

New Student Orientation 2015
Do You Have A Middle Name? We Do Too
Lutheran Higher Education

Opening Screen of Video (Melissa Maxwell-Doherty)

When I was a young person I didn't much care for my middle name. It seemed so "old school". I was named after my maternal grandmother. During the years following my grandma's death my relationship, my connection, to my middle name changed. My middle name started to remind me of the woman who sewed dresses for my Barbie dolls and who taught me how to play cards.

My middle name? It's Margaret. Melissa Margaret Maxwell-Doherty. That's my name.

Just like many of us, California Lutheran University has a middle name too. Lutheran. This is a part of what makes Cal Lutheran distinctive. And that's what we want to focus on now:

- Our distinctiveness
- Our student focus
- Our commitment to engage the whole person—mind, body, spirit, heart, and hands.

To do so you will hear from some of my campus partners-

- Rahuldeep Gill
- Linda LeBlanc
- Pastor Scott Maxwell-Doherty
- Rabbi Belle Michael
- Colleen Windham-Hughes

So—on two days this summer we asked students and staff members to speak about some of their ideas about Cal Lutheran. Let's listen in to them as they describe their first impressions of the university.

First impressions segment of video (Belle Michael)

When I was in my rabbinical school I was asked to come lead a Seder for the Hillel-The Jewish students organization on campus. I have never heard about California Lutheran University before. In fact, coming from Israel, I have never heard about Lutherans at all. All I knew was it is a Christian school. As a Jew, my automatic response would be to shy away from any Christian encounter, "to be on the safe side" sort of speak.

Nevertheless, I took this leap of faith that God will guide me to the place I needed to be, and came.

I was surprised by the friendliness of people around me and the welcoming atmosphere on campus. From faculty to staff and students, all were nice and smiling. (what is this place?) It felt ok to ask questions, sometimes difficult ones, and still get answers.

I have learned about the Lutheran hospitality and open-minded set through the living examples of my mentors and pastors, Pastor Melissa and Scott. I have learned about Lutheran commitment to freedom and service through campus life and encounters with students. Through encounters with others I was challenged to ask myself "so what does it mean in my tradition? " and thus, grow and develop my own Jewish identity. I met students, faculty and staff with different points of view about many things, and that allowed interesting conversations and paved the way to new relationships.

If you are open minded and ready to go out of your own comfort zone, if you are willing to engage, learn and grow, CLU is the right place for you!

People wonder if they will be welcoming to Cal Lutheran just as they are and what to know what kind of a community is fostered here. Let's listen again.

Community segment of Video (Melissa Maxwell-Doherty)

What did you hear about life on the campus community from these students and staff members? I picked up on the attitude of friendliness and openness that is a part of Cal Lutheran. Some folks described us as a "family" or as a place that both "challenged and accepted" you for who you are.

They stated it so well. Cal Lutheran is so much more than a collection of individuals going about their lives of learning. This is a place where you encounter others in an atmosphere of welcome and hospitality. Who you are matters. Who others are matters also.

From this core conviction all kinds of other attributes emerge:

- Respect
- Compassion
- Openness
- Trial and error and trial and error
- Forgiveness
- Welcome

All of these things together make Cal Lutheran a vibrant community of people from all over the world coming together to learn and grow and develop...together.

Let's listen again as students and staff speak about the spirit of welcome and inclusion that lives among us.

Welcome segment of video (Scott Maxwell-Doherty)

I want you to think of the warmest welcome you have ever received. Does it come with a wonderful hug, a shout of joy, a set of smells you longed to for, or is it like nestling into your pillow after being gone for a bit? Welcome.

It is a moment of transition from where you were to where you are. It is a moment of recognizing that you are not a stranger, that you have a place here, that you have value here, that who you are and what you are matters.

During one of your tours to the campus you may have said, "is everyone on this campus really that friendly?" "Are they drinking some kind of odd water?" No! We are not preconditioned.

Lutherans understand that your value comes because of God's care and love for you. One of the ways we communicate that love is by welcoming you INTO the community to be part of the community...why...because you have value and we care about you.

Diversity and Religion 100 segment of video (Rahuldeep Gill and Colleen Windham-Hughes)

Martin Luther could not have imagined the diversity we experience in the world today or on our campus. We do know how he responded to the diversity he did experience: He called for the education of girls as well as boys, poor kids as well as rich kids, and all children, regardless of religious affiliation. His approach was open access to education for all.

Neither of us is Lutheran, yet we're proud to stand in that tradition. At Cal Lutheran we will never tell you WHAT to think about religion, faith, or anything else. Our job is to teach you HOW to think about those issues, and we have faculty who are experts in their fields teaching you about how religion has been studied from critical perspective, and what the great theologians have had to say about matters of great importance.

We promise that your world will be spinning, in a good way, whether you grew up going to Sunday school, or you have no background in any religious tradition, or you come from non-Christian religious traditions like Judaism, Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism, the Baha'i faith, or native traditions.

