

here  
i learn  
in order to  
lead

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY TEXAS

What it means to be a student at Concordia University Texas

table  
of  
contents

Concordia University's Mission and Vision ..... **3**

Introduction ..... **4**

Why a Liberal Arts Education?..... **6**

Freedom to Ask Questions..... **9**

Making Sense of Seeming Contradictions: Two Kingdoms..... **13**

Leading Lives that Matter: Vocation ..... **17**

Serving Our Neighbor: Community Engagement ..... **20**

Learning to Live Together: Diversity and Inclusion ..... **24**



## MISSION

(What We Do):

**Developing Christian Leaders**

## CORE PURPOSE

(Why We Do It):

**To cultivate goodness,  
truth, and beauty**

## CORE VALUES

(How We Live Life Together):

**Christ-Centered,** Christ is honored and all are welcome

**Caring for People,** All people have inherent value

**Vocation,** God calls us to serve the neighbor

**Life-Long Learning,** An ongoing quest for knowledge and wisdom

**Courage,** An ability and willingness to act boldly and rightly

**Trust,** A mutual belief in good intention, honesty, and reliability



## VISION

(Who We Are):

We are the premier university where the adventure of faith, learning and life-changing experiences leads to meaningful work.



## introduction

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." ~1 Peter 2:9

The unofficial motto of our city is *Keep Austin Weird*, and if we interpret “weird” as “different,” “special,” or “set apart,” then we can boldly proclaim that our university’s unofficial motto is *Keep Concordia Weird*. From the vast nature preserve located on the main campus to rattlesnake crossing signs and a weather-related mascot, CTX is just a little bit different. We’ve been in Austin since 1926 but our history actually stretches back much further than that—to the early 16th century and a priest named Martin Luther (follow him on Twitter @MartinLuther). Luther served as professor of religion and campus pastor at Wittenberg University in Germany, and he’s best known as the architect of the Reformation. Luther didn’t set out to change the course of the Western world... but he did. His conviction that church

leaders could better serve their communities spurred Luther to begin a dialog that took the form of 95 Theses, or rather talking points, he felt should be discussed among professors and theologians (*check them out online: [Luther’s 95 Theses](#)*).



These academic and spiritual conversations continue today, both inside the classroom and out, at places like Concordia University Texas. Luther’s teachings also shaped what we call “The Lutheran Learning Model”—our approach to teaching and learning at Concordia. And one

of the things that makes us—and your program of study—unique is the Concordia Distinctive, our focus on developing Christian leaders. Our goal is to graduate women and men who transform communities by seeking out leadership opportunities and influencing people for Christ. In the following pages, we’ll examine more in depth what all this means, and how a Lutheran liberal arts education will guide your journey both today and in the coming years. Whether you are a life-long Lutheran or come from a very different background, you are welcome here. Join the conversation. Our hope is your time here will be different, special, distinct... maybe even a little weird (in the best sense of the word).



**why a liberal arts education?**

Do one thing, and do it well is often offered as sound advice to those who wish to succeed in life. Sounds great, right? But what if, at this point in your life, you're not entirely certain what it is you do well, let alone what you want to do for the rest of your life? What if the world is rapidly changing and innovations in technology, new scientific discoveries, global economies and communities, and access to vast amounts of knowledge require us to quickly adapt nearly everything we do in order to do anything well? A liberal arts education offers you a broad foundation of knowledge that you build upon once you begin to develop a specific area of expertise within a major field of study. If you take advantage of your time at Concordia, you'll be able to do many things, and do them well.



be  
distinct

*Part of what distinguishes your education here from other universities is the Concordia Distinctive, which is why you're taking classes like "Life & Leadership." You'll also take a leadership theory and practice course as well as courses where you'll study, in-depth, the Biblical texts that laid the foundation of ethical and moral practices for Western Civilization.*



be  
well  
rounded

*A liberal arts education is a classical approach that promotes a broad base of knowledge and develops intellectual capacities. In plain English, that's why you'll take writing and literature courses even if you plan to major in Business Administration, and why you'll take courses in political science and the fine arts even though you plan to pursue a degree in Nursing.*

discover  
your  
passions

*If you haven't chosen a major or mapped out your career plans for the next fifty years, exposure to a broad range of disciplines also helps many students realize what their passion in life is. A liberal arts education can help you discover your vocation, the things you were put on this earth to do.*

