Mikka McCracken spent her summer helping to bring an end to chronic world hunger by working as an intern for the ELCA World Hunger program.

For this Gustavus senior studying political science and peace studies, the summer internship was not a one-time experience with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, nor was it a mere resume builder. McCracken has been involved in the Lutheran Youth Organization at the local synod and national levels and is currently serving on the consulting committee for the Director for Justice for Women.

“[Because I am] a person of faith, serving and loving one’s neighbor is a concept that I understand as a call, a vocation for my life,” McCracken says. “Martin Luther talks about vocation as more than just a calling to a life in the priesthood. Work, community, family, and church are all aspects of our call to live a life of meaning and purpose.”

During her internship, McCracken helped World Hunger create a new resource about how global climate change and hunger are related and worked to assist in updating its HIV/AIDS resources. She also posted updates on the World Hunger blog, “Hunger Rumblings.”

The World Hunger program, created to address the root causes of human hunger and poverty domestically and abroad, works with partner organizations and ELCA congregations to respond to disasters, advocate for change in the legal system, and provide immediate relief to people who are impoverished or suffering from chronic hunger.

As a participant in the Gustavus Servant Leadership Program, through the Center for Vocational Reflection, McCracken is one of several current Gustavus students who spent the summer working with organizations that work for the common good. This fall, McCracken and other Servant Leadership Program participants returning to Gustavus will take part in workshops and leadership development sessions to develop better servant-leaders campus wide and gather to reflect and discuss what they learned during the summer.

“When we look to each other for guidance and to the world around us for the niches that need to be filled, we can all move forward together,” McCracken says. “Leading by serving, through our vocation, to help fulfill the many needs of the world accomplishes a different purpose than leading just to lead.”

Jake Seams ‘10, from Greenfield, Minn., is majoring in religion at Gustavus. Jake writes for the Weekly and spent the summer interning in the Office of Marketing and Communication.
From the Director…

God’s blessings from the Office of Church Relations! With the new academic year well under way, the excitement is high! I know the energy levels are high within your community as well with the excitement of the new church year.

I share with you an image for us both to consider as we entering into this new academic and church year together. The image appeared on the front cover of the bulletin from the Installation service of the Rev. Thomas Aitken to the office of bishop of the Northeastern Synod of Minnesota. The image is an abstract of Mark 4:1–9, Jesus’ parable of the sower. It is meant to call to mind an aerial view of farmland with the many sections representing many different field locations and sizes, different types of crops, and, perhaps, even many different levels of yield. Those in attendance were given an “assignment” to find a section that represented their church and then to be intentionally in prayer for and in relationship with the other sections surrounding.

The Office of Church Relations at Gustavus exists because as a college we are mindful of the great vineyard within which our roots have been established. We take great pride in being a college of the church and we are sincere in our desire to ever deepen our relationship with the congregations. Thank you for the ways in which you have been mindful of and active in the life and growth of Gustavus. My prayer is that this coming year will be one that draws us closer in our work together.

Pastor Grady St. Dennis
Director, Office of Church Relations

New Partners in Education Programs This Fall

James Dontje is the director of Gustavus’s new Johnson Center for Environmental Innovation and is charged with assisting campus sustainability efforts, involving students in that work, and partnering with the wider community in those efforts. He has developed three presentations for the Partners in Education program.

Susa-what? An Introduction to the Ins and Outs of Sustainability
Learn the background and meaning of the terms “sustainability” and “sustainable development” and how they are used in current policy discussions. We will try to answer “What are we sustaining?” and “Who are we sustaining it for?” How do the Church and Christians fit into the discussion?

Making Sense Out of the Climate Change Discussion
What do we know, think we know, and what don’t we know about global climate change and human roles in making that change happen? Consider the risks, challenges, and opportunities presented by possible responses to global climate change.

Tools for Everyday Living: Renewable Energy and Ecological Design
If we are called to “live more lightly” on the earth, our first step is to conserve water, energy, and materials that we use daily. What’s the next step? Renewable energy sources and ecological design approaches for our homes and churches will be introduced, and ideas to help us make better use of what God gives us.

InSpire!

