



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

Global Mission Table

News / Noticias / Nouvèl

March 2021 — Issue #19

Two leaders with a passion for people and justice

Global Mission ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America embody *connection*: of congregations, synods, and the ELCA churchwide expression. Congregations throughout the Florida-Bahamas Synod support our work with companion churches through financial gifts and countless hours of volunteering. As a

synod we are blessed by a wonderful connection with the ELCA staff devoted to the work of Global Mission.

In this issue of our synod's Global Mission Table newsletter, we spotlight two people we work with closely in the ELCA's ministries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Read their interviews on pages 2 and 3.

Companions collaborate in calling out gender-based violence

Lutheran companion churches throughout Latin America and the Caribbean came together to observe 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence last fall, from Nov. 25 through Dec. 10. Nov. 25 is designated as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and the United Nations has designated Dec. 10 as International Human Rights Day. During the 16 days, Lutheran synods and churches posted prayers, songs, litanies and worship services on the Facebook pages of ELCA Global Mission and the Lutheran Office for World Community. The Florida-Bahamas Synod worked with the Lutheran Church in Suriname to create a

Global Mission teams partnered with companions

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 a team (one relates to both Guyana and Suriname) that anyone can join. A team is a great place to launch your involvement — to do so, just e-mail 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 first hand 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 ways we are working together.

Still others commit to being involved with our companions by

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12-minute Advent devotion and prayer video. Women from our

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HELLEN RIOS-CARRILLO

With a dual focus, she feels called to help others grow

Hellen Rios-Carrillo is the ELCA's Regional Representative for the Caribbean, which includes our companions of Cuba, Suriname, Guyana and Jamaica. (The representative for Haiti, our fifth companion, is ELCA's Rev. Jaime Dubon.) Hellen also is the Gender Justice Coordinator for the Caribbean and Latin America. Rev. Katie Carroll, Florida-Bahamas Synod Global Mission Team chair, interviewed her recently about her ministry.

Pastor Katie: *Tell us about your background and what led you to Global Mission.*

Hellen: I was born and raised in Nicaragua and was an active member of the Nicaragua Lutheran Church of Faith and Hope. My passion for women's empowerment and gender justice was kindled in my youth. As a leader in my church, I visited rural congregations and recognized the great pastoral need in this area. There was a lack in education regarding sexuality and reproductive rights, and communities such as those suffering from AIDS were rejected.

I became the youth representative for the Latin American/Caribbean region to the Lutheran World Federation and served as the LWF Women in Church and Society coordinator for Central America. My higher education also related to this field, as I received an undergraduate degree in psychology and a master's in Sexual and Reproductive Health.

I moved to the United States in 2015 with my husband, a candidate for ordination in the ELCA. I began volunteering in the International Leaders Program. In 2017, I began serving as the Latin American/Caribbean program coordinator, and four years later I was named the Regional Representative for the Caribbean and Coordinator for Gender Justice.

Pastor Katie: *How would you describe the significance of Global Mission? Why is it important?*

Hellen: Through Global Mission, we are able to grasp the meaning of being one body in Christ. In the United States there are millions of Lutherans; in other countries the numbers are much smaller. As I grew up in a smaller community, it was wonderful to feel connected to groups that came from the United States and various other parts of the world, and to realize I was a part of something bigger.

What's more, we learned that different languages were not barriers to relationships; as the family of God, we were connected. Through Global Mission partners we are all gifted with mutual learning and growing.



Hellen Rios-Carrillo

Leaders are developed and we come to realize that we all have gifts to share.

I am particularly excited by the YAGM (Young Adults in Global Mission) program of the ELCA, where young leaders serve in companion churches throughout the world. Young adults immersing themselves in another country grow and learn to love and value cultural experiences beyond their own.

Pastor Katie: *How is the ELCA involved in Global Mission work throughout the world?*

Hellen: The ELCA has developed relationships with Lutheran churches around the world, and over the years we have been accompanying them in their ministries, serving to lift up their ministry priorities back to the ELCA and helping them discern how best the ELCA can respond to their priorities in a holistic approach. There are 12 regional representatives throughout the world: four in Latin America/Caribbean, five in Africa, two in Asia and one for Europe and the Middle East.

