



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

Global Mission Table

News / Noticias / Nouvèl

Fall 2023 — Issue #26

## Guyana, Suriname Churches take part Regional Lutheran Companion Consultation held in Texas

For the first time since 2019, companions from throughout Latin America and the Caribbean joined together this fall with their ELCA companion synods to "Reconnect, Renew, and Rise Again."

The Sixth International Companion Consultation for the region was held October 31-November 3 at a retreat center called Camp Tejas (Spanish for Texas) west of Houston. Representatives of two of our synod's five companions joined in the gathering — from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana (ELCG) and the Evangelische Lutherse Kerk Suriname (ELKS).

There was time for worship, reflection, discussion and planning. Along with reflecting on the Good Friday experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, we renewed our faith in God's promise of a glorious Easter morning. We took time to mourn the losses we endured as well as to strengthen one another as we rise again in mission.

There are exciting possibilities for joint ministry involving ELCG, ELKS and our synod. A top priority for the year ahead is to collaborate in the area of leadership development. All three groups wish to work together both in training of lay people and in forming new leaders for rostered ministry. In addition, the groups brainstormed ideas for joint activities and exchanges among women, men and youth.



*Consultation participants (from left) Sister Maryan Molgo, secretary, ELKS; Rev. Khader El-Yateem, Florida-Bahamas assistant to the bishop; Rev. Sandra Kurtzious, acting president, ELCG; Marcee Wilkes, Guyana-Suriname Team leader; Rev. Katie Carroll, Global Mission Table chair; Brother Henk Rahan, treasurer, ELKS; Rev. Chris Wordsworth, ELCG; FB Synod Bishop Pedro Suarez.*

If you or your congregation is interested in learning more, please e-mail Rev. Katie Carroll, Global Mission Table chair, at [revkhc@gmail.com](mailto:revkhc@gmail.com).



*Far left: Participants created a display at the consultation expressing through pictures and writings some of the losses that were experienced throughout Latin America and the Caribbean as a result of the Covid pandemic.*

*Left: Pastor Jaime Dubon, director for the ELCA's Latin American and Caribbean Region, was a celebrant at one of the consultation worship services. Here he is pictured giving the benediction at the end of the service.*

## SURINAME REPORT

### ELKS leaders are welcomed by Dade-Monroe Conference

The trip home for leaders of the Suriname Lutheran Church (ELKS) from the International Companion Consultation (*See article, page 1*) included a stopover in Miami. Our synod's Dade-Monroe Conference hosted their visit on November 6 at St. Thomas By-the-Bay Church to welcome Sister Maryan Molgo and Brother Henk Rahan of ELKS for worship, lunch and conversation.

Nineteen people gathered around God's word and a reflection on our common mission of spreading the gospel to all ends of the Earth. Over lunch we learned

about each other's ministry contexts — the unique aspects of our respective settings, and our common hopes, dreams and challenges.

The hosts learned from having the ELKS leaders describe life in Suriname, and the visitors had an opportunity to learn about congregational ministry in South Florida. There is great enthusiasm for continuing these conversations and exploring ways to visit each other and work together on a project or a new ministry initiative.

*Right: Sharing conversation over lunch at St. Thomas By-the-Bay.*

*Far right: Some of the 19 folks who took part in the meeting.*



## GUYANA REPORT

### Synod provides grant for tech support

During our Spring 2023 visit to Guyana, the Florida-Bahamas Synod learned of needs of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana in the areas of technology and sound equipment. Thanks in part to an offering received from the 2023 Synod Assembly, the Global Mission Table was able to grant up to \$10,000 to ELCG for microphones, projection screens, equipment carrying cases and more.

Among other uses, the microphones will provide needed sound enhancement for outdoor youth events and worship services. Screens and video equipment will be useful for virtual meetings and for the expansion of ELCG's Lay Academy, which provides training for lay lead-

ership within the church.

In another tech implementation, an exciting, new joint activity this fall has been "Women-to-Women," a small-group discussion via Zoom twice a month between women of FBS and ELCG. A dozen women come together to discuss topics of spiritual significance. A different woman serves as facilitator for each meeting. Themes have included discerning one's call, cultivating gratitude, and celebrating Halloween in our media-soaked, consumer-oriented culture.

In addition to "Women-to-Women," the group hopes in 2024 to sponsor a larger-scale virtual women's event with worship, a speaker and discussion groups.

