



Florida-Bahamas Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Global Mission Table

News / Noticias / Nouvèl

Summer 2021 — Issue #20

Read about how Global Mission makes a difference

Global Mission Makes a Difference! This is the theme for the Summer 2021 newsletter of the Global Mission Table. Global Mission makes a difference in the lives of our companions and in the lives of members of the Florida-Bahamas Synod. We see God in action as diverse peoples are brought together as one body in Christ to proclaim the Gospel and help build a world of justice and peace.

Featured in this issue are spotlights on two of our Companion Team leaders — Marcee Wilkes, who leads the Guyana/Suriname Team, and the Rev. Dr. Russell

Meyer, who leads the synod's partnership with Cuba. Learn what they do and how Global Mission makes a difference in their lives. (Our Haiti and Jamaica team leaders will be spotlighted in the next newsletter.)

Here, too, you can read news from our companions. Throughout the pandemic, we have stayed in touch, continuing to support each other.

Finally, prayerfully consider how you would like to be involved!

— **Rev. Kathryn Carroll, chair,**
Florida-Bahamas Synod Global Mission Table

Synod Assembly will include video of Global Mission ministry

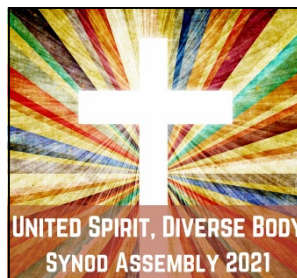
Anyone who's been to a Florida-Bahamas Synod Assembly in recent years will no doubt recall seeing -- and probably stopping by -- the actual tables of the Global Mission Table in the Connections Café marketplace. There was always something interesting going on there.

The presence of the Global Mission will be felt again at this year's assembly, but in a different way.

Because of Covid-19 concerns, the decision was made not to have a marketplace this year. That's the sad news. The glad news is that Global Mission has been invited to have a three-minute video presentation at an assembly plenary session highlighting our work -- and, of course, we have accepted the invitation.

The assembly will be held in person Friday to Sunday, September 17-19, at the Embassy Suites in Kissimmee, where such gatherings have been held several times before. Its theme is especially meaningful for Global Mission, "United Spirit, Diverse Body." The theme is drawn from 1 Corinthians 12:12-14: *Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one spirit so as to form one body — whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free -- and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.*

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CUBA REPORT

Churches staying in touch at time of dire shortages

Rev. Dr. Russell Meyer Team Leader

The Florida-Bahamas Synod is in partnership with the Lutheran Church in Santiago de Cuba (*Iglesia Evangélica Unida-Sínodo Luterano, IEU*) and maintains close communication through social media and virtual meetings. Rev. Ismael Laborde, who had been bishop of the church, continues to be our primary contact. However, he stepped down from the role of bishop this spring and was succeeded by Bishop Virgen Laborde, his sister, who is assisted by Pastora Marta Romero.

Cuba is facing the most acute shortage of food, medication and

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SPOTLIGHT ON MARCEE WILKES, GUYANA/SURINAME TEAM LEADER

Touching lives far beyond the people we meet

Marcee Wilkes, an active member of Messiah Lutheran Church in Panama City, leads the synod partnerships with the neighboring countries of Guyana and Suriname. She became involved in Global Mission and World Hunger after retiring from a career in teaching.



Marcee Wilkes

What difference does Global Mission make in your life and the lives of others?

As a member of a congregation, I found myself sitting in the pew wanting to help, yet didn't know what to do other than designate an offering.

I always had a heart for connecting with people in other countries. In fact, part of the reason I retired from teaching was to go out into the world to see what I could do for the rest of God's people.

By being on the Global Mission Table and being a leader, I get to serve God in ways I couldn't otherwise. Further, I have grown in my understanding and connection with people living in completely different contexts.

Serving in Global Mission, for me, provides the oppor-



Marcee Wilkes (in pink) at the 2019 Synod Assembly with, from left, Pastor Leroy Nicholson of Guyana, Sandra Kurtzious of Guyana and Reva Karg of Suriname.

tunity to live the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself in a profound and expansive way. Every visit we make. . . every dollar we give. . . every experience we have. . . it multiplies. Lives are touched through Global Mission far beyond just the people we meet.

Our companionship expresses the greatness of God's love both to me and to our partners. I am so thankful that I get to serve God in Global Mission. It is truly love in action, for all God's people.

JAMAICA REPORT

UTCWI course has global appeal

Judith Olson, Jamaica Team Leader

United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI), our companion in Kingston, Jamaica, recently completed an online short course (nine evening classes) titled Gender and Leadership in Church and Society. The 25 participants from around the globe included two from the Florida-Bahamas Synod.

Issues impacting the place of women in society today — barriers, challenges, opportunities and hopes — were explored from a global perspective. Each class was led by a different professor, with virtual lectures from Argentina to Mexico to the United States to Jamaica.