Faith Expression and experience segment of video (Scott Maxwell-Doherty)

A well known professor of theology and human development spoke frequently that there are several stages in faith development, and it does not matter what faith practice you share, even if you have no faith, these stages of development are common and consistent.

I get asked how Lutheran will I become during my time at Cal Lutheran? As if we existed to turn you all into Lutherans. That is not our intent. It is our desire to support you in your faith journey regardless of the 'tribe' you are in, to be faithful, confident, competent, and authentic.

John Westerhoff would tell us that up until these days you have an inherited faith expression. You have received faith tenants or propositions from your core community. But now in these days ahead you will move from an inherited faith to an affiliative faith. This kind of faith is built around you taking what you know and pulling alongside others who have a faith, encountering their thoughts and wonderings. Beyond that are the phases of searching faith and owned faith.

You will hear from several students about their communities of faith that are active communities here on campus. After they speak you may find yourself saying, "I didn't expect that? I didn't expect so many faith communities honored and valued here on campus."

Well, here's the deal...if we make the claim that we are raising up global leaders then we need to honor and value the world's religious traditions and practices and make room for their expression on this campus.

There is a place for you here...there is room at the table for you.

Freedom segment of video (Colleen Windham-Hughes)

Martin Luther's favorite question was "What Does This Mean?" He was confident to ask that question in any direction, on any topic, to any person. Luther's freedom in asking questions was for him rooted in a God and a universe big enough to take any question he had.

The flip side of freedom is responsibility, and Martin Luther was serious about this, too. You can be as free as you wish in pursuing truth as long as you are responsible—to your sources and to your neighbor. Ask what you need to ask and explore to the edges of where you think you can go, and then report back to the community in a language they can understand.

When you combine personal freedom and community responsibility, you are ready to talk vocation and ready to pursue life with purpose.

Vocation segment of video (Linda LeBlanc)

Cal Lutheran is committed in guiding students to discover and live their purpose. And as a Lutheran university we believe in this thing called vocation. Martin Luther's teaching regarding the vocation — or calling — of all God's people to respond to God's grace by serving their neighbors within their own particular places in society is a key element of our heritage as Lutheran

Christians. Luther is quoted as saying: *If you are a student, mind your studies; if you are a maid, sweep the house; if you are a servant, care for the horses, etc. A monk may live a harder life, wear poorer clothes, but he will never be truly able to say that he serves God in this manner. But they who serve society, the state, and the church can say it.*

For students at this time in your life that call is to be a student. As a student you not only go to class and are encouraged to wonder what is your purpose. Lutherans asks “What are you good at? What are you passionate about? What brings you joy? What experiences, circumstances and challenges have formed and prepared you for a new thing God may be doing with you? What are the needs of your community?” As part of your vocation as a student you will have the opportunity to serve through community service and different clubs and organizations on campus.

This coincides to the mission of Cal Lutheran that is to educate leaders for a global society who are strong in character and judgment, confident in their identity and vocation, and committed to service and justice.

Service segment of video (Melissa Maxwell-Doherty)

Martin Luther, Augustinian monk and founder of the Lutheran church, once said that “God doesn’t need our good works but our neighbor does”. A commitment to serving one’s neighbor is at the heart of our life together at Cal Lutheran.

You are called to be a neighbor to others because all of life is a treasured gift from God. All that we have—our life, the world we live in, our food, our families, our education, our talents and abilities---all are gifts from a loving God.

The only way to react to all these good gifts is a deep and life-shaping sense of gratitude. Gratitude causes us to want to respond, to say thanks, by making a difference in the lives of others.

At Cal Lutheran you will be asked to consider how your life, your academic study, your community involvements, your use of your time can be a way to benefit others and benefit the larger community.... or, as Lutherans call it, your “neighbors”.

In addition, you will be summoned to see your learning as benefitting more than just yourself. Your learning will lead you to a life of service in the world. As you consider your vocations and your purpose, so to speak, you will use those gifts to follow your purpose to transform your community and the world.

Each of you will answer this summons in your own way because you are you! And—you’ll have the delight of teaming with others to serve and make a difference.

We're serious about service and we intend for all our students to join in transforming the world. It's a part of our middle name.

You've heard a lot of voices speaking about Cal Lutheran's middle name. How we focus on community, welcome, diversity, freedom, vocation, and service are all connected to our Lutheran understanding of what makes a whole and holy life where every person is valued and every person contributes to the common good.

Pictures of opportunities on campus

Presentation by students representing Lord of Life, College Life, Common Ground, Interfaith Allies, Catholic Life, and Hillel club all wearing "What does this mean" tee shirts.

Scott Maxwell-Doherty

I hope that you have learned that there is room for you here. You are welcome here. You will be invited to wonder about faith, your faith, and their faith, those with a different faith or set of convictions.

Luther had this easy catch phrase...what does this mean? It is a 500 year-old question and it still works for us today.