We live in a dynamic world economy that demands creativity, flexibility, and change. Career opportunities for the future require adaptability, critical thinking and the ability to make connections across disciplines. The best preparation for this type of career can be found in a liberal arts education.

be a  
life-long  
learner

*At Concordia, you'll learn not only what to study but how to learn, not just in the classroom but also through lectures and workshops by visiting scholars and guest lecturers, service learning opportunities, a variety of arts activities and venues, and study abroad programs. These experiences provide a multifaceted opportunity to teach, model, practice, and recognize Christian leadership—invaluable skills that will serve you well the rest of your life.*



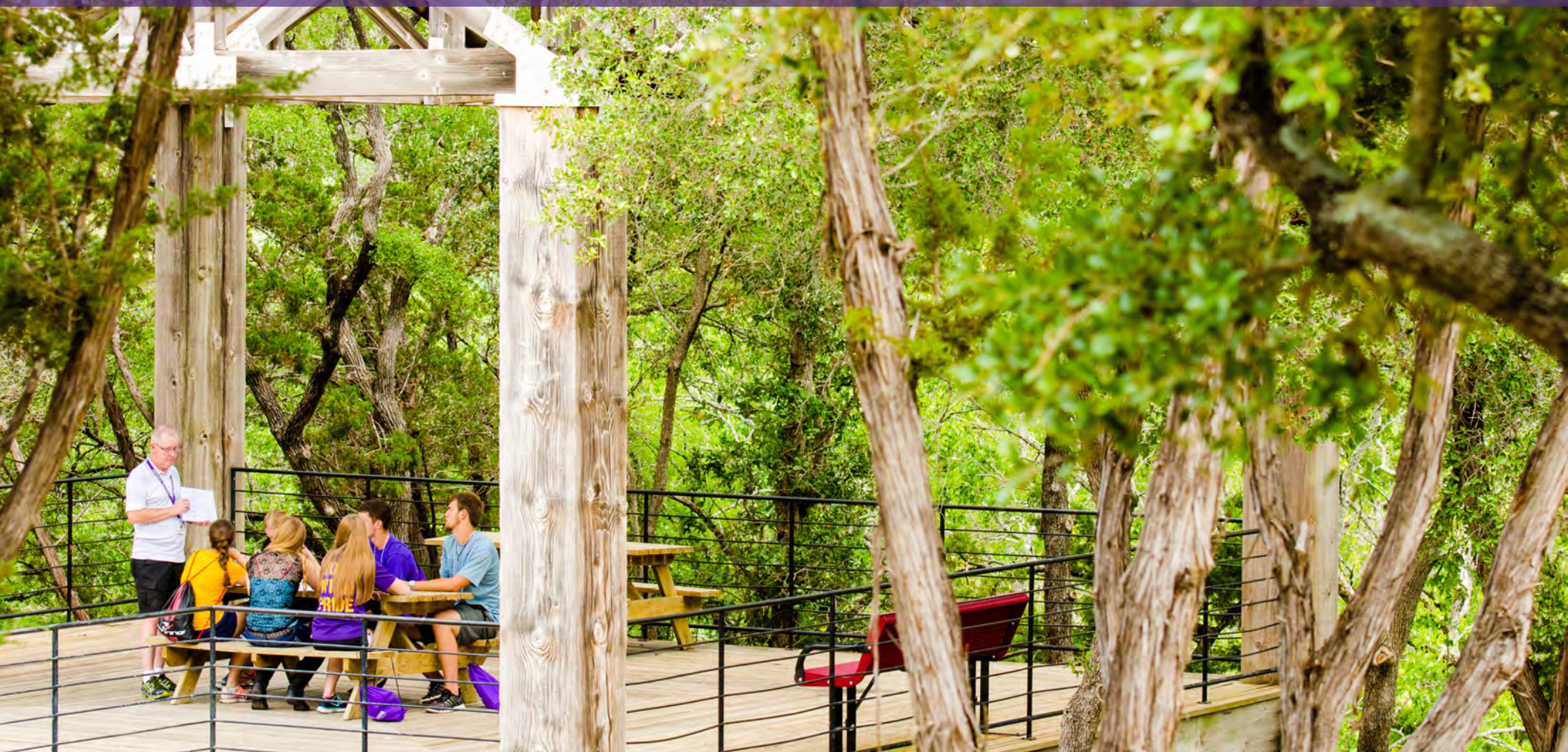
questions  
(for further  
thought)

