



Ready for Adventure?



*Robert Hunt, Director of
Global Theological Education*

When Americans travel abroad they often encounter what is less culture *shock* than culture *confusion*. A hotel TV will feature familiar news networks, but refracted through a lens of "internationalization" that brings unfamiliar personalities and accents to the screen - not to mention non-American perspectives. Well-known sit-coms and movies will appear, but dubbed or subtitled. Well-known American music videos will be interspersed with groups whose languages, styles, and themes turn watching into a front row seat on Babel, or maybe Pentecost. Beyond the world of mass media, and of urban centers, this same mixture of the recognizable and strange continues. The fundamentals of economic life - buying, sell-

ing, the creation of markets are universal even if the tiny village *tienda* in central Mexico doesn't carry quite the variety of goods found in a Tom Thumb supermarket. Yet there are also telling differences. In many parts of the world local retailers repackage commodities into daily rations for people who literally live day-to-day. And a good credit rating may mean that the shopkeeper knows her client's grandmother and sees how she treats her children. Quite possibly a more reliable system than those employed recently in more "advanced" social settings. The people around the traveler will laugh with joy and amusement, cry with grief and pain, and otherwise display that full range of human emotions that remind us of just how universal some aspects of the human experience of life really are. Yet beyond the traveler's own culture there can suddenly arise motivations and behavior that seem inexplicable. Tasks almost finished will be left for another day so that full attention can be given to a passing acquaintance, or just the evening meal, or evening prayers. Apparently angry confrontations can arise over apparently trivial matters,

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Come check out Perkins new website at
<http://smu.edu/theology>

A Special Immersion in Reformation Culture for Friends of Perkins

The Global Theological Education Program and Continuing Education Program are pleased to announce that Dr. Richard Nelson, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs has agreed to lead an inter-cultural immersion program especially for Alumnae and Friends of Perkins School of Theology. From June 6th to 14th, 2010 a group of fifteen travelers will, under the guidance of Professor Nelson, immerse themselves in the world of the Protestant Reformation and contemporary post-Communist Eastern Europe. The journey will begin in Prague, where for four days the group will explore the often forgotten, but well-preserved

history of the earliest reformers. Among the highlights will be worship in the first church at which the chalice was offered to lay persons during holy communion. From Prague we will travel to Wittenberg, Germany where Luther sparked the German Reformation. We will visit the church on where his famous 95 theses were nailed, as well as the pulpit from which he preached and taught.

For further information, and to register for this unique opportunity, contact the GTE office at 214 768 1274, or go online to: smu.edu/globaltheology/reformation.htm.



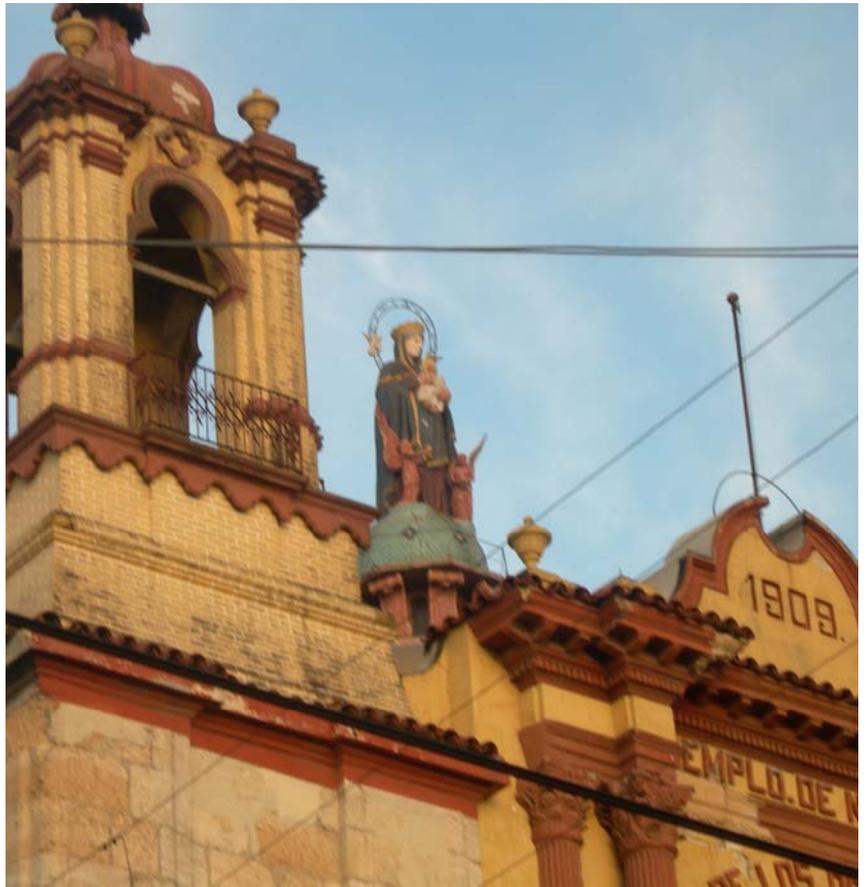
Perkins in Banska Bystrica, Slovakia 2009

2009 - 2010 Immersion Courses

Summer 2009

- **Iona, Ireland and Scotland** - *Exploring Celtic Spirituality and its Antecedents*. Dr. Michael Hawn and Dr. Elaine Heath (May 17 to 29, 2009)
- **Northern Ireland** - *Christian Reconciliation in the Wake of Terrorism*. Dr. Billy Abraham (July 5 to 18, 2009)

*The Martyrdom of Jan Hus - Reformer.
Bethlehem Chapel, Prague 2009.*



Mary watches over Monterrey Mexico.



