



THE BLESSING OF 'BEING THERE' NOW WITH COMPANIONS

At the Global Mission Table there is gratitude for the gift of in-person accompaniment: At long last, travel is again feasible to our Global Mission companions. After nearly three years of solely virtual contact, small groups have had the opportunity to visit Jamaica and Cuba. Read our accounts and see pictures here that tell the story of their experiences.

JAMAICA REPORT

Theological college president hosts synod, ELCA visitors

Jamaica Team leader Judy Olsen, team member Dr. Linda Brent, and Rev. Katie Carroll, Florida-Bahamas Global Mission Table chair, joined ELCA representative Hellen Rios-Carrillo in a visit to the United Theological College of the West Indies in Jamaica on Sept. 14-18. The group was hosted by UTCWI President Oral Thomas and Dr. Carolyn Schneider, the ELCA-sponsored professor who teaches at the school.

UTCWI, an ecumenical theological institution located in the capital city of Kingston, has a rich heritage as a training ground for pastors throughout the Caribbean. As many nations in the region gained independence in the 1960s, UTCWI was formed to provide contextually relevant theological education for the area. As these

(Please turn to page 2)



Rev. Russell Meyer, Rev. Katie Carroll, and ELCA representative Hellen Rios-Carrillo with members of Cuba's Iglesia Evangélica Unida - Sínodo Luterano

CUBA REPORT

A welcome of abundance despite island's dire difficulties

Rev. Russell Meyer, Cuba Team leader; Rev. Katie Carroll, Florida-Bahamas Global Mission chair; ELCA representative Hellen Rios-Carrillo; and Lutheran World Hunger representative Marie Arias were able to visit Santiago de Cuba on Nov. 5-10. The trip brought both tremendous hope and tremendous heartache.

The group was received by the Iglesia Evangélica Unida-Sínodo Luterano with great hospitality and love. In so many respects, the church is flourishing. Worship is vibrant and full of passion; there are exciting ministries in the various congregations, ranging from a daycare center (Nuestro Salvador, in Santiago) to a growing young adult group (Cuerpo de Cristo, in Guantánamo), to a pig and community farm project (Cristo Vive, in Dajao). An active women's group draws participants from all of

(Please turn to page 3)



Jamaica Team members Judy Olsen and Linda Brent; UTC board members Jacqueline Maytie, Beverly Pereira and Maurice Jones; Hellen Rios-Carrillo and Rev. Katie Carroll.

JAMAICA REPORT

(Continued from page 1)
 nations were emerging from colonialism, the existence of a Caribbean-focused center for theological study was timely and important.

UTC has six sponsoring denominations, all located in the Caribbean Basin and all responsible for supporting the school and sending it students. Through its relationship with the University of the West Indies, the school offers not only denomination-specific certificates, but also UWI-accredited degrees. These include a Certificate in Ministerial Studies, a Bachelor of Arts in Theology, a Master of Philosophy in Theology and more. Courses are offered both in-person and online.

Our Global Mission group had opportunities to gather with students, faculty and board members. We participated in chapel services, which are held daily at mid-day, underscoring that one's relationship with God must remain central and be nurtured amid one's daily duties.

While each constituent

group had its own perspective from which to view the school, all could appreciate the marvelous sense of community and collegiality that UTCWI embodies. Students support each other and revel in the diversity of the denominations and nationalities represented. Students, staff and board alike embrace the philosophy of the "four C's" — classroom, corridor, cafeteria and chapel — as key ingredients to foster community.

Linda Brent, our Jamaica Team member from St. Paul's Lutheran, Pensacola, shared her gifts as an educational consultant to facilitate a discussion about online teaching strategies. Like many institutions, UTCWI has undergone a paradigm shift in delivery methods for teaching. Both pandemic restrictions and the increasing difficulty students find in leaving their local settings to live on campus have fueled a move to more virtual offerings.

Dr. Brent's presentation was well received, and the
(Please turn to page 4)



UTC students Jean Jules, Aldwayne Brooks and Rafael Van Ommeren, who is a Lutheran.



Judy Olsen, Linda Brent, Pastor Katie and Hellen Rios-Carrillo, at center, pose with a group of students at the United Theological College of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica.



UTC's president, Dr. Oral Thomas, presents a school journal to Pastor Katie.



One of the structures on the UTCWI campus, located in Kingston, Jamaica

CUBA REPORT

(Continued from page 1)

the IEU congregations. The visiting group presented a day-long retreat on gender issues. Hellen Rios-Carrillo, Marie Arias and Pastor Katie led the discussion.