*Find people well established in a successful career (parents, supervisors, professors, etc.) and ask them what they do differently in their jobs today than they did five or ten years ago. Ask them how they keep current with technology and new knowledge in their field. Ask them how they became life-long learners.*



# freedom to ask questions

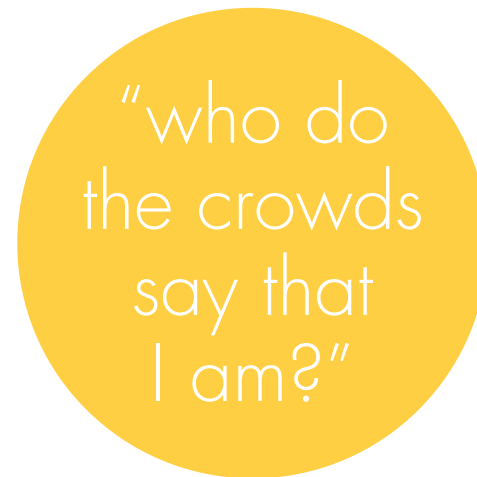
"You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." ~ John 8:32



The first followers of Jesus were ordinary people—civic workers, blue collar guys—that Jesus sent into the world to do some pretty serious community service. They had been watching Jesus work, listening and learning from him, and then suddenly, he told them to go out on their own to heal people, to share the message about God’s love. And they did. When they returned, they were eager to share their success stories with Jesus, to catch up and maybe relax together for a while. But Jesus’s following had grown. People couldn’t get enough of his message. The disciples wanted to send the crowds away but Jesus decided to perform the compassionate (not to mention physics-defying) act of feeding over five thousand people with only a few fish and loaves of bread.

You might have heard this story, awe-inspiring in and of itself, but consider

what follows the feeding of the five thousand. Jesus wants to know what the word on the street is, so he gathers his circle of friends and asks them a question: “who do the crowds say that I am?”



The disciples report back what they’ve heard: a lot of people think Jesus is a reincarnated prophet. There’s a possibility that some of the disciples thought this as well, and there’s no indication that all of them thought he was the son of God. And then, Jesus asks another question: “But what about you—who do you say I am?”

From Jesus’s perspective, the answer might have seemed self-evident by now—these “ordinary” men had seen and done extraordinary, miraculous things. Wouldn’t it have been easier for Jesus to simply declare “*it should be pretty obvious to everyone that I’m the son of God.*” But he doesn’t. He opens the door for speculation, reflection, self-discovery, doubt, and dialog. He asks questions.

You are on a journey, a quest (sounds a lot like “question,” doesn’t it?) for knowledge about yourself, about the world (seen and unseen) and how these things fit together in the hopes of discovering what you specifically are called to do in this world. Be sure to ask lots of questions along the way.



**Ask “the Big Questions of Life” questions.** *Who am I? Who is God? What is my purpose in life? You are surrounded by people who have either spent a significant portion of their lives asking similar questions or who are still looking for answers. If you ask questions, you might learn new ways of thinking that help you along on your journey.*



**Ask questions in the classroom.** *At Concordia, we value academic freedom. This means we’re free to discuss anything in the classroom—including religion and faith. We’re free to question and to doubt. We believe that since God created everything and*

*called it good then all disciplines—the arts, sciences, religion, business, etc.—are worthy of examination and interrogation. This doesn’t mean we’ll always agree with one another, but we can share our points of view, respectfully disagree, and learn from one another.*



