



Global Mission Updates



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Winter/Spring 2019

Dear Friends of ELCA Global Mission,

“Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this” (Esther 4:14b).

Esther’s life changed quickly. This young Israelite girl found herself living in the king’s palace, along with other teenagers competing to become queen. Esther was chosen. What a change, from the streets of Susa to the royal palace! Life was indeed good for Esther, but all the comfort and luxury could come to an end.

Her adoptive father, Mordecai, challenged her to plead the case of the Jews before the king. Esther faced a difficult situation. No one could come before the king without an audience, doing so would result in death. Mordecai challenged Esther: You were given this gift – use it!

Like Esther, we all have been gifted by God. These gifts are not our own possessions but tools for building up the body of Christ and engaging in God’s mission to restore community. Our world cries with deep sighs, lifting up the eyes to the hills, wondering, “where will my help come?” (Psalm 121:1). We have been gifted with the Spirit for just such a time as this, doing God’s work with our hands.

This edition of Global Mission Updates provides a panoramic view of how our gifts and talents touch the lives of peoples from around the globe. I hope that, through these stories, God will touch your hearts and fill them with the burning fire of the Spirit, so that you too will become part of this great missional journey.

Please get in touch and let us know how you are making use of Global Mission Updates. Thank you for your prayers and financial support for this labor of love that continues throughout the world in God’s name.

Pax,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rafael Malpica Padilla". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rev. Dr. Rafael Malpica Padilla
Executive Director, ELCA Global Mission

ELCA Global Mission Updates is a biannual collection of stories and insights that highlight the ministries of our global companions. This resource provides a platform for a diversity of voices and perspectives that seek to honor the unique context from which they come.

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Asia and the Pacific (AP)

Lutherans first arrived in Australia from Prussia and established a new church in 1838. In the 20th century efforts were made to bring unity, and in 1921 five churches joined together. Another joined in 1926. The final union in 1966 created the present-day **Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA)**. One condition the church brought to this final merger was a formal detachment of the LCA from the Lutheran World Federation and International Lutheran Council. Since then linkages with the ELCA have been limited.

However, the ELCA and the LCA have shared common engagement in a number of Asian countries: Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Cambodia. The LCA has also looked to the ELCA for guidance in the practice of cross-cultural ministry.



YAGM volunteer Isaac Taylor delivering a children's sermon at Alice Springs Lutheran Church (Photo: Y. Franklin Ishida)

New opportunities for engagement have emerged from the Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) program in Australia. Now in its third year, the program places YAGMs in LCA social service ministries, camp programs, schools, congregations, and aboriginal ministries.

Together the ELCA and LCA have partnered with the **Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea**; sat at the partnership table in Malaysia and Singapore; coordinated mission engagement in Cambodia and Myanmar; organized fund-raising appeals for Indonesia and beyond with **Australian Lutheran World Service**; joint support for the **Lutheran Study Center in Sabah, Malaysia**; joint support for the establishment of a new **Lutheran Study Center in Indonesia**; the Australia YAGM program highlighted above; joint scholarship

support for students from Papua New Guinea; theological education support (through supporting an ELCA missionary professor at Australian Lutheran College); and informal consultations on methodologies for cross-cultural ministry.

Montana Synod Bishop Jessica Crist attended the LCA General Synod last October. A hoped-for resolution to permit the ordination of women failed again at that synod, but participants resolved to bring the LCA and ELCA closer together, mostly through conversations with LCA Bishop John Henderson and other key LCA leaders. Participants plan further talks on how to express prayerful support for those in the LCA who seek the ordination of women.

Also, the Asia-Pacific Team has been forging ties with the **Mara Evangelical Church**, an LWF member church in Myanmar. Mara congregations in the U.S. are already cooperating in this effort.



Representatives of the Mara Evangelical Lutheran Church with Bishop William Gafkjen from the Indiana-Kentucky Synod.

Madagascar, West and Central Africa (MWCA)

In the fall of 2018, the MWCA team hosted several guests. Four theologians from the **Malagasy Lutheran Church** visited the U.S. in September to observe the church's work and engage with their companion synods. They were able to visit the ELCA churchwide office and the **Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago (LSTC)**, where they spoke with a class and visited with LSTC President James Nieman. Many of the conversations centered on theological education and what the two churches have in common.

After the MWCA team and staff from the ELCA's Mission Advancement unit visited the **Lutheran Church in Rwanda (LCR)** to see the newly built Kayonza Parish, the team was happy to host LCR Bishop Evarister Mugabo. His first stop was the LCR's companion synod, **Sierra Pacific**, then the bishop traveled to Chicago to visit the ELCA churchwide office and connect with Young Adults in Global Mission who had served in Rwanda. He later visited with Pastor Veronica John Mwakasungura, who is studying at LSTC.

In November, the **Lutheran Communion in Central and West Africa (LUCCWA)** had its biannual meeting in Senegal, where Andrea Walker, ELCA area director for MWCA, discussed possible future projects with bishops, church leaders from around the region and other partner church members. The LUCCWA members were pleased to be joined by Archbishop Musa Filibus, president of the Lutheran World Federation.



Bishop Mugabo and ELCA area director for MWCA, Rev. Dr. Andrea Walker visit with students at LSTC.



Rev. Hansen of the Lutheran Church in Bavaria sits with members of LUCCWA in a breakout session.