### 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 churches.

Through these partnerships, we strive to encourage one another in faith through relationships, education, advocacy and service in witness to God's love.

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## UTCWI UPDATE

### Seminary in Jamaica focusing on planning for a viable future



Spring 2023 UTCWI Suriname graduate Rafael Van Ommeren poses with his wife, Lucille; Lutheran professor Dr. Carolyn Schneider; and ELCA representative Hellen Rios-Carrillo

The Florida-Bahamas Synod has a long-standing relationship with the United Theological College of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica. Since the 1960s, this ecumenical seminary has provided theological education for emerging leaders in the Caribbean. Rafael Van Ommeren of ELKS in Suriname graduated from the school in May 2023; Pastor Joseph Livenson of Haiti's l'Eglise Lutherienne did so years ago.

An ELCA-sponsored professor, Dr. Carolyn Schneider, has been teaching there. (See article on her new position, page 8.)

The institution is engaging in strategic planning to secure a vibrant and financially secure future. With declining on-campus enrollment, it is seeking to grow its online presence. At this point, there are no Lutheran students on campus, nor any in the pipeline. We continue to accompany each other through regular dialogue and mutual prayer, as UTCWI discerns its future course.

## ELCA synods have over 120 companion synod relationships

"When companions engage one another in authentic relationships, everyone's lives are changed." So proclaims Peggy Contos Hahn, assistant to the bishop for global mission, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod. In this sense, the ELCA is indeed a church that is true to its heritage of *semper reformando* -- always reforming.

Each of the 65 ELCA synods has at least one international church companion, and many (like ours) have more. Altogether there are over 120 such relationships. The ELCA website states that companion relationships "enrich and deepen our ministries by exposing us to global challenges and perspectives as we seek to work with one another to build up the body of Christ." Some companions are in relationship with several synods. Tanzania's Lutheran Church is so large that its regions relate to over 20!

There are five regions in the Companion Synod program: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin American and the Caribbean, and the Middle East. The one companion church in the Middle East — the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) — relates to two ELCA synods as well as the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada.

Our prayers and pleas for peace are urgently needed in Palestine and Israel, where 2 percent of Palestinians are Christians and LWF operates the Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem. Rev. Khader El-Yateem, involved in our synod's Global Mission, is president of the Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage (ALAMEH). You can learn more and make donations at <https://community.elca.org/middle-east-crisis>.

## Future visits to Suriname, Haitian churches

Bishop Pedro Suárez will visit the synod's companion church in Suriname for the first time this December. A small group will join in this long-awaited trip which was postponed due to the Covid pandemic. Along with visiting the congregations in and around Paramaribo and meeting with church leaders, ELKS and FBS leaders will renew the Memo of Understanding which undergirds the companion relationship. Similar MOU's were signed with Iglesia Unida Evangélica (IEU) of Cuba and ELCG of Guyana this year.

The Florida-Bahamas Synod continues to await anxiously for an opportunity to meet face to face with leaders of the Eglise Lutherienne d'Haiti (ELH). Travel to Haiti is not possible at this time because of safety concerns.

We hope leaders of both companions can meet in an alternative location in 2024. While unable to visit Haiti, the Global Mission Table is active with the church there through financial partnerships. Earlier this year, \$50,000 was given to projects led by the Lutheran World Federation and ELCA partner ACT Alliance; another \$15,000 has been approved for school supplies that ELH will distribute.





*The celebration of Reformation at IEU included a service of adult baptism.*



*Reformation Sunday worship at the IEU headquarters church in Santiago de Cuba.*

## CUBA UPDATE

### A vibrant Lutheran ministry in the midst of scarcity

The Iglesia Evangélica Unida of Santiago de Cuba (IEU) continues to shine the light of Christ amid severe economic challenges. Citizens contend with daily blackouts due to the aging electrical system and extreme shortages of basic food, medicine and hygiene supplies. In the face of such profound scarcity, the IEU proclaims the abundant life found in Christ. Youth events, worship, Bible studies and prayer group gatherings help the community to find purpose, and the strength to keep going.

The pictures here offer a profound witness to the power of the gospel as a source of hope for those active in the worship and work of the IEU. On this page are scenes from various congregations' observances of Reformation Day, seen as an occasion for engaging in celebratory worship and a renewal of people's understanding of the tenets of Lutheranism.



