

**Augustana College  
Chapel of Reconciliation**

**Home**

**Abby Thompson  
16 Oct 2009**

This week we're celebrating Augustana College as more than an academic institution; this week we're celebrating Augustana as *home*. For some of us, Augie has been home for quite a while now: four or five *or six* years and for many of the faculty, much longer than that. Alumni have come back to this place which once was their physical home, to experience Augustana as an emotional and spiritual home all over again. And for those of you who have only been on our campus a little over a month now, I pray that Augustana is beginning to truly feel like *your* home too. I still remember the first time I said I was planning to go "home"—referring to Augustana—in front of my mom. I believe her response was, "WHAT?!?!?!?" and then it looked as though she might burst into tears. You see, for me, Augustana was becoming more than a physical place as I experienced the love and nurture and coming into myself that I associated with being at home.

As Christians though, we are called to something more than seeking out or even creating these "home-like" places to live our lives. Our ideal earthly homes (both physical and not) manifest fundamentally Christian values—values such as community, love, and service toward one another—and the Augustana community is in so many ways a wonderful example of this ideal home. Ultimately, however, we are called to make our home in Christ as we simultaneously welcome Christ at home in us. What does this mean for our relationship with Christ? Well, as the text tells us, our relationship with Him becomes intimate and organic; it transforms the more formal (master-servant) relationship into a *friendship*. Think about friendship for just a moment. Not in the social-networking, "I-have-four-hundred-and-seventy-two-friends-on-Facebook" sort of way, but think about *authentic* friendship...those relationships with people who you speak to or see on a regular basis or even if you don't, you always pick up your relationship right where you left off. With these individuals, you probably possess a distinct level of intimacy, a deep feeling of being at home in their presence. This kind of relationship could not exist without an investment of emotional energy on both your parts and the deliberateness required for sharing time and space. In the same way, we cannot expect to be intimately acquainted with Christ, apart from making time and space for Him in our day-to-day lives. Nor can we be fruit-bearing disciples in the world as He intended us to be.

Now while you might agree that making time and space in our lives for Christ is a nice ideal, you're probably wondering where I propose you find this extra time and space in your life. Well actually God it prepared to do that for you if you simply allow Him to prune your life branch. We can hardly enjoy a beautiful physical home if it's filled with messes and clutter, leaving no space to relax and recharge: physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually. For those of you who have *seen* my dorm room, I know you're probably thinking that it's very ironic I should include a lesson in home cleanliness, and I admit that I'm preaching as much to myself as anyone here. But just as we must (or should) clean our homes of clutter, we must also clear our

lives of endless “to-do” lists and our souls of the growth-stunting chaos that occurs when we don’t. We must prepare our hearts for the pruning process that includes having those unhealthy parts of our self-identity stripped from us. “I like being busy,” I say, or “I’m *way* more productive when I have lots to do.” And while this may be true, I’ve grown too accustomed to loosing myself (as Christ intended me to be) amidst an accumulation of worldly distractions. In many ways, a busy life has become a convenient way to deny the fact that my life needs some serious pruning! If being of service to others is an inconvenience to *my* busy day, I probably need to let Christ do some pruning: to my planner and to my attitude. If I go-go-go from morning until night without a moment to spare for the One I claim to have at the center of my life, my priorities need some pruning. This reminds me of a letter I’ve had framed in my room for some time now. It begins:

My Dear Friend,

As you got up this morning, I watched you, and hoped you would talk to me, even if it was just a few words, asking my opinion or thanking me for something good that happened in your life yesterday...

The letter goes on to walk through an entire day like this: God, patiently waiting and hoping that the oblivious human might acknowledge Him at some time, in some way. Eventually the human has made it through their day, complete with just enough time for phone conversations and TV watching, but without any time left for God. God says, “It’s hard to have a one-sided conversation.” I’ve kept this letter for so long, because I identify so directly with the human it’s written for. How many times have I left God in that one-sided conversation? How many days of mine have looked heartbreakingly similar to the one depicted here?