**Accept that some things are unknowable.** *Despite our quest for knowledge, we accept there are mysteries in life, that the ways of God are not the ways of humans, that some answers have not yet been discovered or revealed. Your professors possess a world of knowledge and sometimes they’ll also answer a question with “I don’t know.” Knowledge has its limits, and our job is to seek answers with an honest and open mind.*



**Accept that some things are absolute truths.** *When Jesus asked his disciples “who do you say I am?” Peter answered “God’s Messiah.” He had examined the evidence, sorted through the opinions of others, and came to the conclusion that made the most sense. And, you know what? He was correct. Just like there’s only one correct answer when solving for  $x$  and  $y$ , and just like “there,” “their” and “they’re” mean three different things and cannot be used interchangeably—some answers are correct and some are not.*

*Seeking the ultimate truth in all things while accepting that some things are unknowable may sound like a seeming contradiction, and so now might be a good time to move onto a discussion of the two kingdoms.*



?

questions  
(for further  
thought)

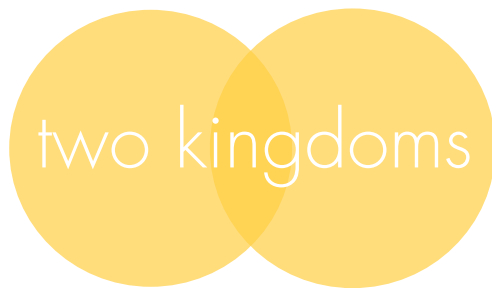
*What do you believe is  
absolutely true? How did  
you come to believe this?  
What do you question,  
struggle with, or doubt?*





## making sense of seeming contradictions: two kingdoms

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” ~ *Romans 5:8*



## two kingdoms

Once a student made a poor choice: she didn't quite understand a research assignment, started her paper the night before it was due, and waited too long to ask the librarian for help. She plagiarized large sections of the assignment, and the professor called her in for a discussion about academic dishonesty. "We're both Christians," the student argued "so you should forgive me." "I do forgive you," the professor responded "and you still earn a failing grade for this assignment."

Offering forgiveness and levying punishment at the same time seems to be contradictory behavior (a

paradox) but, in fact, it reveals a greater truth about how Christians live in this world.

### **Sinners/Saints and Law/Gospel**

Martin Luther pondered seeming contradictions, or paradoxes, quite a bit. Rather than view them as a source of confusion, however, Luther believed paradox can often help us make sense of the human condition. His favorite paradox was that believers of Christ are simultaneously sinners and saints. How can that be? It means that God's law shows us our flaws, our sin, (and honestly, who makes it through the day without screwing something up?) AND the Gospel—the belief that through Christ, we are forgiven—wipes away those flaws. We are made whole through God's love, and yet we still lead broken lives. We are usually safe drivers

but the one day we're late for class, we get pulled over and receive a ticket. We are an awesome skater but one miscalculation that defies the laws of gravity, and we spend the summer in a cast. We have finally found a best friend for life but after a stupid argument, she stops speaking to us for a week. Being forgiven doesn't mean that we escape the consequences of our actions. Lutherans believe this is true because we live in a fallen world, which leads us into the concept of "two kingdoms."

### **Two Kingdoms**

Another paradox we regularly live and explore is the concept of two kingdoms or realms. While there is only one ultimate authority, namely, God, we believe that humans live simultaneously under two realms. One way to think about this paradox

is to imagine a “left-hand” and a “right-hand” kingdom.

### **The left-hand kingdom (or realm) includes living under:**

- **The authority of reason** (*keeping up with course readings and attending class instead of waiting the night before to cram for the final exam increases one’s odds of success.*)
- **Standards of obligations** (*small children drastically change the social lives of their parents.*)
- **Justice** (*sometimes being in the wrong place at the wrong time results in mandatory community service, fines, or worse.*)
- **Laws and Rules** (*see above: “traffic citations” and “academic dishonesty policies.”*)
- **Societal expectations** (*visible tats and ear spacers might be cool, and they might prevent people from landing their dream job someday.*)

- **Evaluations** (*employees who take few sick days, volunteer for tough projects, and arrive on time earn better performance reviews.*)

The examples above are not meant to be judgmental: they are simply examples of what it means to live in the “left-hand” kingdom. And left-hand kingdom living happens in establishments of state, education, business and, yes, even institutions of the church.