*A time of sharing — of fellowship and food.*



*From left: a Reformation worship service, sharing food with those in the community, talking about Lutheranism.*





*Animated small-group discussion during Bible study.*



*Praying together was a vibrant aspect of the retreat.*

The photos on this page are from a weekend retreat that focused on spiritual wellness, self-care and Lutheran identity for pastors and lay leaders of the IEU congregations. It took place November 10-12 in the town of El Cobre in the municipality of Santiago de Cuba. The ELCA provided some funding for the gathering.

Session topics included Caring for One's Own Well-

being, Symbols of the Church, Lutheran Doctrine, Liturgical Practices, Worship Practices and Means of Salvation.

The Reformation Day and retreat worship, learning events, and celebrations are testimony to how intent the IEU is on teaching Lutheranism to its members, and how seriously they take the idea of catechism.

*Right: Presenters at this retreat session provide information on the principles of worship in Lutheran teaching.*

*Far right: In an outdoor setting, participants in a self-care workshop hold discussions in small groups.*



*A workshop presentation on symbols of the church.*



*Gathering for the retreat closing blessing.*



# What does it mean to be in accompaniment with companions?

Throughout the ELCA, synods are called upon to develop relationships with their companion churches embodying the accompaniment model. What does this mean? Literally, to accompany means to walk side by side. We seek to develop mutual

relationships in which we value the gifts, strengths and skills of our companions. Rather than assuming the lead and dominant position, we take time to listen to our companions. We learn the priorities of the companion churches and interact

with them as fellow workers, sharing and learning from one another in mutual respect.

In the accompaniment model, receiving is as important as sending or giving. Companions who walk together in accompaniment emphasize recognizing and embracing one another's gifts. Being open to, and appreciative of, the gifts of companions is a hallmark of accompaniment and the Companion Synod program.

There are five core values in the Accompaniment Model:

- ♦ **Mutuality** — we seek relationships that receive one another's gifts and expertise.
- ♦ **Inclusivity** — we address exclusion and commit ourselves to making all people feel valued and embraced.
- ♦ **Vulnerability** — we are open to Christ's transformation and reconciliation.

♦ **Empowerment** — we build on each other's strengths, and build capacity for God's mission.

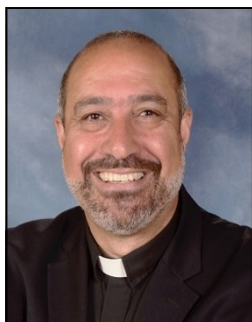
♦ **Sustainability** — we are accountable to each other, exercising good stewardship of God's gifts for the present and the future.

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. Global Mission Table projects are developed together through our companion relationships, bearing in mind the context and needs articulated by the companions.

## Here's how to learn more 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, Global Mission Table chair, at [revkhc@gmail.com](mailto:revkhc@gmail.com), or Rev. Khader El-Yateem, Florida-Bahamas Synod assistant to the bishop and director for evangelical mission, at [khadere@fbsynod.org](mailto:khadere@fbsynod.org).



Rev. Khader  
El-Yateem



Rev. Katie  
Carroll



### Want to get this newsletter in your inbox?

If you received this copy from E-Spirit, or forwarded from someone else, e-mail Pastor Katie at [revkhc@gmail.com](mailto:revkhc@gmail.com), and she will add you to our distribution list.

## LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

# Companion church representatives have leadership roles at global communion gathering in Poland

A key connection for churches in the Companion Synod Program is membership in the Lutheran World Federation. Formed in 1947, LWF is a global communion of 150 churches from 99 countries, representing 77.5 million Christians spread across Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America. LWF's Vision Statement describes it as "liberated by God's grace, a communion in Christ living and working together for a just, peaceful, and reconciled world."

LWF churches work together to support and advance God's mission in the world through activities such as theological reflection, engaging ecumenical partners and interfaith dialogue, equipping churches for ministry, responding to emergency situations, and promoting human dignity, justice and peace.

The highest governing body is the Assembly, which meets every six to seven years. This body directs and nourishes the life of the communion. A 49-member council meets between assemblies to move the work of LWF forward. The Communion Office is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. Currently the organization's chief executive officer is the Rev. Dr. Anne Burghardt.

