



New Global Mission Scholarship Fund is ready to grow

Education opens minds, brings greater knowledge and understanding, and empowers us as we do God's work with our hands. So, it makes sense that the Global Mission Table would want to grow this area of partnership with our Companions.

The Global Mission Scholarship Fund, introduced in the summer newsletter, is established and ready to grow! Its purpose is to deepen our partnership with our Companions by providing them financial support for continuing education. Through this support, Global Mission hopes to empower and strengthen leaders for the sake of the gospel, bringing God's healing and hope to congregations, communities and the world.

As an account of the Global Mission Table, the fund is dedicated to providing money for continuing education within our Companions: Cuba, Guyana, Haiti, Suriname and the United Theological College of the West Indies in Jamaica. Donors with a passion for education can donate to the fund by either designating their gift to a particular Companion, or allowing it to be used by any of the five.

A Companion applies for funds by submitting a Scholarship Concept Note. The SCN requires the Companion to specify, among other things, (a) the intended purpose of the funding, (b) a plan for allocating the funds and evaluating individual recipients of the scholarship, (c) the educational and ministry goals the scholarship will support, and (d) how the scholarship recipients also contribute to funding their education.

Following the Global Mission accompaniment value of empowerment, the Companions themselves will determine the ultimate recipients of the scholarships,

whether awarded for pastoral leadership development, healthcare training, vocational apprenticeship or something else. It's key that our Companions decide how the scholarship money will best grow their entity. They will provide an evaluation and/or description of the results of the education supported by the scholarships.

A Global Mission Scholarship Team, comprising the GMT chair, a team member from each of the five Com-

THROUGH THIS SUPPORT, GLOBAL MISSION HOPES TO EMPOWER AND STRENGTHEN LEADERS FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL.

panions, and a representative from the Bishop's staff, will make funding recommendations to the Global Mission Table, which will vote to ratify disbursements from the fund. The Scholarship Team will meet on an as-needed basis.

Our partners in Jamaica and Suriname have already indicated an interest in applying for scholarship money, once the fund has more robust resources. You and/or your congregation are encouraged to make a donation — no gift is too small!

To do so, go to the synod website, fbsynod.com, click on the "donate now" prompt, and scroll down to Global Mission Special Projects. Indicate your gift is for the GMT Scholarship Fund and whether you want it to go to a particular Companion. Or you can send a check with the same information to the synod at 3838 W Cypress St, Tampa FL 33607.

Rafael van Ommeren, a young member of the Lutheran Church in Suriname, is the only Lutheran student at the United Theological College of the West Indies in Jamaica. Lutheran World Information interviewed him for its online publication of The Lutheran World Federation. Read excerpts on page 6.



Visits iffy due to Covid

The combination of Covid and socio-political events continues to make planning for travel to visit our Companions difficult. In Haiti, the realities of earthquake recovery, street violence, government unrest and gas shortages add to the lag in vaccination rates.

Statistics are hard to come by, given the number of suspected unreported cases of the virus; however, Our World on Data states the

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SPOTLIGHT ON JUDITH OLSEN, JAMAICA TEAM LEADER

Synod mission trip was unexpected, and life-changing

When my husband and I signed up for a synod trip to Jamaica a few years ago, we thought it would be a work group — we were ready to paint something or build something or provide some other service. What we took part in was a Global Mission accompaniment trip to the United Theological College of the West Indies. It was an experience that changed our world view.

The trip was not project focused; it was all about building relationships. We met amazing people of faith who had started this theological program. We attended classes, we learned about Jamaican culture, we heard stories of colonialism and eventual independence. We saw sights. We opened our eyes, our minds and our hearts. We came back home changed!

Through being part of Global Mission, we are part of something larger than our own stories. We are part of what the ELCA is involved in throughout the world. While my focus remains primarily on Jamaica, I am aware that the ELCA has more than 120 Companion relationships with Lutheran churches around the globe.

When I read stories in the news about other countries now, rather than think simply that “it’s not happening here,” I feel connected to them. Moved by the fact that



Judith Olsen

Global Mission brings you one step closer — you can see the impact our Companion relationships can have, and feel joy. I love being active through my local congregation and will continue this involvement.

Getting involved in Global Mission is not an either/or proposition; it’s both/and. In fact, involvement beyond the church walls here at home energizes my involvement in my congregation! I have the chance to share ideas and thoughts, and to grow together with people throughout the synod and beyond.

we are one human family; we are called to have compassion and concern. We are to see all God’s children as our sisters and brothers, and to be helpers. That’s what Jesus wants.