The unpacking is done. Orientation for the first year students is over. Classes are underway, and the reality of first assignments and adjustments to schedules is being felt all across campus.

Do you have a daughter or son at Gustavus? A niece, nephew, or grandchild? A young adult from your congregation? If so, then you will want to look for this new column in each edition of The Spire for helpful ideas on how you might make your student feel loved and supported.

Here are three suggestions:

• Send a care package. Baking cookies or gathering goodies for a care package could be an excellent project by a group in the congregation to help send the message to your students that they are remembered and loved.

• Write often with news from home—and an occasional dollar or two will not go unappreciated. If your student has taught Sunday school or served in a mentor role for the youth, perhaps one of the young adults could be encouraged to send a personal “thinking of you” note to their mentor off at college.

• Keep them in your personal prayers and put them on the church prayer list.

I hope you find these suggestions and this column meaningful for you as you seek to show your support and love for your special student!
**Koinonia Lectionary Study in Its 16th Year**

Gustavus Adolphus College and the Reverend Doctor David Mesner are pleased to invite area clergy to participate in the 2008–09 Koinonia lectionary workshop, which is titled “God With Us: Living and Preaching Matthew.” Extensive exegetical notes will be provided at each of the three sessions. This series, now in its 16th year, has developed a reputation for congregationally relevant biblical scholarship, attentiveness to the impact of biblical text in the life of the pastor, and a spirit of fellowship. Mesner is an active parish pastor and also a trained spiritual director with special interest in lector divina.

The three session dates for this year are October 13, January 12, and May 4. Tuition for the series is $200. To register or request more information, contact the Gustavus Office of Church Relations at 800-726-6194 or church-relations@gustavus.edu. Space is limited.

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**Book Shelf**

**Jim Gilbert’s Minnesota Nature Notes**

by Jim Gilbert

You may know him as the consulting naturalist for WCCO Radio, but now phenomenologist Jim Gilbert, Gustavus Class of 1962, has put his wealth of knowledge into a remarkable book. Follow along as he takes you through the Minnesota seasons, week by week. Read his fascinating notes on bird behavior, weather, the flowering of plants, and many other aspects of nature. If you love the great outdoors, be sure to add this book to your collection.

Gilbert will be the featured speaker at the Friends of Linnaeus Arboretum Fall Meeting on Sunday, Nov. 16, at noon. The event is open to all. Call Shirley at 933-6181 to register; there is a charge for lunch and the meeting.

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**The Augustana Story: Shaping Lutheran Identity in North America**

by Maria Erling and Mark Granquist

Explore the significant traditions and the legacy of Augustana in North America, within the culture and history of Sweden, the United States, and Canada, and within the larger context of Lutheranism in North America. Erling, daughter of Professor Emeritus of Religion Bernhard Erling, and Granquist, who taught in the Department of Religion at Gustavus from 1993 to 2007, are two fine historians who tell of Augustana’s identity and its achievements in education, youth work, social programs, and missionary efforts. The Augustana church let go of its independent existence while it participated in theological developments of 20th-century Lutheranism, providing leadership in ecumenism, with hopes for a dynamic, committed, and creative church entrusted to a new generation and with a role in the world yet to be fully realized.

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**“Who Were The First Humans?”**

Nobel Conference 44—October 7 & 8, 2008

Who were the first humans? Six noted scientists will come to Gustavus Adolphus College on October 7 & 8 to address this question. Nobel Conference 2008 will consider the full range of recent evidence about the first modern humans and what we might be able to learn from them about surviving the global challenges we face as a species today.

Where the first humans came from and how they lived has long been studied by the archaeologists and paleoanthropologists. But during the last couple of decades, biologists, climatologists, geneticists, mathematicians, and psychologists, among others, have been adding to the scientific database of what we know. New techniques and state-of-the-art technologies have aided the work analyzing the physical evidence. New research is rewriting history and informing us in dramatic ways.

