

## **2017 GLOBAL MISSION TEAM**

The Global Mission Team has as focus the enabling of congregations to proclaim Jesus Christ by way of Companion Synod relationships with Lutheran Churches in Namibia, El Salvador and Slovakia, advocacy for peace through the Middle East Working Group, support of the Metro DC Synod's Gifts of Hope, ELCA World Hunger Appeal and the UNSDG Project.

### **COMPANION SYNOD TASK FORCES:**

#### **A. El Salvador – Kelly Baugh and Phil Loar**

Pastor Mike Wilker of Reformation, DC, and his family (wife, Judy, daughter, Maya, and son, Carl) applied for and received a grant from the Lily Foundation to support the congregation during a sabbatical in which he visited a number of places including Metro DC companion synods in El Salvador and Namibia.

Mike and daughter Maya spent two weeks in El Salvador. Mike reported that church leaders in El Salvador continue to rely a lot on Bishop Gomez, who while spiritually strong is growing more frail. However, there are many great leaders in addition to the bishop.

Norma Castillo was director of the Companion Synod relationships for all four U.S. synods. Sadly, she died suddenly of cancer last year. A teacher from Illinois took a leave of absence and ran the companion synod office for a year and strengthened relationships, encouraging in-country support for volunteers.

Violence continues in the country and feels intractable. IPAZ, an ecumenical group including Pentecostals, Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, and Lutherans tries to respond to the gangs and police to establish a truce. The violence is interconnected with situations in the U.S.

Lutheran World Relief was gracious in allowing Mike and Maya to visit a cocoa producing biodiverse plantation that is seeding forestation projects and providing good paying jobs. No chocolate on these farms yet, but it will be niche market chocolate.

In two weeks, they visited 10 different cities, from small towns to inner cities. Popopo was a very densely populated suburb. The Lutheran Church there helped create a new neighborhood, like a Habitat for Humanity project. All the houses were the same size except that they could be adjusted to have, for example, two rooms instead of one. But there were empty houses – gangs extorted the families – there were strong leaders; still one can't escape the pervasive violence.

Bishop Gomez is the most respected person in El Salvador. He is working to lay the groundwork to end the gang warfare. Pray for them and help support them. A main reason people emigrate is that they are trying to flee the violence – it is a death sentence to go back for some.

### **Programs related to Lutheran Church in El Salvador**

Women have a coop with a garden and men have started raising honeybees.

There are 57-61 congregations in El Salvador. For people who return to El Salvador, there are \$100 worth of groceries to try to get them through the first month. For young people who are not trying to emigrate, there are apprenticeships for beauticians, mechanics, etc.

ELCA's AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities) strategy "was envisioned after witnessing the plight of children who are forced to flee their communities in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala." Steve Deal has posted about AMMPARO on the national website.

Guardian Angels is a separate program working with those in prison. A few welcoming congregations have formally sent a letter of commitment.

Rafael Malpica notes that there is some evidence that leadership needs to look into child-related issues at Casa Concordia – not at the main Resurrection church.

Resurrection has a new building consecrated in August. They had been worshipping in a health clinic.

## **B. Namibia – Mark Victorson & Kathryn Tobias, Chairpersons**

Mike Wilker reported on his family visit to the companion synods in Namibia. The Lutheran Church in Namibia is strong and vibrant. Most of Namibia is Lutheran and there are two large synods, ELCRN, based mainly in the middle and southern part of the country, and ELCIN, which is twice as large but has two dioceses and is based in the north.

### **ELCRN**

A sewing and embroidery project received a grant to buy a large industrial embroidery machine to emblazon the LWF logo on shirts and vestments for all churches across Namibia for the Lutheran World Federation gathering this summer. This was a great economic opportunity for those who participated.

The Wilkers delivered scarves and hats for Jasmine.

Social Development: They continue to work on land reform issues 25 years after independence. ELCRN was part of a pilot project, the basic income grant (BIG) program which gave people a small basic income regardless of ability or age. The result was dramatic and the leaders of the project are hoping to nationalize it. Rachel Schmidt commented that the Namibian economy has been growing slowly, which has implications for the hostels as well as BIG.