### **The right-hand kingdom (or realm) includes living under God’s authority of:**

- **Forgiveness** (*Paul, who wrote many books of the New Testament, said it best in Colossians 3:13: “Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.”*)
- **Mercy** (*it’s not unheard of for professors to give students a second chance when they royally screw up*

*an assignment or, for that matter, for students to forgive professors when they drop the ball.*)

- **Grace** (*it’s like your dad buying a second scoop of ice cream when you dropped the first one on the sidewalk; it’s a gift; it’s no strings attached; it’s a second chance; it’s more than we deserve.*) **Accept it. Practice it. Pass it on.**
- **Freedom** (*if we accept that our sins are forgiven, then it makes no sense to live in the past; we are free to live, to serve others, to share God’s love.*)
- **Gospel** (*in a nutshell: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” John 3:16.*)
- **Faith** (*sometimes we have to silence the voice of reason, venture into the unknown, and embrace seeming contradictions.*)

These two realms are and must remain distinct; yet we live in both at the same time simultaneously. As the theologian, Richard Hughes, explains it: “the Christian must

reside in two worlds at one and the same time: the world of nature and of grace... [we are] free to take seriously both the world and the kingdom of God.”



Sounds like a lot of mental work, doesn't it? It is, and that's why this university exists—to equip you for the hard work that lies ahead. Make no mistake: hard work in the classroom, in the community, in relationships, in the workplace pays off. Slackers need not apply. And yet, Lutherans believe that humans can't gain God's favor through hard work. We are saved by God's grace through faith alone, not by human effort. God loves you and showers you freely with his grace. There's nothing we can do to earn it. It's a gift. Our response to that love and grace is that we work towards restoring his kingdom on earth.

Wrestling with seeming contradictions isn't just something we discuss in matters of faith; it lays the groundwork for discussions about many of the subjects you'll study. Life is complex, often confusing, and the world needs critical thinkers, people who can solve problems, people who are comfortable dwelling in two kingdoms.



*What seeming contradictions are present in your life? How do you resolve them? Can they be resolved? What do you believe to be important about work? About faith?*



# leading lives that matter: vocation

"However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you."

~ 1 Corinthians 7:17



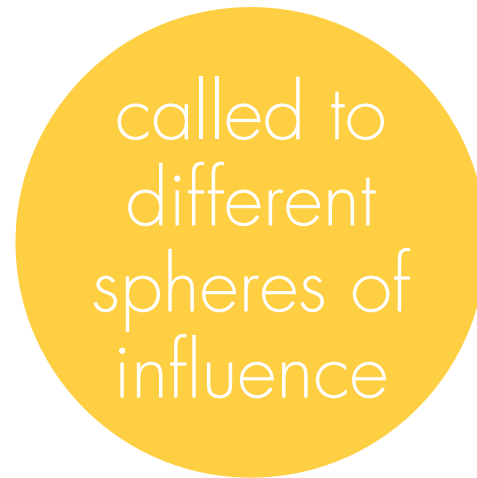
Whether you are a Christian or profess a different faith, the concept of vocation means that one is called to different spheres of influence, oftentimes simultaneously in life.

### A vocation may be

- A certain profession or project.
- It may mean being a mom or dad, a daughter or son, an accountant, a teacher, an entrepreneur, a historian, or a software developer.
- It may be that you are called to hold an office within a student organization on campus.
- You are even called to be a Concordia University Texas student.

The idea that God has “called” you to do something in life may sound strange, a little overwhelming. However, some people, at a young age, know exactly what they want

to do for the rest of their lives. For others, just the process of choosing a major or a career takes a while. Some people change their minds several times before figuring out what it is they were put on this earth to do. And that’s OK.