Pastor Katie: *What do you love about your ministry?*

Hellen: It is a great privilege to walk with the churches in Cuba, Guyana and Suriname and the seminary in Jamaica. Coming from a companion church in Nicaragua myself, it is a particular privilege now to be a resource person to other companions. As a Latina and one from Central America, I feel called to serve in my region. It is the place where I built my capacity, and now I have the opportunity to accompany, similar to the way I was accompanied.

Pastor Katie: *What are your goals for the coming year?*

Hellen: A primary goal is to get to know the companions and their ministries in this "new normal." Until we can travel, I recognize this in itself is a challenge. However, becoming acquainted through a computer has also opened up opportunities for creativity and innovation. ELCA Global Mission and the Florida-Bahamas Global Mission Table work closely together to reach the goal of effective companion relationships.

In **Cuba**, the ELCA is providing Covid-19 relief and also has provided funds to create a community garden,

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PAULINA DASSE

An emphasis on forging relationships, realizing dreams

As Program Director for Relationships in the newly named Service and Justice Home Area of the ELCA, Paulina Dasse is a key partner with the Florida-Bahamas Synod. Pastor Katie spoke with her about her ministry.

Pastor Katie: Tell us about your background and what led you to Global Mission.

Paulina: I was raised in Punta Arenas, one of the southernmost cities in Chile. I am a lifelong Lutheran. When my family moved to Punta Arenas when I was six years old, my parents found no Lutheran church to join, yet they found other Lutheran families, and we began gathering together. The church was our life — we went from being a small group to being a mission served by visiting pastors from Brazil, Germany and other parts of Chile, to buying land and building a church. From the start, our congregation had a global connection.

After receiving a degree in business in Chile, I worked for a cruise line. Looking back, I recognize the life-changing nature of that job. A desire was ignited within me to learn about and appreciate other cultures.

I moved to the United States in 2001, as my husband was a seminary student in the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. After I received my work permit the following year, my career with the ELCA was launched. I served first in Stewardship and next, in Ecumenical Affairs. From there, I transitioned to Global Mission's Latin American Desk.

Global Mission has been a perfect fit: I feel as though I came back to my roots as I relate to the very region I am from. My gifts and skills are a good match for my work, and I am able to speak Spanish on a regular basis. What's more, I bring a perspective from the South to my work in the ELCA.

Pastor Katie: To you, what is the significance of Global Mission?

Paulina: When we experience other cultures, not only do we appreciate another way of life, we also come to understand our local engagement in a new way. We see with even greater clarity that life is not "about me" but, rather, "about us."

Through Global Mission we are given a new vision of the world. We come to appreciate, value and respect the other, recognizing that we have much to learn from each other. The emphasis in Global Mission is on *relationship*. When we are in relationship, we learn to trust each other and to be vulnerable to each other — sharing dreams, admitting needs and opening ourselves to



Paulina Dasse

serve. As we grow in love of God and each other, we are able to dream together. Then, the relationship that we forge help us to realize those dreams.

Pastor Katie: Describe the work that you do and your goals for the year ahead.

Paulina: As Program Director for Relationships, my work is to connect people and groups. Prior to the reorganization of

the ELCA this year, my focus was on companion relationships in Latin America and the Caribbean. I was the liaison in the ELCA for the companion synod program and I helped connect synods with the work of the ELCA Global Mission Desk. While I continue to do this, I now also oversee the development of other relationships beyond companion synods — from seminaries to individual congregations to donors to organizations of all types. Further, my portfolio has been expanded to include Europe.

My goal this year is to grow the number of "entry points" through which people and groups can engage. I will continue to support companion church relationships and consider this to be a key vehicle for engagement. Nevertheless, I am also excited to develop other relationship modalities in hopes of energizing newer, younger and more diverse communities.

Pastor Katie: How can the Florida-Bahamas Synod partner with you?

