



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

Florida-Bahamas Synod **Global Mission Table** **News / Noticias / Nouvèl**

November 2020 — Issue #18

What does it mean to be involved in Global Mission?

An 18-member Global Mission Table guides the synod's five companion relationships in the Caribbean Basin: the countries of Cuba, Guyana, Haiti, and Suriname and a seminary, the United Theological College of the West Indies, in Kingston, Jamaica.

Each companion relationship is supported by its own "team" that anyone can join. A team is a great place to launch your involvement—to do so, just email Pastor Katie Carroll at revkhc@gmail.com and she will get you started.

For some of us, "being involved"

means being part of an immersion trip once travel is feasible and learning firsthand about how God is active in another land and culture. For others, it means being an ambassador to one's congregation and/or conference — sharing news from our companions and describing the ways we are working together.

Still others commit to being involved with our companions by providing resources that will grow the relationship, whether that means encouraging monetary support from congregations and individuals, or hosting a visit of one of our com-

panions to Florida. All of us are urged to be involved through praying for our companions and nurturing hearts that seek to learn how our stories and their stories are all part of God's story.

The ELCA Global Mission program understands our companion relationships as ones of accompaniment: *walking together in solidarity that practices interdependence and mutuality*. This a wonderful image. What does it mean?

In generations past, *mission* typically meant Christians in the global North traveled to the global South, bringing their religion through the lens of their culture. In other words, God's story was proclaimed through the cultural story and lens of the evangelists.

The world has changed significantly since those days. Christians in the global South now outnumber Christians in the North. Further, the concept of *mission* is understood differently. We recognize that our story and the other's story are together, part of God's story.

In other words, we seek to understand and value local context, local story, and local culture. We come not to direct and manage, but to walk alongside and partner.

We come in a spirit of reconciliation and accompaniment, not imposing one culture upon another. We come to learn from each other, help each other, grow from each other and serve with each other. We are companions in the journey of faith.

WELCOME!

My name is Rev. Katie Carroll, and recently I was named chair of the Global Mission Table of the Florida-Bahamas Synod. I follow in the footsteps of PJ May, who led this ministry to occupy the central place it holds today in our life as a synod. I live in the culturally rich city of Miami where some 130 languages are spoken in the home. Having lived in Argentina as a young child, I speak Spanish and have served in both English- and Spanish-speaking settings during my 25-plus years of ministry in Miami. I delight in the ability to be immersed in cultures different from my own, where we learn from each other and grow in community.



Encouragement from our synod's Global Mission Table liaison

A message from Rev. Khader El-Yateem, the Global Mission Table's liaison with the synod's Office of the Bishop and the Synod Council

The Global Mission Table is an important expression of the work we do together as a synod. On behalf of the Office of the Bishop, I invite your prayers, your excitement and your engagement with our companions in Cuba, Guyana, Haiti, Suriname and the United Theological College of the West Indies in Jamaica.

Involvement in Global Mission connects us to what God is doing throughout the world, just as it connects congregations of the Florida-Bahamas Synod as they join in mission and ministry. I hope you enjoy this newsletter and learn more about the values of the accompaniment model that shapes ELCA understanding of Global Mission. Once travel can resume, consider joining an immersion trip. It is a life-changing experience!

Through the Global Mission Table, we are drawn together in Christ's name with people near and far, and sent out to do God's work with our hands. Thanks be to God!



Rev. Khader El-Yateem is assistant to the bishop and director of evangelical mission for the Southern District of the Florida-Bahamas Synod. In this photo, he is blessing a child during the synod immersion trip to Cuba last December (see page 3) that he had baptized on his trip to the island a year earlier.

GMT team leaders report on Covid-19, approve aid to Haiti

At the October 28 Global Mission Table meeting, via Zoom, team leaders shared that Covid-19 has impacted all of our companions.

In-person worship ceased in Guyana and Suriname. The seminary is offering classes online. The particular crisis in Cuba is shortages of food and medicine, made more acute due to U.S. government administration policies.

Thanks to a generous donation made through Emmanuel Lutheran in Venice, Haiti will receive a container of sanitizing and protective equipment. The GMT approved funding of fuel and generator-related parts for Haiti, so that the Lutheran Center in Gressier can have power for its office until solar panels are installed.

