

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today is Campus Ministry Sunday! This designation brings back memories of my college days and gatherings with fellow students and campus ministers. There were meetings, Bible studies, guest speakers, service projects, social events, and more. Some of the students served as Bible camp counselors during the summers. Some participated in mission trips and/or work projects during the breaks. Many went on to serve as lay leaders at churches after graduation. Some went on to be deacons and pastors.

During my years at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, the campus ministry programs owned their own houses near the UW-L campus. If I recall correctly, there were two Lutheran Campus Ministry locations, Crossroads Campus Ministry (which included some of the mainline Protestant denominations: Presbyterian, United Methodist, United Church of Christ, etc...), the Newman Center (which was/is a church, as well as the location of the Catholic Campus Ministry), and perhaps a few others.

Today, the ELCA and United Campus Ministry share a campus ministry building on Pine Street in La Crosse. It is known as Common Ground. College students can drop-in for a cup of coffee or tea, a cookie (provided by congregations in the synod, including our W-ELCA group), and visit with fellow students or the campus ministers. They can also participate in Bible studies, mission trips, and attend worship services.

There are two campus ministers who work with the students at Common Ground. One is Pastor Ben Morris, who is an ELCA pastor. His work is a ministry of the La Crosse Area Synod. (You may recall that Pastor Ben preached last summer at our combined outdoor worship service for VBS students, members, and guests of St. Paul's, Peace Lutheran in Tomah and the Methodist churches in Norwalk.) The other campus minister is typically associated with one of the other supporting denominations: American Baptist, Episcopal, United Church of Christ, United Methodist, or the Presbyterian church.

In recognition of Campus Ministry Sunday, our sermon for today has been written by Pastor Ben. I will be sharing part of Pastor Ben's sermon today during our Drive-In worship service, but feel free, if you have online access, to watch his full sermon after our worship service today. Nalani will be sending the link to you.

As Pastor Ben mentions, these are challenging times due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Most of those who attend and/or work at colleges do not yet know whether classes will be online, in-person, or hybrid. Many other aspects of campus life are unknown, as well. Therefore, let us pray for the welfare of all students, teachers, and parents as they prepare for the fall semester. Let us pray for all of the college students, that they may be encouraged in their walk with Christ through the work of campus ministry. Let us provide our support, in whatever ways we can, for Lutheran Campus Ministry at Common Ground.

Peace,

Pastor Cathy