



DISPLAY, WORKSHOP, HOSPITALITY EVENTS

Global Mission seen and heard throughout Assembly

The good news of Global Mission was spread far and wide throughout the Florida-Bahamas Synod Assembly in June! Attendees at the gathering in Orlando had a variety of ways to become familiar with the ministries we share with our companions.

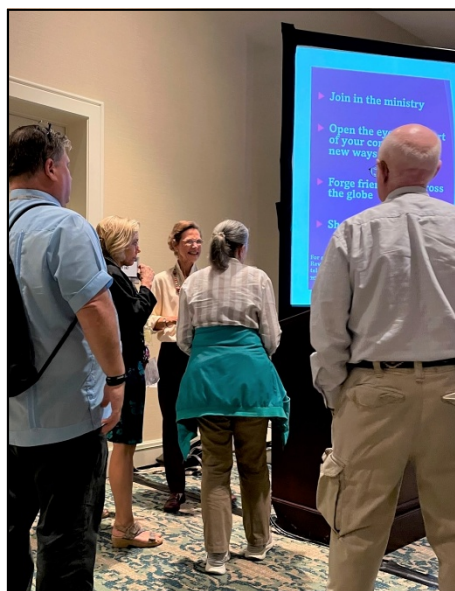
- ♦ A colorful display drew a lot of attention in the Connections Café, where we offered printed materials, an enthusiastic table host and, of course, candies for all who stopped by.

- ♦ Our Ministry Moment video, shown on Saturday morning (one of 11 of about five minutes each shown during plenary sessions) featured Global Mission's new Scholarship Fund for continuing education in our companions.

- ♦ On Saturday afternoon, Pastor Katie led a well-attended workshop introducing the accompaniment model that guides the work of Global Mission and discussing our involvement with each of our five companions.

- ♦ Both Friday and Saturday night, it was celebration time! Global Mission and ELCA World Hunger co-hosted a Hospitality Room next door to the Synod's Just Love Hospitality Room. Countless people came by over the course of the evenings to share fellowship time and catch the excitement of these synod ministry groups. (See more photos on page 7.)

Both nights featured music, song and dance, thanks to impromptu performances by Revs. Oscar Restrepo and Victor Jortack of Grace Alone Ministries in Fort Lauderdale and Ryan Sinclair of St. John's in Jacksonville. Their distinctly Caribbean beat had everyone tapping their feet or breaking out in a dance. What a glorious time to celebrate the diversity we are blessed with, right in our synod.



Above: Music making at one of two Hospitality Room evening gatherings. Left: Attendees chat with Pastor Katie at the end of her Global Mission workshop.

First steps being taken to resume travel with companions

While accompaniment trips are not yet being planned with our companions, Global Mission is starting to travel once more. This fall, Global Mission team leaders and synod staff are taking the first steps towards re-engaging in-person visits since the outbreak of the

Covid pandemic.

In early September, Bishop Pedro and Deacon Aura Suárez, Bishop's Assistant Rev. Khader El-Yateem and Cuba Team leader Rev. Russell Meyer will join ELCA staff members in a week-long trip to Cuba, focusing primarily on meeting government

officials in Havana and visiting an ecumenical seminary in Matanzas.

Rev. Katie Carroll, Global Mission chair, will make a follow-up visit to Cuba in November (see Cuba Report on page 2).

And in mid-September, a small
(Please turn to page 2)

CUBA REPORT

Coming trips to Cuba aim to strengthen relationships

Two trips are planned this fall to Cuba. During the first week of September, Bishop and Deacon Suárez, Rev. El-Yateem and Rev. Meyer will join leaders of the ELCA Service and Justice Area for visits in and around Havana. They will meet with government officials and deepen an already supportive relationship between the church and the Cuban government.

With direct commercial flights from Miami to Santiago de Cuba resuming in November, Global Mission chair Pastor Katie Carroll will join two ELCA representatives in visiting the headquarters of Cuba's Lutheran church — the Iglesia Evangélica Unida-Sínodo Luterano (IEU) — at that time. Both visits will help to advance our ties with the Florida-Bahamas Synod's newest companion.