December 2009

- **Melbourne** - *The World Parliament of Religions* - Dr. Ruben Habito

January 2010

- **Palestine Territories/Israel** - *Understanding Christianity in the Israel/Palestinian Territories Context* - Dr. Valerie Karras
- **Waco, Texas** - *Homeless: an Immersion in an American Way of Life*. - Dr Elaine Heath

Spring Break 2010

- **El Salvador** - Dr. Hal Recinos

Summer - 2010

- **Greece/Turkey** - *The Ancient Christian World* - Dr. Valerie Karras / Dr. Jamie Clark-Soles
- **South Africa** - *Human Rights and Liberation in Practice* - Dr. Joerg Rieger

Exact dates may change depending on available flights. Costs will be announced before registration opens August 25th, 2009.

Reflections on 2008 - 2009 Immersion Courses

In the 2008-2009 academic year more than 60 Perkins students participated in six different immersion courses. These are their reports on what these experiences have meant.

*Sharon A. Alexander
Hong Kong/Taiwan Immersion 2009*

The immersion trip to Hong Kong and Taiwan placed me for the first time in a culture in which Christians are a small minority (no more than 6% or 7% of the population). It was instructive, even eye-opening, to meet with seminary students and Christian scholars in this environment. Many of the seminary students we met were first or second generation Christians whose families did not support either their conversion to Christianity or their decision to go to seminary. Indeed, some of the students had been disowned by their families. These students are relying on their small and relatively poor

Providing for an Open Road

Recently the Global Theological Education Program celebrated a generous three year grant from the Woodworth Foundation of The United Methodist Church in Oklahoma. This grant, along with funds from individual contributors, endowments, and the university has opened the road for every Perkins student to participate in at least one intercultural immersion course before he or she graduates.

We would like to insure that the path to greater intercultural understanding and more effective church leadership remains open for decades to come. This is made possible through contributions to, or establishment of endowments that both honor a person or institution in perpetuity and provide critical funds for the training of Christian leaders.

If you would like to create or contribute to a named endowment, or learn more about endowments at Perkins School of Theology, please contact Dr. Robert Hunt, GTE Director, or Todd Rasberry, Director of Development.

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churches for help and support in their seminary education. These are people who have made real sacrifices to become Christians. I have a much greater appreciation for how easy it is to take Christianity for granted, as we so often do in the West. I also have a better understanding of how Christians must learn to co-exist with non-Christians in Asia and how we in the West might find ways to live together better with our non-Christian neighbors. In addition, thanks to this trip, I hope I have a better appreciation for what the first few generations of Christians in the first and second centuries may have gone through and the sacrifices they made.

*Julie Macpherson
Spain Immersion 2009*

Through my immersion experience in southern Spain, I developed an affinity for the rich history and culture of Spain that I had not anticipated. I also learned about and saw beautiful evidence of Marian devotion. Primarily, however, I learned a great deal about the historical inter-

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Photo by Missy Collings

Intercultural Immersions 2009

Bringing it Home

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action among Christianity, Judaism and Islam on the Iberian peninsula: at times co-existing in ways that allowed for peaceful interaction and even the adoption and adaptation of each other's practices, and at other times challenging one another, exerting power to attempt to destroy people, practice and history. I believe this aspect of my immersion experience further developed my understanding of issues of religion and empire, as well as informed me for more careful interfaith dialogue and teaching regarding other religions, as well as my own.

Jessica Nelson

Mexico and the Borderlands Immersion 2009

The gift of worship in a different language and a different culture was amazing in that it brought home that we are all people of God, beyond nationalities and denominations. To experience sunrise mass at the oldest Cathedral in Monterrey, Mexico was powerful beyond words. It was humbling to see the museums, take part in the cultural activities, and eat at amazing restaurants in a culture that is typically presented as second class, and to fully recognize the gifts that others have to offer should be we open their influence. (Plus you learn the language very quickly when your ability to eat is dependent on it!) The second part of the trip brought us face to face with the other side of Mexico: the desperate poverty that results in part from failed international social policies. We had to face the difficult question of how churches in America can be so opulent while our brothers and sisters in Christ just across the border struggle for basic human necessities, such as clean water. In this dichotomy, where would Jesus worship?



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while those things the traveler might think consequential are quickly forgotten. Patience and resignation are easily confused when one sails unfamiliar cultural seas, as are interest and polite indifference.

Adventure is a word that has come to be both maligned and trivialized. Maligned when associated with the

first steps of colonial conquest, trivialized when associated with visiting a new restaurant. The Latin roots of the word suggest the anticipation of something about to be seen, about to happen. It is the excitement of knowing that something is about to change - and that the something is the life of the adventurer. This is why neither colonialism (which is all about changing others into our own image) nor new food (which is a transient tickling of the palate) are adventures. Nor, for that matter, is sitting in a hotel watching CNN International or doggedly finishing a work project while one's partners have gone for dinner or prayers. But if the traveler enters the world of cultural confusion with an eye toward (*advenir*) arriving at a different cultural place, open to be changed by the approaching encounter, then a real adventure has begun.

Last fall I was walking across the campus at the University of California at Berkley, I overheard a young woman earnestly saying to a young man, "I cannot believe how much I've changed these last two years." And she sounded excited! She

sounded like someone on the cusp of being reborn. Many of us, somewhat past that age, want nothing more than to avoid just exactly what she had experienced. Yet a vision down the comfortable trajectory we have chosen for our lives may all too obviously show us an end that is no more than old age, illness, and death. "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the Reign of God without being born again." Perhaps it is time for an adventure.



SMU PERKINS
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Preparing pastors for local ministry
in a global context***

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