

# Faith in the World

## ***Rochester student participates in an LSTC program to foster faith in a global context***



By Juliane Herder

Last summer I was one of 14 high school students to participate in the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago's (LSTC) Youth in Mission: Serving Christ in the World program. This three-week program engages a diverse group of high school students in guided theological reflection with an international perspective. Two weeks are spent on the LSTC campus and one week is spent at the Lutheran Center in Mexico City, Mexico. The international component provides an opportunity to experience the broader context of sharing our faith in a global context. The goals of the program are to challenge and nurture faith, to deepen spiritual formation through experience with Christians in Mexico City, to foster commitment to the church and to explore vocation and ministry opportunities in the church.

Looking back on my experience, I can identify three areas of my life and faith in particular that came to life for me through this program:

### ***A better understanding of vocation***

Vocation was emphasized throughout the program as our life's calling. All four leaders, who were students or recent graduates of LSTC, shared their faith stories and vocations at some point during the three weeks. Vocation was not emphasized as necessarily "working in the church" but rather "living out God's plan for you and finding what He is calling you to do with your life." To my knowledge, only one out of the fourteen of us who

participated in the program came into it wanting to someday go into the ministry, and I don't know if the program sparked the interest in anyone to go to seminary someday. What I do know is that it solidified my belief that my vocation may not be directly in the ministry, but I can fulfill my calling and still serve Christ in my community and throughout the world my whole life in many ways.

### ***A strengthened sense of diversity and acceptance***

Throughout the program, I saw diversity both within the group of fourteen youth and leaders and also outside the group. Chicago is a much different place from Southeast Minnesota, and exploring the area surrounding the campus as well as downtown Chicago with the group helped me to witness big-city life. Acceptance of other religions, mainly Islam, was also emphasized, as we spent a day learning the history, customs, and culture of Islam and visiting a local mosque to witness their prayer.

During the week we spent in Mexico City, the cultural differences and visiting locals to hear their stories of immigration, survival, and growth, forced me to view world issues on a different level and with a new understanding.

Within our group, we also learned acceptance through our own differences. The fourteen youth came from all across the US, with different religious backgrounds (not all of us were Lutheran), and different histories. There was one night in Mexico City that about eight of us sat around a table after dinner and just started talking about our faith and what theological questions we had and how everything played into our faith. It was fun and interesting to see how some believed in reincarnation, some believed in free will, some believed in heaven, some didn't, etc. but instead of judging our differences in faith, we used our differences to ask questions and strengthen our own faith and understanding.



## *A drive to serve Christ in the World*

One of the most amazing things I witnessed while I was in Mexico was the joy of the people living in poverty. I know the words “joy” and “poverty” should not go in the same sentence, but despite the hardships they faced throughout their lives, they welcomed us into their homes and were more than willing to share their stories. Even though many of their stories included painful memories of losing loved ones in war or through government suppression, they knew that they were serving Christ by sharing with us, to encourage us to do something about it. I also gained a new understanding of



**Juliane Herder (right) with one of the other participants at LSTC’s 2006 Youth in Mission: Serving Christ in the World.**

America’s power in the world, and an understanding that we have the power to change the world for the better or worse. I gained a new understanding on fair trade and the labor issues that countries face, and the drive to continue searching for ways to find Christ throughout the world.

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I am lucky to have been able to participate in this wonderful program. They are accepting applications for the 2007 program through February 19 if you or a high school sophomore or junior you know is interested. The program will run June 17-July 7, 2007.

### *Get it Online:*

- More information and a registration form are available at [www.lstc.edu/yim](http://www.lstc.edu/yim)

## 2007 Hein-Fry Lecture: The State of the Bible in North America

The annual Hein-Fry Lecture Series, the premier endowed theological lectureship of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, identifies key theological issues facing the church and offers lectures that stimulate inquiry and discussion of those issues not only at the eight ELCA seminaries but throughout the church.

The committee has developed a three-year sequence they are calling “Living Together in the 21st Century.” The sequence began in 2006 with lectures by the current and former presiding bishops speaking on “Living Together in the 21st Century: As Lutherans in the ELCA.” In 2007 the topic is “Living Together in the 21st Century: The State of the Bible in North America.” The sequence will conclude in 2008 with a series on “Living Together in the 21st Century: The Lutheran Vocation in World Christianity.”

Two prominent lecturers (an evangelical and a Roman Catholic) will each travel individually to four of our ELCA seminaries between February and May. At each seminary they will deliver two lectures (each roughly 45 to 60 minutes in length) on the following topics:

Lecture 1: A theological discussion of “the state of the Bible” from the lecturer’s point of view.

Lecture 2: What import this state of the Bible has for Lutherans.

In addition, at each site a Lutheran theologian selected by that seminary will present a third lecture in which he/she presents a response.

March 14, 2007

Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN  
Hein-Fry Lecturer — Dr. Donald Hagner  
(Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.)

Faculty Responder — Dr. Diane Jacobson

March 16, 2007

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago  
Hein-Fry Lecturer — Dr. Donald Hagner  
(Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.)

Faculty Responder — Dr. Ralph Klein

March 27, 2007

Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, IA  
Hein-Fry Lecturer — Dr. Donald Senior  
(Roman Catholic)

Faculty Responder — Dr. Duane Priebe

More information at [www.elca.org/heinfry/2007](http://www.elca.org/heinfry/2007)