Amid all that brings joy and hope in the community of IEU, however, the situation in Cuba is dire. The U.S. embargo has had a longstanding, debilitating impact on everyday life. Further sanctions placed in recent years, such as the United States placing Cuba on its International Terrorists list, have made restrictions much worse. Adding to that the current economic and political crises Cuba faces, the people are suffering. There are severe shortages of food, medicine and fuel. With skyrocketing inflation, goods that are available are unaffordable. We heard accounts of hospitals lacking syringes, thermometers and medication. Basics such as milk and meat are rationed, and children lack the nutrition they need.

The nation’s aging electrical grid needs repairs and fuel to be fully powered; for months there have been daily forced outages for hours at a time. Factories cannot operate and schools struggle to function. People get up at night, if that’s when they have electricity, to carry out necessary household chores and cooking. Public transportation has been reduced due to high fuel prices and aging buses for which there are no replacement parts.

We heard story after story of struggle and pain from the people of IEU; nevertheless, we were inspired by their amazing resilience, their solidarity with one another and their desire to help their neighbor. Church members underscore how IEU is a source of strength, comfort, sanctuary and hope.

(Please turn to page 4)



Pastora Angela not only leads the Nuestro Salvador congregation but also oversees a daycare program serving 40 children, shown here with Hellen Rios-Carrillo.



At a retreat for women of the Iglesia Evangélica Unida-Sínodo Luterano that focused on women’s issues, the ELCA’s Hellen Rios-Carrillo, center, was a presenter. Here she poses with Bishop Virgen Laborde, left, and Assistant Bishop Marta Lorenzo.



Participants pose for a picture at a retreat for women of the IEU held at Aposento Alto Church, located in the IEU headquarters building in Santiago, with presentations by the Florida-Bahamas and ELCA visitors.



Hellen Rios-Carrillo, left, with IEU founding Bishop Ismael Laborde and Pastora Esperanza, women’s ministries coordinator.

JAMAICA REPORT

(Continued from page 2)

Florida-Bahamas Synod looks forward to partnering in more faculty development events.

Looking ahead, UTCWI faces a number of critical strategic decisions after the challenges that the pandemic brought. The school has taken some successful steps in online education and hopes to build this aspect of its offerings further. Currently there is one Lutheran on-

campus student, Rafael Van Ommeren from Suriname, who will be graduating in the spring. There is also a part-time Lutheran online Ph.D. candidate from Argentina.

The UTCWI sponsoring denominations had a day-long retreat in early October with faculty and board members. With all committed to forging a sustainable and bright future, a task force was formed to develop a vision for moving forward. Educational offerings, administrative practices and expanded funding opportunities are among

the topics to be analyzed.

The ELCA and the Florida-Bahamas Synod continue to support UTCWI as it envisions and builds a sustainable future. The churchwide Global Mission expression has provided financial support for completion of financial audits. The Florida-Bahamas Synod made a gift this fall to support the work of Professor Schneider, and another in support of UTCWI's growing online library.

We surround the school with prayer as its leaders make plans for a vibrant, secure future.

CUBA UPDATE

(Continued from page 3)

The visit provided a great opportunity to grow our relationship with IEU's leaders, Bishop Virgen Laborde and Assistant Bishop Marta Lorenzo. Bishop Virgen followed the long tenure of IEU's founding bishop, Ismael Laborde, who is now semi-retired and facing health challenges. The community continues to honor his presence and his legacy, surrounding him with support and prayer.

The Florida-Bahamas Synod has made financial gifts to IEU over the past few years, and on this visit our group brought supplies including youth group shirts and electric fans. The Synodical Women's Organization sponsored a drive for daycare supplies for Cuba at its fall gathering; we delivered a first installment of that collection — crayons, modeling clay, watercolors and books.

ELCA is part of a globally coordinated Lutheran effort to provide desperately needed medical aid to Cuba

Lutheran church bodies serving Europe, South America, the Caribbean and the United States are cooperating with a foundation, a medical group, an import/export firm and the Lutheran church in Cuba to get a container shipment of medicine and medical supplies to five of Cuba's eastern provinces by yearend.

Participating are Norway-based Normisjon, the Lutheran World Federation German Committee, the LWF Latin America/Caribbean Program, the ELCA, the Netherlands-based IDA Foundation, the company MEDICUBA, and Iglesia Evangélica Unida in Cuba.

The ELCA is providing \$200,000 to Normisjon, the coordinating agency in Europe. Funds collected from ecumenical partners will be

We must speak out in our own country to end the sanctions that impede our ability to minister to our neighbor in need. Aid such as the container of medicine and medical supplies described below will help, yet much more is needed. The Global Mission Table has made a gift to IEU in support of its March 2023 celebration of 30 years of ministry.