The IEU was established in Cuba in 1998, initially with ties to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The church broke from that body over the ordination of women and at this point has more female ordained ministers than male. In 2018, the IEU applied for and was granted membership in the Lutheran World Federation, the global communion of 148 Lutheran churches of which the ELCA is also a part. It is through this connection that the



Bishop Virgen Laborde Figuera

Florida-Bahamas Synod was introduced to IEU, and the journey toward becoming companions began.

Though visits have not happened often, the relationship is nurtured almost daily with communication via the WhatsApp messenger and communication service and occasional virtual meetings. Further, the Florida-Bahamas Synod and the church-wide expression

have made financial gifts to support emergency food and medication relief, refurbish a daycare center and develop a community farm.

On pages 6 and 7 you can learn more about a *finca* (farm) in San Miguel developed by members of the IEU in El Dajao. Through the ELCA's World Hunger ministry, our synod supported the provision of seeds for the farm as well as pigs, which were bred by five families. There is potential to expand this successful initiative.

IEU has 11 congregations and is growing, with a vibrant youth program and a leadership academy that has been in operation since 2000. Most churches are located in Santiago and surrounding communities. The Cuban government supports religious activities and churches can evangelize freely.

The current bishop of the IEU is Rev. Virgen Laborde Figuera, who was elected in March of 2021. She is the sister of Rev. Ismael Laborde, the founding bishop of IEU, who continues to oversee partner relationships with other church bodies. Also elected in March was Rev. Martha Romero Lorenzo as assistant to the bishop.



Mariela Barrera and Alcides Hecheverria with a squash from the Lutheran community's El Dajao garden. Read more about IEU support of farming and pig raising on page 6.

Close ties continue with Haiti, though travel not possible

(Continued from page 1)
delegation will be visiting our companion seminary in Jamaica, the United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI). They will meet with professors and board members

to share ideas about expanding the school's online presence.

Looking ahead to 2023, plans are in the works for Bishop Suárez to join trips to Guyana, Suriname and Jamaica.

While travel to Haiti is not yet feasible due to political unrest and street violence, Global Mission plans to invite Pastor Livenson Lauvanus, president of L'Eglise Lutherienne d'Haiti, to visit Florida.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Companion program began with 8 pastors' trip to Guyana

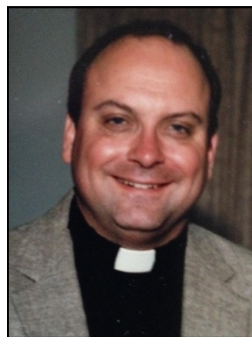
BY REV. GARY LEOPARD

My relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Global Missions Companion Synod Program dates from June 1994, when the Florida-Bahamas Synod asked for eight of its pastors to go to Guyana to meet and study for a week with eight pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Guyana (ELCG). At that time the Guyana church had 47 congregations that were being served by those eight pastors. I was one of the synod pastors who took the trip to Guyana.

It was a learning experience for all of us. Guyana is one the poorer countries in the Americas. We stayed in an open retreat house for five days, meeting, discussing and studying together; then over the weekend each of the pastors from the Florida-Bahamas Synod was matched with one of the pastors of the ELCG.

I was partnered with Pastor Orin Cummings of Reformation Lutheran in Georgetown. We stayed in the pastors' homes and went with them to visit the community. On Sunday we preached and conducted worship with them in their congregations. In the afternoon I visited the Sand Hill congregation — an experience that changed my life forever. It made me realize how blessed I was that as a pastor in the church I had so many resources available to me and my ministry, while those eight pastors had so little to work with in theirs; and they never ever complained.

The eight Guyanese pastors served their 47 congregations with very limited resources, but they managed to worship and praise God with joy. They told us they needed "theological books," which included concordances, Bibles, Luther's works, and other books to assist pastors in their preparation for ministry. Upon return to the States, when we all debriefed the experience, we decided to have a book drive at the next Synod Assembly. It was a success — we gathered a 40-foot trailer-



Rev. Gary Leopard

load of books for the Guyana church.