Our synod helped to make this global classroom possible through its funding of technological advances.

The gifts of UTCWI and the Florida-Bahamas Synod are making a difference.



FLORIDA-BAHAMAS SYNOD GLOBAL MISSION TABLE NEWS/NOTICIAS/NOUVÈL

The Global Mission Table of the Florida-Bahamas Synod seeks to ignite and empower its congregations in boldly sharing Christ, passionately making disciples and faithfully doing justice through accompaniment with our companion relationships. Through these partnerships, we strive to encourage one another in faith through relationships, education, advocacy and service in witness to God's love.

The Rev. Katie Carroll,
Global Mission Table Chair
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SPOTLIGHT ON REV. DR. RUSSELL MEYER, CUBA TEAM LEADER

Learning via first-person stories how God is at work

Rev. Meyer is serving as interim pastor at St. John's Lutheran Church in Jacksonville and leads the synod's growing relationship with the Lutheran Church in Santiago de Cuba (the *Iglesia Evangélica Unida-Sínodo Luterano*). Alongside participating in a variety of larger church initiatives, he also is executive director of the Florida Council of Churches. Rev. Meyer has been involved in Global Mission work for many years.

What difference does Global Mission make in your life and the lives of others?

Until I became involved in Global Mission, my only window on the world was the media of the United States. I didn't have a means of seeing, knowing, understanding and loving what was beyond our shores.



Rev. Russell Meyer

Through Global Mission, I have opportunities to see the world from outside the perspective of America. The reality is, we are now not even 5 percent of the world's population. It is vital that we appreciate and learn, through first-person stories in other countries, how God is at work in other contexts. Through listening and loving our global partners, we are able to hear their testimony of what Jesus has done for them from where they are. My understanding of baptism is the basis for this perspective: My life is now about walking with others, as they walk with me.

Our Global Mission work helps our companions to know that their stories are not told from the perspective of others, and they are not treated as leftovers. The spirit of Jesus is alive in their country and their churches, just as it is alive in our churches and country.

The spirit of Jesus is where our hope lies on both sides, together. Without this mutuality, one of us will see the world through a hegemonic narrative, and the other will see itself as a victim.

CUBA REPORT

Plan is to send Covid relief funds

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other basic resources since the "Special Period" after the fall of the Soviet Union. Due to this as well as other crises, there was tension in the streets of Cuba's cities during July, as well as demonstrations in Florida and elsewhere.

Rev. Meyer, our Cuba Team leader, reminds us that as we walk with our brothers and sisters in the Lutheran Church in Cuba, we must listen to their stories. They are asking for assistance in this time of profound need. While the political

and economic challenges and disagreements persist, we are called to feed others as Jesus did.

The Florida-Bahamas Synod is making efforts to send a Covid-19 financial relief gift to the IEU to help meet the needs of our companions.



A Lutheran church gathering in Cuba for mutual support in the midst of the spread of Covid-19.



From left: then-Bishop Ismael Laborde, current Bishop Virgen Laborde, Pastora Marta Romero.

The funds will be used primarily for food and personal hygiene supplies. We will continue to be in daily contact with the IEU and pray for peaceful and just solutions to the crises Cuba faces.

Our partnership is making a difference as we support and learn from each other.

HAITI REPORT

Solar panels, funds for food relief at a time of crisis

Alonzo Batson Haiti Team Leader

After months of political turmoil and unrest in the streets, Haiti suffered a devastating blow when President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated in his home on July 7. The tragedy brought international attention to the country and the profound challenges that lie ahead as civil order is restored.

A new prime minister has been named, yet the situation is fragile. Further, people are facing severe poverty, hunger and lack of access to basic human services.

Our Haiti Team maintains close touch with Pastor Livenson Lauvanus, who leads the Lutheran Church of Haiti (*LEglise Luthérienne d’Haiti*, ELH). Church leaders are taking precautions in order to keep themselves and their families safe, avoiding areas in which violence tends to erupt.

A project launched in 2019 that was completed this spring is the installation of solar panels on the roof of the Lutheran Center, the church headquarters, in the city of Gressier. Thus far, the panels are

providing power for the church office and for one of the guest houses in the complex.

In late July, \$10,000 was sent to ELH for its food relief program. Congregations throughout the country will receive funds from which to secure food from local sources. In this time of profound need, the ELH has indicated that this is the most

effective way to build the community.

Further, we stay closely connected through prayer. Together with the ELH, we have prayed the words of Psalm 46: *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*

Sharing prayers and resources is making a difference.



Solar panels (right) and batteries (above) installed at the Church Center in Gressier provide power for the office and a guest house.



Rev. Khader El-Yateem

What are your thoughts about Global Mission?