For example, molecular biologists and geneticists, through the study of mitochondrial DNA and Y chromosomes, have traced the origin of modern humans to Africa around 200,000 years ago. For tens of thousands of years, they coexisted with Neanderthals, who, while they were ‘wired’ with same language gene, headed for extinction in the forests. Ancient humans, it has been learned, headed for the beach. Our forebears discovered the “basket” of food along Africa’s coastlines and expanded their hunting and gathering skills from wooly mammoths and berries to seals and shellfish at least 167,000 years ago. Learning to harvest marine resources may be what enabled them to survive the last ice age, as well as to make it to Asia, Europe, and across the seas to the Americas. The implications of the current research are that, for all our physical and genetic differences, we are more alike than anyone imagined.

The presenters for Nobel Conference 44 include Robin I.M. Dunbar, Institute of Cognitive and Evolutionary Anthropology, University of Oxford, United Kingdom; Marcus W. Feldman, Morrison Institute for Population and Resource Studies, Stanford University; J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, Princeton Theological Seminary, New Jersey; Curtis W. Marean, Institute of Human Origins, Arizona State University, Tempe; Svante Pääbo, Max Planck Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig, Germany; and Dennis Stanford, Division of Archaeology, Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C.
Meet Dean Smith

The Rev. Dean Smith of Trinity Lutheran Church in Owatonna has been appointed to serve the one-year term vacancy on the Association of Congregations Board of Directors left by the Rev. Peter C. Johnson.

Dean is associate pastor for youth and families at Trinity Lutheran Church in Owatonna. A graduate of Luther Seminary, he is married to Bridget (Hundt) ’01, and they have three children, Cheryl, David, and Tanner.

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Entreptained with the Care of the Earth: Focus of National Theological Conference 2009

Radical Abundance: a theology of sustainability is the focus of the 39th Trinity Institute Conference, to be held January 21–23, 2009. Again this January, Gustavus plans to be a partner site for this national theological conference.

Is there a theological basis for living abundantly while striving for justice and sustainability? Sustainability will be explored through the lens of liberation theology, a vision of Christians working together toward social justice by considering all people as full partners in healing our planet and our communities, regardless of their social or economic status. It is only by striving for sustainable relationships, rather than accumulating and consuming more for ourselves, that we can discover true abundance.

The conference takes place at Trinity Church in New York City but includes a diverse audience and the ability to take part at Gustavus as a designated partner site. Speakers include Majora Carter, Timothy J. Gorringe, David C. Korten, and Nestor O. Miguez, with Miriam MacGillis delivering the opening sermon.

The sessions will be webcast live. Through keynote speeches and panel discussions, this three-day conference will enable you to consider radical ideas about abundance, sustainability, and well-being, and to share your own experiences and solutions with others.

The cost for the five-week session will be $30 and will include curriculum materials. Registration deadline is Oct. 8, 2008. For more information or to register, contact the Office of Church Relations at Gustavus, 933-7001, or e-mail church-relations@gustavus.edu.

2008 Service Awards Given to Two

The Association of Congregations Service Award recognizes alumni and former students of Gustavus Adolphus College who have made distinctive commitments and contributions to the service of others. On November 3, Mary Ellen Kitundu ’65 and Dennis Lofstrom ’51, who direct projects with International Health Partners and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, will be recognized jointly as recipients of the 2008 Service Award.

Dennis Lofstrom ’51 is vice president and chief operations officer with International Health Partners. He has worked at three hospitals in Tanzania, one of the poorest countries in the world. Most recently he steers a project at Nyakato Health Center to create a self-sustaining health care system that will provide ongoing care of the best possible quality in this developing country. Previous work has included the iambi Lutheran Hospital expansion project, and he previously served as a mission doctor at Kiomboi Lutheran Hospital.

The award will be presented during daily chapel at 10 a.m. on Monday, Nov. 3. The public is cordially invited to be on hand at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minnesota, for the presentation of this award and to celebrate with these individuals and the Association of Congregations their commitment and their success.

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Exploring Religious Questions
A New Educational Series for Fall 2008

“Sorting out Conflicting Approaches of Interpreting the Bible”

A new five-week adult educational series will be held at Gustavus Adolphus College on Oct. 13, 20, and 27 and Nov. 3 and 10. This course, sponsored by the Office of Church Relations and the Religion Department, is for anyone who seeks a deeper understanding of the Bible. Sessions will be held from 7 to 9 p.m.