Florida-Bahamas has the most relationships of any of the ELCA's 65 synods in the Companion Synod Program. How did we end up with five? Well, it all started in the '90s with Rev. Conrad A. Braaten, pastor of Ascension Lutheran, Boynton Beach. Working in the church-wide expression of the ELCA, he

had formed The Center for Multi-Cultural Ministries. As Pastor Braaten noted, all five companions are in proximity to the Florida-Bahamas Synod and all are small in comparison to many others around the world.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Guyana had the most congregations and pastors, so that is where we decided to start. The Evangelical Lutheran Kierke in Suriname at that time had only three congregations and two pastors, Haiti and Cuba were having major issues with their governments, and our Jamaica focus was the seminary where these pastors were trained for ministry.

Rev. Braaten had connections with the Lutheran World Federation, which had an office in Haiti, so it all tied together. He presented the program to the Florida-Bahamas Synod in 1990 with the blessing of Bishop Lavern Franzen, and it was approved by the ELCA. And so, we began our work.

I encourage all of you to get involved in the work of the Companion Synod Program. Our five relationships have blossomed and grown. Thanks be to Almighty God, the best is yet to come.

The Rev. Dr. Gary Leopard, a Global Missions member, is pastor of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lake Park.

Synod representatives to attend Service and Justice conference

The ELCA Service and Justice Area is hosting a week-long conference in Chicago at the end of August, and Global Mission will be participating.

The goal of the conference, titled "Becoming," is to provide space for networking and planning within and among the ministries of the Service and Justice Area. Ministry areas such

as these will host gatherings: AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities), Peace Not Walls (working for justice and peace in Palestine), Lutheran Disaster Response, Hunger Advocacy, and Global Mission

Pastor Katie will participate in

Global Mission planning sessions for the next international consultation — a gathering of companion churches throughout Latin America. Also attending from the synod will be Steve and Denise Beumer, in learning /planning sessions related to Hunger Advocacy, Rev. Khader El-Yateem and Rev. Russell Meyer.

HAITI REPORT

Goat Project is a way of building livelihoods in Haiti

In the last Global Mission Table newsletter, the synod's Haiti Team described a new project with the Eglise Lutherienne d'Haiti: fostering economic stability for families in the community of Les Cayes with a Goat Project. Each participating family is receiving a female goat which can be bred in order to build a herd and provide income through selling animals, milk and other products.

The first step was to build a shelter for the church in Les Cayes, where male goats would be maintained for breeding purposes. Global Mission provided around \$8,000 for this roomy, secure structure which has now been completed. This spring, an additional \$10,000 was sent for the purchase of four male goats and the first 50 female goats.

All families participating in the program must demonstrate an ability to provide shelter and secure their own goats. They will bring the animals to the church shelter to breed them and to receive vaccinations and veterinary care.

Once this first group of female goats is distributed and being bred and cared for, funds will be sent to acquire goats for the next group of families.



The shelter to house male goats .



One of the project's four male goats.

At this point, the Goat Project can support up to 150 goats. If it is successful, the Haiti Team and ELH are hopeful the initiative can be expanded beyond Les Cayes to other communities in Haiti. Many of the families receiving goats are involved in the church; however, the ELH sees this as a ministry that goes beyond its members. The goal is to bring hope and healing to as many families as possible.

Hope Lutheran in The Villages and Nativity Lutheran in Weeki Wachee provided significant funds to get the Goat Project started; other congregations and individuals have made donations as well. Recently, Our Savior Lutheran, Vero Beach, designated its "Change for Christ" program for the Goat Project. To all who've helped, the Haiti Team is most grateful!

You and your congregation are invited to join this group of supporters, by giving online on the synod website (fbsynod.com) or sending a check to the synod office (Florida-Bahamas Synod, 3838 W. Cypress St., Tampa FL 33607) with the designation "Goat Project" on the memo line.

God's work. Our hands. Thanks be to God!

**Global Mission
is looking for
ambassadors
to share its
ministry in
every synod
congregation**

Want to be part of Global Mission but don't know where to begin? For starters, contact Rev. Katie Carroll, Global Mission chair (revkhc@gmail.com or 305-505-1656) or Rev. Khader El-Yateem, the bishop's liaison to the Global Mission Table (khadere@fbsynod.org).