Paulina: The synod will continue to be a dynamic part of my portfolio of relationships. We will continue to partner wherever possible in projects and initiatives, and stay in regular touch. Such partnership can range from providing funding for different aspects of an initiative to having joint calls with our partners to deepen our relationships, to sharing ideas and perspectives on our individual and collective work. Through collaboration and communication, our dreaming will continue. The Holy Spirit will ignite us as we work together as partners in ministry.

Pastor Katie: What are your thoughts about the impact of Covid-19 on Global Mission work?

Paulina: Covid-19 has impacted Global Mission in myriad ways. Travel has ceased, and many projects we

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Partnering to speak out against gender-based violence

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synod's Cuba Team joined with women in Cuba in designing personal postcards in which each shared a connection with a woman in the Bible to a theme of advocacy and justice for women.

On page 1 and here are several of the postcards. Texts and translations from Spanish appear at the end of this article.

The project last year came about as a result of a November 2019 gathering in Guatemala, the 5th International Consultation of ELCA synods and churches in Latin America and the Caribbean. A major theme of the gathering was gender justice. It resulted in calls for action including:

✝ Education within the church to promote gender parity among leadership.

✝ Insistence on women being seen within the church as a community of equals.

✝ Speaking about gender differences and a new understanding of masculinity.

✝ Looking to more role models for single-parent families headed by women.

In 2020, mutual plans that were developed included gender justice efforts "recognizing the importance of lifting up the gifts and talents of women and all human beings in the world and in the ministry of our churches." In a letter last fall, Paulina Dasse, ELCA program director for relationships, and Hellen Rios-Carrillo, ELCA gender justice coordinator and representative for the Caribbean, invited the churches to join in 16 days of activism aimed at ending violence against women.

"We believe that as churches, we can plan an important role ...

addressing gender-based violence from our rooted Lutheran perspective on inclusion and equality," they wrote. "We know that Covid-19 has negatively impacted the life and safety of all, but particularly women and girls. Violence against women and girls has increased throughout the regions, and we know that churches have been present accompanying those who suffer and struggle with these situations."

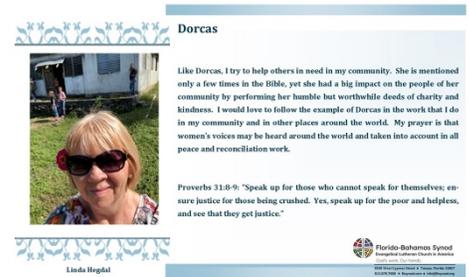
They proposed that, using social media, ELCA synods and companion churches "share from their own context and realities the call of the church to work towards a world without gender-based violence." They suggested prayers, liturgies, lament and healing, and stories of hope and resilience. Particularly, they suggested, "Can we lift up names of women in the Bible that experience gender-based violence such as physical or emotional abuse?" And so the postcard collaboration between our synod and women of faith in Cuba was born.

Each companion synod and church was asked to pick a day to share its effort. Our 12-minute Advent video project with our companion in Suriname was on Dec. 2. You can watch it here: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=669763193740548>.

The postcards created in partnership with our companion in Cuba were posted on Dec. 9.

Postcard texts with translations from Spanish

The word "red" printed in red atop each postcard does not refer to the color; it is the Spanish word for *network*. Atop each card are the words "Women of faith / No violence and equity." And across



the bottom: "No discrimination, No violence, No more gender-based violence, Peace and equity, God be with you "

Here's what each one wrote:

Pastor Yamilka Hernández-Guzmán: Like Esther, I have been chosen for a special mission. I put myself in your hands, Lord, to prepare me for the great day. May you find my presence gracious in your eyes. May your wisdom be the message that comes from my mouth. May your presence be made real through me in the lives of others. May my people find protection beneath your mantle. May you hear our cry as women, and may the powerful hear you. Dry our tears, Lord, free us and come to our defense. Change our lament into dancing, and may your truth guide our lives. Bless us with peace. Amen.

Deacon Aura Suárez: Like Lydia, I join other women in worshipping God. We have a much more precious value for God than the

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SURINAME

Gender justice is a priority

The partnership with our companion in Suriname, the *Evangelisch Lutherse Kerk in Suriname* (ELKS), is active at both the synod and ELCA levels.

