

## A GENERATION OF HOPE

by Jeff Bolster (B.A. 93, M.A. 01)

On a recent Saturday morning, I was taking my two-and-a-half year old daughter up to see her grandma and grandpa, who live a couple hours north of San Diego. As we drove along I-5, I was listening to the news while Ana carefully decorated her arms with stickers meant for the book she had already discarded on the floor.

About 20 minutes into the update on world affairs for the week, I had the same reaction that I almost always do when I am confronted with the happenings of our world: I find myself deeply grateful for many of our PLNU students. It's not as much of a stretch as it might seem.

There are grim realities in our world, along with the ever-present challenges of poverty, injustice, war, education reform, healthcare, politics, globalization, and a host of other issues. For as much as I attempt to practice the discipline of awareness, at times the result is a sense of almost being overwhelmed at the sheer magnitude of human challenges.

It's about this time that their faces come to mind: our students. They are intelligent, insightful, and passionate about engaging the world. They desire authenticity for themselves and from those who lead them. They are not intimidated by the problems they see; many of them are drawn into the very epicenter of these problems. They are followers of Christ, who early on in their time at PLNU are incarnating hope.

It is important to acknowledge that these are not typical college students walking a four-year path to a self-serving career. As I am alongside students during their time at PLNU, I have come to see that they wrestle with issues of faith, society, church, and the greater world. They ask tough questions of themselves, of me, and of others here. They do not settle. These are not color-by-number people willing to enter a predetermined space.

And here is where I am encouraged, especially in the face of local, national, and global realities: the intersection of our students and our world. Who better to encounter these difficult challenges than



*Jeff hanging out with Generation Z daughter Ana.*

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these students? I believe that the Lord is using this generation's inherent sensitivity to His Spirit and that He is further equipping them at institutions like Point Loma.

But it isn't "prepare now and serve later." They are serving, searching for their place, pushing their way into the messiness that many of us find paralyzing. And, in doing so, they encourage me. So, I hear a report on challenges facing Africa, and I think about a recent graduate who was there with me in Rwanda several years ago. She is now

in graduate school getting a degree in international affairs and will continue to work in Africa when she is finished. Or, I hear about the educational challenges facing our local school system, and several of our graduating education students come to mind. There is peace in my heart, knowing they will soon be in the classroom.

And then there is my daughter, sitting in her car seat, now with the stickers on her legs instead of her arms. Having her enter my life has created the deepest sense of gratitude and need for our students. I am glad that they will be out there before Ana is. Our students cause me to hope, and that isn't always an easy thing to do these days. ☪

*Jeff Bolster is the director of international ministries at PLNU.*