects of my sense of call. First, I seek to “dwell in the house of the Lord” all my days. For me, this means that my life is defined by my baptism into Christ, which is the event which calls each of us to “proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace.”

My career has been in theological education, specifically theological librarianship and ecumenical ministry. I started my career at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, SC., and I am currently Head Librarian and Professor at Virginia Theological Seminary, an Episcopal seminary in Alexandria. I teach seminarians to use print and electronic research resources effectively for teaching and preaching throughout their ministries. I also teach courses in ecumenical relations, serve a formation group leader for students, and teach Episcopal students to lead Lutheran liturgies in chapel worship. Resurrection member the Rev. Dr. Gordon Lathrop has often presided at the Eucharist with my chapel teams, which, I tell our students, gives them the best example of Lutheran liturgical leadership they will ever experience!

My vocation is an ecumenical one: I’m living out the full communion agreement between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church. I am a deacon (known until recently as an Associate in Ministry), rostered in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America under call to service on the faculty of Virginia Seminary. I serve on the national Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee, which has oversight for the implementation of the full communion relationship in these two churches. I recently wrote [this blog post](#) for the 20th anniversary of this full communion agreement.

I literally dwell in the seminary community: my husband John and I have the privilege of living on the campus of Virginia Seminary in faculty housing. One should note that dwelling on the seminary campus is not synonymous with dwelling in the house of the Lord! There are many times when living at one’s workplace can seem confining. Living in the seminary community has the same complex human dynamics that living in proximity brings to any neighborhood. Still, perhaps because we work, worship, and live together, I have a close sense of collegiality and shared vocation with my faculty colleagues.

The second aspect of this Psalm, “to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord,” is to me an invitation to think, read, contemplate, meditate, and pray on how God is at work in our world today and how we might share that witness with others. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*:

“It is only because [Jesus] became like us that we can become like him.

It is only because we are identified with [Jesus] that we can become like him.

By being transformed into his image, we are enabled to model our lives on his.”

When we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, we can live and move and have our being in him – even in the face of an ongoing pandemic.

As Paul says in I Corinthians 3:16, we are God’s temple and God’s Spirit dwells in us. So, the Psalm’s third phrase, “to seek God in his temple,” means to me that the Spirit seeks us out and surprises us with new challenges and opportunities to serve our neighbors in love, often when and where we least expect it. For example, several years ago, the Faith and Order Convening Table of the National Council of Churches which I co-chaired was assigned to study the theological issues around mass incarceration. I became convicted (pun intended) that I couldn’t study mass incarceration just as a concept; I needed a connection with real people serving time in the criminal justice system. So, I got involved with the Bible study and art program that our seminary offers for women who are incarcerated at the William G. Truesdale Adult Detention Center in Alexandria. Although our visits to the detention center are currently curtailed during the pandemic, we continue to meet (by Zoom) for prayer for those who are incarcerated and to create Bible study worksheets for our incarcerated women. Then I received a surprise invitation from the ELCA to serve as co-editor for what became *Hear My Voice: A Prison Prayer Book* (Augsburg Fortress, 2019). Resurrection member Dr. Gail Ramshaw was also a contributor to this prayer book. I never expected my ecumenical work to take me to jail! But it seems that the Spirit wanted to stretch me to seek God in the temple that is the Alexandria Detention Center – because, when I went there, I found that God was indeed already there.

Although I have technically been the same job for many years, every year has brought a new dimension to the call to follow Christ. I believe that through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, my small role at Virginia Seminary over a quarter century has ripple effects across space and time, as our graduates’ ministries bear the Gospel across the globe, now and for years into the future. I am deeply grateful for the call that I hold at Virginia Theological Seminary, which allows me to participate in God’s mission in this corner of God’s church.

This year of pandemic has brought so many pivots in life, work, and worship to us all. Figuring out how to worship online, how to teach and learn remotely, how to provide and receive pastoral care via Zoom, how to care for elderly parents we can't visit - it's been a year of unexpected learnings and yearnings. I remember with longing – perhaps you do too – what a precious gift it was to worship together in person in church, to receive Communion, to sing, to pray, to pass the peace, to hug those we love. To experience a packed church at Christmas Eve and Easter. Yet, we trust that God is even yet at work. As God said in Isaiah 43 to his people in exile in Babylon: “I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” I

think God has this same message for his people in exile today. I am eager to see how God is and will be renewing and re-creating church for us all.