Consider Kristin Wollman who knew she wanted to work in marketing when she came to Concordia University Texas, and her first professional job out of college was as a marketing consultant for franchise owners of a major American company. The owner of another growing business noticed Kristin’s work ethic and

interpersonal skills, and hired her to be his marketing manager. Under Kristin’s leadership, a one person marketing department has grown to ten as the company has expanded to seventeen locations. Kristin credits not only the essential communication skills she learned in the classroom while at Concordia, but also the experiences she gained being involved in many campus activities—student government, Residence Assistant, statistician for the basketball team and more. “I learned how to manage my time,” Kristin says “and that’s been essential in this business.” Kristin knew, from a very young age, what she wanted to do with the rest of her life... and she’s doing it.

For others, the journey isn’t always so clear cut. As a teenager, Nicole Allison wasn’t certain about her future but she knew it wasn’t going

to include working the family farm in El Campo, TX. Her passion for sports was the answer. After a stint playing volleyball for a junior college, Nicole was offered a scholarship to attend Concordia. She arrived in Austin, excited, but was quickly overwhelmed with paying her own bills, balancing athletics with academics, and being a single mother. “It was a whirlwind,” Nicole remembers, “but Concordia felt like the place I was supposed to be.” Upon graduation, Nicole put her business degree to work—first in the semiconductor business and then with a mortgage company—two industries that suffered in the economic decline of the 2000s. “I kept thinking about the people who encouraged and supported me at Concordia—professors and coaches—and realized that’s what I’m supposed to be doing.” Nicole returned to Concordia where she earned a Masters degree in

Education. For the past seven years, she has also been a coach for an elite club volleyball team in Austin.

So, whether you know exactly what you want to do with your life or if you’ve come to Concordia seeking direction, this is a place to both discover and prepare for many vocations—the things you were put on this earth to do.

**Remember:**

- “Vocation” is more than a job—it can be what you “do for a living” and it’s also the things for which you have a great passion, or what Lutherans might describe as what you are “called” (by God) to do with your life.
- Your calling for the next several years is to be a college student. And, whether you realize it or not—being a student is a vocation—you’ve been “called”

to study, to form relationships, to be involved in this community.



*If you could choose what to do and how to do it every day of your working life (and someone would pay you to do this), what would your “ideal job” look like? How many vocations (friend, volunteer, organization leader, etc.) do you currently have?*



**servicing our neighbor: community engagement**

A wise man once asked Jesus how to get into heaven and, as Jesus was fond of doing, he asked the man a question in return: “what do you think?” The man replied that we should love God with our heart, mind, soul, and strength and that we should love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus agreed it was a good answer but then the man asked: **and who is my neighbor?**

The concept of “neighbor” has changed throughout time. Many of us grew up in neighborhoods with privacy fences, air-conditioning, and garage door openers so we might have seen little of our immediate neighbors. We also live in a “global community” in which we are seemingly connected to the entire world through social media, the internet, and globalized economies. We might well wonder, along with

the wise man who interrogated Jesus: and who is my neighbor?



The short answer to this question might be: everyone is your neighbor. If you participated in CTX’s Freshmen Service Project, then you already know that part of what we value at Concordia is getting to know our neighbor through community service. We begin Week of Welcome with a service project because we believe that part of developing as a Christian leader is serving our neighbor. And this is just the beginning. You can serve your neighbor by being a

leader in the classroom, on the court or field of play, by participating in student government, or helping to lead chapel service.

Serving your neighbor is part of discovering and living out your vocation. What follows are some resources for getting to know your neighbor better, ways to get involved in the local community, and opportunities to earn college credit and gain a greater understanding of the global community.

### **Know Your Neighbor**

- Join a club on campus: CTX ALIVE, Association for Computing Machinery, Behavioral Sciences Club, Black Student Union, The Executives Business Club, Helping Hands, Mission Club, Student Nurses Association, Texas Master Naturalist, CTX

Twister Dance Club (for more details and updates, go online: [CTX clubs](#)).

- Concordia hosts many social activities throughout the year. For upcoming events check out the [Social Activities Calendar](#). Get the latest on Twitter: @CTXStudentLife

### Serve Your Neighbor

- **Service-Learning** combines field and classroom instruction by linking community partners to service projects such as [Water to Thrive](#), which raises money to build wells in global communities that need clean, accessible water. Service-Learning links academic study to meaningful community service so that students' academic experience and communities are mutually strengthened. Learn more at [Service-Learning](#).