But God is *always* there ready to welcome us back into our immovable, unshakeable home in Christ. While He loves us the way we are, He loves us too much to leave us that way. He knows which of our dying parts inhibit our living being. Pruning is not a process we go through to discover our hidden talents and gifts; it’s a sometimes painful process we go through to realize what it is that limits us in furthering the glory of God in our lives and in the lives of those around us. Even once we recognize that our lives *need* pruning, we experience this tension between fully surrendering ourselves to Christ to prune us of what we know of ourselves and knowing that as we do, we come further into our true self than we ever were before.

The Good News is precisely this: that Christ has chosen us! When we are connected to Christ the Vine and we find ourselves at home in Him, this puts us in touch with God’s will, God’s Word, and God’s love. If we let Him into our spiritual home, *God* will prune our hearts and our lives. Christ tells us all this, that “[His] joy may be [our] joy” and that we might remember to love as He loved. As we welcome Christ at home in us, may we be open to the ways in which he wishes to change our lives, celebrating the joy and love that comes from a pruned heart. No matter how many different places you call home throughout your lifetime, I pray that finding your home in Christ and welcoming Him at home in you is your greatest homecoming every day.

Amen.

**MORNING WORSHIP**  
**Friday, October 16, 2009**

**Prelude**

**Welcome/Announcements**

**Gathering Song**

*“Gather Us In”*

ELW # 532, vs. 1

**Invocation:**

**All: Home is where we can be silent and still be heard...**

**Where we can ask and find out who we are...**

**Where people laugh with us about ourselves...**

**Where sorrow is divided and joy multiplied...**

**Where we share and love and grow.**

**Prayer**

**All: Grant us a home in this day and in this prayer. Shelter us with the goodness of worship, the kindness of each other, the earnestness of our hope to know you more. Alleviate our anguish and grant us your peace. Amen.**

**Hymn**

*“Precious Lord, Take My Hand”*

ELW #773

**Scripture Reading**

John 15: 1-17, from ‘The Message’

**Message**

Abby Thompson

Hometown: Elkhorn, NE

Major: Secondary Educ./ All Grades Educ.

**Song**

*“Welcome Home”*

Shaun Groves

Take, me, make me. All You want me to be.

That's all I'm asking, all I'm asking

Welcome to this heart of mine. I've buried under prideful vines.

Grown to hide the mess I've made Inside of me. Come decorate, Lord.

Open up the creaking door. And walk upon the dusty floor.

Scrape away the guilty stains. Until no sin or shame remain.

Spread Your love upon the walls. And occupy the empty halls.

Until the man I am has faded. No more doors are barricaded

*Chorus:*

Come inside this heart of mine. It's not my own.

Make it home. Come and take this heart and make it.

All Your own. Welcome home

Take a seat, pull up a chair. Forgive me for the disrepair.

And the souvenirs from floor to ceiling. Gathered on my search for meaning.  
Every closet's filled with clutter. Messes yet to be discovered.  
I'm overwhelmed, I understand. I can't make this place all that You can

I took the space that You placed in me. Redecorated in shades of greed.  
And I made sure every door stayed locked. Every window blocked,  
and still You knocked  
Take me, make me. All You want me to be.  
That's all I'm asking, all I'm asking

## **Prayer/Lord's Prayer**

**Hymn:**

*"In Christ Alone"*

In Christ alone my hope is found, He is my light, my strength, my song;  
This Cornerstone, this solid ground, firm through the fiercest drought & storm.  
What heights of love, what depths of peace,  
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease.  
My comforter, my all in all, here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone, who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe!  
This gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones He came to save.  
'Til on the cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied.  
For ev'ry sin on Him was laid; here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay, Light of the world, by darkness slain;  
Then, bursting forth in glorious day, up from the grave He rose again:  
And as He stands in victory, sin's curse has lost its grip on me:  
For I am His and He is mine, bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the pow'r of Christ in me;  
From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.  
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from His hand;  
'til He returns or calls me home, here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand!

