

UPDATES FROM ELCA GLOBAL MISSION



Europe

Rev. Cindy Halmarson, third bishop of Saskatchewan Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, began work as Area Program Director for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa (Europe/MENA). She will relocate to Chicago in March 2015. **Ms. Johanna L. Olson** began work as Manager for Relationships for Europe and MENA in October 2014.

The ELCA accompanies churches throughout Europe through leadership development, education, pastoral ministry, and engagement with marginalized peoples. Specific

ministries include **Young Adults in Global Mission** volunteers serving in the U.K. and Hungary; providing **English teachers** for church schools in Central Europe; ELCA pastors in International English language congregations and seminary interns in London and Bratislava; **leadership training** for the Lutheran church in Russia; **an international women's seminar** in Germany; and support for programs working with **Roma people** and **humanitarian assistance** for people impacted by the war in eastern Ukraine.

Now in its 24th year, the teaching program in Central Europe continues to serve the needs of Lutheran church schools in Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. Over 15 teachers are appointed each year by the ELCA to teach English and other subjects in Lutheran high schools. Most teachers spend one year in their school before returning home, but each year several teachers renew their contracts, which is a good sign of a strong and vibrant program. Recruitment is a big task, and Global Mission relies on word-of-mouth to get the word out about this global service opportunity, so please help out and refer people to <http://www.elca.org/Careers>, where interested persons can check out the "Job Board". Our current volunteers range in age from 25 to 68. (Except for the change of year, this is all fundamentally correct.

In Russia, ELCA Pastor Bradn Buerkle is leading **leadership training seminars** for both lay and clergy of the Lutheran churches. Lutherans are scattered from St. Petersburg in the west to Vladivostok in the Far East, a distance of 5,974 miles by road! Access to theological training is very limited, so these courses provide essential grounding and refreshed thinking about key elements of the faith. This project is one of the Global Ministries supported by "Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA". In 2015, ELCA Global Mission underscored its commitment to the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy, a 50 year ecumenical ministry in Russia's capital, to provide grant support for a medical advice clinic which serve the African and Asian refugees population.



The second **International Women's Seminar in Wittenberg** will take place April 25-May 2 with 16 women church leaders from 10 countries. The sharing of stories, hearing new perspectives and meeting one another at the "crossroads of the Reformation" will encourage and inspire them to become stronger leaders in their respective churches. These seminars are supported by The Campaign for the ELCA through International Leaders –Women.

10-12 million **Roma** (sometimes called Gypsy) live throughout Europe. They represent the largest and most marginalized people on the continent and face discrimination and racism at every turn. The ELCA is working closely with churches, non-government agencies and Roma-led organizations to assist the Roma to speak for themselves in finding a better and safer future. In Serbia, we are partnering with Roma community leaders for access to education, health care and employment opportunities. We are committed to the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Hungary's efforts to build and sustain a faith community of education and farming for Roma children and their families.

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In January, **Lutheran Disaster Response** disbursed \$85,000 to its partners from ACT Alliance, Hungarian Interchurch Aid and the Russian Orthodox Church to help support almost 20,000 survivors in the areas of conflict. Lutheran Disaster Response is working with its partners to provide food, diapers, blankets, water, health kits, hygiene kits and psychosocial services to assist those who have fled their homes.

Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

In **Egypt**, the ELCA accompanies the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services, and St. Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS). In November, StARS hired Chris Eades as its new executive director. Chris is a lawyer by training and previously worked as the legal director of Africa and Middle East Refugee Assistance in Cairo, and in a similar role at the Jesuit Refugee Service in Bangkok, as well as other organizations in the UK and USA.

Our companions in **Syria** and **Iraq** are facing intensifying threats of religiously-sanctioned extremism, especially at the hands of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS, or what Arab Christians call *Da'esh*). The ELCA has given over \$1 million of direct aid to Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons. The international war in the region will lead to even greater human suffering.

In January, Bishop Eaton led a delegation on her first official visit to our companion, the **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL)**. The delegation met with students and staff in schools operated by ELCJHL; pastors and other church leaders; and political and religious leaders, including a meeting with the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land. "The impact of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land upon the lives of all people in the region is out of proportion to its size. This relatively small church does enormous work in education, humanitarian aid, environmental study, advocacy, ecumenical and inter-religious relations and peacemaking all while dealing with the difficult and ever present reality of the Israeli occupation," said Eaton. In addition, the delegation visited the Aida Refugee Camp in Bethlehem and toured **Augusta Victoria Hospital**, a ministry of the Lutheran World Federation. "Augusta Victoria Hospital is a vital ministry" said Eaton. "It is something that The Lutheran World Federation and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are committed to supporting, have been, are now and always will be." Bishop Younan reflected on the visit: "Through [Bishop Eaton's] visit, this accompaniment relationship that started in 1988 was strengthened even more. It has helped us to see that we both in the ELCJHL and ELCA have been called together for a common mission for the love of God in the Middle East and the United States."