Pastor Katie's goal is for each congregation in the Florida-Bahamas Synod to have a Global Mission ambassador who would make sure their congregation has

timely information about Global Mission work and opportunities to be involved through prayer, financial gifts, hosting a visitor or being part of an accompaniment trip.

Bringing news of Global Mission activities to your congregation is a vital ministry. Think about whether God might be calling you to be an ambassador. To learn more, contact Pastor Katie today!

Accompaniment: a way of walking together as equals

Accompaniment. The word is a familiar one, yet what does it mean when it comes to Global Mission? For the Florida-Bahamas Synod, the accompaniment model is at the foundation of our companion relationships with Cuba, Guyana, Haiti, Suriname and the United Theological College of the West Indies in Jamaica. It provides the framework from which we serve God together and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In generations past, our relationships with other countries tended to be rooted in a power imbalance. Our story was the dominant one, and we brought it as we told the story of God. In other words, as we evangelized, we shared God's story through the lens of *our* culture, *our* customs, and *our* way of thinking.

We now recognize that we do not own God's story to bring to other cultures; rather, our story and others' stories are all part of *God's* story! God is active throughout the world, and all of us have the opportunity to learn what God is doing and how we can be part of it. We enter into relationship not to impose, but to listen and learn — to walk *with* each other, rather than one group leading and dominating the other.

Think about it: In the story of the walk to Emmaus in Luke 24, the risen Christ comes to walk alongside the two disciples. Jesus does not impose himself on their conversation; first he listens, he waits, he watches. Then, he shares. He unpacks what Scripture has to say. And it is in the breaking of bread — the sharing of a meal, and of fellowship — that the disciples' eyes are opened, and they become aware that the Lord is present.

The risen Christ is revealed when we listen and wait and watch and share — when we gather as equals around a table, when we first learn from each other.

The accompaniment model speaks to the commitment of coming together as equals and fellow sojourners in the gospel. It encompasses five values:

- ♦ **Mutuality:** building relationships that receive one another's gifts and expertise as equally valued, respected and needed; understanding and valuing each other's context
- ♦ **Inclusivity:** seeking relationships that address exclusion in communities and strive to ensure that all voices have a place at the table

♦ **Vulnerability:** recognizing that we do not always have the answers and need to admit our fears and weaknesses, remaining open to Christ's transformation and reconciliation

♦ **Empowerment:** nurturing relationships that build one another's strengths and capacity for God's mission

♦ **Sustainability:** fostering relationships with accountability that steward God's gifts for the present and future; building relationships that are enduring.

The accompaniment model, once understood and practiced, can become a way of life. No matter who we come into relationship with, this model provides the foundation on which we can learn and grow through each other.

Suriname Lutheran seminarian to visit three Flagler/Volusia Conference congregations

Rafael Van Ommeren is a Surinamese student at the United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI) and a future pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Kierke in Suriname (ELKS) — both companions of Florida-Bahamas Synod Global Mission. He and his wife are currently in Illinois while he is pursuing a summer program in Clinical Pastoral Education.



Rafael Van Ommeren

They will travel to Florida in the last week of August to visit with three Lutheran congregations in the Flagler/Volusia Conference — St. Mark by the Sea, Palm Coast; Grace, Ormond Beach; and All Saints, Port Orange.

Those they meet will have a marvelous opportunity to learn what God is doing in Suriname, where the ELKS has been in existence for 280 years! Look for pictures and stories about the visit to come in the next issue of the Global Mission Table newsletter.

A simple way for a congregation to learn more about Global Mission is to have Global Mission come to you! Pastor Katie offers virtual or live programs for Sunday Schools or weekday events and will gladly serve as a guest preacher. And Global Mission Team members all over Florida will eagerly tell about their involvement in companion ministry. Global Ministry can connect you to the synod, the churchwide expression and the world. Just ask!

CUBA'S CHURCH PROJECT

Raising crops and pigs is part of wider empowering process

BY HELLEN RIOS CARRILLO

One of the ministries of the United Evangelical Church-Lutheran Synod in Cuba (Iglesia Evangélica Unida-Sínodo Luterano) supports the families of the Cristo Vive (Christ Lives) faith community of El Dajao, located in the Santiago de Cuba area.

