



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

April 15, 2020

Dear friends in Christ:

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to grip the world and spread within new regions of the United States and across the globe. As we live into this new and challenging reality, we might be feeling as the disciples did on Good Friday upon seeing Jesus crucified: we are experiencing continuous loss, distance, uncertainty and grief. The impact of this pandemic on human life and community is catastrophic, presenting us with circumstances we have not faced as a country or a global community in more than 100 years.

All of these feelings I share with you now as I inform you that the Global Mission unit has decided to cancel sending Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) volunteers for the 2020-21 program year, which was scheduled to begin in August. This was not an easy decision, and it brings lament. Yet I cannot stay in this place of Good Friday, for we are a people of Easter, a people of the resurrection, and we hope that this decision will bring life to our future ministry together. In the meantime, our YAGM country coordinators will continue their work in collaboration with companion churches to prepare the sites and hosting communities.

The Scriptures stress the importance of sabbath. In the 20 years of the YAGM program, we have never taken a sabbath. We have continued to move forward and, in the process, have created wonderful connections with our companion churches over time. We believe this upcoming program year could be a year of rest, a sabbath, that will lead to renewed and shared life in our ministry together. We know that our church and our companion churches are being impacted by COVID-19, and that this is a time of great suffering, uncertainty and grief. We also know our global relationships will continue and grow stronger throughout this pandemic. This sabbath will allow us a time of healing and rest so that we might be renewed and strengthened for the 2021-22 program year.

May the Lord bless the joint ministry of the Young Adults in Global Mission program.

Soli Deo Gloria,

The Rev. Rafael Malpica Padilla  
Executive Director, Global Mission