Is the Spirit stirring you to delve more deeply into Global Mission? Perhaps you would like to share your thoughts about something you read in this newsletter, or maybe you would like to get involved. To begin that conversation, contact Rev. Katie Carroll, chair of the Global Mission Table, at revkhc@gmail.com, or Rev. Khader El-Yateem, Director for Evangelical Mission/Assistant to the Bishop, at khadere@fbsynod.org.



Rev. Katie Carroll

SURINAME REPORT

Companions fund shelter for domestic violence survivors

Marcee Wilkes
Guyana/Suriname
Team Leader

This spring, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Suriname (*Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Suriname*, ELKS) partnered with the Florida-Bahamas Synod (providing \$3,000) and the ELCA churchwide expression (providing \$3,500) for a new project described below by Rev. Danielle Dokman of ELKS:

"With the pandemic, the cases of domestic violence in Suriname have become more common and severe. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Suriname believes it is part of our calling as the people of God in Suriname to work toward a community without violence, in particularly domestic violence. In light of this, we became involved with a shelter for women who have suffered abuse at the hands of their partners. It is called STICRIS, which stands for *Stichting Tehuisvoor Vrouwen in Crisis Situaties* (Home for Women in Crisis Foundation)."

"With the help of the ELCA Service and Justice Area and the Florida-Bahamas Synod, we are sponsoring two rooms for one year. Here, women and their children find a place to rest, get professional help to deal with their trauma, and take the initial step in the recovery proc-

ess. Each family can stay up to three months, and then they are referred to other organizations with programs that can further facilitate their journey to mental and physical health.

"The church still has a long way to go with understanding and identifying the signs of domestic violence. In noticing this gap, we are also organizing a seminar on domestic violence for church leaders and other congregations in October 2021. This, we hope, will enable the church better to fulfill its calling in our communities. We thank the ELCA, which has accompanied us through Service and Justice, and the Florida-Bahamas Synod, for your continual support."

Note: Special thanks goes to St. Mark By the Sea Lutheran Church of Palm Coast. The congregation has become excited about Global Mission and provided significant support for this new project. Such enthusi-



The exterior of the STICRIS shelter facility (top) and one of the rooms (above) where women can stay with their children for up to three months while getting support to deal with the trauma of domestic violence.

asm ignites a congregation, just as it provides funding for vital ministry.

The gifts given by ELKS, the ELCA and the Florida-Bahamas Synod are making a difference.

Help unlock
 the door
 to learning
 for our
 companions

An area of need and source of empowerment for all five synod companions is funding for education. In order to build leaders in the church who will continue to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Global Mission Table has created the **Global Mission Scholarship Fund**. While Global Mission has long champi-

oned educational support, this fund offers the opportunity to give specifically to scholarships. Those with a passion for education will find the fund an effective avenue for donating, knowing that their gifts will support students with a thirst for learning. To learn more, contact Pastor Katie Carroll at revkhc@gmail.com.



All ELCA synods have companion relationships

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America website, www.elca.org, states: "Companion synod relationships of the ELCA connect Lutheran churches throughout the world with ELCA synods and congregations. These relationships are concrete expressions of the communion and fellowship with the more than 140 Lutheran member churches of The Lutheran World Federation. Each of the 65 synods has at least one international church companion and many have additional relationships."

With its companions in Cuba, Guyana, Haiti, Suriname and the United Theological College seminary in Jamaica, the Florida-Bahamas Synod follows the ELCA accompaniment model embracing commitment to these values:

MUTUALITY — relationships that receive one another's gifts and expertise

INCLUSIVITY — relationships addressing exclusion in communities

VULNERABILITY — relationships open to Christ's transformation and reconciliation

EMPOWERMENT — relationships building one another's strengths and capacity for God's mission

SUSTAINABILITY — relationships of accountability that steward God's given gifts for the present and future.

As companions, we seek to learn from each other and grow together in our commitment and zeal to share the good news of Jesus Christ. We develop projects attuned to the context and needs articulated by our companions.

It's easy to host a Global Mission Sunday event!

If you would like to build excitement for Global Mission in your faith community, here's how to do it:

Contact the Rev. Katie Carroll, and she will help you craft a Global Mission Sunday (or another time of the week) just right for your congregation or group. She can provide information, resources and ideas — and what's more, she or another Global Mission leader can visit your congregation and share the story in person.

E-mail Pastor Katie at revkhc@gmail.com, or text or call her at 305-505-1656.

Companions will not be at assembly

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Because of Covid-19 it will not be possible for representatives of our companion churches to be present for this year's assembly. They are unable to travel to the United States, Pastor Katie Carroll, Global Mission Table chair, states, "as vaccines are much more limited in our companion countries than here."

Assembly registration is open now. For details, visit the synod website, www.fbsynod.com. Visitors and other non-voting members are welcome to register to attend the assembly but will not have access to the plenary sessions, where seating will reflect social distancing. Instead they will be seated in another room with video coverage of the proceedings.