The **Peace Not Walls** campaign connects ELCA members to our companions and promotes dignity, full respect for human rights, healing and reconciliation. This inter-unit team works with our Palestinian Lutheran companions to accompany Palestinians and Israelis, Jews, Christians and Muslims working together for peace with justice. Our advocacy efforts are meant to help bring about a just and lasting negotiated resolution to the Palestinian Israeli conflict.

- Call for equal human dignity and rights for all people in the Holy Land.
- Call for an end to Israeli settlement building and the occupation of Palestinian land, both of which violate international law;
- Call for a two-state solution, with two viable, secure states living side-by-side.
- Ask individuals to invest in Palestinian products to build their economy and to utilize selective purchasing to avoid buying products made in illegal Israeli settlements built on Palestinian land.
- Call for an examination of U.S. military aid to Israel to ensure compliance with U.S. and international human rights law and a possible withholding of aid for noncompliance with those laws.

The team is working with other ELCA partners to enable a response to the 2013 Churchwide Assembly memorial on **positive investment in Palestine**.

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Asia Pacific

With a new Young Adults in Global Mission country program starting in Cambodia, this brings the ELCA in closer collaboration with the Lutheran Church in Cambodia. Started with mission work by the Lutheran Church in Singapore (which in turn was founded with work by ELCA missionaries), this new and emerging Lutheran church will be in a new accompaniment mode with the ELCA.

The ELCA has been involved in some reconciliation efforts within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Himalayan States (India). This is another fairly young church with which deepened relationships with the ELCA can be anticipated, especially in helping with Lutheran identity projects.

Meanwhile, we celebrated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hong Kong its 60th anniversary. With this we remember the much longer history of Lutheran mission in China that goes back to the 19th century, which gave birth to the church in Hong Kong. And while there is no Lutheran church in China today, the ELCA enjoys a close relationship with the Protestant church, particularly in work happening in Sichuan and Yunnan provinces. Additionally, the ELCA helped facilitate a disaster preparedness workshop with the China Christian Council.

In many parts of Asia, the churches are gearing up in their own ways toward a commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Madagascar, West/ Central Africa

The **Ebola** Virus outbreak in West Africa continues to affect the work we do. Although we were not able to travel to Liberia and Sierra Leone in 2014, we have been in conversation with the leaders of the Lutheran Church in Liberia (LCL) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sierra Leone (ELCSL). The cases of Ebola are receding and we are awaiting the all clear from the World Health Organization so that we can be present with our companions at partner's meetings in LCL and bishop's elections in ELCSL this year. Bishop Thomas Barnett, who is visiting the Northern Texas/Northern Louisiana Synod, came to Chicago in February. He was able to tell us first-hand how the Ebola Virus outbreak has affected the country and the church. For additional information, see page 5 of the report from Diakonia.

Because of the occurrence of Ebola, Rev. Brian Palmer continues to work in Cameroon with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon as pastor in residence and Rev. Linda Johnson Seyenkulo who was scheduled to be deployed to Liberia is helping with strategic planning in Ghana at Good News Theological College and Seminary. Rev. Morsal Collier has ended his service with the ELCSL. We have also had to postpone the start of a YAGM program in Senegal.

The **violence in Nigeria** has affected the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria. Church buildings have been destroyed and LCCN is now hosting internally displaced persons. The Archbishop Nemuel Babba has asked church leaders to be advocates and to speak out against extremist violence in Nigeria and around the world.

Central African Republic (Cameroon) -ELCA/GM is currently supporting the work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic (ELC-RCA) to reconstruct homes in four villages. Material has been distributed in these villages, and the foundations of these homes were laid on February 17. The villagers are now gathering grass for roofs.

Although some areas are seeing moments of stability, there is still violence in the Central African Republic. According to the UN, as of January, 30,000 additional people have been displaced. While many of these refugees are crossing the border into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, others are crossing into Cameroon. Garoua Bolau Protestant Hospital, a hospital supported for years by ELCA/GM continues to attend to the needs of refugees especially women and children.

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Besides continued sporadic violence, one of the biggest threats to peace in CAR is disarming and reintegrating tens of thousands of combatants back into society. A report of the Norwegian Council for Africa cites the number of armed combatants as anywhere from 2,000 to 4,000. This intensifies the need for the work of ELC-RCA's president Andre Golike. He works in communities as part of an ecumenical group that focuses on trauma healing, peace and reconciliation. To aid in this work pastors of the church are now being trained in trauma healing.