It’s wonderful to purchase a goat or a chicken for another country through the ELCA Good Gifts program, and it does make a difference. But involvement in

Cuba is a role model for effective response to the Covid pandemic

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portion of fully vaccinated citizens in Haiti remains under 1 percent. Congregations there still gather in person on a local basis.

Our Companions in Suriname and Guyana have been impacted by the virus, and our partner in Suriname has reported a number of grieving families in their congregations. Gatherings remain modest in size. Our World on Data says Suriname’s vaccination rate is over 36 percent and Guyana’s is nearly 34 percent.

A declining infection trend is encouraging in Jamaica, although the vaccination rate remains fairly low. Classes at the United Theological College of the West Indies are continuing in both virtual and in-person formats.

The success story on Covid vaccinations in the Caribbean and beyond has been Cuba. The country developed its own vaccines and was the first in the world to vaccinate children. The Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective reports Cuba has one of the lowest Covid death rates

in the world and a vaccination rate of almost 80 percent.

The challenges for visiting Cuba are due to the severe restrictions placed on the country by the United States. We hope that limited travel will resume in 2022 and pray that accompaniment trips will follow.

UTC offering Zoom course on Lutheran Confessions

Beginning in January, Dr. Carolyn Schneider, the Lutheran professor on the faculty of the United Theological College of the West Indies in Jamaica, is inviting all interested to join segments of the course she’s teaching on the Lutheran Confessions. Her presentations will be delivered virtually via Zoom.

The course will feature aspects of the Book of Concord and cover major tenets of Lutheran theology. Connection information will be provided through the weekly E-Spirit communication.

This could be a great refresher for those who attended seminary way back when, as well as a wonderful exploration of Lutheranism for all. Be on the lookout for more details in the new year, and contact Rev. Katie Carroll at revkhc@gmail.com if you want to know more.

SPOTLIGHT ON ALONZO BATSON, HAITI TEAM LEADER

Experiences as a youth led to life of mission

Global mission is my passion. I recall as a youth traveling to the Philippines with my father, mother and older brother in the late 1940s or early '50s. My father had been chosen as a Fulbright Scholar. I can recall vividly the extreme poverty in which the people of Manila and southeast Asia lived and existed.

Upon returning to Oklahoma, I was baptized at Prince of Peace Lutheran in Tulsa by Pastor Karl Lutze. As youth of the church, we

were involved in many global mission and local charitable activities.

I was an "ambassador for Christ" and spent several summers during my confirmation school years doing mission work in rural communities of Oklahoma.

I saw the stark poverty of those people and communities, right here in the United States.

Hearing the words of Christ, to love my neighbor, as I love him and myself, I knew I had to give to the

less fortunate. I knew that food, water and basic health needs are essential for life, and I have dedicated my life to sharing and providing these vital elements for others. The Global Mission Table gives me the opportunity to live the gospel.



Alonzo Batson

CUBA REPORT

Reformation Day is a festive time for Cuban Lutherans

Rev. Dr. Russell Meyer Cuba Team Leader

Amid the scarcity of resources in Cuba, the *Iglesia Evangélica Unida-Sínodo Luterano* (IEU-SL) is managing to maintain and grow its ministry. Prayer, tenacity and creativity have yielded energizing worship and community meal sharing such as we see in these photos.



The pictures here are from Reformation Day celebrations in Cuba by the *Iglesia Evangélica Unida-Sínodo Luterano* on October 31. The altar signs read "Faith alone, Scripture alone, Grace Alone," a Spanish version of Martin Luther's *Sola Gratia*.

HAITI REPORT

Distribution of food, supplies held up after earthquake

Alonzo Batson
Haiti Team Leader

There are profound obstacles to recovery from the August 14 earthquake in Haiti’s southwest region. Lives, livelihoods, hospitals, buildings, houses and more were destroyed. The death toll is reported to be at least 2,200, with some 12,000 injured and 650,000 in need of immediate assistance.

The generosity of the Florida-Bahamas Synod has been overwhelming. Already \$22,000 has been sent to *l’Eglise Luthérienne d’Haiti* (ELH). Pastor Livenson Lauvanus has organized the purchase and distribution of food and supplies; however, as of this writing he has been unable to get them to the people. The combination of a severe gas shortage and unrest in the streets makes travel simply unfeasible.

Also as of this writing, two of the missionaries from Ohio- based Mennonite Christian Aid Ministries have been released from their kidnapping in Haiti on October 16. The event occurred at gunpoint after the group had visited an orphanage near the village of Croix-des-Bouquets, east of Port-au-Prince. The group included five children, the youngest of whom is eight months old.

The area around the orphanage is known to be controlled by some powerful gangs with a history of abducting religious groups. Little detail is being provided as agencies work for the release of the others; Christian Aid Ministries is asking for continued patience and prayer.

