

**Global Mission Committee
Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod
Annual Report for 2019**

To all who read this report, Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

The Global Mission Committee of the synod serves a coordinating ministry, facilitating the work of individuals and groups with varied interests and diverse passions. And the committee serves an advocating ministry, holding before the synod opportunities to know and support brothers and sisters all over this country and far beyond its borders. Some members of the Global Mission Committee have served for years. Others are new in their committee commitments. Together the members of the committee are proud and happy to represent the whole synod in addressing the world at large, sharing resources, building relationships, praying and working for the Kingdom of God in its broadest extension.

The best-known work of the Global Mission Committee is its role supporting the synod's **Companion Synod Teams**. The ELCA helps local synods like ours establish relationships with Lutheran church bodies around the world. We relate to the Lutherans in Slovakia, in El Salvador, and in Namibia. One of our companion synod teams cares for each of these relationships, and the circumstances involved vary enormously. For example, El Salvador is a short direct flight from Washington and the Lutheran church there is a recent tiny minority in a deeply troubled country. Slovakia is a longer flight, and not direct, but the Lutheran community there goes back to Luther's own time and the country is a vacation destination for many. It takes two days to get to Namibia, a large nation in southwest Africa in much of which everyone is Lutheran.

With the **Middle East Working Group**, a sub-unit of the Global Mission Committee that connects the synod with Lutherans in Palestine, the companion synod teams are struggling at the moment to learn what kind of help and support is needed from them. An ELCA consultation planned for this spring between companion synod teams like ours and all the Lutheran churches of southern Africa had to be cancelled. International travel is all but impossible right now. And financial pressure on Lutherans in developing countries means that it is not easy for our overseas companions to staff offices with which our team can be in contact. In the near future the synod's companion synod teams will discuss using their reserve funds, mostly saved for mission trips, as direct financial support for the churches in Namibia and El Salvador. This support may be more helpful than our physical presence just now.

The committee's insight into the state of affairs across the world is greatly helped by the **Sustainable Development Goals Team**. This team has led discussions and classes throughout the synod (and in ecumenical partner churches, too), explaining the United Nations "Sustainable Development Goals" and the programs that implement them. For the last several years, living into the Sustainable Development Goals had helped the nations of the world improve health and economic outcomes for millions of people. Sadly, the pandemic, with the financial disruptions it causes, threatens to undo the recent progress. The situation calls on rich nations like ours to redouble their efforts to aid the poorest ones.

The **World Hunger Appeal Team** of the committee advocates for the kind of financial assistance that is called for urgently now. The generosity of congregations and individuals, with the enthusiasm and the persistence of this team, make our synod one of the ELCA's World Hunger Appeal leaders. A portion of the money raised comes back into our synod (St. Luke in Silver Spring is one synod recipient of a World Hunger grant). With new World Hunger leadership in the ELCA churchwide offices this team looks forward to new ideas and new relationships of trust and affection with partners in Chicago.

And this seems to be the appropriate place to acknowledge that several of the committee's teams benefit from the **Gifts of Hope** campaign. Through Gifts of Hope members and friends of the synod have helped raise money that provides especially for the ministries of the companion synod teams.

Of course, the work represented here is only a part of the synod's ministry around the world. Congregations have relationships with Lutheran communities, with ecumenical and inter-faith partners, and with non-governmental organizations in lots of places. Individuals also have international relationships, which may grow from public service or military service somewhere long ago. The Global Mission Committee gratefully acknowledges these relationships and encourages them. In the year ahead the committee intends to conduct a "Global Mission Survey" across the synod to assess the different forms of international work which members of the synod support with energy, money, and prayer.

Finally, as this report has already indicated, the work of the Global Mission Committee has become much more difficult in recently. The pandemic has made travel difficult for members of the committee, as it has for our global colleagues. The pandemic has thrown companions into financial distress and reversed years of progress toward global justice and equity. The mood in our country has made those of us interested in global relationships feel threatened and small, just at a time when our points of view are perhaps most needed in the culture at large.

But we do not serve as those without hope. The Church of our Lord Jesus is spread throughout the world. Each of us is part of a great cloud of witnesses which extends in space as it does in time. We do not grow weary in our work and we have noble examples to follow. The Rev. Robert Allard, whose leadership of the Global Ministry Committee ended this year, is a great example to all of us. Curious, kind, wise, and strong, Bob had friends all over the synod and all over the world. We miss him, but we're glad he could trust the rest of us enough to retire after more years as committee chair than we could count. We trust that he and Elsa will keep an eye on us. We trust that God will be glorified in what we do.

You may have more information about the committee's work, be placed on our email list, or join us in almost any capacity by contacting the current committee chair,

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