GUYANA AND SURINAME

Looking forward to when we can resume in-person interactions

Like other countries in the Caribbean Basin, Guyana and Suriname have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. In-person worship ceased for many months in both countries and only now is beginning to return on a limited basis.

The Guyana and Suriname team of the Florida-Bahamas Synod Global Mission Table looks forward to further conversations regarding ways we can work together virtually in the new year until we can once more interact in person.

Over the years, a bond has been established between the synod and the Lutheran churches of these two South American countries through



*Marcee Wilkes
Guyana and Suriname
Team leader*

WELCA (Women of the ELCA). Members of the Lutheran Church in Guyana have attended synodical women's gatherings at Lake Yale, and Florida-Bahamas women have attended women's events in Guyana. We hope these kinds of exchanges can resume when travel and events are reinstated.

We had hoped to host an immersion trip in 2020 for Lutherans in Suriname to visit in Florida. Such plans are on hold for now due to the pandemic.

Marcee Wilkes is the Global Mission team leader for Guyana and Suriname. She has visited both countries and has participated in women's events with Guyana.

CUBA

December visit fosters new companion relationship

The Florida-Bahamas Synod and the ELCA Global Mission Desk continue to develop our new relationship with the *Iglesia Evangélica Unida-Sínodo Luterano* based in Santiago de Cuba. A synod immersion trip in December 2019 helped to cement a commitment to establish a companion relationship.

This has been a challenging year, but there have been positive steps forward.

Through regular communication at both the synod and ELCA levels, we are learning about the joys and struggles of the Cuban people and the work of the IEU-SL. We are finding ways to partner with them in projects ranging from emergency relief to the refurbishment of churches throughout the Santiago de Cuba region.



*Rev. Russell Meyer
Emerging Cuba
Team leader*

The ELCA Global Mission Desk has provided financial support for a kindergarten being constructed. Earlier in the year the synod provided albs for the worship leaders of the various congregations.

The combination of the pandemic and ever-increasing restrictions levied by the current U.S. government administration has made life extremely difficult in Cuba. Access to basic necessities including food and medications has been severely impacted. Residents of villages, towns and cities are most deeply affected by restrictive measures, rather than the leadership. The ELCA continues to call for an end to the U.S. trade embargo and for opening of dialogue and mutual cooperation.

The Rev. Russell Meyer leads the emerging Cuba Mission Team. He is a longtime friend and advocate of the Cuban people with an extensive background and deep, abiding love of the country.



Above: During the synod immersion trip to Cuba last December, participants join with local Lutherans at the IEU-SL headquarters in Santiago de Cuba after multi-congregational worship. The banner reads "Be strong and take courage."



Above: Florida-Bahamas Bishop Pedro Suárez baptizes a child during Sunday worship in Cuba.



Left: Joining in prayer around a table in Cuba.

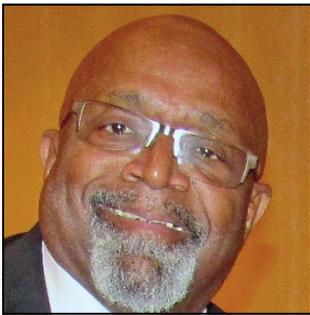


Left: Headquarters of the Iglesia Evangélica Unida-Sínodo Luterano in Santiago de Cuba.

HAITI

Despite setbacks, Lutheran projects going forward

Greetings from Alonzo Batson Jr., the Global Mission Table's Haiti Team leader. The grassroots companion relationship of the people of Haiti and of the Florida-Bahamas Synod began in 1998 with the "Pigs and Pastors" project. This project resulted in the ordination of the first four Lutheran pastors and the establishment of the *Eglise Luthérienne d'Haiti* (ELH). Pastor Joseph



Alonzo Batson Jr.
Haiti Team leader

Livenson Lauvanus was selected as president of the new church, and in 2010 a formal partnership was established with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Haiti was been struck in this century with repeated natural disasters — hurricanes, earthquakes and droughts — leaving the country economically and socially dysfunctional. The consequences of these disas-

ters along with the total collapse of the national government has created multitudes of challenges for the people of Haiti just to eke out a living and feed their families.

Communication problems, fuel shortages and now the Covid-19 pandemic have affected the connectivity and also the personal interactions between our two groups. However, the synod and the ELCA have responded to the challenge with increased companionship support. At the request of the ELH, successful "Seeds for Haiti" and "Goats for Haiti" projects were initiated by the synod. A water cistern was built. Solar panels have been purchased and await installation in the ELH office. Updated computers with QuickBooks accounting software have been installed.