## **ELCIN**

Mike reported meeting with Bishop Veikko Munyika and worshipping in Opuo and in the Himba area. The experience was stunning. His sermon was translated into the local language. "Everybody sings," he said. He described the beauty of the Himba people in their traditional dress, although Himba and others also wear jeans and t-shirts or business suits and African American style dresses with hats. He preached from the Gospel texts about the prodigious father and prodigal son.

The Wilkers met Pastor Emmanuel Ephete and visited Laurie Markers and the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF). The CCF has a relationship with our National Zoo and has a mission to introduce animals into new areas. Rachel Schmidt has a relationship with a tour company that was able to help the Wilkers. Mike also met Ivan, assistant director of Culture Ministry for the government. A Namibian national choir is attending an international choral festival in Paris and may consider coming to the U.S.

## **Namibia Companion Synods**

Mark Victorson reported on the companion synod conference call in July. Representatives of the four ELCA synods with relationships to Namibia (Metro D.C., SW Washington, NE Iowa and New Jersey) primarily discussed the SW Washington and Iowa Synod trip to Namibia around the timeframe of the LWF meeting in May. The group visited ELCIN projects including a Braille printing project that is helping train people blinded especially by AIDS in various occupations.

Mark Victorson and Kathy Tobias participated in the Namibia Companion Synods meeting in Chicago November 2-3.

## **Paulinum Seminary and Need for Pastors**

The traveling group also learned that Paulinum Seminary is going out of business, being folded into the theological curriculum of the University of Namibia.

Mike Wilker commented that the seminary was not discussed during his visit with Bishop //Gamxamub. There was discussion about the need to do better training pastors – possibly do more partnership with South Africa. There is currently a low clergy to lay ratio – 1 to 500.

Bob Allard said that he understands enrollment in the seminary is down because of lack of funding – monies are not available to enable students to go. Pastors have to depend on lay catechists and others. Money has not been there to keep the seminary in repair. Being in touch with the Bishop's office, especially Bishop Munyika, might be a way to learn more.

Bob talked about a bible school presentation on a superhero theme – talking about the heroes of Namibia and “Nakambale,” the upside-down basket man.

Despite everything the next generation continues to be baptized – 41 in one service. Pastor Mike will connect with the Namibia team on how to help.

### **Hostels, Gifts of Hope, etc.**

The Wilkers did not get to visit a specific hostel.

Cecily and Mietjie at the main central office are coordinators of the hostel program. Mike spoke with them a little and also met with Naomi Kisting, who is the main contact for ELCRN partnerships. She was interested in accountability re Gifts of Hope, etc. Situation is difficult in the hostels, which house up to 1500 kids at rural boarding schools. She emailed a report – hostels are in dire straits. When the group from SW Washington and New Jersey visited ELCRN, the Bishop asked them to help the hostels. This was the mission of the Friends of Namibian Children (FNC), but FNC has been disbanded.

### **C.. Slovakia – Nina and Ed Bartholome**

Plans were developed for observance of “2018 Companion Synod Sunday: Slovakia” to be held on January 28. Also in the plans are to get someone from Slovakia to come to the Youth Gathering. \$1000 has been earmarked from Living Faith. Gifts of Hope monies have been utilized to build a soccer field and renovate some historic churches. Bishop Graham noted that Bishop Klatik would like to visit the U.S.

### **MIDDLE EAST WORKING GROUP – Nathan Rich, Chairperson**

April 25 and 26, 2017, the annual ELCA Peace Not Walls Gathering was held in College Park, MD.

The Global Mission display at the 2017 Synod Assembly included items from the MEWG.

Bishop Graham participated in the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Joint Simulcast Worship Service between Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem and Washington National Cathedral on Saturday, December 16, 2017. The event was held in the cathedral's choir. Bishop Younan preached from Bethlehem.

### **ELCA WORLD HUNGER – Dorothy Sorrell**

It goes without saying that the needs of the world as they are related to hunger and issues surrounding these needs are increasing. Reaching out to all congregations in our Metro Washington, DC Synod has been the main goal this past year, to encourage all to participate in giving to ELCA World Hunger on an annual basis. An ELCA Report for FY 2017 indicated that less than half of our Synod congregations contributed to ELCA World Hunger.

