

Dear Pastor, Youth Director, or Church Musician, and all parents and students,

I am the Founding Conductor of the Lutheran Youth Choir International, an ecumenical, international summer choir for high-school-age singers from the United States and Germany, based in the Chicago, Illinois area at Faith Lutheran Church in Glen Ellyn. Since 2005, the choir has formed eight times for 10-14 days in the summertime: four times for a North American tour or festival, and four times for a tour or festival in Germany. The general age of our students ranges from 14 to 19 years old (entering grade 9 through graduating grade 12), and we usually have a choir of 20-30 singers, counting both Americans and Germans. Some are returning students but many are new each year. Participants do not need to be Lutheran or able to speak German, nor do they need to be members of a choir at church or at school.

In 2011, we initiated a biennial *Festival of American Vocal Music* at the beautifully restored 14th-century Mansfeld Castle in Mansfeld, Germany, the boyhood home town of Martin Luther. At this festival, young Americans come together with young German singers for ten days to rehearse and sing four centuries of sacred music from the Americas, including gospel and jazz. After several days of rehearsal together, we perform our choral music in several venues, including churches in Berlin, Wittenberg, Erfurt, and Eisleben. Of course, there is also ample time for the German and America students to enjoy recreation, discussion, and sightseeing together! In 2013 we performed a joint concert with a German adult Gospel Choir based in Eisenach. This past summer 2015 we held our third successful festival in Germany, including singing at the American Church in Berlin.

In even-numbered years the German students are invited to come to the Chicago area and join American singers for our biennial *Festival of Global Vocal Music*. The students all live on a beautiful and safe college campus (North Central College in Naperville) for ten days, rehearsing and performing sacred music from many different cultures. **Our upcoming 2016 Festival is July 10-19.** In addition to singing, it will include sightseeing in downtown Chicago; a trip to Milwaukee and Six Flags Great America amusement park; a chance to tour the fourth-largest musical instrument in the world (the Naperville Millennium Carillon); and global percussion and vocal development workshops taught by master teachers.

Everyone who participates in the 2016 *Festival of Global Vocal Music* will automatically receive a \$1,000 scholarship toward the cost of attending the next *Festival of American Vocal Music* in Germany in summer 2017 for the very special "Luther @ 500" anniversary year! There is also generous scholarship assistance for those who want to sing with us this summer!

There is more information about the Lutheran Youth Choir International and our two festivals on our website, www.lutheranyouthchoir.org. If your young people cannot participate in 2016 or 2017, perhaps you would know of other youth leaders or pastors who might be interested whom I could contact. If so, please contact me at philipspencer@sbcglobal.net.

This unique, active partnership between young German and American singers has been a remarkable, life-changing musical and cultural blessing for all of the students, and for all of us adult volunteers too! We hope that it will continue and thrive for many years into the future.

Thank you for your time, and best wishes to all churches and families in your future musical endeavors!

Sincerely,
Philip Spencer, Founding Conductor
Lutheran Youth Choir International
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