



For more information:  
Janelle Koepke  
Principle Gifts Director  
Communication Director  
563.589.0712

[jkoepke@wartburgseminary.edu](mailto:jkoepke@wartburgseminary.edu)

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Wartburg Theological Seminary Student Dies in Haiti Earthquake

DUBUQUE, IA – January 14, 2010 - Wartburg Theological Seminary Student, Ben Splichal Larson has died in the Haiti Earthquake. Two other students, Ben's spouse, Renee Splichal Larson, and his cousin, Jonathan Larson, are safe at the U.S. Embassy in Haiti and will be returning to the states this week.

All three students were in the same building when the quake hit. Renee and Jonathan made it out, eventually found each other and then returned to the St. Joseph Guest House in Port au Prince, Haiti, where they were staying. They attempted to rescue Ben, to no avail.

Ben and Jonathan were serving as teachers to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Haiti for a January Term project for their studies. Renee was doing interviews and research for her Master of Divinity thesis on the beginnings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Haiti.

Ben was originally from LaCrosse, Wisconsin and is survived by his spouse Renee Splichal Larson who was originally from Garrison, ND. Ben is also survived by his parents April Ulring Larson and Judd Larson of Duluth, MN.

Wartburg Theological Seminary President Duane Larson said, "We so grieve with his parents, April and Judd; for Renee's loss of her husband; Jonathan's loss of a dear cousin, for our loss of a beautiful friend. Ben's baptismal light burned so brightly in our community and for all who came to know him. We grieve the loss of so clear a proclamation, with eyes twinkling, of Christ's love, compassion, and humor."

In a phone interview with the ELCA news service, April Ulring Larson described Ben, 25, as "gentle, in love with Christ, in love with people, in love with life. He's been hearing God's call.

His life belonged to God. If you want to know Ben, listen to his music." Ben is the youngest of four Larson children.

Ben was a master of divinity student in his senior year at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. He received his undergraduate degree from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa.

Another Wartburg student, Sarah Thomson, who is serving as an intern at Abiding Hope Lutheran Church, Littleton, CO, was also in Haiti with students from Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, OH. She and the Trinity students are safe in Jacmel, Haiti. Sarah is originally from Centerville, South Dakota and received an undergraduate degree from Augustana in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Wartburg Theological Seminary is one of eight theological schools of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Wartburg is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools and educates women and men to serve the church as ordained and lay leaders. Established in Dubuque, Iowa in 1854, Wartburg Theological Seminary is in its 156<sup>th</sup> academic year.

###