El Dajao is a rural community where people don't have a steady source of employment; rather they make their living by doing sporadic agricultural work on their own plots and by raising farm animals in precarious conditions. In June of 2021 leaders of Cristo Vive went to Finca San Miguel, a farm, to clean up a space to set up a community garden. The faith community also gave pigs to five families within the community to raise them for the production of meat and lard.

Mariela Barrera and Alcides Hecheverria are the owners of the finca in San Miguel, where the community came together to clean and harvest. They have introduced new seeds and continue experimenting with new crops and vegetables that are nontraditional for the community but that are great for the kind of land that they have.

Alcides and Mariela share: "With the support of the church we introduced three types of beans, corn, carrots, yuca and spinach, among others; this has sustained us. We have had good harvests and we have been able to sell them. We give 10 percent of the profits to the church and we have to eat and share. With God's help we have seen the bean harvest like never before."

In El Dajao's Cristo Rey (Christ the King) community, members have

grown in knowledge about raising pigs. When the project started, they were involved in the process of purchasing the pigs. One of the anecdotes that was shared was about two women in the community and their respective pigs.

At the time of birth, one of the sows gave birth to four piglets, while the other gave birth to eight. Estela Ferreiros' pig gave birth to the four. At a gathering she shared with Mariela her worries because Mariela's pig gave birth to eight.

She continued, "Look at your piglets. They are strong, the sow takes care of them, they are in good condition." Estela felt reaffirmed and encouraged to continue learning and continue strengthening the tools that were given to her and other members of the community.

By organizing a structured space to garden and partnering families to raise animals, the church's intention was to empower the families and provide a more planned process for their own livelihoods. The family



Alcides Hecheverria and Mariela Barrera surrounded by plantain trees being raised in the community garden on their farm.

"Maybe I didn't feed it enough or take good enough care?" she wondered. "What did you do for yours to have eight?"

Mariela responded, "Well, mine had eight, but the sow couldn't care for all of them, and half of them died." She added, "We shouldn't judge our success by how many pigs we have, but rather that we are taking chances to try something new, and we can learn from each other in the process."

members of the community are all connected to take care of the garden and to raise pigs; they coordinate to collect food and help each other to care for the animals.

The IEU provides regular follow-up to the families to evaluate their practices, challenges and successes.

Hellen Rios Carrillo is the ELCA's Regional Representative for the Caribbean and Latin America and its Caribbean Gender Justice coordinator.



Music, refreshments and good company at the Global Mission Hospitality Room at Synod Assembly. Story on page 1.



Left: pigs raised by members of the El Dajao community of Santiago de Cuba, and Alcides Hecheverria with yuca from the Lutheran-supported El Dajao garden. Story on page 2.

Right: Two of the four male goats that will be used for breeding, initially of 50 female goats, in a project of the Haitian Lutheran Church. Individual females will be given to families to provide sustainable income. Story on page 4.



New leadership in Suriname and Guyana

The Lutheran Church bodies in Suriname (ELKS) and Guyana (ELCG) installed new executive boards this spring. In early August, Bishop Suárez and Assistant to the Bishop El-Yateem participated in virtual meetings with each leadership group to become acquainted and begin setting goals for the year ahead.

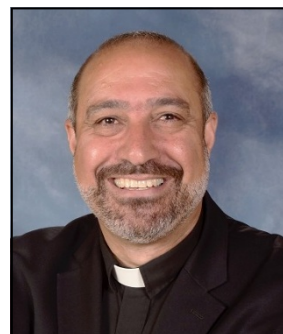
A common refrain with both companions is the need for leadership development and training. The shortage of ordained pastors results in clergy needing to oversee multiple parishes. Of particular need are the establishment of lay academies to train deacons and the development of resources for Christian education in local parishes. These projects will be a focus of 2023.



Installation of the Suriname leadership team.



Rev. Khader
El-Yateem



Care to share
your thoughts about
Global Mission?
Here's how to do it

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

The purpose of our Global Mission Table

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 Global Mission Table comprises 18 members, including an assistant to the bishop. In addition, for each companion relationship there is a synod team that focuses on just that relationship and 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. Katie Carroll by e-mailing revkhc@gmail.com or by calling or texting 305-505-1656.

Rev. Katie
Carroll



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