- **[CAN-DO](#) (Christ Among Nations—Disciple Outreach)**

Missions is a vehicle to actively involve students in Christ's great commission to "Go and make disciples of all nations." Through short-term [mission trips](#) to locations around the United States and the world, CAN-DO provides opportunities for youth and adults to support specific missions with their financial gifts and volunteer hands-on labor.

- Also get involved with the [Student Government and Leadership Association](#).

### Get Outside of Your Neighborhood

- **Study abroad and experiential education** is one of the best investments a student could make during the university years. Cross-cultural, real-world

experiences are without equal in helping students develop leadership skills, think critically and creatively, master foreign languages, apply classroom content, mature spiritually and take responsibility for their neighbors' wellbeing. Learn more at [CTX Study Abroad](#).

- **Concordia Travel Courses** are developed and taught by Concordia faculty around the country and internationally. Travel Courses are usually less than one month long and typically take place in the summer or on breaks in the academic calendar. Recent excursions include: a spring break trip to Central America and the Caribbean; a four-day trip to Eagle Pass/Piedras Negras to explore the economics, politics and culture of doing business on the Texas/Mexico border; a one-

week trip to Ontario, Canada to experience Shakespearian plays during the Stratford Festival; and trips to Hawaii, the Pacific Northwest, the Grand Canyon

and parts of Texas to study geology and ecology. Additional fees apply for travel courses. See [CTX Travel Courses](#) for additional details and upcoming trips.

Let's return once more to the question: **who is my neighbor?** Jesus answered the wise man's question with the story of the good Samaritan—about the guy who gets the snot beat out of him while traveling along a dangerous highway. You might recall that two “good” men passed by the injured guy because they were either afraid or too busy. A third traveler, the Samaritan, picks the guy up, takes him to the hospital and pays all his medical bills.

When Jesus finishes the story, he turns to the wise man and asks: which of the three men was a good neighbor? “The one who showed mercy,” the man replies. Jesus encourages him to “Go and do likewise.”

Serving our neighbor isn't always easy work; it may take us places we ordinarily wouldn't go, and put us into contact with people we might otherwise avoid. It takes time out of our already busy lives. And yet, serving our neighbor is what Christian leaders do—in big and small ways. It's part of our vocation. We hope your experiences here will inspire a life-long journey of serving others. And that once you leave Concordia, you will **go and do likewise** in other neighborhoods, organizations, and communities.



questions  
(for further  
thought)

*In what ways have you defined “community” and “neighbor” in the past? How have you served your neighbors in these communities? What opportunities could you try during your time at Concordia which would expand your community involvement?*



## learning to live together: diversity and inclusion

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ~ Galatians 3:28



Hong Vo grew up in Port Arthur, TX in a household influenced by Buddhism, Catholicism, and Lutheranism, where she spoke both Vietnamese and English. Her background made it easier to talk to other college students who were struggling with their identities, trying to figure out where they fit at Concordia, and making sense of their own academic and spiritual journeys.

How did Hong find her way at Concordia University Texas? “No one in my family had attended college,” she says “so I just jumped right into everything to see what it was all about.” In route to earning her degree in Education last fall, Hong served on student government, joined and led Bible studies, engaged in community service projects, and started clubs. “It was always about inclusion,” she stresses, “whatever I was doing, I invited other people

to join in. Everyone was welcome. It’s the only way to learn from other people, to network, to keep an open mind.”

- At Concordia, we value diversity of thought, people, background and beliefs. All are, indeed, welcome.
- Recognizing each student as members of the body of Christ, we seek to foster a true sense of community.
- Learning happens in community as we realize that each discipline and each vocation is connected to each other as part of God’s world.
- Relationships happen in this community as we realize that we are free to live and love in our vocations as friend, classmate, and colleague.
- We enjoy life, and we use our gifts and talents to serve those around us.



## questions (for further thought)

*What makes you special, unique, makes you stand out a bit, maybe even makes you a little weird? What have you noticed that is different about those around you? Consider engaging someone else in a conversation about what he or she believes makes him or her unique. Take risks—you might learn something from someone else. You might even learn something about yourself.*