Pastor Katie and Helen Rios-Carrillo present supplies to Pastora Angela at the Santiago daycare center.

given to the IDA Foundation to procure medicine and supplies such as antibiotics, acetaminophen, surgical gloves, glucose strips and syringes, along with solar panels to mitigate Cuba's power shortages. The foundation will ship the items to Santiago, Cuba. There, MEDICUBA will coordinate the importing and transferring of the items to hospitals and clinics. The Cuban Ministry of Public Health will distribute the items to the five provinces.

The Lutheran church in its many expressions is committed to serving the wider Cuban community during this time of dire emergency and severe shortages. Through this significant donation, the ELCA is supporting the local Lutheran church response.

SYNOD, CUBA INVOLVED IN CAMPAIGN

Global activism is shown to end violence against women

According to United Nations figures, violence against women and girls remains the most widespread and pervasive human rights violation worldwide, estimated to affect more than one in every three females, a figure largely unchanged over the last decade.

The most recent global estimates are that, on average, a woman or girl is killed by someone in her own family every 11 minutes.

But there is evidence that a strong, independent feminist movement is the single most critical factor in driving policy change to end violence against women.

The “16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence” against women and girls is an international civil society-led campaign that takes place each year. It begins on Nov. 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and ends on Dec. 10, Human Rights Day. Begun by activists at the inaugural Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991, the observance continues to be coordinated each year by the Center for Women's Global Leadership.

Under the leadership of UN Secretary-General António Guterres, the United Nations Secretary-General's UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women initiative (UNiTE) calls for global action to increase awareness, galvanize advocacy efforts and share knowledge



and innovations to end such violence. Launched in 2008, UNiTE calls on governments, development actors, civil society, women's organizations, young people, the private sector, the media and the entire U.N. system “to join forces in addressing the global pandemic of violence against women and girls.”

Pauline Dasse, ELCA program director for relationships for Latin America and the Caribbean, in a Nov. 11 message to synod companions in ministry stated that churches “from the Americas and the Caribbean to the Lutheran churches in Indonesia to the church in Madagascar” would be coming together to participate in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

“Starting on Nov 25 we will be acting, lifting voices, and promoting a more just world for women and girls,” she said, with instructions on how to register for activities during the campaign.

She expressed thanks to the companions “for your

commitment to ending gender-based violence; for your leadership, boldness and creativity to dare to express and lift your voices to bring consolation and healing to those suffering and for those who left us without receiving justice.”

Through the ELCA's Service and Justice Area, the Florida-Bahamas Synod is participating in this advocacy work. Each day of the observance, there are discussions, devotionals, videos and information posted on the ELCA and Lutheran World Federation Facebook pages.

Our synod is partnering with our companion in Cuba on Dec. 7, posting resources for reading and personal devotion about incidences in the Bible of violence against women.



A promotional poster of the Lutheran churches of Argentina and Uruguay.

The “16 Days of Activism” calendar of events organized by the ELCA and its companions can be accessed via a link on the Global Mission page of the Florida-Bahamas Synod website, which can be found at <https://fbsynod.com/mission-ministry/global-mission-information>.

SURINAME & GUYANA UPDATE

After 280 years of ministry, looking forward to more!

On Nov. 13, the Lutheran Church in Suriname (ELKS – for Evangelisch Lutherse Kerk Suriname) celebrated the completion of 280 years of ministry! The milestone was marked by a festive worship service honoring the ways the church has served the community in the past and continues to do so today — while envisioning a future with hope. And over four days of celebrating, there also were social activities — a Family Day, a Youth Day and an Appreciation Night.

ELCA Regional Representative Hellen Rios-Carrillo, who was present for the observance, shares the following reflection: “I was honored and blessed to be part of the celebration marking 280 years of Lutheranism in Suriname with ELKS! The church today looks so different from its beginning — and it reflects more and more the diversity of their leaders today!

“Today’s church continues to be transformed and challenged to be a sign of hope for those they are serving. From the four worshiping communities gathering together to a service in Dutch, English, Spanish and Swahili and a get-together with the youth and young adults – ELKS was a church full of energy, hope and genuine warm welcoming!”

The Florida-Bahamas Synod joins the ELCA in recognizing this important milestone and looks forward to sending a delegation to visit the Lutheran churches of both Suriname and neighboring Guyana in March 2023. It will be an opportunity to meet with newly elected executive boards of both churches and learn how we can nurture and support each other.

For more photos, see the facing page.



Red was the liturgical color of the day for the festive worship service held on Nov. 13 marking the completion of 280 years of Lutheran ministry in Suriname.



Evangelisch Lutherse Kerk Suriname worshipers receive communion during the festive service held on Nov. 13.



