

GLOBAL MISSION TEAM

The Global Mission Team focused upon the enabling of congregations to proclaim Jesus Christ throughout the world by way of Companion Synod relationships with Lutheran Churches in Namibia, El Salvador and Slovakia, advocacy for peace throughout the Middle East Working Group, support of the ELCA Malaria Campaign, the work of the Immigration Team, ELCA Global Church Sponsorships, and Gifts of Hope.

COMPANION SYNOD TASK FORCES:

A: Namibia – Kathryn Tobias & Mark Victorson, Chairpersons

Visit of Bishop Ernst //Gamxamub and Finance Minister Leonard de Vries to Metropolitan Washington, DC, Synod, May 1-5, 2016.

Following visits to Chicago and to companion synods in Southwestern Washington and Northeastern Iowa, Bishop Ernst and Mr. de Vries visited the DC Metro Synod before traveling to the final synod, New Jersey, on May 5. After arriving on Sunday evening, May 1, at the home of Lutheran Church of the Reformation Pastor Michael Wilker, they shared a small dinner with his family, Kathryn Tobias, and Pastor Al and Nancy Swingle. On Monday morning they visited Lutheran Social Services, hosted by Kati Miller Holland, Dara Yahya and other staff and learned about the Youth Haven Camp, which addresses the needs of children and youth in families affected by HIV/AIDS and the alienation that often surrounds them. They were then hosted at the Folger Shakespeare Library by Dan DeSimone and staff, who showed them books by Luther from as early as 1518. After a German lunch, they visited Patricia Kisare at the ELCA Washington Office and discussed issues before Congress and in the U.S. government related to international relationships. In the evening, Bishop Ernst preached an Ascension Day sermon, reminding us that as Jesus goes to prepare a place for us, we are each known by name.

On Tuesday morning, Ambassador Martin Andjaba and staff welcomed the visitors to the Namibian Embassy in Northwest Washington, DC. The Ambassador affirmed his support for and interest in the Namibian-North American companionship of Lutherans and said he would welcome being a part of future celebrations. In the afternoon, Bishop Ernst and Mr. de Vries traveled to the home of Pastor Bob Allard in Woodbridge for a two-day stay. Over dinner, they met with the Namibia Companion Synod team (Mark Victorson, Kathryn Tobias, and Pastor Elijah Mwitanti) and representatives of the independent nonprofit, Friends of Namibian Children (FNC). The group hashed out some concerns and FNC agreed to work together with the Bishop's office on a Memorandum of Understanding to improve transparency in the relationship.

On Wednesday, the visitors participated in the Fairfax Conference meeting at St. Mark's Lutheran Church where Bishop Ernst and Bishop Richard Graham met for the first time. In the afternoon, hosted by tour guides Bob Allard and Mark Victorson, they visited several outstanding nonprofits: Good Shepherd

Housing, the Hilda Barg Homeless Prevention Center and Action in Community Through Service (ACTS). Bishop Ernst led an evening gathering of confirmands and participated in a hymn sing at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Woodbridge. On Thursday morning, the Woodbridge Rotary Club, which has been supportive of the hostels in Namibia, welcomed the visitors for lunch. And at 3 pm, they were returned to Washington for a wrapup meeting with Bishop Graham at the Metro DC Synod office. They shared a simple supper at a "Glocal" meeting at Church of the Reformation and boarded the train for New Jersey, and ultimately the flight home.

Companion Synod Sunday, 31 January 2016. Metro DC Synod Namibia Team put together a packet of materials about Namibia for Companion Synod Sunday, which included a Companion Synod Sunday flyer, a Friends of Namibian Children flyer, and Sunday Church School lesson plans for pre-school and kindergarten through middle school classes, a Namibia fact sheet, photos, and a flyer for the Friends of Namibian Children's Summer Sundaes fundraiser, which was held on the same day. Churches throughout the Metro DC Synod used elements of the packet during their celebration of Companion Synod Sunday.

