

One in a *Ver*Million

Meet Rachel Ringlaben

By David Lias

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Rachel Ringlaben at one time had dreams of performing on stage before an audience.

Today, her numerous duties include connecting with a special audience in a different setting – at Trinity Lutheran Church in Vermillion.

She is in the midst of serving a one-year internship in Vermillion at Trinity Lutheran Church, under the direction of its pastor, Trisha Boese.

Rachel was born in Bethlehem, PA, and moved to Arkansas with her parents when she was 3 years old. After her parents divorced, she grew up in Little Rock, AK, with her mother and stepfather, and would regularly visit her father and his wife – her “bonus Mom,” she said.

“As a young kid, I thought was going to be an actress,” she said, “so I went to a high school conservatory for the performing arts and did drama and musical theatre and dance, and actually went to college on theatre scholarship, and just knew I was going to be on Broadway.”

While growing up, Rachel always attended church with her mother, and she witnessed her father “re-committed his life to Christ,” she said. “When I was in junior high, one summer I was visiting my dad in Texas, his church was doing a mission trip to Mexico to build an orphanage.”

The work took place at a small village in the jungle, several miles south of Cancun.

“I remember my last day, after we had worked very hard in the jungle clearing trees, I was sitting by this beautiful lake called the Lake of Seven Colors ... I started crying, and praying, and I just had a very strong feeling that I would continue working

on mission trips and things like that, to serve others.”

She was 14 at the time, and she admits that eventually those thoughts diminished as she became involved in other things.

While in college, however, Rachel had the opportunity to travel to study abroad in Spain.

“I got back in touch with why I fell in love God, and with people of the world,” Rachel said. “When I got back from Spain, I changed my major to history and sociology. I began learning about the world’s people ... just the story of us, and how our story and God’s story interconnect.”

She graduated from the University of Central Arkansas in 2007, and decided to try to continue mission work. She traveled throughout the United States for four months with a mission group, and the experience helped her personally explore the meaning of ministry before her group left to serve four months in South America, where they worked in Ecuador, Columbia, and Venezuela.

“It was during this time that I experienced my first inking in wanting to continue in mission work or ministry,” Rachel said.

She decided, while still in South America, to study at a seminary.

“I knew I wanted to continue in some sort of a setting in the ministry,” she said. “I wasn’t sure whether I wanted to be a pastor.”

She applied, and was accepted in the fall of 2009 at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN, to pursue a Master of Arts program in the area of congregational mission and leadership.

“During classes, my professors would ask if I had ever considered changing my studies to pursue a pastoral ministry degree,



RACHEL RINGLABEN

because you write like a pastor, and you talk like a pastor and you have a heart for service and serving other people,” Rachel said.

After deep reflection and prayer, she decided in early 2010 to study pastoral ministry. A requirement of her studies toward earning her master of divinity degree includes serving a one-year internship at a church, which she began last August at Trinity Lutheran Church in Vermillion.

“I just love it,” Rachel said. “I think it is always hard to list out goals for something you’ve never experienced before. I kind of came into it with wide eyes, and a notion to hit the ground running, and I was

immediately blown away by the generosity of the congregation.”

Members of the church spruced up its parish house and made sure she was comfortable as she settled in Vermillion. “I am really seeing God in the service of the congregation, and personally through the members who I have met.”

Trinity Lutheran’s pastor, Trisha Boese, “treats me in a manner of mutual sharing, where she recognizes the gifts that we both possess. She uses an approach in which we try to learn from each other. I really appreciate that from my supervisor, because I know I’ll grow more that way.”

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