

Spring 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

Grace and peace be yours.

This past year will surely live on in our thoughts for the rest of our lives, and many of those memories will be traumatic and painful as our students, faculty, and staff have weathered the multiple pandemics of COVID-19, racial injustice, economic hardship, and the polarization in our politics. But one thing we will remember with warmth and appreciation is the extraordinary, unprecedented commitment of Augsburg faculty, staff, and students to meet this moment.

Life at Augsburg was changed in ways most couldn't have imagined in March 2020. Classes were moved online. Physical distancing practices were put in place. Many on campus began to study and work via Zoom. Athletic events were canceled. Our communal worship life shifted, like many congregations, to virtual experiences. One of the most difficult moments was moving the 2020 Commencement to a virtual format, and we promised disappointed graduates that we would plan an in-person event to celebrate the milestone when it is safe to do so. We have now extended that same promise to the Class of 2021, as their commencement this year will also be virtual. Now, we are working in a modified way with some critical employees on campus and students living in residence halls and in a limited number of in person classes, though that may ramp up with distribution of vaccines.

The murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, three miles from campus caused pain, fear, and trauma throughout the world and for our own students, faculty, and staff of color. Many in our community joined the protests. A new Critical Race and Ethnicity Studies department and a requirement that all faculty and staff complete anti-racism training are among efforts at Augsburg University to combat systemic racism. Augsburg's response was an important continuation of our ongoing work to build and maintain an equitable and inclusive campus. Our 41st Annual Augsburg Advent Vespers led by the Music Department and Campus Ministry honed in on the theme for the need of God's redeeming love in Jesus as we named the heartache of May 25 and cried out, "Come Now, Breath of God." We continue to live into the ongoing Advent of Jesus who makes all things new, the One who calls us to proclaim life and breath for all God's beloved.

Given our inability to be together in person, Augsburg decided during the holidays to support important efforts in our community to feed our neighbors. In recognition of the remarkable efforts of our faculty and staff over the past year, Augsburg made a \$5,000 gift to Soup for You, the food ministry that is based at Bethany Lutheran Church on Franklin Avenue. Soup for You continues to provide a free lunch every weekday to all. Throughout the year, the Augsburg community ran food and supply drives for those in need as well as outreach to the growing number of people experiencing homelessness. We are heartened by how our community has come together this past year even when we've been apart and look forward to the promise of life as we emerge through and from these multiple pandemics.

We are seeing a strong interest in an Augsburg education. Fall 2019 saw our largest first-year class, and Fall 2020 was the second largest, despite the impact of the pandemic. At this point, we are seeing encouraging signs for Fall 2021 as well.

We thank you for your prayerful support in the shared work to which God calls us as the body of Christ in the world. May the God of all hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope.

Faithfully yours,

Paul C. Pribbenow, Ph.D.
President

Rev. Justin Lind-Ayres
University Pastor

Rev. Babette Chatman
University Pastor

WE ARE CALLED | AUGGIES