Mission Trip to Namibia. On 19 July 2016, a mission team of 15 parishioners from St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Washington, DC embarked on a two-week mission trip to Namibia. The mission trip involved visiting and working at two hostels, one in Karibib, where the team spent most of its time, and the other in Otjimbingwe. The team also worked at a Children's Education Center in Usakos. The team worked hard with the guidance of Hope for Kids to repair, build, paint, and do plumbing. The team also built a gated hallway, so the children could have access to the bathrooms at night. Playgrounds were rebuilt and painted, and the team involved the hostel children in the work. The children helped paint a beautiful mural of the world on the side of one of the buildings. The night before it departed Namibia the team had dinner with Bishop //Gamxamub. The team members considered this a trip of a lifetime and a true blessing to them, as well as to the children of the hostels.

Friends of Namibian Children

Namibian Summer Sundaes Fete, 31 January 2016. The eastern FNC Board of Directors Team held its first fundraiser, a Namibian Sundaes Fete and silent auction at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Arlington on Sunday, 31 January 2016. It seemed appropriate to have an ice cream social in February, because it was summer in Namibia. The Fete was very successful and included addresses by Bishop Graham and Ambassador Andjaba and remarks by FNC Chair, Rachel Schmidt; CEO of Hope 4 Kids International, Ken Eggum; and Bob Allard, who thanked donors, to include major donors, the Woodbridge Rotary Club, which donated \$1400; and Thrivent Bull Run Chapter, which donated \$1000. There was a good turnout, informed a number of interested people about Namibia, and raised over \$5000 for the various projects FNC is carrying out in support of the school hostels run by the ELCRN in southern Namibia.

FNC and LCRN MOU. At Bishop //Gamxamub's request, made during his visit last year, FNC has written a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) detailing how the relationship between FNC and the ELRCN Synod will work in support of the hostels. The draft MOU has been submitted to ELRCN and FNC is waiting for a reply. The ELRCN's Director of Hostels has developed health issues, and there is some question concerning the future leadership of the hostel program.

B. El Salvador – Kelly Baugh & Phil Loar, Chairpersons

Phil Anderson shared that gang violence is on the rise in El Salvador from drug trafficking to extortion. Travel is dangerous. Prayers are asked for the country in dealing not only with gang violence, but also refugees. Bishop Gomez visited DC the end of February. Lutheran Churches are trying to help with the gang problems as part of a Nationally Covered Presidential Committee to deal with these problems.

Synod Immigration Team and AMMPARO. Kelly Baugh reported that the Synod Immigration Team is looking at reaching out to congregations about AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, and Opportunities). According to ELCA, “amparo” in Spanish means the protection of a living creature from suffering or damage. ELCA’s AMPARRO strategy “was envisioned after witnessing the plight of children who are forced to flee their communities in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.” The welcoming congregations initiative is broader than just El Salvador. Phil Lohr says the synod will expand welcoming beyond the level of the ‘reconciling in Christ’ initiative of years past. Meetings will be held in the synod to make a plan. As reported previously, through AMMPARO, congregations agree to welcome migrant children and families, listen to their stories and receive the divine blessings that they bring, pray for and share the gospel, provide emotional and spiritual support, accompany migrants to access institutional services as needed, and advocate for justice for and with migrant families and children. “Guardian Angels” are present in courtrooms and legal hearings, where migrants, including many mothers, are not always afforded their legal rights.

Two groups are planning trips to El Salvador—Marion and Phil and a group from Holy Trinity; and Kelly and Bishop Graham and Pastor Lynn. Kelly noted that their group is going to learn more about the ministry there and to support people here as well.

