

**Report of the Global Mission Committee,  
Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod  
For the Year Ending January 31, 2021**

Throughout most of the last year the Covid-19 pandemic hampered the work of the Global Mission Committee to a huge extent. Yet the committee remained constant in its concerns for our global Christian partners and for the Lutheran communities to whom we are especially responsible.

The primary work of the committee is done in relationship with three “Companion Synods,” national churches overseas whose connection with us is facilitated through our partners in ELCA churchwide offices. Our companion synods include the Lutheran community in Namibia (actually two large and one small national church bodies), the Lutheran church in El Salvador, and the Lutheran church in Slovakia.

The cultural situations of our companion synods differ enormously. In both El Salvador and Slovakia the Lutheran churches represent a small minority of the population. The church in El Salvador serves in a country troubled by poverty rooted in a history of oppression and political unrest. Slovakia on the other hand is prosperous and at peace with itself, though lately issues of immigration have generated some conflict. In Namibia, one of the most prosperous nations of Africa, the Lutheran churches represent a majority of the population. When you travel in some parts of Namibia, everyone you meet is a Lutheran. This variety of circumstances among our companion synods has meant over the years that our committee has had a variety of relationships with these partners.

In addition to caring for ministry with our companion synods, our committee includes a Middle East Working Group, which focuses on the Lutheran community in Palestine and on larger issues related to Palestine and Israel. For the last several years, the Middle East Working Group was coordinated by Nathan Rich, whose faithful attendance and participation at Synod assemblies was a remarkable gift to us all. Late this past year Nathan resigned his duties. We thank him for his service and expect that the next person to hold this sensitive position will be appointed by the committee chair and Bishop Ortiz working together.

The Global Mission Committee also provides a place in the synod structure for a devoted team of people working to promote interest in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Members of this group, readily available to travel and teach in almost any setting, included until this year Michael Kuchinsky. Mike is a pastor and political scientist who recently resigned because of concerns about his health. We miss him already and keep him in our prayers.

The ministry of promoting the ELCA World Hunger Appeal also belongs within the Global Mission Committee. The present chair of the committee admits he has miserably failed to attend to the World Hunger Appeal and he promises to do better in days to come.

Because of the pandemic, the work of the committee has been limited. We have, thanks to the continuing support of Synod Treasurer Julie Hamre, been able to continue financial support for the companion synods. The churches in Namibia, and in El Salvador to a larger extent, have received funds the Global Mission Committee had been holding in reserve. Money received through Gifts of Hope has also been distributed. But we know that when the pandemic loosens its grip at last, relationships with the companion synods will have to be rebuilt from the ground up. Based as they were on travel back-and-forth, and limited by the technological situations of our partners, the relationships have faded and we have to a certain extent just lost touch with one another. We will have to repair what has been damaged.

Yet we have other plans for the future that we are working on right now. We want to pursue the synod's goal of increasing our cultural competency by arranging meetings among us that include Salvadoran Lutherans who are members of our local community. We want to do more to promote an understanding of these neighbors and their experience in Central America and here. With time and effort, we want to expand our meetings to include local Lutherans who have come here from Ethiopia and East Africa and other countries. Like most synods now, ours is a global community. We want to take better advantage of the benefits this blessing offers us.

And we continue to plan (Please God, may it happen soon!) for a survey of our congregations' global connections. In almost every congregation there is some special ministry connected with some country or other elsewhere around the

world. Some of these connections are small and easily overlooked. Other connections include large amounts of time and energy and money. Some connect us with other Lutherans, within or outside of our official companion synods. Most are with other Christians, non-governmental organizations, or individuals. We would like to have the fullest picture we can get, share what we know, make connections if we can. If you, my reader, are the person who winds up being asked for information, please help us out.

Ultimately, of course, our work on the Global Mission Committee serves its greatest purpose in reminding us that, precious as we are to our Lord Jesus, we are a very small piece of the Lutheran community. We are an even smaller piece of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. We pray for ourselves, our loved ones, and our own work. But we pray, too, for Christians around the world living faithfully in circumstances often much more difficult than ours. We remember those who suffer for their faith. We remember those on whom the pandemic has fallen especially hard. We ask the Lord Jesus to remind us that we are all close to each other because we are close to him.

In Jesus's name,

Pastor Richard H, Graham, Chair  
Global Mission Committee