Latin America and the Caribbean

São Leopoldo, Brazil - On November 13 and 14, Raquel Rodriguez (LAC APD) and Justin Eller (Regional Rep for Southern South America) participated in the "Theological Reflection from the Sustainability of the Churches" seminar hosted by the LWF Sustainability Institute. The event called together theologians from the LWF member churches in the LAC region that work in the themes related to organizational sustainability, planning, new models of being church, developing gifts and ministries, spirituality: all with the purpose of deepening concepts and practical follow-up tasks for the administration of the churches.

Prayer concerns:

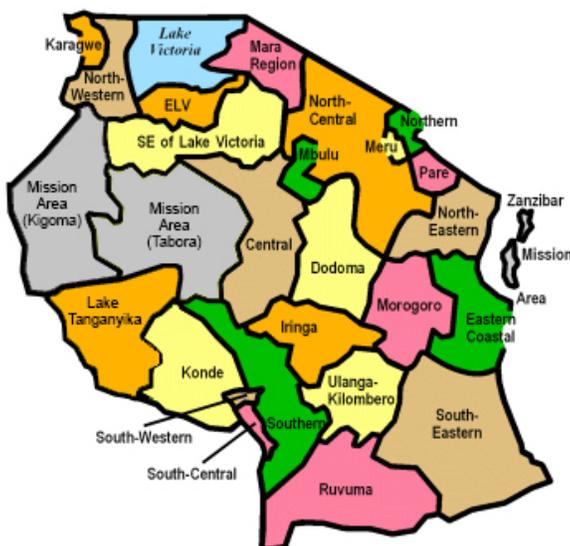
For the Galilee Center of the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELB) in Cobija, Pando, Bolivia and for the five thousand plus people there who have been greatly affected by the catastrophic flooding, the degree of which has reached unimaginable limits.

For the well-being of several Lutheran churches in the LAC region where transitions have generated conflict, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Peru (ILEP) has elected a new transition team and an assembly is scheduled for April. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELCH) faces challenging implications for decisions made related to a merge with another Lutheran body in Chile.

For the election processes in their assemblies, IELCH, Chile will have its synodical assembly in March. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Colombia (IELCO) will have their assembly in March as well. The IELB, Bolivia will have its assembly in April as will ILEP, Peru.

For the newly elected leadership of ILCO, Pr. Gilberto Quesada, Pastor -president, Pra. Geraldina Alvarez, Vice-president, Secretary Mercedes Vargas, Oscar Varela, Treasurer, Luisa Mora, Ana Yensy Rivera, Janet Perez, all members of the council from different communities and Ruben Chacon, auditor of the work of the board.

For Unaccompanied Minors: The New Migrant Wave from Central America – see Exhibit 2 for details



East and Southern Africa

East Africa - Four new dioceses have been developed in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania; South-East of Lake Victoria (created by dividing East of Lake Victoria Diocese); Lake Tanganyika, developed from the Rukwa Mission Area; Ruvuma, created by dividing the Southern Diocese; and Southeastern, developed from the former Mtwara Mission Area.

Presiding Bishop Malasusa expressed a desire for companion synods for these four new dioceses, as well as for three more expected in the next five years. Strategy sessions

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(November 2014, April 2015 and November 2015) are being held with the twenty ELCA companion synods to address the manner in which the ELCA-ELCT network continues to walk with the ever expanding ELCT

Update on South Sudan The president of South Sudan, Salva Kiir and the leader of the opposition party Riek Machar (former Vice President of South Sudan), signed a peace agreement named “Areas of Agreement on the Establishment of the Transitional Government of National Unity in the republic of South Sudan on Feb. 1, 2015. The peace talk has resumed on Feb. 20, 2015 with the aim of finalizing a comprehensive peace agreement no later than March 5, 2015.

The council of Ministers of South Sudan recently met and decided to call off the elections and extended the lifespan of the elected positions to have continuity and to give the peace agreement recently signed a chance. According to the country’s 2011 transitional constitution, the mandate of President Salva Kiir and entire government officially expires on July 9, 2015. Critics and the opposition party have expressed their concern whether such a move by the Council of Ministers’ is a wise move.

Southern Africa – The first ELCA-ELCSA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa) took place August 14-15, 2014. Representatives from the six companion synods had the opportunity to confer, converse and develop a strategy for collaborative work with ELCA Global Mission.

Rev. Molefe Markus Dithhale, former bishop of the ELCSA Western Diocese (companion to the East Central Synod of Wisconsin) has been elected presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa. He replaces Rev. Ndanganeni Phaswana who has retired.

Lutheran Office for Public Policy

The International Decade for People of African Descent - On December 10, 2014, The UN General Assembly launched the [International Decade of People of African Descent](#) (1 January 2015 - 31 December 2024). The main objective of Decade is to promote respect, protection and fulfillment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by people of African descent. LOWC coordinated Lutheran presence at the launch event with CSM’s Racial Justice Ministry staff and hosted five Lutherans from Metro New York Synod and the African Descent Lutheran Association.

