Convention 2011: Savoring Life through Servant-Leadership

Marilyn Beyer, Assistant Director of Church Relations

Purpose is fundamental to human life. We all want to find our life’s purpose.

It gives us the will not just to live but to serve others. Every one of us already has it within … some of us just need to uncover what it is.

The 24th annual convention of the Gustavus Adolphus College Association of Congregations is scheduled for Saturday, April 9, 2011. It promises to be a fulfilling day of learning and fellowship as Gustavus hosts pastors and delegates from ELCA congregations.

The theme of the day will be A Year of Living Purposefully: Savoring Life through Servant-Leadership. In a keynote presentation and afternoon workshops, Richard Leider and Larry Spears will detail a graceful, practical, and spiritual process for making your unique purpose central to your life and leadership.

Richard J. Leider ’66, a native of St. Paul, Minn., is founder and chairman of The Inventure Group. He has worked for over three decades researching, writing, coaching, speaking, and facilitating workshops to help people discover the power of purpose. He is the author of eight books, including The Power of Purpose and Repacking Your Bags. Larry C. Spears heads the Spears Center for Servant Leadership. Formerly president and CEO (1990–2007) of the Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, he is considered today’s foremost authority on servant-leadership and teaches graduate courses on the topic for Gonzaga University in Spokane, Wash.

This year’s convention schedule will begin with the 9:15 a.m. business meeting in Christ Chapel, where association delegates will elect members to the college’s board of trustees and to the association board of directors. Morning worship will follow, featuring the Rev. Rodney Anderson of St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Eden Prairie, as homilist and special music by the Choir of Christ Chapel. Immediately following worship, Leider and Spears will present the keynote address, “Savoring Your Purpose in Life through Servant-Leadership.”

The Covenant Award will be presented during the noon luncheon in Alumni Hall. An interactive afternoon workshop, “Discovering the Essence of Servant-Leadership,” will follow. Using a special card deck to identify gifts and passions, Leider will lead delegates through a tested process to discern individual gifts, their reasons for getting up in the morning, and will guide them in integrating it into everything they do. Participants will discover the inspiring essence of servant-leadership.

All congregations represented will be eligible to participate in drawings for a resource from the Inventure Group: a “Discovering Your Calling” kit. Please join us at the close of the day for the official ribbon-cutting and open house event of Gustavus’s new Center for Servant Leadership.
From the Director
PASTOR GRADY ST. DENNIS, Director of Church Relations

On campus, there is a great deal of promise and excitement in the air with construction projects!

On the west side of campus, the new academic building—a three-story learning center that will house the Departments of Communication Studies, Economics/Management, History, Psychology, and Sociology/Anthropology—is well under way and scheduled to open in the fall.

More immediate is the construction in the Johnson Student Union of a new center for servant leadership, which will bring our Office of Church Relations together with three others—the Center for Vocational Reflection, the Community Service Center, and the Career Center—uniting our staffs in one location to continue the work of each while expanding our vision and the possibilities that may unfold.

The Center for Servant Leadership will be officially launched at the annual convention of the Gustavus Adolphus College Association of Congregations on Saturday, April 9, 2011. The idea for the center has deep roots in the College’s mission and offers a strong expression of who we are and what we are called to be as a church-related, liberal arts college. We will seek foundational ways to more fully live out our vocation as a college of the Church. As a center, we will look for ways to increase outreach and strengthen the relational outreach network to alumni, friends of the College, and congregational and community partnerships; to enhance academic service-learning; and to extend our work to new audiences.

We continue to desire to be in service to the wider community within which we are rooted. We count it a privilege to be your partner in ministry and an intellectual resource for your congregation’s educational goals and growth. May this coming year bring opportunities to work together even more to strengthen the tie of faith in Jesus Christ that binds us!

InSpire!

It is quieter on campus during January than at any other time during the academic year. While many first- and second-year students are on campus, other students are studying abroad, away for job-shadowing opportunities and internships, or taking a break. It is a peaceful time on campus, but with friends and roommates often gone, students can find it to be very lonely. The second semester will begin in February. We hope that you will find ways to remember and support students from your congregation during these winter months.

Here are a few suggestions:

• Write a letter or card, send a package from home. Facebook and e-mail are common ways to keep in touch, but students consider it even more special to receive mail and packages.
• Remember birthdays and special days in the life of your student. A card is great, and a dozen cookies, an iTunes gift card, or a pair of warm gloves with a thoughtful note would be greatly appreciated!
• If a Bible verse or devotion has touched your heart, take time to share it with your student. Encourage them in their faith walk.
• If you find yourself on campus, or if your youth group has an on-campus retreat planned, contact your student and invite them to share social time.