Given our current social environment, the questions addressed are timely. When major public figures appeal to the Bible, they often come to quite different conclusions—about peace and war, for example; about the death penalty; about marriage and divorce. When these issues are debated, arguments usually exhibit differing ways of interpreting the Bible. How do we sort out these conflicting interpretive approaches? This course will give you an opportunity to explore this question, to “dig deep,” and to understand what arguments made from the Bible can and cannot accomplish.

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Learn the background and meaning of the terms “sustainability” and “sustainable development” and how they are used in current policy discussions. We will try to answer “What are we sustaining?” and “Who are we sustaining it for?” How do the Church and Christians fit into the discussion?

Making Sense Out of the Climate Change Discussion
What do we know, think we know, and what don’t we know about global climate change and human roles in making that change happen? Consider the risks, challenges, and opportunities presented by possible responses to global climate change.

Tools for Everyday Living: Renewable Energy and Ecological Design
If we are called to “live more lightly” on the earth, our first step is to conserve water, energy and materials that we use daily. What’s the next step? Renewable energy sources and ecological design approaches for our homes and churches will be introduced, and ideas to help us make better use of what God gives us.

Confirmation Retreat Programming 2008–09

The Confirmation and Student Retreats program at Gustavus continues to be the Office of Church Relations’ most demanded program—the number of participants grew again in 2007–08 to over 1,400! Retreats are booked first-come, first-served, and a deposit is required. Arrangements should be made six to eight weeks in advance, and more lead time may be needed for groups larger than 40. Students should be in grade 7 or above for overnight retreats.

Retreat coordinators for 2008-09 include Spencer Broughten ’09, lead coordinator; Conor Bennett ’09; Cathryn Nelson ’10; Allie Stehlin ’11; and Laura Russell ’12.

To book a retreat, or for details and answers to specific questions, phone Marilyn in the Office of Church Relations at 507-933-7001.

Confirmation Retreat Programming 2008–09

InSpire!

The unpacking is done. Orientation for the first year students is over. Classes are underway, and the reality of first assignments and adjustments to schedules is being felt all across campus.

Do you have a daughter or son at Gustavus? A niece, nephew, or grandchild? A young adult from your congregation? If so, then you will want to look for this new column in each edition of The Spire for helpful ideas on how you might make your student feel loved and supported.

Here are three suggestions:

• Send a care package. Baking cookies or gathering goodies for a care package could be an excellent project by a group in the congregation to help send the message to your students that they are remembered and loved.

• Write often with news from home—and an occasional dollar or two will not go unappreciated. If your student has taught Sunday school or served in a mentor role for the youth, perhaps one of the young adults could be encouraged to send a personal “thinking of you” note to their mentor off at college.

• Keep them in your personal prayers and put them on the church prayer list.

I hope you find these suggestions and this column meaningful for you as you seek to show your support and love for your special student!

Grady St. Dennis

Confirmation Retreat Programming 2008–09
Mikka McCracken spent her summer helping to bring an end to chronic world hunger by working as an intern for the ELCA World Hunger program.

For this Gustavus senior studying political science and peace studies, the summer internship was not a one-time experience with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, nor was it a mere resume builder. McCracken has been involved in the Lutheran Youth Organization at the local synod and national levels and is currently serving on the consulting committee for the Director for Justice for Women.

“[Because I am] a person of faith, serving and loving one’s neighbor is a concept that I understand as a call, a vocation for my life,” McCracken says. “Martin Luther talks about vocation as more than just a calling to a life in the priesthood. Work, community, family, and church are all aspects of our call to live a life of meaning and purpose.”

During her internship, McCracken helped World Hunger create a new resource about how global climate change and hunger are related and worked to assist in updating its HIV/AIDS resources. She also posted updates on the World Hunger blog, “Hunger Ramblings.”

The World Hunger program, created to address the root causes of human hunger and poverty domestically and abroad, works with partner organizations and ELCA congregations to respond to disasters, advocate for change in the legal system, and provide immediate relief to people who are impoverished or suffering from chronic hunger.

As a participant in the Gustavus Servant Leadership Program, through the Center for Vocational Reflection,