

Putting faith in action clarifies call

THE TWO YEARS the Rev. Laura Bensman spent working with the General Board of Church and Society through the US-2 missionary program helped shape her faith and her eventual career.

"You are able to discern a call," she said of her experience. "You are able to put your faith into action, and that is an exciting thing as a young person."

From 2005-07, Bensman participated in the General Board of Global Ministries' program in which young adults were placed in a social justice ministry in the United States. Participants trained at the Global Ministries offices in New York and continued on to their assigned posts. Today, Global Ministries' Generation Transformation initiative offers young adults similar experiences.

Based on Bensman's interview and interests, the Board assigned her to assist in producing educational seminars for visiting groups of men, women and youth. She helped design seminars on such topics as immigration, hunger and homelessness, and the environment by arranging speakers and tailoring each seminar to the group's needs.

Bensman applied for the US-2 program after receiving her bachelor's degree in social work from Ohio State University. "I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do, but I knew I wanted to work to make the world a better place," she said.

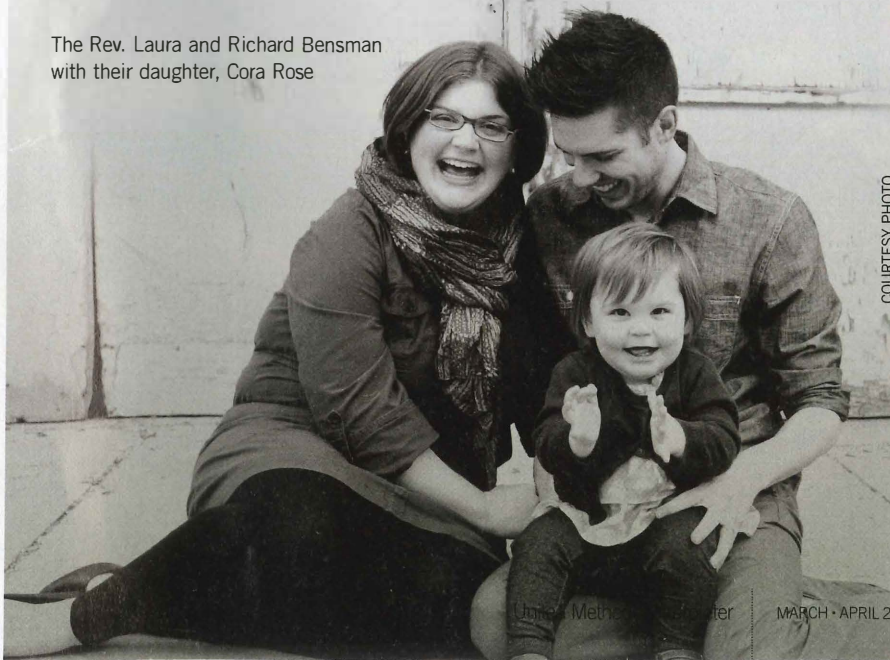
Bensman's call to ordained ministry came during her two-year assignment. A year later, she entered Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington. She felt called to address social justice issues with the same group of people for a long time, rather than for three days as she did in the seminars. She now serves as the pastor of Church of St. Andrew United Methodist Church in Toledo, Ohio.

Her experience as a US-2 missionary taught her that religion and the world aren't two separate things.

"How we live in the world is really how we live out our faith," Bensman said. "Our faith should impact how we live in the world. It is not something we should just do in a building on Sunday. Our actions should be influenced by our faith."

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The Rev. Laura and Richard Bensman with their daughter, Cora Rose



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