

Mission of the Month

STORIES FROM THE GLOBAL CHURCH

2014 NO. 4



SOUTH AFRICA

LEFT: Abby Henderson dancing with children
BELOW: Abby with some of the women in the program.



Dancing to make a difference

While serving in South Africa through the ELCA's Young Adults in Global Mission program, Abby Henderson has witnessed the courage and resilience of young South African women, particularly as they face difficulties on an everyday basis. Sexual harassment and violence are ongoing concerns.

Abby is one of 59 young leaders who are working with the ELCA's companion churches around the world, an opportunity made possible by the support of generous ELCA members and congregations. As a Teen Life Coach at Proudly Female, a program for 140 teen girls from two schools in Bellville, Abby mentors young women and encourages them to stay in school.

"Many of the girls come from homes where they do not receive as much love and attention as they deserve, so the Teen Life Coaches serve to show the girls that they are wonderful and worthy, just as they are," Abby says.

One especially meaningful aspect of her work was when Abby learned and taught a special dance for a One Billion Rising activism event sponsored by her workplace. One Billion Rising is a movement that encourages 1 billion men and women to stand for love and justice for the 1 billion women who will be raped or beaten in their lifetimes.

"I had sessions to teach the dance at least once a weekday for over a month," Abby says, "and there was never a single session that wasn't full of laughter and joy! One of the best moments was watching some of the seventh-grade girls I worked with dance with some of the women from the senior citizen center, all of them singing along."

The culmination of Abby's work with the women and girls was a special performance in the community. Though the issues facing women in South Africa can seem insurmountable, this dance and other moments of joy help Abby see that the program is making a difference.

"Throughout my year in South Africa, I have begun to learn to see God in the heartaches as well as the joy, and that is due to my incredible communities in Bellville South and the Young Adults in Global Mission program around the world."

Get involved!

To learn how you or your congregation can sponsor a Young Adult in Global Mission, visit www.ELCA.org/YAGMsupport or email globalchurch@elca.org.

Expanding the Young Adults in Global Mission program is a priority of Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA. Learn more by visiting www.ELCA.org/campaign



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