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## **Benediction**

**All: In Christ is where we can be silent and still be heard...**

**Where we can ask and find out who we are...**

**Where we can laugh with God...**

**Where sorrow is divided and joy multiplied...**

**Where we share and love and grow as Christ's fruit-bearing disciples.**

**Christ is our home.**

**Dismissal**

**Postlude**

## CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS

**CLEAN WATER PROJECT** - \*For All Who Are Thirsty:\* Let's work together to eliminate dirty water! USF, Sioux Falls Seminary, and Augustana are partnering to bring clean water to people who need it - here and abroad. If you're interested in helping, **sign up in the narthex or email** Hannah Miller at [hmmiller08@ole.augie.edu](mailto:hmmiller08@ole.augie.edu) or Kayla Rockwell at [kerockwell07@ole.augie.edu](mailto:kerockwell07@ole.augie.edu) Project will culminate in a silent auction and concert on Monday, Nov. 23rd.

**MARTIN AND KATARINA LUTHER LOOK-ALIKE CONTEST** - In an effort to raise funds for the "For All Who Are Thirsty" project, various campus figures have agreed to 'compete' in a contest to see who looks the most like Martin Luther and his wife, Katarina. You may vote with your \$\$'s by placing your contribution in the box of your choice on the Narthex table. The 'winners' will be announced in chapel on Reformation Day worship, and will receive several 'indulgences' for their selection. Vote early and often!!

**PRISON WORSHIP** - Every semester a campus ministry group attends a worship service at the South Dakota State Penitentiary. The date of our visit this semester is, **Thursday, November 12<sup>th</sup>**. There are various clearance forms that need to be filled out and **returned to the chapel office by Tuesday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>**. Carol has the forms in the chapel office. Please consider this powerful opportunity to minister to the imprisoned.

### **This week in chapel:**

Sunday (18 <sup>th</sup> )	<b>Homecoming worship, 10:30 am - ELMEN CENTER</b>
Monday (19 <sup>th</sup> )	Worship, 10 am - Morning Prayer
Tuesday (20 <sup>th</sup> )	Roman Catholic Mass, 10 am - Fr. Shane Stevens
Wednesday (21 <sup>st</sup> )	Holy Communion, 10 am - Chris Croghan, Reli.; Senior Academy
Friday (23 <sup>rd</sup> )	Worship, 10 am - Hannah deFreese, Sr. Spkr.

My Dear Friend,

As you got up this morning, I watched you, and hoped you would talk to me, even if it was just a few words, asking my opinion or thanking me for something good that happened in your life yesterday.

But I noticed you were too busy, trying to find the right outfit to wear. When you ran around the house getting ready, I knew there would be a few minutes for you to stop and say hello, but you were too busy. At one point you had to wait fifteen minutes with nothing to do except sit in a chair. Then I saw you spring to your feet. I thought you wanted to talk to me but you ran to the phone and called a friend to get the latest gossip instead. I watched patiently all day long. With all your activities I guess you were too busy to say anything to me.

I noticed that before lunch you looked around, maybe you felt embarrassed to talk to me, which is why you didn't bow your Head. You glanced three or four tables over and you noticed some of your friends talking to me briefly before they ate, but you didn't. That's okay. There is still more time left, and I hope that you will talk to me yet.

You went home and it seems as if you had lots of things to do. After a few of them were done, you turned on the TV. I don't know if you like TV or not, just about anything goes there and you spend a lot of time each day in front of it not thinking about anything, just enjoying the show. I waited patiently again as you watched the TV and ate your meal, but again you didn't talk to me.

Bedtime I guess you felt too tired. After you said goodnight to your family you plopped into bed and fell asleep in no time. That's okay because you may not realize that I am always there for you. I've got patience, more than you will ever know.... I even want to teach you how to be patient with others as well. I love you so much that I wait everyday for a nod, prayer or thought, or a thankful part of your heart. It is hard to have a one-sided conversation.

Well, you are getting up once again. Once again I will wait, with nothing but love for you. Hoping that today you will give me some time. Have a nice day!

Your friend,

GOD