Thank you for finding ways to reach out to your students while they are away at college. We would love to hear what your congregation is doing or has done to connect with your college students. Thank you for the role you play in building up the church-college connection!
Youth and youth leaders will enjoy a day of discovery at Student Leadership Day 2011, with Tiger McLuen, Gustavus students, Richard Leider, and others. | Photos by Stacia Vogel

Student Leadership Day 2011 Planned for April 9

Youth and youth leaders invited to participate in a day of leadership development.

The Office of Church Relations is excited to be offering a special daylong event for high school students (currently in grades 8–11) on Saturday, April 9. This day will be filled with opportunities for students to identify, explore, and develop their own leadership skills. It will help students better understand what it means to be a leader and to recognize leadership opportunities within their congregations, schools, communities, and the wider world.

Throughout the morning, students and youth leaders will have the opportunity to listen to and interact with Tiger McLuen, president of Youth Leadership. Tiger engages audiences of any age. His talks are grounded in scripture and laden with humor and personal stories that are sure to entertain, teach, inspire, and motivate.

The students will also have the opportunity to be in conversation with each other facilitated by Gustavus students who are leaders both on campus and in the local community. The Gusties will encourage the high school students with questions that challenge them to really think about aspects of what it means to be a leader in the world today.

Youth directors will also have the opportunity to talk with Tiger about practical ideas for growing an exciting youth ministry program. Tiger is a former youth pastor himself and has authored two books, *Equipped to Serve* and *The Student Leadership Training Manual*. His expertise is centered on youth groups and forming strong youth for the future.

To close the day, students will participate in a workshop led by Richard Leider that explores their gifts and life’s purpose in an exercise that will help them identify five core strengths and connect those gifts to being a servant and a leader. Youth leaders will come away from the workshop with valuable information that will enable them to begin encouraging the students in specific ways to explore these strengths in their home congregation, school, and extracurricular activities.

Student Leadership Day promises to be a day filled with energy and excitement. Conversations with Tiger McLuen, Gustavus students, and the workshop to close the day will give students and youth leaders more knowledge and a better understanding of servant-leadership. The day will be one that helps students begin to discern their calling to service and leadership in whatever capacity God has planned for them.

The schedule for the day starts with registration at 8:30 a.m. and will end at 3:30 p.m. The cost is $10 per person (including adult leaders) and includes lunch. To register, find a form on the website, or call Ellen Miller at 507-933-7073 (or e-mail church-relations@gustavus.edu).

A BRIEF INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD LEIDER

Q: What do you want your audience to understand about life’s purpose and meaning?

RL: Purpose is the reason we get up in the morning. Finding that is a daily quest for all of us, every day, from cradle to grave.

Q: Will the workshop appeal to an audience of all ages?

RL: All of us are in transition much of the time. Change is not specific to any age or group.

Q: Will the youth “get it”?

RL: The calling cards exercise is failsafe and insightful for people of any age and at every level, a tool to discern God-given gifts. If we could make it fun, like a game, for you to see your gifts for yourself, would it be worth an hour of your time?

Q: Can we really have outcomes like that in an hour’s time?

RL: I’m always amazed at how it breaks open to see “Who am I?” “What am I doing with my life?” “What do I want to do?”

Q: And how does this relate to the spiritual dimension?

RL: It will be tailored to the audience, and to the spiritual side of “Make Your Life Count.” It will be very easy to connect this to the Lutheran life.

Q: How will youth leaders be able to use this?

RL: The calling cards exercise is failsafe and insightful for people of any age, and at every level. It’s done with a deck of 52 cards. If we could make it fun, like a game, for you to see your gifts for yourself, would it be worth an hour of your time?

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Mission and Vision of the Center for Servant Leadership

President Jack Ohle, the Board of Trustees, and the “thinking partners” who have worked to develop the concepts are thrilled beyond measure about the creation of the Center for Servant Leadership and being a part of it, and are offering full support.

Between April 2008 and October 2009, the deliberations of the eight task forces of Commission Gustavus 150 offered lots of great ideas and recommendations. The Center will offer an important way to ground and pull many of the ideas together in action. The Center for Servant Leadership, with the variety of audiences it serves, will be a place where all can experience Gustavus’s new brand—making your life count—for a lifetime!

While the offices and partnerships involved in the new Center for Servant Leadership are very excited about the new collaboration, the constituents to be served by the College are still learning about the new Center. We are pleased to share the following about the Center:

“The MISSION of the Center for Servant Leadership is to cultivate capacity for the alignment of inner and outer life that is oriented toward mutual investment with others and rooted in a critically reflective liberal arts understanding of faith, vocation, and service.”