According to a Miami Herald article, the Center for Analysis and Research in Human Rights in Port-au-Prince reports that at least 803 people were abducted between



The images above and below show some of the destruction that resulted from the August 14 earthquake.

January and October of this year, including at least 54 foreigners.

U.S. and Canadian embassies have asked that their citizens not remain in or travel to Haiti. This is also the posture of both the Lutheran Church in Haiti and the Florida-Bahamas Synod.

However, our Global Mission Table Haiti Team maintains regular contact with Pastor Livenson and receives updates on the many ELH congregations. Leaders take precautions to keep themselves safe and out of harm’s way.

The Global Mission Table will support Pastor Livenson with additional gifts when the situation improves and supplies can be shared with the people. Your prayers are urgently needed at this desperate time.



How is YOUR congregation engaging in Global Mission? How do you reach our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world? Send your pictures, news articles and activities to Rev. Katie Carroll at revkhc@gmail.com, and we will highlight them for sharing throughout the synod.

SURINAME REPORT

Synod, ELCA join Suriname in gender-violence seminar

Marcee Wilkes
Guyana/Suriname Team Leader

On October 15-16, ELKS — the Evangelical Lutheran Kierke in Suriname — hosted a two-day seminar on gender-based violence. Community leaders, college faculty and church leaders from Suriname, Guyana and the United States gathered online for presentations, small-group discussions, devotions and more.

Speakers shared information on topics ranging from the impact of gender-based violence on children to effective ministry practices with victims.

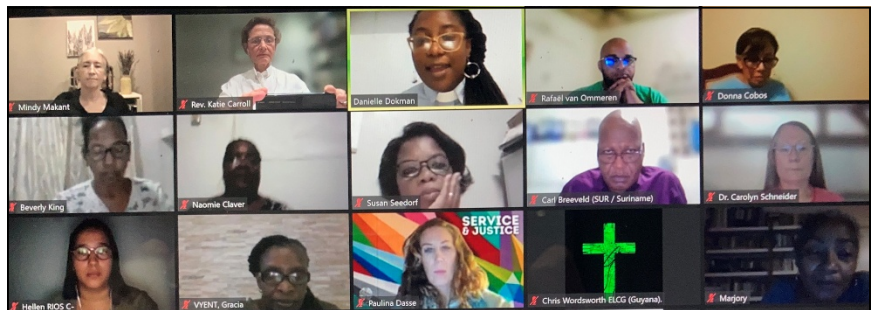
Representatives from the Florida-Bahamas Synod and the ELCA churchwide expression teamed up to lead the closing devotion. All participants left with the resolve to continue to work for justice and an end to gender-based violence.

The seminar was one expression of a larger commitment ELKS has made to address gender issues. The Florida-Bahamas Synod and the ELCA partnered in funding

the event and in sponsoring two rooms in a women’s shelter. The facility, called STICRIS (an acronym for Home for Women in Crisis Situations Foundation), receives both government support and private funding.



Above: Suriname’s STICRIS facility. Below: a screenshot of some of the seminar participants



Synods and Companions to address gender-based violence

Once again this year, the ELCA Synod Companions in the Latin American and Caribbean region are observing "Sixteen Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence."

The observance runs from November 25 to December 10. Each day during this period, Companion churches will offer prayers, scrip-

ture readings, devotions, conversations and music that invite listeners to consider God’s call for compassion and justice in the face of gender-based violence.

All offerings will be posted on social media through Facebook by the ELCA.

The Florida-Bahamas Synod is

teaming up with our Companions in Cuba, Guyana and Suriname to create a virtual service of music, prayer and reflection that is to be shared on December 10.

Be on the lookout in the weekly E-Spirit for more details and specifics on how to view this collaborative effort.



Rev. Katie Carroll

If you’d like to share your thoughts about Global Mission, here’s how

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. Khader El-Yateem

Surinamese UTCWI student reflects on being Lutheran

The Lutheran World Federation awards scholarships to students pursuing theological studies throughout the world. A current recipient is Rafael van Ommeren of the Evangelical Lutheran Kierke of Suriname (ELKS), who is the only Lutheran student at the ecumenical United Theological College of the West Indies. The article below is excerpted from his recent interview by Lutheran World Information for an LWF online posting.

Rafael, who is pursuing a master's program in contextual ministry, plans to return home after graduation in May 2023, serve as a vicar for a year, and then be ordained as a minister of word and sacrament. His background includes serving as a youth leader, lay preacher, musician and choir leader, church caretaker and director of a home for the elderly.