The focus for 2018 will be that ELCA World Hunger giving is needed year round, as currently nearly 50% of giving to ELCA World Hunger occurs in the last couple months of the year. Resources include Valentine's Day, Easter and memorial cards. Lenten 40 Days of Giving opportunities, and Sunday School and Vacation Bible School materials.

An ELCA World Hunger Gathering was held on January 21-24, 2018, in Washington, D.C. for all World Hunger Coordinators. Coordinators visited the offices of U.S. Senators and Representatives to advocate for the Farm Bill, which will come before Congress for a vote later this year.

The 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering will launch a year-long "Global Farm Challenge" that has set a goal of \$500,000 to provide communities in the USA and around the world with livestock, seeds, tools and training. Gifts to the Challenge will be matched dollar for dollar making possible \$1 million for these efforts.

Five Metro DC Synod congregations and their partners received ELCA Domestic Hunger grants for 2017. They are Lord of Life, Fairfax; St. Luke, Silver Spring; Good Shepherd Housing, Good Shepherd, Woodbridge; ACTS, St. Matthew, Lake Ridge; and WIN, Luther Place, Reformation and First Trinity, all in Washington, DC. Grants totaling \$715, 100 were awarded to 268 ELCA congregations and their partners in 2017. The ELCA Domestic Hunger Grants process is changing, and applications will become available online in June 2018.

World Hunger displays were present at the Synodical Women's Organization meeting in May 2017 and the synod Assembly in June 2017, providing opportunity to talk to participants about World Hunger projects and educational materials for all ages. Everyone attending these events was given information about ELCA World Hunger and a prayer magnet.

## **GIFTS OF HOPE – Ruth Manchester**

### **Namibia**

ELCRN – Help for Hostels	\$ 4,171.43
Undesignated	103.90
ELCIN – Fund for Retired Pastors	1,348.35
Undesignated	103.90
Computer for Namibian Seminary	1,680
Undesignated	<u>103.90</u>
	<b>\$ 7,407.56</b>

### **El Salvador**

Salary Support for Pastors	\$ 1,148.35
Micro-Business Grant	2,546.40
Undesignated	<u>207.81</u>
	<b>\$ 3,902.56</b>

### **Slovakia**

Church Windows	\$ 1,700
Soccer Field	1,989
Undesignated	<u>207.81</u>
	<b>\$ 3,896.81</b>

## **UNSDG Project – Michael Kuchinsky and Dick Hoehn**

At the 2016 Synod Assembly, the Synod voted to “encourage the congregations of the synod to engage in thoughtful and prayerful study of the United Nation’s Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development Goals...and to inform the synod bishop annually on their progress...for the next five years.”

Since then, Pastors Kuchinsky and Hoehn have led one or more sessions at: All Saints, Bowie; Christ the Servant, Montgomery Village; Emmanuel, Bethesda; Epiphany, Burtonsville; Hope, College Park; Hope, Clinton; Holy Cross, Herndon; Living Faith, Silver Spring; Luther Place, DC; Peace, Waldorf; redeemer, McLean; Trinity, North Bethesda; and Lewinsville Presbyterian, McLean. The ELCA has provided a \$1,000 grant to assist printing brochures, and plans are being made for presentations at an October continuing education event at United Lutheran Seminary (Gettysburg and Philadelphia) and at additional congregations.

## **METRO DC SYNOD GLOBAL MISSION TEAM**

Pastor Bob Allard, Chairperson

Kelly Baugh & Phil Loar, Chairpersons El Salvador Companion Synod

Mark Victorson & Kathryn Tobias, Chairpersons Namibia Companion Synod

Nine & Ed Bartholme, Chairpersons Slovakia Companion Synod

Nathan Rich, Chair Middle East Working Group

Dorothy Sorrell, Chair ELCA World Hunger Appeal

Ruth Manchester, Gifts of Hope

Michael Kuchinsky & Dick Hoehn, UNSDG Project

Elijah Mwitanti

Rachel Schmidt

Michael Wilker