The Thirteenth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation met in September 2023 in Krakow, Poland, with the theme "One Body, One Spirit, One Hope." A number of representatives were in attendance from the ELCA, as well as from our companions in Guyana, Suriname and Cuba. We celebrate the leadership roles assumed by individuals in all three companions.

Brother Davy Ram from Guyana helped to lead



Participants in the Men's LWF Pre-Assembly Gathering. Davy Ram from Guyana is in the center with glasses and pullover vest.

the Men's Pre-Assembly Gathering and serves on the Assembly Council as chair of the Finance Committee. Rev. Danielle Dokman of Suriname delivered the sermon at the opening worship. Rev. Dokman leads a congregation in Paramaribo, Suriname, and is completing her doctoral studies through Luther Seminary. Rev. Yamilka Hernandez Guzman of Cuba participated in drafting "Now There Are Varieties: A Study Document on Lutheran Identity in the Global Lutheran Communion."

The study document concludes in part:

"As a communion, LWF member churches are autonomous, and free to express our Lutheran identity in contextually relevant and meaningful ways. And at the same time, we are accountable to one another, to ensure that we do not harm the consciences of one another in the process. Liberty and love are good Lutheran guides for our task of faithful *tentatio*."

That last word is in Latin. Martin Luther described three rules for scripture study -- *oratio*, *meditatio* and *tentatio* -- meaning reading, meditation and what can perhaps best be described as struggling with the Word. He recognized that we all have weary hearts and consciences that cause struggle that can draw us away from God; we need to confront these in order to cling to the Word.

The study document, while 76 pages in length, is worthy of congregational study. It can be found here: <https://www.lutheranworld.org/resources/document-now-there-are-varieties>.



Suriname's Rev. Danielle Dokman preached at the LWF Assembly opening worship.



## Dr. Carolyn Schneider

### ELCA professor moving from UTCWI to serve Guyana Lutheran Church

For the past few years, Dr. Carolyn Schneider has served as Lutheran Warden (professor) at the United Theological College of the West Indies. This position is appointed and sponsored by the ELCA. Her particular role, along with teaching other courses, has been to provide Lutheran teaching for those students at UTCWI preparing for professional ministry in the Lutheran church.

Dr. Schneider has made an impact on the school, and her involvement in community life has been rich.

Along with teaching and involvement in student activities, of particular significance has been the centering experience of daily chapel. It is the key building block for creating a community based on Christ's love.

The various denominations represented at the school are invited to lead chapel according to their particular traditions. October was the month for the Lutheran community to have its turn; participants were invited to reflect upon what we as Christians are freed from and what

we are freed for, using Martin Luther's paradox, "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none; a Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all" (from *The Freedom of a Christian, in Martin Luther: Three Treatises* -- Minneapolis: Fortress 1970, page, 277).



*Dr. Carolyn Schneider*

Recently it was announced that Dr. Schneider will be moving from Jamaica to Guyana in February 2024. This decision was made in consultation with her, UTCWI and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana (ELCG). While she will no doubt engage in teaching, her particular role will be to work with ELCG as it revitalizes its ministerial and lay leadership training programs.

As part of her orientation to this new position, Dr. Schneider will visit the Florida-Bahamas Synod in January to meet with synod staff and leaders in our diakonia program. We look forward to supporting her efforts and to collaborating with her and ELCG through joint courses and teacher exchanges.



*The chapel where students take turns leading worship at the United Theological College of the West Indies*

## The many ways you can connect with Global Mission

Are you interested in getting involved in Global Mission? There are a number of ways to feel more connected to this ministry. You can . . .

- ♦ speak to Pastor Katie, Global Mission Table (GMT) chair, about joining a Companion Team or being part of the GMT.
- ♦ make a financial gift as an individual or on a congregational level.
- ♦ include Global Mission in your personal prayers or corporate prayers in worship.
- ♦ plan a Global Mission Sunday at your congregation

and invite a Global Mission volunteer to speak or preach.

- ♦ join our mailing list so you will receive the GMT Newsletter in your e-mail inbox.
- ♦ let Pastor Katie know that you would like to host a companion visiting the United States.
- ♦ be part of a virtual activity.
- ♦ join or help to plan an accompaniment trip.

To learn more about any of these opportunities, e-mail Pastor Katie at [revkhc@gmail.com](mailto:revkhc@gmail.com) or call her at 305-505-1656 today!