Recently the ELCA approved an emergency grant of \$24,785 for Covid-19 pandemic response, to be used to provide food and non-food items, particularly for women and the elderly impacted by the virus.

Gender justice is also a priority for ELKS; the church is aware that ongoing issues of violence and abuse have been made worse by the pandemic. Our Guyana/Suriname Team has begun conversations regarding projects the companion would like to launch in partnership with the Florida-Bahamas Synod and the ELCA.

ELKS initiatives in the works range from direct service to women and children facing domestic abuse to educational events about the many aspects of gender-based violence. Watch for more news on these plans in future newsletters.

Hellen Rios-Carrillo . . .

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refurbish a nursery and support leadership formation. The Lutheran Church in **Suriname** has recently received Covid relief funds; the ELCA is partnering with the church on a pilot project in the area of gender violence due to Covid stress.

The seminary in **Jamaica** is expanding its online educational program, and the ELCA is supporting this both with funding and with guest professors who will teach online. There are plans for a symposium on gender justice later in 2021, and the ELCA will be part of this initiative. Further, the ELCA is actively seeking a Lutheran professor to be part of the faculty at the seminary. Plans are still in development for partnering with **Guyana**.

Pastor Katie: How does the Florida-Bahamas Synod partner with you?

Hellen: I am in regular communication with the Global Mission Table of your synod and attend as many meetings as possible with each team. Wherever possible, we collaborate so that the work the synod does fits in with the ELCA-wide initiatives.

We all long to meet face-to-face to deepen our relationships further. It is our goal to travel — ELCA staff and Florida-Bahamas Synod volunteers together — connecting our joint mission with our companions. We are church *together*, for the sake of the world.

Paulina Dasse . . .

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had anticipated working on have been placed on hold. Nevertheless, I also see how the pandemic has brought new life and a deepening of relationships. We have discovered the power of virtual meetings and, if anything, are in more regular touch than we were before the pandemic began.

In our meetings, we spend time on relationship building — we don't get "right to business," but ask about each other's lives and how our families and communities are faring. We have pursued projects involving technology that we might otherwise have overlooked. How the Spirit will lead the work of Global Mission remains to be seen; however, we have learned that when relationships are genuine and are valued, our partnership continues unabated.

5 Global Mission teams . . .

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providing resources that will grow the relationship, whether that means encouraging monetary support from congregations and individuals, or hosting a Florida visit of one of our companions. 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 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.

UNITED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF THE WEST INDIES

Companion seminary offering short courses virtually

Online learning has become a reality at the United Theological College of the West Indies, the Florida-Bahamas Synod's seminary companion in Kingston, Jamaica.

The seminary is offering short courses in a virtual format that makes them available literally worldwide, and anyone can apply to take them.

The first offering, begun in January, is training leading to an Advanced Certificate in Leadership Skills for Church and Society. Through a \$600 scholarship grant, our synod's Jamaica Team provided financial aid for two students to enroll.

The recipients were Gillian Murray, a final year Methodist student at UTCWI, and Marvin Hard-ware, also studying for ministry.



In a note of thanks, Gillian wrote that "I will be both diligent and faithful to the course of study." Marvin wrote, "I look forward to the ways in which I will be equipped for

the work of ministry and the impact that this partnership will have on the communities that God has given me the grace to serve."

This course was designed to take into account real-life scenarios that occur in local

church and community settings. It provides tools for existing and aspiring leaders to work effectively with and through others to achieve goals, manage crises, devise new solutions to old problems, and encourage the development of other leaders.

UTCWI also is planning online

courses this year on Digital Discipleship and on Talking to God in an Age of Physical Distancing. And one on Gender and Leadership is being developed in coordination with a symposium on gender justice the seminary hopes to organize in the latter half of 2021.

The seminary was founded as an ecumenical community of learning and worship in 1966 from three other institutions. It is owned and operated by six denominations in the Caribbean — Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Moravian and United churches. Its purpose is to prepare men and women, clergy and lay, for mission and service in the Caribbean and beyond within the denominational traditions from which they come.

If you'd like to learn more, visit the UTCWI website at <http://www.utcwi.edu.jm>.