On March 25, 2015, the UN General Assembly will host a commemorative meeting followed by the Unveiling of the [Ark of Return, the Permanent Memorial to Honour the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade](#). LOWC will attend this event as well.

Post 2015 Development Agenda - The Secretary-General launched his synthesis report, [The Road to Dignity by 2030](#) last year in December. The report supports the 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recommended by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. This year negotiations have started on the new proposed Post-2015 Development Agenda which will include the SDGs. A special Summit will be held in late September to adopt the Post 2015 development agenda. LOWC has been following the negotiations and will continue to do so throughout the year.

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)- The fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will take place at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 9 to 20 March 2015. This is the 20th anniversary year of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, and the theme will focus on the current challenges that affect its implementation and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. There will be a review of progress made in the implementation since its adoption at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. LOWC is expecting to host 30 Lutheran delegates, 6 international and 23 ELCA members.

Several parallel events:

- Three Lives of Women 20 years after Beijing (together with the World Council of Churches)

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- Local People, Global Impact: The role of community-based organizations in the fight against the Ebola virus (together with Nobel Peace laureate Leymah Gbowee's Foundation)
- The role of faith in realizing the promise of Beijing: where do we come from and where do we need to go to accelerate progress on transformative gender equity (together with the ACT Alliance and the World Council of Churches)

This year also marks the 15 years since the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Resolution 1325 addresses disproportionate and unique impacts of armed conflict on women. The UN Secretary-General has commissioned a global study on the implementation of resolution 1325. This High-level Review and Global Study results will be shared in October 2015.¹

Debt restructuring process - From February 3-5, 2015, LOWC monitored the [first working session of the Ad hoc Committee on a multilateral legal framework for sovereign debt restructuring process](#). This committee was set up by the United Nations General Assembly last year. Among the member states a point of controversy is whether the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or another international institution should be the place for discussing a new legal framework. We shared our observations with colleagues at the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva and ELCA Global Mission.



The **Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM)** program continues to grow! **Sixty-three gifted and faithful young adults are midway through the 2014-2015 year of YAGM service** across 8 country/regional programs. As we celebrate and support their continued service, we are simultaneously working with the 160 new candidates who have applied to serve for the 2015-2016 program year. We have **capacity to place 76 YAGM volunteers for this new program year – a nearly 21% increase from 2014**. A new program in **Cambodia begins in August, 2015**, to be followed by new starts in **Senegal and Australia in 2016**. And finally, after a year of intensive planning and collaboration with Mission Advancement colleagues and trips to visit two companion churches that host YAGM programs, we are thrilled to **share three new videos which will support recruitment and fundraising efforts for the YAGM program globally**. All are available on the ELCA's YouTube channel

(www.youtube.com/elca) under the following titles:

- **“Thad’s Story”** – an in-depth look at the journey of one YAGM volunteer and his host community in Hungary. This video is specifically geared toward deepening the base of financial and prayerful support for the YAGM program. **(If you only have time to watch one, the YAGM Program Director recommends this one!)**
- **“Young Adults in Global Mission”** – a quick, 90-second glimpse at what it means to serve as a YAGM volunteer, intended to support recruitment efforts.
- **“Imagine Yourself as a Young Adult in Global Mission”** – a more complete recruitment video sharing the stories of current YAGM volunteers in South Africa and Hungary.

¹ Resolution 1325 calls for increase in the participation of women at decision making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes. It has four pillars: Participation, Protection, Prevention and Relief Recovery. Resolution 1325 was followed by other related resolutions, including 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, and 2122. These resolutions focus on post-conflict peace building, naming and shaming parties responsible for acts of rape or other acts of sexual violence, address impunity and participation of women, including women protection advisers in the peace and security agenda.

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Current statistics on ELCA Global Service Personnel – Total -219

- *Contract – 19*
- *GM Two Year- 9*
- *GM Associates (ELCA Personnel serving with partner organizations) – 19*
- *Long Term (4 + years) – 65 ** this number went down because the reintegration period ended in December.*
- *Horizon Seminary Interns- 4*
- *Self-funded Volunteers- 37 (of which 4 are shared Personnel with ELCA Synods)*
- *YAGM- 61*
- *GM Co- workers (non US Nationals)- 5*

Serving the global church is a great opportunity to engage with and learn from other cultures, travel and discover more about who you are as a Christian. The Global Mission Unit is developing a recruitment strategy for members of the ELCA, especially members of ethnically diverse populations and those whose first language is other than English. Your input will be the basis for the strategy. We are interested in hearing from all regarding what would make global service appealing. Please click on the link below for a short questionnaire. Thank you for your time!

<https://surveys.elca.org/scripts/rws5.pl?FORM=gmservice>

Mission Formation – see 2 page attachment

Diakonia – see 6 page attachment

International Leaders Program update – see 2 page attachment