Broadly stated, the new Center will help the entities involved to fulfill goals to constituents in the following ways:

Center for Vocational Reflection (CVR): With the creation of the Center, Gustavus will fulfill its promise to sustain and fully own the CVR, and significantly expand its outreach to alumni, community, and congregational partners and friends of the College.

Community Service Center: With the creation of the Center, Gustavus will expand campus-community partnerships and enhance academic service-learning.

Church Relations: With the creation of the Center, Gustavus will increase the number of outreach resources available and strengthen the relational outreach network of alumni, friends, and congregations.

Career Center: With the creation of the Center, Gustavus will expand and deepen its work with students, providing information, opportunity, and support to them as they gain clarity, confidence, and connections in defining their work future, purpose, and calling.

“The VISION of the Center for Servant Leadership is that the people of Gustavus and those with whom we are engaged will so come to know who they are, why they are here, and how they are called to live that they will be agents of change for a just and peaceful world.”

STOCCHI NAMED DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Jeff Stocco, interim dean of students and vice president for student affairs since 2009, has been named to assume the role of director of the Center for Servant Leadership effective June 1.

Stocco came to Gustavus in 1987. As director of the Career Center for more than 20 years, Stocco has focused on programs that help students clarify their direction, obtain experience in their chosen field, and make the transition to work or graduate/professional school. During that time, all four offices making up the new Center have collaborated on a number of initiatives and projects.

“The Center for Servant Leadership is now poised to build on the strengths of four excellent and established programs,” said Stocco. “All of our programs are highly experiential and focused on learning and reflection. In addition, our programs are based in the world, the community, in congregations, and in the workplace. We have a unique opportunity to deepen and integrate this work with students, alumni, the community, congregations, staff, and faculty as students stand ready to find their place and make a difference in the world. There is much work to be done, and I can’t wait to help the staff of the new Center make that happen.”
The New Center for Servant Leadership
MARILYN BEYER, Assistant Director of Church Relations

Four campus offices merge into one department

In early 2011, four entities that have existed separately for many years will merge to form the new Center for Servant Leadership (CSL) at Gustavus Adolphus College.

Under joint leadership, the Center for Vocational Reflection (Chris Johnson, director), the Center for Community Service (Jeffrey Rathlef, director), the Office of Church Relations (Grady St. Dennis, director), and the Career Center (Cynthia Favre, director) will unite their staffs to form the new Center for Servant Leadership. Each section within the new department will continue with work already being done and, through new possibilities offered by a new spirit of collaboration, be able to expand and better share through this new structure. “The practical reality of being together [in one location] will help us be more efficient,” St. Dennis said.

Jeffrey Stocco, interim dean of students and vice president for student affairs, will take the helm as director of the Center for Servant Leadership beginning in June [see related article].

The center represents the result of several years of discussion, dreaming, and planning. More recently, the work done for the Commission Gustavus 150 process set several major priority areas, and the creation of the center will allow the College to make significant progress toward implementing more than 80 of the 439 recommendations that grew out of that process. “We’ll be able to build on the best of what we have each developed over the years,” said Johnson.

As a signature expression of the College’s mission, the center will invite and equip students, faculty, staff, alumni, congregational and community partners, and friends of the College to find ways to learn, live, and lead “from within” in ways that serve others and work toward addressing the needs of the community. With this center, Gustavus is poised to make distinctive contributions to the mission of higher education—to foster active and informed citizenship, nourish capacities for critical and integrative thinking on behalf of the common good, and create innovative solutions to the significant challenges of our times.

The new center will have its home in Johnson Student Union near the Campus Center, easily accessible, highly visible, and at the heart of campus life. A formal inauguration event to celebrate the launch of the CSL will be held in early April and during the GACAC convention on April 9.
St. Dennis Named Minnesota House Chaplain

MATT THOMAS, Media Relations Manager

The Rev. Grady St. Dennis ’92, Director of Church Relations at Gustavus Adolphus College, was nominated and elected to serve as chaplain of the Minnesota House of Representatives on Monday, Jan. 10. St. Dennis will succeed former Gustavus President Dennis J. Johnson ’60, who served as House Chaplain for the past two years.

Pastor St. Dennis will add the part-time duties associated with the House Chaplain position to his current responsibilities at Gustavus, which will include serving as Associate Director of the College’s emerging Center for Servant Leadership, which will be officially launched at the Gustavus Adolphus College Association of Congregations (GACAC) Convention on Saturday, April 9.