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 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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CUBA

Hope for improved relations

Relations between the United States and Cuba became even more strained in the final weeks of the previous administration, as Cuba was placed on the list of terrorist countries alongside nations such as Iran and North Korea. This was added to the already crippling effect of the embargo. Under the new administration, the unfolding of priorities will inform the timing of any relaxation of restrictions.

Besides the challenges of Covid-19, the people of Cuba are experiencing severe shortages of food and medications. A restructuring of the Cuban currency led to a major devaluation of the peso. The ELCA has made two grants to the *Iglesia Evangélica Unida-Sínodo Luterano* (Cuba's Evangelical United Church-Lutheran Synod) in Santiago for food, supplies and pastoral care support and training in response to hardships caused by the pandemic and economic stress. The Global Mission Table asks for your prayers that the officials of our respective governments find a way to open themselves to dialogue and exchange.

Anticipating a growing partnership, the Global Mission Table plans to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Lutheran church in Cuba in the near future to formalize a companion relationship.

HAITI

Church receives grant to stabilize power, PPE supplies

L’Eglise Luthérienne d’Haiti — our companion church in Haiti — was awarded \$2,020 by our Global Mission Table last November for generator repairs and fuel to provide electricity to the church headquarters. Reliable power is necessary so that computers can be used for book-keeping and other financial and administrative functions.

Electricity needs will be secure once solar panels, purchased with Global Mission Table funds two years ago, are installed in the church headquarters building in the community of Gressier, located near Port-au-Prince. Political unrest in Haiti has stalled the project.

At present there is added tension, with citizens calling for President Jovenel Moise to step down and not remain in office for the fifth year of his term.

Also late last year, the Lutheran Church of Haiti received a gift of



Left: Pastor Livenson Lauvanus prepares to open boxes of PPE supplies sent to the Lutheran Church of Haiti by Emmanuel Lutheran/Venice. Right: Pastor Livenson unpacks some of the 15,600 bottles of sanitizer in the shipment, for distribution to those gathered at the church headquarters in Gressier.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other Covid-19-related supplies from Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Venice. The boxes of items received at the Gressier center included 480,000 masks, 72,000 bottles of antibacterial soap and

15,600 bottles of sanitizer.

Our Florida-Bahamas Synod Haiti Team stays in regular communication with Pastor Livenson Lauvanus, ELH president, and prays for an end to the violence and instability in that land.



Rev. Khader El-Yateem

What are your thoughts 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, 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. Katie Carroll

OUR GLOBAL MISSION COMPANIONS

Postcard texts. . .



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 purple fabrics that Lydia sold. Just as you opened Lydia’s heart to respond to your message, keep opening my heart to persuade others to inclusion, justice and gender equity. Trusting that you, dear God, will open and transform hearts.

Liset Govin Murdoch: Led by the prophet Deborah, I ask for all women that we continue our walk to confront injustice, so that we may defend our rights and together make an offering of liberty, peace and faith.

Tirisy Durán Martínez: Like Ruth, I walk with you, my friend and sister in faith, fully confident that united we can move forward. Nothing can separate us. Together in love and with faith in God we can be sustained and overcome adversities. And so I want to accompany you in your fears, in your silences. Like Ruth, I will go with you wherever you may go; in your challenges my spirit will be with you, your freedom will be my freedom, your justice will be my justice, your fullness my own.

Linda Hegdal: Like Dorcas, I try to help others in need in my community. She is mentioned only a few times in the Bible, yet she had a big impact on the people of her community by performing her humble but worthwhile deeds of charity and kindness.

I would love to follow the examples of Dorcas in the work that I do in my community and in other places around the world. My prayer is that women’s voices may be heard around the world and taken into account in all peace and reconciliation work.

ELCA defines synod companion relations

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,” totaling more than 120 in all.

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

- MUTUALITY** — relationships that receive one another’s gifts and expertise
- INCLUSIVITY** — relationships addressing exclusion in communities
- VULNERABILITY** — relationships open to Christ’s transformation and reconciliation
- EMPOWERMENT** — relationships building 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. We develop projects bearing in mind the context and needs articulated by the companions.