

Global Mission Updates

GUYANA/SURINAME

The South American countries of Guyana and Suriname not only share a border and a common strong Lutheran heritage, but are joined in one sub-committee of the Global

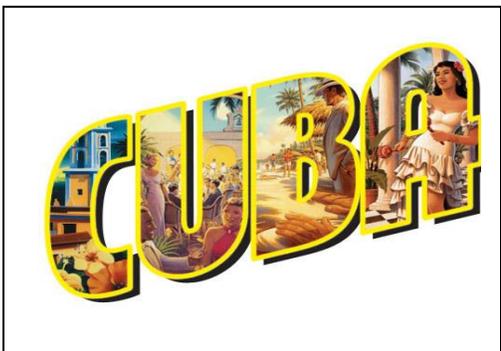
Mission Committee that has been headed up by Pr. Tom Unrath for the last 4 years. Pr. Unrath has decided to step down from this responsibility due to health issues and is handing over the reins to Pr. Kit Robison of Miami Springs, FL. To help with the transition, the 2 pastors are currently traveling together, with 4 others (Marcee Strickland, Chris Klafs, Steve and Leandra Rizzo) from the Florida Bahamas Synod, visiting Lutheran churches and meeting clergy and deacons in Suriname and Guyana, and attending the annual convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Guyana (ELCG) in New Amsterdam, Guyana. Pr. Robison, a former ELCA missionary to Ecuador, is excited about this opportunity to become more involved with Global Mission in the FB Synod.

The group flew out of Miami on April 24th and will be returning to the US on May 5th. Their “immersion” visit began in Suriname where they’ve been hosted by the Lutheran clergy there, including Pr. Ken Kross and the recently ordained, Pr. Danielle Dokmann. On Friday they crossed over the border to Guyana and are attending the annual convention of the ELCG. A full story and photos will be submitted by Steve Rizzo when they return and will be posted on the Synod website and included in the next issue of this newsletter.

WELCA Synodical Women’s Organization (SWO) continues relationship with ELCG Women’s Group

Judge Sandra Kurtzious, Vice President of the ELCG, has been asking for Leadership Training for the women’s groups of the Lutheran churches in Guyana. When Marcee Strickland decided to go on this trip to Suriname and Guyana, GMC Chairperson PJ May asked her to consider doing a workshop for the women during the convention meeting time. Sandra, PJ, and Marcee conversed via “WhatsApp” and coordinated the 2 workshops that Marcee is scheduled to lead on Sunday afternoon and Monday morning. A full report and pictures are forthcoming!!

The exchange and sharing of resources are important activities that deepen our understanding and appreciation of our respective cultures and church mission work. The Global Mission Committee is grateful for the commitment of the SWO in pursuing and supporting these opportunities.



The Cuba Team has held several phone conference meetings to review the status of La Finca (the Farm), the expense reports and productivity reports of the past year, and the projected costs and productivity for the coming year. Continuing support of La Finca is being carefully considered, especially in light of tighter restrictions Cuba has placed on religious visas and recent developments throughout the Lutheran church in Cuba.

ELCA Global Mission is providing additional support and guidance in these matters.



HAITI

ELH Clergy with FB Synod Global Mission members and Rev. Dr. Raquel Rodriguez meet in Port au Prince, Haiti April 4-8, 2017.



FB Synod GMC Chair PJ May, Haiti Task Force Chair Pr. Steve Winemiller, Assistant to the Bishop, Pr. Jaime Dubon and Haiti Consultant Jim Noss, recently went to Haiti to strengthen relationships and have conversation about the ongoing partnership between the synod and the ELH (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Haiti). Pr. Anna Figuero and Pr. Steve Winemiller's previous trip just a few weeks before laid the foundation for being able to move through the agenda with a clear vision of how the ELH wants to position itself for the future.

Dr. Raquel Rodriguez, from the ELCA Division for Global Mission, facilitated the agenda and conversations that allowed the ELH to share the context of their ministry on their first day of meetings. The challenges of daily life in Haiti are enormous and widespread and yet, the ELH continues, with God's help and guidance, to offer hope and healing for their communities. On the second day, attendees from the US shared the realities of the ELCA, the FB Synod, and the Global Mission Committee. The afternoon was spent coming together and developing a mutual action plan and vision of accompaniment for the priorities identified by the ELH.

These project plans included an immediate desire for funding for seeds, plants and farming tools as the second phase of the emergency response from Hurricane Matthew. The first phase involved funding for food and immediate supplies needed in December. There is more work being done around this project proposal, but the need for seeds before the end of the planting season is significant. As a result of the meeting and Project Concept Note submitted by the ELH, a second grant of \$25,000 was sent to Haiti the week before Easter to be used for seeds, plants, and small farm implements in the areas of Les Cayes and Jean Rabel – which were hardest hit by Hurricane Matthew. The money came from ELCA Disaster Relief money sent to the synod, and money donated by individuals and congregations of the FB Synod for disaster relief. Pr. Livenson just confirmed on Monday, May 1st, that the first distribution of seeds has been completed though the Les Cayes area has been hard hit with heavy rains and flooding again, as the rainy season has commenced.

In additional conversations, Dr. Raquel brought up the status of the compound at Gressier which was built with ELCA Disaster Relief monies and has not been used to its original potential. The ELH presented new

information showing that the school building is being used by Pr. Livenson and his congregation for worship space. Members of the congregation are working to keep the grounds clear and the goats that used to wander the grounds are now penned up.



In addition, a family of the congregation is being allowed to live in one of the guest houses in exchange for providing security at the compound. Lastly, Pr. Livenson shared the possibility of renter for the school and office building.

After 2 days of meetings, the FB Synod delegation drove to Jacmel to view the work of a mission group from St. Andrew’s Lutheran Church, Eden Prairie, MN. Over a period of 7 years, “Seeds of Support” has built a water tower, installed solar panels, built an outdoor covered area for worship and meetings, and most recently, an additional building that houses a portable machine for making peanut butter, and now, a bread bakery.



Pr. Livenson, President of the ELH, pictured with new double oven bread bakers!
Above – building constructed by Seeds of Support, St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Eden Prairie, MN.

Overall, the visit to Haiti was conversation, visioning and gather with leaders who have ongoing partnership between What a joy it has been to brothers and sisters in the the Spirit has used the relationships provided by the Florida-Bahamas synod to the ministry of the Eglise



a rich time of fellowship, planning. It was a joy to become friends due to the the church and the synod. walk alongside these Gospel, and see the way resources and congregations in the strengthen and support Lutherienne d’Haiti.

Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGMs)

Please be sure to check out the Synod website and the YAGM section to read about the three YAGMs from the Florida Bahamas Synod!

Becca Williams (St. Stephen, Tallahassee) is serving in England, Ben Smith (Vero Beach) is in Madagascar. Kyle Marie Jacobsen grew up in Panama City, FL and entered the YAGM program through Redeemer Lutheran Church and the Campus Ministry program at Georgia Tech. Kyle is serving in Cambodia.

Please include these young people in your devotions and prayers for a safe and meaningful experience, especially in these last months of their year of service when they will be completing their programs, saying tearful good-byes to host families and friends and preparing for re-entry to the American culture. ***Consider contacting them on their return and inviting them to speak with your congregation or youth group as they will be sure to have inspiring stories to share!***

Contacts for Global Mission

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|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
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Please submit stories/articles/photos to PJ May for July issue by June 15th