

2026 Faith, Reason, and World Affairs Symposium Call for Contributors

Vocation is more than the work we do — it is the ongoing calling to live faithfully and wholeheartedly in service to God and our neighbors through every aspect of life. This understanding of vocation connects meaning, relationships, citizenship, well-being, and the common good.

“Passion to Purpose: How Vocation Shapes Wellness and Meaning,” the 2026 Faith, Reason, and World Affairs Symposium, will explore how Lutheran higher education empowers people to discern their gifts, nurture personal and communal wellness, and respond with purpose in an increasingly complex world. The symposium will highlight how vocation shapes not only what we do, but who we become — and how we use our lives to influence the affairs of the world. The 2026 Symposium will be held Wednesday, Sept. 23.

The committee invites contributors to the following themes. Submit your interest to contribute to Dr. Stefanie Meyer at smmeyer@cord.edu with the subject line Vocation Symposium 2026 interest **by April 24, 2026**. Please include:

- Your name and affiliation (faculty, staff, student, alumnus or friend, and department, major(s), or profession)
- Which session theme you would like to contribute (see below)
- 200-word maximum description of how you'd like to contribute
- Format you'd like to use: panelists, lecture, workshops, pre-recorded videos, exercise session, etc.

1. Design Your Life: Where Do You Find Flow?

A guided, reflective, *hands-on* session where participants map moments of deep engagement (“flow”) across work, relationships, service, rest, and creativity — and examine what those moments reveal about vocation and wellness.

Considerations: yoga, meditation

2. Calling and Caregiving: Vocation in the Ordinary, Exhausting, and Exciting

An honest, affirming exploration of caregiving as vocation — centered on formation, presence, sacrifice, and joy rather than perfection. Vocation takes on different perspectives during different seasons of life.

Considerations: parenting, aging adults, caring for those with chronic conditions

- Short reflections from parents, caregivers, and those who support families

- Participants name gifts developed *because* of caregiving (patience, advocacy, courage, creativity)
- Explicit connection to how students' current gifts shape future family life in many forms

3. **Journeys Through Detours or Loss**

A guided conversation about how disappointment, burnout, job/hobby/athletic participation, loss, illness, or grief can become formative — not because suffering is desired or easy, but because faith reshapes meaning.

Considerations: building resiliency

- Participants reflect privately on a “detour” moment
- Small groups discuss what *changed* in them, not what went “wrong”

4. **The Vocation of Citizenship: Faithful Presence in a World of Need**

A participatory session exploring vocation beyond career — into civic life, civil dialogue across perspectives, and community responsibility.

- Case studies (local, national, campus-based)
- Groups discern faithful responses that balance conviction, humility, and positively influencing the affairs of the world

5. **Practices That Hold You: Faith Habits for Sustaining Purpose**

A practical, experiential session exploring faith practices that support resilience and meaning over time. Connecting vocation to integrity and quiet leadership.

Considerations: campus ministry and interfaith

- Participants sample short practices that can help people throughout their life journeys
- Reflection on which practices *actually work* in real lives — emphasis on human agency and divine aid over creativity of fads, gimmicks, and gadgets
- Story-sharing exploring unseen, uncelebrated acts of service

6. **Vocation Remix** [Athletics edition, Music edition, Medicine edition, Art edition, etc.]

A creative session where participants examine inherited narratives about success, worth, and calling — and intentionally rewrite them.

Considerations: identity as an athlete, musician, future medical doctor

- Participants identify messages they've absorbed ("I should...", "Success means...", "I thought you'd for sure be a...")
- Workshop remixing into vocation-centered alternatives

7. Create Your Calling: Creating a Vocational Artifact

In this hands-on studio, participants will *curate* a vocational artifact that reflects the work of their life so far — or the life they're becoming — using art, words, movement, dance, food, or another creative medium. There is no "right" output and no artistic expertise required; the goal is to make meaning visible and explore vocation as more than a job title. Could use social media as a vehicle to share.

8. Winding Paths to Vocation: Panel Discussion

Hear from and interact with panelist on their "Winding Paths to Vocation." Callings will be shared beyond the "major" and how each panelist engaged in their journey.

9. Living My Vocation Means I'm Happy, Right?!

I just want to be happy with my future. Sure, that's nice. But what about when our vocation requires us to do hard things? Difficult things that we wouldn't choose but are what the world needs.

10. Indigenous Callings

Hear from Indigenous people discussing traditional ways of being, resiliency, and the relationship with Mother Earth.