Left and above: A Family Day celebration held on Nov. 12 was part of the festivities making the completion of 280 years of ministry by the Suriname Lutheran Church.



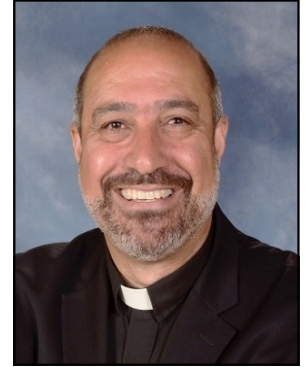
SURINAME CELEBRATION

The ELKS events marking the completion of 280 years of ministry concluded on Nov. 15 with a gala “Appreciation Night” celebration featuring musical performances and, of course, tables laden with favorite foods.



Now that you’ve read so much about Global Mission what’s next — for you?

Maybe after reading this newsletter you have questions. Maybe you are feeling called to learn more, or do more. No matter how the Spirit is calling you, we want to hear about it and help you take the next steps.



Rev. Khader El-Yateem

The first one is really easy: Just text Rev. Katie Carroll, Global Mission Table chair, at revkhc@gmail.com; call her at 305-505-1656; or send a note to Rev. Khader El-Yateem, assistant to the bishop and director of evangelical mission for the Florida-Bahamas Synod, at khadere@fbsynod.org.



Rev. Katie Carroll

HAITI REPORT

Instability has companion projects largely on hold for now

Work is at a virtual standstill in the midst of Haiti’s political, economic and societal upheaval. Violence continues and streets are not safe for the movement of people and goods. Roads are often shut down by gangs wanting to steal what vehicles contain.

There are continual reports of kidnappings, particularly in the area of the capital, Port-au-Prince. Gangs are known to control the roadways, where they intercept travelers and seize vehicles and their contents, and to be impeding the distribution of fuel and food.

The goat project described in the



Pens built to house the male goats

Summer issue of this newsletter will move forward once the female goats can be distributed safely. The project provides for families to receive the goats, to be bred with males kept at the Lutheran church in the community of Les Cayes. This will enable the families to build herds and gain income by selling animals, milk and other products.

The Global Mission Table and Pastor Livenson Lauvanus, president of the Haitian Lutheran Church, stay in communication as he is able via texting and virtual meetings. We continue to pray ardently for the people of Haiti.

Words of welcome — and invitation — from the GMT chair

As chair of the Florida-Bahamas Synod Global Mission Table, I am involved in its work, in one way or another, on a daily basis. Yet I realize that it is not on everyone’s radar screen. In fact, you might have opened this newsletter thinking, *What is Global Mission, anyway? And what does it have to do with my congregation. . . and with me?*

Being part of a congregation in the Florida-Bahamas Synod, you are part of Global Mission. The GMT is a synod committee of volunteers who oversee our participation in the ELCA Synod Companion Program, which connects synods with 149 Lutheran churches in 99 countries that through the Lutheran World Federation “promote justice, peace, reconciliation and dignity for individuals and communities.”

Each of the ELCA’s 65 synods has at least one companion relationship. The Florida-Bahamas Synod has five, all in the Caribbean Basin — Cuba, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica and Suriname. As companions, we are in regular contact, learning about each other’s ministries, praying for one another, and finding ways to collaborate and support each other with time, talents and resources.

The Global Mission Table meets bi-monthly to discuss what’s going on with our companions. Additional volunteers serve on teams focused on particular companions that meet

as needed. There are 18 members of the GMT. Anyone with an interest in a companion can join a team.

In any given week, our Global Mission volunteers might:

- participate in a Zoom call with members of a companion church;
- share prayer requests, pictures and news in a WhatsApp group;
- stay current on socio-political situations of our companions;
- host a visit from a member of a companion church;
- investigate projects with a companion the synod might support — such as providing scholarship money, funding a community garden, sharing resources for leadership development, or acquiring solar panels for reliable electricity.

There are annual small-group visits to each companion and occasional “accompaniment” trips that can include a larger group. Such vis-

its allow us to nurture and deepen our relationships with our companions, as we learn how God is active in contexts different from our own. Likewise, Global Mission sponsors occasional visits from our companions to congregations in our synod.

The Global Mission Table depends on donations to do its work on behalf of the synod. You or your congregation are encouraged to support this work with a financial gift — to benefit a particular companion or the Global Mission Table as a whole.

I would be honored to come to your congregation to tell the story of Global Mission. It opens our eyes to the vastness of God’s love and the beautifully diverse ways the gospel is proclaimed. Want to learn more? I am a telephone call or an e-mail away: 305-505-1656 or revkhc@gmail.com. — **Pastor Katie**

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