He described taking part in an online LWF scholars' meeting, saying he "greatly appreciated hearing from others how they experience Lutheran identity — learn from the differences and reflect on similarities." The similarities, he said, "indicate that even if we are separated by oceans and land borders, we are still very much connected."

The Lutheran church, he noted, has "strong ecumenical relations with different denominations. On the other hand, this has also led us to lose a sense of what it exactly means to be Lutheran." The idea of tying good works to being saved "finds its way into many Christian settings," he said, and "in Suriname's multi-denominational and multi-religious context, one of the important things we offer at the table is reassurance that we cannot work to gain our salvation."

A contemporary Lutheran focus, he noted, is on "caring for God's creation and making choices that will benefit God's creation as a whole." He described the ELKS shopping bag project — an outreach providing reusable cloth bags as a substitute for non-degradable throw-away plastic ones.

Another focus, he said, is in "public discussion on gender-based violence. I believe the Christian church and other religions do not have a clear enough voice in condemning violence that happens due to one's gender." He said the October seminar in Suriname on domestic violence (see story, page 5), and work of the ELKS gender committee "make a difference to being Lutheran."

Rafael helped coordinate the Megas Diakonon project for a small Suriname church in response to Covid-19,



Volunteers in the Surinamese church diaconal project Megas Diakonon. Rev. Marjory Slagtand, ELKS president, is seated in front, second from left. Photo: ELKS

gathering food packages and other essentials for distribution to people in need. "The church realized that the pressure of the pandemic on our already unstable economy was very bad," he said. "The marginalized in our communities are always the ones who are the most negatively impacted by the crises. That is why we started this diaconal project, which the LWF also supported. It is a lot of work, and many times we don't have enough hands to make it work, but God provides through the Holy Spirit."

While there is a tendency not to talk about the Holy Spirit much other than at Pentecost, he added, "in Suriname, we have a strong spiritual sense of life experiences, even if our members would not explicitly identify some of them as the Holy Spirit at work."

Personally, he added, "I believe the Holy Spirit is truly at work in the Lutheran church in Suriname. We are a very small denomination in a multi-denominational country, and we have had many hard years with strong concerns about the future of the church." But, he added, "I strongly believe that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide us throughout the hard times, and God's church will remain and be relevant."

The IWF interview noted that ELKS, whose founders in 1741 included owners of sugar cane plantations, today has some 4,000 members from throughout society who are Indian, Black, Hindustani, Javanese and Chinese. Read the interview in its entirety at lutheranworld.org/news/suriname-journey-re-explore-our-lutheran-identity.



‘Fund Day’ ideas to raise awareness and funds in support of Global Mission

You don’t need a particular occasion to have your faith community raise funds to support the work of the Florida-Bahamas Synod’s Global Mission Table. Here are some “anytime Fund Day” Ideas.

Have your Sunday School, Bible study class or Youth Group create a display on one or more of our Companions — Cuba, Jamaica, Haiti, Guyana and Suriname.

Include music from one or more of the Companion countries (or other countries) in worship.

If someone in your community is from one of the Companion countries, ask them to share their “local knowledge.”

Have a luncheon or social hour following worship that includes foods from one or more of our Companion countries.

Apply for Thrivent Action Team project support to get \$250 to buy food for such a luncheon or social hour, then have participants donate money for Global Mission projects.

Florida-Bahamas Synod Global Mission Table NEWS/NOTICIAS/NOUVEL

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 churches. 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
Contact: revkhc@gmail.com
Newsletter editor: Jean Etsinger

The purpose of our Global Mission Table

Companion synod relationships of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America connect Lutheran churches throughout the world with ELCA synods and congregations. These relationships are concrete expressions of communion and fellowship with the more than 140 member church bodies of the Lutheran World Federation. Each of the ELCA’s 65 synods has at least one Companion. The Florida-Bahamas Synod has five! — Cuba, Guyana, Haiti, Suriname and Jamaica’s United Theological College of the West Indies.

Our synod’s Global Mission Table comprises 18 members, including an assistant to the bishop. A synod team for each Companion reports to the Global Mission Table at bi-monthly conference calls.

We welcome individuals with a desire to work with our global church partners to join us in this ministry. While travel has not been possible recently because of the pandemic, we and our Companions continue to interact with each other digitally.

For more information about joining the Global Mission Table or any of its companion teams, contact Rev. Kathryn (“Katie”) Carroll by e-mailing revkhc@gmail.com or by calling or texting 305-505-1656.

ADVENT: A SEASON OF HOPE

As we enter the Advent season, we contemplate the incarnation and how God becomes real in the person of Jesus Christ. Through Global Mission, may we be instruments of hope, as we see the face of Christ in our neighbors, and seek to be the face of Christ to our neighbors.