

ELCA International Consultation for Latin America and the Caribbean



Pictured left are representatives from The Florida-Bahamas' Synod Global Mission Table and some of our Companion Church representatives who attended the recent ELCA International Consultation for Latin America and the Caribbean in Antigua, Guatemala.

The conference attendees participated in activities and presentations around the themes of Gender Justice and Migration and also had time in their Companion Synod-Church groups to share and plan mutual mission and ministry priorities for the next three years. *Thank you* to our hosts from the Lutheran churches in Guatemala who did a fabulous job!

From L to R – Br. Leendert Darnoud – Suriname; Jim Noss, Special Consultant to Haiti; Pr. Khader El-Yateem, Asst. to Bishop- FB Synod; Pr. Russell Meyer, Chair of the Cuba Team; PJ May, Chair of the Global Mission Table; Rev. Dr. Oral Thomas, Acting President of the UTCWI in Kingston, Jamaica; Pr. Shirley Jaundoo – Guyana; and the Rev. Jaime Dubon, Director of the Latin America-Caribbean Desk for the ELCA.

Report of Guyana (ELCG)-Suriname (ELKS) Consultation Visit

Led by Pr. Jaime Dubon and Paulina Dasse of the Global Mission Desk at Churchwide, Pr. Khader El-Yateem, Marcee Wilkes (Chair of the Guyana-Suriname Team) and PJ May met with both the ELCG Executive Council in Georgetown, Guyana and then traveled onto Paramaribo, Suriname for meetings with the ELKS. In Georgetown, the group was joined by Pr. Riitta Hepomaki, Asst. to the Bishop in the Eastern Canadian Synod (which is also a companion synod to the ELCG) and Synod Vice President Laurie Knott.



Our meeting agenda with the ELCG Executive Council included sharing current ministry contexts and challenges, along with creating a timeline of significant events in the relationship between the ELCG, FB Synod, and Canadian Lutheran Church – Eastern Synod.

Commitments for the future include quarterly conference calls between the 3 church bodies and the ELCA Global Mission desk. The ELCG is looking for clergy who might be interested in serving 3-6 months in Guyana to help with a significant clergy shortage.

In Suriname we met with the ELKS Church Board and heard of their strategic plans and how they are implementing changes in the church organization. They are eager to learn more about evangelizing, training committee volunteers, liturgy and worship, and church administration. They have asked to come to visit the FB Synod in the fall of 2020. Dates and travel itinerary are TBD. It was exciting to hear how they are planning for the future.



Ruth House Project



The ELKS has a Senior Housing Ministry behind the Maarten Luther Kerk in Paramaribo. They have low-income housing available for women. One of the houses – Ruth House – needs renovation work done to make it a suitable gathering place for the women to socialize and have Bible study. The ELKS Board has submitted a Project Concept Note (PCN) to the Guyana-Suriname Team and the Global Mission Table that was recently approved. The project will cost about \$1200 USD.

HAITI IN CRISIS

The crisis in Haiti has been disrupting the daily lives of Haitians for several months now. Schools are just now re-opening this month. Inflation continues to make products out of reach for most Haitians, basic utilities are inconsistent or non-existent, travel is difficult and not always safe, and the government is not functioning. Despite the difficulties, our special consultant to the ELH, Jim Noss, traveled to Haiti for 10 days in October and met with Pr. Livenson to work on our mutual goal of *increasing the capacity* of the ELH. This means we are focusing on creating and sustaining organizational structures and processes that will help the church be better able to meet the requirements of the ELCA for applying and receiving grants. To that end, Jim showed up with 2 new computers and installed Quick Books and recorded all the receipts for this year to get the ELH up to date and started with an accounting system. These seemingly small and simple steps for us, are extremely challenging to accomplish in the current setting in Haiti.

The Haiti Team was pleased to learn that the application for the final and 3rd year of the TiM Grant was approved. Part of this grant pays for Internet for Pr. Livenson and phone access between the clergy who are scattered around the country and try to provide support for each other as best they can. Unfortunately they have not been able to meet in person for quite some time due to fuel shortages and protests blocking the roads.

Elections are scheduled to take place in January 2020. Please continue to lift up Haiti and the ELH in your prayers for peace, and a functioning government that can help its citizens.

CUBA ACCOMPANIMENT TRIP AN “accompaniment” visit was made the first week in December in order for Bishop Pedro Suarez to meet with Bishop Ismael Laborde of the United Evangelical Church – Lutheran Synod (UEC-LS), in the Santiago area. Pr. Meyer and Rev. Khader El-Yateem also went along with Beverly and Pr. George Cruz-Martinez, Pr. Katy Carroll, Pr. Pam O’Donnell, Hannah Baradon, PJ May, Linda Hegdal, Pr. Keith Spencer, and Deacons Jeanine Romano and Aura Suarez. The group visited a number of churches in Santiago and Guantanamo along with visiting the childhood farm of Fidel Castro in Biran, a pharmaceutical company, and the Santa Ifigenia cemetery where many of the Cuban martyrs are buried, including Fidel Castro. They attended several worship services, received presentations from the adult and youth members through song and interpretive dance, shared fellowship, and learned much about the context and ministries of the UEC-LS.



Currently there is a food and fuel shortage in Cuba and so initial plans had to be adjusted and the group was not able to visit Havana on this trip. However, and despite this reality, the lodgings at the Synod House were comfortable and they were lavished with love and feasted on fabulous food everywhere they went. They were witnesses to what the Holy Spirit is doing in and among and with the people of Santiago and Guantanamo.

At the end of the visit, Bishop Suarez announced that he will be writing an Memorandum of Understanding and seeking approval from the Synod Council to formalize our Companion Synod-Companion Church relationship with the UEC-LS. In the meantime, the members of the group were encouraged to share with others about their experience in Cuba and contact their legislators to advocate for ending the embargo.

**END THE
EMBARGO**

Bishops Pedro Suarez and Ismael Laborde in front of the bus used for transporting the group that traveled to Santiago, Cuba in early December.



JAMAICA TEAM

The Jamaica Team is working on several initiatives as this relationship continues to deepen with the seminary.

- A Classroom Renovation project was approved for support at the October meeting of the Global Mission Table. Funding for the \$10,000 project has been delayed until 2020 – however, with help from the Space Coast Conference congregations and a Synod-wide appeal in Lent, it is hoped the project may be able to be completed before the end of the spring semester.
- The Jamaica Team has been invited to attend the May 20 Graduation ceremonies and a small group is considering going.
- Dr. Thomas and others who attended the Consultation in Guatemala are looking into developing a Gender Justice Symposium at the seminary as a follow-up to the presentations that were done there. The seminary is also looking to add Gender Justice to its curriculum.

Please keep in prayer, Lee Setzer, our YAGM serving in Madagascar, who left the YAGM program and returned to the states for personal reasons.



Brad Giordano
Serving in Madagascar



Macey Kennedy
Serving in Australia



Sarah Henning
Serving in Mexico



Kaitlyn "Zig" Ziegelmaier
Serving in Senegal

Please lift up these YAGMs in prayer as embark on a life-changing journey in service to the church for one year. Check the FB Synod website to sign up for their blogs and postings throughout the year.



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