

The Global Companion

News from the Global Mission Committee of the Metropolitan Washington, DC, Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America vol. 4 no.1 April 2010

GMC April Meeting Summary

The Global Mission Committee (GMC) of the Metropolitan Washington, DC, Synod of the ELCA met April 11 at Christ Lutheran in Fairfax.

Gifts of Hopes for 2009 included a total of more than \$22,000 for Metro DC companion churches in El Salvador, Namibia, and Slovakia. Nominations for 2010 gifts should be submitted by June.

- **Companion synods.** The Metro DC Synod has “Companion Synod” relationships with Lutheran church bodies in Namibia in southwest Africa, El Salvador in Central America, and Slovakia in Eastern Europe. (See reports on developments throughout this issue.)
- **Middle East Working Group.** A group in the synod focusing on Israel-Palestine, Iraq, and other issues in the Middle East reported developments.
- **Other reports.** Reports were offered on past and upcoming events, communications, organizations, and the budget.
- **Next meeting.** The next meeting was scheduled for Saturday, August 21, at 9:30 am at Good Shepherd in Alexandria.

Interested in learning more about the synod’s global mission work? Join us! For more information, contact GMC Chairman Bob Allard at bobandelsa@hotmail.com

Christina Vollbrecht Teaches English at Bratislava Seminary

Christina Vollbrecht (King of Kings) is teaching English at the seminary in Bratislava, Slovakia. The GMC provided financial assistance. Christina shared a story from her experience:



Christina Vollbrecht

Each night here at the seminary, the students run an evening devotion. A different student is responsible for each day, and it is an informal gathering with lively songs, complete with drums,

bongos, and guitars. There is a verse reading accompanied by a short devotion and group prayers. I greatly look forward to this event, as it is not only an opportunity to worship with my students but to immerse myself in Slovak language and get an idea about the worship style of youth in this country. Not surprisingly, each night runs just as I might imagine any American youth devotion would run.

One of my advanced English students was responsible for this evening's service. The passage was from John 17, verses 9-19, quite a difficult text. But the message he took from it was being one with God. With that, he decided to host the devotion in both Slovak and English—a first for this faculty. He asked for my help choosing some songs from the LBW and With One Voice, and I read the text in English as well for the group. The resulting prayers included prayers for those people who cannot speak for themselves, the deaf, the mute. That God is not limited in his understanding. God does not speak just one language. We are all united in one language, that of Christian love.

It is through these out-of-the-classroom experiences that I understand truly what it is I am doing here, as a representative of the ELCA in Slovakia. I am not here to teach religion, I am not here to teach language. I am here to share in the brotherhood which unites every believer on this earth.

And it is a precious thing.



Katie Baugh

Katie Baugh to Join Youth Mission to Holy Land

Kathleen Baugh (King of Kings, Fairfax) will take part in an ELCA Youth Mission to the Holy Land along with seven other youth and four adults July 8-22, 2010. This mission grew out of the ELCA Southeast Michigan Synod's tradition of taking youth to the Middle East. Katie needs help to cover the \$2500+ costs. If you'd like to help, please send a check made out to "St. George Youth" to Kathleen Baugh, 12888 Crouch Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. More info at www.elca.org, search "holy land youth."

Haiti Earthquake Relief

On January 12 at 4:53 p.m., a magnitude 7.0 earthquake rocked the island country of Haiti, primarily impacting its capital of Port-au-Prince and its nearly two million residents. It is believed that over three million citizens of Haiti were affected. The epicenter of the quake was centered approximately 10 miles west of Port-au-Prince. Offices, hotels, houses and shops collapsed.

Already one of the poorest countries in the world, this catastrophe has exacerbated

the suffering felt by many already living with hunger and poverty.

On January 20, the ELCA formalized a relationship with the church in Haiti, showing greater solidarity and commitment to accompany this small church as it responds to the needs of its community in the wake of the disaster. Joseph Livenson Lauvanus, is president of the Lutheran Church in Haiti. For more information, visit <http://blogs.elca.org/disasterresponse/haiti>.

For information on the disaster response and to contribute, visit <http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Responding-to-the-World/Disaster-Response/Ongoing-Responses/Haiti-Earthquake.aspx>.

A Moment of Truth: Middle East Working Group Affirms Kairos Palestine Document

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." (Matt. 5:45)

A group of concerned Christians in Palestine has drafted a document called by Bishop Munib A. Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) "an expression of the aspirations of Palestinian Christians inspired by our common spiritual heritage." The document, titled "A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope, and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering," is also known as the Kairos Palestine Document. (<http://www.kairospalestine.ps/sites/default/Documents/English.pdf>).

The Metro DC Synod's Middle East Working Group (MEWG) plans to offer a resolution encouraging study of the document at the May 7-8 Metro DC Synod Assembly in Leesburg.