Through the efforts of Pastor Livenson and the ELH Executive Council, working with the FB Synod, progress is being realized toward the Lutheran Church of Haiti becoming a fully functional companion of the synod, expanding the church's min-



Lutheran members of the Gressier community in Haiti work on organizing the main office of l'Eglise Luthérienne d'Haiti there. The office has been fitted with new computers and software for bookkeeping and record keeping. The office will be powered by solar panels which have been purchased but not yet installed.

istry, and helping to improve the quality of life for the Haitian people.

Alonzo Batson Jr. chairs the Global Mission Haiti Team, which meets regularly. Involvement by any Florida-Bahamas congregation or individual in this mission project is welcome.

Companion church mission trips will be restarted when health and safety conditions allow.

FLORIDA-BAHAMAS SYNOD GLOBAL MISSION TABLE

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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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UNITED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF THE WEST INDIES

Mission Team partners in upgrading seminary classroom

The United Theological College of the West Indies is an ecumenical seminary that has been serving a diverse student body since its establishment in 1966. Six denominations support and send candidates there for formation in ordained and lay ministries — Moravians, Anglicans, Methodists, Lutherans, Baptists, and the United Church. Students come from other denominations to pursue degrees as well.

Pastor Livenson, president of the *Eglise Luthérienne d’Haiti*, is one of UTCWI’s graduates.

The journey of the synod’s Jamaica Team began with an invitation from former Global Mission Team chair PJ May to Dr. Oral Thomas, president of the United Theological College of the West Indies, to attend a meeting of the GMT. Through PJ’s efforts, a companionship and friendship began with the purpose of following the mission of this remarkable seminary to train and equip students to spread the good news.

Our first project together was renovation of UTC’s Classroom #3, a Christian education classroom. The work included installing an en-



This photo was taken in the reception area of the University of the West Indies -Mona, where our companion seminary is located. That’s Judith Olsen, the synod’s Jamaica Team leader, in the pink shirt. PJ May is at the back in navy.

hanced Wi-fi connection, replacing manual teaching and learning systems, and providing comfortable furniture for students and instructors, along with electrical upgrades, additional computers and video equipment.

This project is almost completed, even though the Covid-19 pandemic is still a problem. The renovation and upgrades ensure the instructors and students a classroom that is technologically current and comfortably furnished.

During our ice breaker trip, we enjoyed lectures and learned the history of the struggle of the Jamaican people to be a part of the world God designed for everyone to enjoy. The afternoons were spent touring sites, visiting museums and relishing Jamaican cuisine.

We look forward to deepening our companion relationship with UTCWI and visiting again to expand our love and knowledge of a beautiful island country.

— **Judy Olsen**, Jamaica Team leader



PJ May last December at a Lutheran congregation in Guantanamo during the Cuba immersion trip.

Many thanks, PJ, for so much that you’ve done

When it comes to Spirit-inspired, faithful leadership, PJ May is a prime example. For nearly seven years, PJ served as chair of the Global Mission Table. With the model of accompaniment as her guide, she brought enthusiasm, passion, organization, structure and mutual accountability to the Global Mission ministry.

She appreciated the individual companions and their unique context and helped to assemble teams of committed volunteers for each. She led consultations, hosted groups, traveled on immersion trips, and was the voice for Global Mission around the synod. PJ’s love for Global Mission was contagious, and her legacy is one of leaving a vibrant ministry that through the Spirit’s guidance can be sustained for years to come.

We are thrilled that she will continue to be involved with Global Mission by remaining on the Cuba and Jamaica Teams. On behalf of the Office of the Bishop, the Global Mission companions, members of the Global Mission Table and teams, and indeed, the entire synod, thank you, PJ!

OUR 5 GLOBAL MISSION COMPANIONS



ELCA defines Lutheran synod companion relationships

The Global Mission link on 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, resulting in more than 120 companion synod relationships.”

Through its companion relationships with Cuba, Guyana, Haiti, Suriname and the United Theological College seminary in Jamaica, the Florida-Bahamas Synod follows the ELCA model of accompaniment embracing commitment to the following values:

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

INCLUSIVITY — relationships that address exclusion in communities

VULNERABILITY — relationships that are open to Christ’s transformation and reconciliation

EMPOWERMENT — relationships that build 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.

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