“I’m honored to have been elected and to have the opportunity to serve in this unique role,” St. Dennis said. “I’m hoping to provide spiritual guidance to the political leaders of our state who have some tough and challenging times ahead of them this legislative session.”

Following his graduation from Gustavus in 1992, St. Dennis completed his M.Div. at Luther Seminary in St. Paul. Following ordination, he served as Associate Pastor at Mount Olivet Lutheran Church in Minneapolis for eight years before accepting his current position at the College in 2007.

St. Dennis leads the College’s church relations efforts with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and its congregations, with particular attention to the Gustavus Adolphus College Association of Congregations (GACAC). He represents the College at ELCA gatherings, synod assemblies, and other church-related gatherings. He serves on the Lutheran Youth Outreach and Companion Synod Boards of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod of the ELCA.

“Gustavus is extremely proud of the fact that the College’s Director of Church Relations, the Rev. Grady St. Dennis, will be serving as House Chaplain this legislative session,” Gustavus President Jack R. Ohle said. “This is an example of an alumnus committed to service and leadership which is at the center of the College’s mission. Like former President Dennis Johnson before him, St. Dennis will be a huge asset to the state’s leaders in St. Paul.”

HOW WILL THE NEW CENTER FOR SERVANT LEADERSHIP BENEFIT ALUMNI AND THE CONGREGATIONS?

- The best of what each office offers will continue and be strengthened and extended to new audiences, resulting in more resources Gustavus can offer.
- New synergies and possibilities will emerge.
- The new Center will be a springboard / launching pad / incubator for advancing leadership development.

CONGREGATIONS, WE NEED YOUR HELP IN UPDATING OUR RECORDS!

Congregations know well how difficult it is to maintain correct records! We are working hard to update our records, and Association congregations are currently helping us update information about their staff and delegates. Pastors and delegates, please check with your church office to make sure we have the correct information regarding who will be invited to represent your congregation on Saturday, April 9.

Invitations for pastors are mailed to the church address. Lay delegates receive their invitation mailed to their home address. Invitations will be mailed in early February with a complete schedule enclosed.

Grady St. Dennis ’92 gives the opening prayer at the Minnesota House of Representatives.
Three years ago, we perceived that people in area congregations longed for something deeper and more focused than the normal Sunday morning adult forums in their churches provided. On that premise, Exploring Religious Questions was begun. This winter, Church Relations at Gustavus Adolphus College offers “God’s Purpose and Our Role in the World.”

What is God’s purpose for the world, and how is God at work? What is salvation? What role is there for us humans? What is the significance of Sabbath rest? What role does nature play? Of what importance is the community of faith? Of what importance is a relational understanding of the self? To what are we called? Among concepts discussed will be creation, justification, the image of God, vocation, salvation, and dominion.

The course will be taught on five consecutive Mondays from February 21 to March 21 at 7-9 p.m. by Darrell Jodock, with help from Blake Couey (Religion Department), Chris Johnson (Center for Servant Leadership), and Jim Donje (Johnson Center for Environmental Innovation). The cost for this not-for-credit course is $35 per person and will include materials. Registration deadline is February 14 and space is limited. For more information or to register, contact Church Relations at 507-933-7001 or e-mail church-relations@gustavus.edu.

On Saturday, February 12, and Sunday, February 13, 2011, Gustavus and Thrivent Financial for Lutherans will partner in hosting a food-pack event on the Gustavus campus, welcoming the community in an opportunity to deepen understanding of food security.

The days’ events coincide with the College’s year-long Global Insight program focused on food and will draw upon some of the themes discussed at the 2010 Nobel Conference, Making Food Good. It will encourage participants to consider the challenges of addressing and alleviating local and global hunger.

Through speakers, education booths, advocacy, and hands-on activities, the event will feature a variety of opportunities for learning and involvement about the complexities of food insecurity. Participants of all ages will be challenged to deepen their understanding of the conditions that precipitate and perpetuate food insecurity locally and globally, and to consider alternative models for promoting food security, from emergency food relief in its various forms to sustainable development. The hope is to inspire participants personally to do at least one thing, looking beyond emergency food relief, to impact systematic change.

Included in this event is the opportunity to participate in an emergency food pack of 250,000 meals, funded by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. This is a great opportunity to be engaged in a servant event to benefit the global community. Registration is required for this food pack event; individuals or groups may register starting in January.

For more information or to register, go to gustavus.edu/events/food/.

“God’s Purpose and Our Role in the World”
Exploring Religious Questions minicourse begins February 21

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Good Food for All
A food security event building solidarity through education, action, and advocacy

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BECOME A MEMBER!
Not a member of the Association of Congregations but interested in joining? Contact the Office of Church Relations.

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