Dr. Roy Enquist Dies; Was Active in Synod Middle East Issues
Pastor Roy Enquist passed away on Tuesday, April 6, of acute leukemia. Pr. Roy was

actively involved in ecumenical work for many years and most recently was a strong advocate for Palestinian Christians.

An ordained Lutheran minister, he was appointed Ecumenist at the Washington National Cathedral in spring 2000, serving as the principal advisor and planner on matters regarding the Episcopal Cathedral's relationship with other faiths and denominations. He received his Ph.D. from Union Theological Seminary in New York, and was professor emeritus of theology and ethics at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg where he served as professor from 1980 to 1998. The memorial service was held at the National Cathedral April 24.

Namibia: Growing Relationships
Pastors Dean duToit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) and Eliakim Shaanika of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) were pastors in residence in the Washington, DC, Metro Synod and its fellow Namibia Companion Synods in Iowa, New Jersey, and Southwest Washington in fall 2009. Thanks go to the Metro DC congregations that hosted Pastor duToit: St. Luke, Silver Spring; Holy Trinity, Falls Church; Nativity, Alexandria; and First Trinity, Washington, DC. In 2010 there will again be opportunities to host a pastor. It's a great way to learn about Namibia!

Representatives of the four U.S. synods with companions in Namibia met again in November in Chicago.

For more information about Namibia, contact Lowell Knauff at umpyk@aol.com.

News from El Salvador

A Sister Congregation Gathering was held March 14, 2010; Phil Loar and others from Holy Trinity attended.

Tim Muth of the Milwaukee Area Synod has made many trips to El Salvador and summarizes his stories on his blog at walkingwithelsalvaodr@googlegroups.com.

An orientation trip is being planned for summer 2011. Contact Deena Bulick-Terry for details.

Philip Anderson Reports from El Salvador: Beauty and Suffering

Along the beaches of El Salvador, the scene is breathtakingly beautiful. Tourists find luxury accommodations close to the warm waters stretching out to the horizon. Surfers enjoy the perfect wave action. Small, colorful village houses sparkle in a brilliant Pacific sunset.

Yet very nearby, people continue to live in abject poverty. Some make a meager living by collecting crabs—for which they are paid \$1-\$2 a dozen—about as many as they can collect in a day. Sanitation and potable water were destroyed in the November 2009 hurricane.

The Lutheran World Federation has been active in El Salvador since 1983. El Salvador has faced many natural disasters since 1998—hurricanes and mudslides, earthquakes, high winds. So much of LWF's attention has gone toward mitigating disasters, particularly the major earthquake in 2001. There is also a need to anticipate future events—through better houses and reforestation. Bad land practices that converted rain forest to coffee plantations have led to more drought, as there is nothing to hold moisture during the rainy season. Climate change is a concern.

El Salvador is looking at a 20-year plan to turn this around with sustainable agriculture and reforestation—working with international organizations and encouraging Salvadorans to devote some of the remittances from their relatives abroad to investments in the community. They are digging wells by hand—there is no other water source in many communities.

There are other challenges as well. Human rights violations continue against indigenous peoples. Structural concerns are ongoing—corruption, land tenure issues, homelessness. The violence of organized crime—drug syndicates and gangs—has undermined the capacity of government to work. In the justice system, lawyers and judges are threatened or on the take; human rights advocates face death threats.

A key role of the LWF is to do a great deal of capacity building—to help the Salvadoran churches and people address their own issues, be their own advocates. More and more direct human assistance is given through partnerships and local associates. It's a long process that often feels like beginning at square one every day.

In the midst of it all, the Lutheran Church of El Salvador remains strong, active, and committed to working with the poor. Bishop Medardo Gomez sends greetings to the Metro DC Synod.

—Pastor Phil Anderson is regional representative in Central America for the Lutheran World Federation's Department of World Service.

Bishop Klátik: Feed My Sheep
Bishop Dr. Miloš Klátik of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the Slovak Republic (ECAC-SR) recently reminded churches of their responsibility in securing food for the hungry. “The shocking fact that millions of children and adults are undernourished calls us Christians to take responsibility for our brothers and sisters and to do everything we can to change the situation so that those who are hungry today will tomorrow have their daily bread, basic food, drinking water and health,” said Bishop Klátik in a March 14 sermon to the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) European region pre-assembly consultation.

Upcoming Events

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP)
2010 Advocacy Conference is June 13-15 at Kellogg Conference Hotel, Washington, D.C. Conference rates: \$150. See <http://www.cmepe.org/2010conference/index.html>.

Region 8 “Glocal” Mission Gathering:
November 12-13, 2010, Trinity Lutheran in Camp Hill, PA. Contact Sunitha Mortha, sunitha.mortha@elca.org.

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