

Your Wild and Precious Life

“Live a life worthy of the calling you have received”
(Ephesians 4:1 NIV).

On the day Mary Oliver died, a friend posted her poem, “The Summer Day,” with its poignant closing lines:

Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?

This is a question to ask our librarian selves no matter where we are in our professional lives. Are you a library school student, a paraprofessional exploring an MLS, in your first job, a solo librarian, a bored mid-career librarian feeling stuck, a first time director, a veteran with experience in many positions and roles, a retiree, or about to retire? Take a moment and ponder your plans for your “one wild and precious life.”

The operative word in Mary’s question is “plan.” It is so easy to not find the time to plan how best to live out our calling to be a Christian librarian. The critical, the quotidian, the necessary often take over our lives, robbing us of the blessings of our positions in the institutions we serve. It is about the journey, but can we make that journey more meaningful by planning how we will live a professional life that embodies Christ?

How do you want your vocation to express your Christian values? What can you do every day in the library to support your colleagues and the students you serve? How can you create a welcoming and safe space for students—not just to research and study, but to think about what they will do with their one precious life?

Can you focus and plan to be a librarian who lives a life that embodies Christ? Can you determine to make time in your day, your week, the semester, the academic year to ponder ways you can express your Christian faith as you interact with those around you?

Our vocational blessings are many. I often look back at my first ACL conference (1980), and how I had no idea how the association would play such a large role in my professional life. I found learning and support, ways to serve and lead, and many lifelong friendships. In part, I am confessing to NOT having a plan early on, but I am now encouraging us all to take advantage of resources and opportunities to make the most of our sacred calling.

Plan a life lived in deep appreciation of the opportunities God has presented you. “Live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (Ephesians 4:1). “Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, weakness and patience” (Colossians 3:12).

Wherever you are in your professional journey, what will be your legacy? Maya Angelou says your legacy is every life you touch. How can your plan for this week/ month/semester bear fruit in a legacy for Christ and his kingdom?



What about your wild and precious (librarian) life?

—Susan Watkins
Susan retired in 2016 from Eastern Nazarene College, where she served as library director. She has been an ACL member since 1980.