

**The Ninth of Twelve**  
**Kayla Hoech**  
**2020 Steinbeck Scholarship Recipients**

Thank you so much for the Steinbeck Scholarship!



My name is Kayla Hoech, and I grew up in Central Asia where my parents have been missionaries for the past 17 years. Central Asia has been my home. I grew up immersed in this different culture, loving the bizarre foods and feeling comfortable in the environment that foreigners would call queer.

I can easily navigate through our outdoor bazaar built like a maze. I can converse freely in Russian with locals. I know how to bargain and how to tell when something is overpriced. I am comfortable sitting cross-legged on the floor for long periods of time. I understand what community means to the people. I perceive the distinctness of terms used in American culture and in this Central Asian one.

For six years, I taught ESL to elementary-aged children as an afterschool Christian outreach. At the end of every class, I shared a bible story with the students telling them about the love of God. It brought me so much joy to share God's Word with those who have never heard it before. I learned much through this process and am excitedly majoring in Liberal Studies in college.

Leaving home and all familiarity was not easy, but I'm slowly adapting to life in California. I am delighted to be a freshman at Concordia University Irvine, studying to be a Lutheran elementary teacher. I love the classes I'm taking and all of my professors. I am blessed to be here at this time and to have friends who support me. I deeply desire to serve the Lord for the rest of my life, starting here and now!

Thank you for supporting me financially. I greatly appreciate all of you, and I look forward to serving God and being a light to those around me as I further my education.

May God bless you, richly and abundantly!

Kayla Hoech