Stephen Deal, ELCA Regional Director for Central America, was in Washington on a home visit for two weeks. He visited with three conferences of the synod—Virginia, Fairfax, and DC (Christ Lutheran), with a lot of his work having to do with ELCA’s AMMPARO initiative. He has preached and led adult forums related to these issues. The number of unaccompanied minors has gone up to the same level as in 2014 and the number of families went higher. Now the

population of undocumented has gotten larger since 2014 and the challenge has gotten bigger. Bishop Gomez has spoken on why people are emigrating from El Salvador. Steve discussed various situations and abuses and mentioned an article for *The Lutheran Magazine* in 2014 which talked about families having to get children out because of bad situations in their home countries—he drew a comparison with Moses being left in a basket. Situations might be overwhelming, as in Guatemala, where a gang comes in demanding bus drivers pay—so extortion may result in no transportation available for rural families even to get to larger towns to buy groceries. When families have to get their children out, the “coyote” may take the titles of their houses as a bond. If kids get a job and pay the price, the family may get the title back—or they may lose their home. Churches have done followup of kids and families in situations and found youth severely traumatized—if the cycle is not broken through reconnection with education, vocational training, microenterprise, it will occur again.

Funding is an issue—e.g., El Salvador may receive \$55,000 annually from ELCA, but that is a drop in the bucket to address the issues. If something doesn’t happen at the congregational level, it goes nowhere—question is what are we doing?

“Catch and Release”—when a minor comes across the border and turns self in—which is the legal thing to do—Customs and Border Patrol has to handle it differently—move the child to a child-appropriate facility and in the next 10 days work to identify someone in the United States who will assure legal responsibility. It is better if they have a parent or someone authorized by the parent to make sure the kids show up at hearings—UP TO NOW. Border Patrol, “tired of being day care centers,” just put them all in detention facilities. For smaller children, since there were not adequate facilities, reactivated private for-profit detention facilities. Leads to trauma—seems to be where it’s going.

The response to the wave of immigration, churches have said, needs to be on the basis of Biblical principles—welcoming the stranger. Mary Campbell, the full-time director for AMMPARO, encourages good lawyers in ELCA congregations to step forward and help as “Guardian Angels.” It was suggested that congregations be contacted to put together a network of lawyers in the synod. Having a lawyer in these cases increases the chance of a case being decided in the client’s favor from 15 percent to 70 percent.

Now with the election, the ground is shifting underneath. It wasn’t planned this way—what is happening at a church level is on a collision course with what’s coming out of the new administration. The US election represents a shift in the context of dealing with this migration. The churches knew that an executive order was coming and now need to build alliances to respond. Some churches are considering the option of becoming sanctuary churches; others are not comfortable with that but are looking for neutral places where discussions can take place. A congregation in North Carolina with a Mexican pastor and significant Latino membership worries about how the E.O.s will affect them. One area of focus is the lawyers’ network. The advocacy area is also critically important. AMMPARO was initially passed as a strategy at the synod level, but in

practice it is a movement across ELCA. Other denominations are now looking at it. Mary Campbell has received expressions of interest from 25-30 synods.

C. Slovakia – Rosemary Burton, Chairperson

An e-mail was received concerning how the refugee crisis in Europe is affecting Slovakia. Churches there took a special offering to help refugees seeking asylum.

A video was shared on the Christian Education Center in Martine. They have a new building and progress is good in reaching students from preschool on up.

Also shared were pictures of a number of churches in Slovakia. Churches there are hundreds of years old and in dire need of modernization, i.e., roofing, electricity, heating, sanitation, etc.

MIDDLE EAST WORKING GROUP – Nathan Rich, Chairperson

Bright Stars of Bethlehem produced its annual “Room for Hope Festival”, a Palestinian Arts Celebration, in the DC area in September. Dr. Mitri Raheb at Faith Lutheran Church Arlington, VA. Other events took place at The Jerusalem Fund, Georgetown University, and Busboys & Poets - Brookland. See <http://roomforhope2016.eventbrite.com> or brightstarsbethlehem.org. MEWG contributed \$250 from its budget to support these events.

Bishop Graham participated in the 10th Annual Bethlehem Prayer Service, a simulcast between Washington National Cathedral and Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, Palestine, on Saturday, December 17, at 10:00 AM in DC and 5:00 PM in Bethlehem. Prayers, readings, and hymns alternated between Washington, DC and Bethlehem via live simulcast, bringing together people of different lands, languages, and ethnic backgrounds in celebration of Jesus' birth. Those unable to join in person were invited and encouraged to join on-line at www.cathedral.org. This service is also coordinated by Bright Stars of Bethlehem.

In 2016 the ELCA Churchwide Assembly passed two important memorials on Israel/Palestine: The first calls on Congress to make aid to Israel contingent on cessation of support for settlements in the Occupied Palestine Territories (West Bank and East Jerusalem). The second calls for development of a human rights social criteria investment screen. The ELCA news story is at <http://www.elca.org/News-and-Events/7855>. The ELCA Peace Not Walls team and ELCA Synod Middle East Network works to implement these resolutions (www.elca.org/peacenotwalls).

The MEWG mourns the passing of one of its most dedicated members: On August 15 Pastor Phil Anderson died of cancer at age 69. A memorial service was held Thursday October 13 at First Trinity Lutheran Church in DC.

ELCA WORLD HUNGER – Dorothy Sorrell, Chairperson

The year 2016 marked the beginning of an effort to make ELCA World Hunger information more widely distributed, and the ministry of this program better understood. Looking forward to 2017, it is hoped that more congregations will participate in World Hunger giving as individuals step forward to serve in this effort.

A World Hunger display was prominent during the Metro DC Synod Women's Organization meeting in April 2016, and resources shared with individuals at that time. Because displays were not possible at the Metro DC Synod Assembly in June, ELCA World Hunger note cards were provided to all Assembly members along with contact information for the Synod World Hunger Coordinator. Some synod members attended the ELCA Region 8 Meeting in October, where World Hunger staff provided information about future initiatives. It should be noted that ELCA World Hunger Education Unit participated in and helped with the financial support of "The Forgotten Luther" Symposium that was held in the Metro DC Synod, and led to the publication of the booklet, "The Forgotten Luther: Reclaiming the Social-Economic Dimension of the Reformation".

GLOBAL MINISTRIES AND MISSIONARY SUPPORT

GIFTS OF HOPE

Namibia

ELCRN – Repair Children's Hostels	\$ 4,668
ELCIN – Fund for Retired Pastors	1,363
ELCRN/ELCIN – Computer for Seminary Library	1,095

El Salvador

Salary Support for Pastors	\$ 1,799
Food for a Family	3,171

Slovakia

Rebuild and Repair Church Walls	\$ 1,498
Church Roof Repair	2,597

UNSDG PROJECT

Michael Kuchinsky reported on the project that he and Dick Hoehn are working on to tie congregations in to the United Nations sustainable Development Goals, which

were voted in September. This is a new set of international goals for 2015-2020. The Synod Assembly voted nearly unanimously to encourage congregations of the synod to do a study of the goals and report back to the Bishop. Dick and Mike have PowerPoints on the Sustainable Development goals and are offering to share them with congregations as a holy calling. Mike encouraged the Global Mission Committee to add the UNSDG project as a component of its oversight and possibly include it in the GMC budget. Phil Lohr encouraged the duo to have congregations think about what would be the most important goals for their focus – e.g., one congregation might look at hunger while another focuses on energy issues.

METRO DC SYNOD GLOBAL MISSION TEAM

Pastor Bob Allard, Chair

Kathryn Tobias, Secretary

Mark Victorson & Kathy Tobias, Namibia Companion Synod Force Co-Chairpersons

Kelly Baugh & Phil Loar, El Salvador Companion Synod Force Co-Chairpersons

Rosemary Burton, Slovakia Companion Synod Force Chairperson

Nathan rich, Middle East Working Group Chairperson

Dorothy Sorrell, ELCA Malaria Campaign Chairperson

Gerry Johnson, Immigration Team

Phil Anderson

Ann Foltz

Rhoda Klug

Ruth Manchester

Elijah Mwitanti

Ralph Neeper

We hold Phil Anderson and Ralph Neeper in fond remembrance. They served faithfully our Lord Jesus Christ as members of the Global Mission Team. We are thankful to God for the gifts which both Phil and Ralph gave to the church and all who knew them.