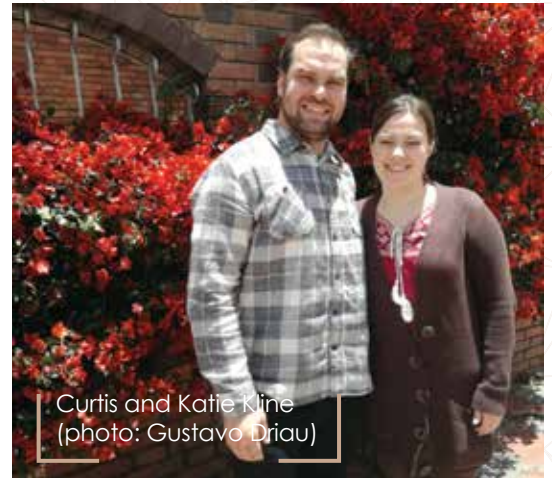
Latin America and Caribbean (LAC)

At the end of June 2019, five missionaries serving in companion churches in South America will return home.

Curtis and Katie Kline have served in Colombia since August 2014, accompanying the **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Colombia (IELCO)** in its Ministry of Human Rights and Peace Building. They started their ministry during the complex peace negotiations between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Katie Kline accompanied the IELCO in its churchwide ministry of education, on issues related to the strengthening of Lutheran identity, the formation of Sunday-school teachers, and leadership formation in the church.

Although there have been missionaries in Colombia in past decades, Curtis and Katie are the first missionaries to have worked within the theological and methodological approach of accompaniment.

During their time in Colombia, the IELCO has undergone some institutional difficulties. In such a difficult context, God provided Curtis and Katie with the patience, humility and wisdom to overcome these conflicts and bear witness to God's love and mission. When Curtis and Katie arrived in Colombia, the church had a single initiative in human rights, justice and life. As they prepare to leave, the IELCO is carrying out three different programs for human rights and peace building, along with a fourth, very recent program to support Venezuelan migrants. The IELCO's experience with Curtis and Katie Kline has been so fruitful that it has extended a call for a new ELCA missionary in 2020.



Curtis and Katie Kline
(photo: Gustavo Driau)



Ryana Holt with her students.

Ryana Holt has served as a missionary in Chile since February 2017, accompanying the **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELCH)** in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). Ryana has served in all regions of Chile that support IELCH congregations, training hundreds of students of varying ages from the communities of faith and diaconal works of the IELCH. Her ministry has unfolded during a period of crisis that has seriously threatened the church. God has blessed Ryana with the strength to accompany and help the church overcome very difficult situations.

Krystle Moraska and Ignacio Madrussan have served for nearly eight years as country coordinators for the Young Adults in Global Mission program in Argentina and Uruguay. Along with their children, they have been a beloved part of the ELCA family in Latin America, and we will be sad to see them go. They have faithfully nurtured our companionship with the **United Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELU)** and the many communities and organizations that we partner with in Argentina and Uruguay. For over seven years, they have served as pastors, coaches, cheerleaders and friends to young adults from the United States, each of them on a distinct vocational journey.



Krystle Moraska and Ignacio Madrussan
with their children, Emilio and Camilo.

We thank God for the gifts and lives of Curtis and Katie Kline, Ryana Holt, Krystle Moraska and Ignacio Madrussan; we pray for a joyful completion of their calls to serve in mission globally, and for new ministerial fields back home where they can continue learning and serving God's mission.

The United Evangelical Church – Lutheran Synod in Cuba (IEU-SL) is one of the newest members of the Lutheran World Federation, having been accepted as a full communion partner during the meeting of its council in July 2018. Working to develop and deepen relationships with the church, the ELCA sent a group of five people to Cuba in November 2018 (one from ELCA Domestic Mission, two from ELCA Global Mission, and two from the UECCLS's companion synod, **Florida-Bahamas**).



ELCA representatives with the IEU-SL congregation in Guantanamo and the emergency response committee of Guantanamo. (Photo: Jaime Dubon)

The specific purposes of the visit were:

- a. To attend a public colloquy on “The Church in the Public Space” organized by the IEU-LS. The seminar drew about 50 people from different denominations to reflect on issues related to the church and human worth in Cuba: the future of the gospel there, its values as reflected in Cuban society, practicing love to the neighbor, religious diversity and freedom of religion in Cuba, and God's mission from the perspective of Martin Luther.
- b. To learn about the IEU-SL, congregations and ministries.
- c. To observe recovery work in Guantanamo following Hurricane Matthew. The IEU is a member of the **Cuban Council of Churches (CCC)**. The pastor of the **Lutheran Congregation in Guantanamo** is also coordinator of the CCC and chair of the Emergency Committee in Guantanamo. The ELCA visitors learned about the churches' coordinated and joint work during and after the hurricane. They have been working together with Lutherans, Church of God, Pentecostals, Moravians, Roman Catholics and the municipality. The ELCA has provided assistance in Guantanamo not only during the emergency in 2017 but also during the recovery phase.

In early January, 12 people from the **Florida-Bahamas Synod** embarked on a one-week trip to Jamaica, along with the area director for LAC, Rev. Jaime Dubon. In Jamaica the ELCA relates to the **United Theological College of the West Indies (UTC)**, where ELCA missionary Dr. Elisio Perez-Álvarez works as a professor. Founded in 1966, the UTCWI serves seven denominations throughout the Caribbean: Lutheran, Methodist, Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian, Moravian, and Disciples of Christ. It prepares leaders for ministry and offers advanced degrees in philosophy and religion; there are currently about 140 students enrolled in various degree programs. While in Kingston, the ELCA group attended morning lectures and presentations by seminary professors on church history, the history of Jamaica, the culture of resistance, Rastafarian culture and religion, and the impact of Jamaican music and dance on the church.



Group photo from immersion journey to Jamaica

East and Southern Africa (ESA)

In keeping with the ELCA Global Mission work plan “A Commitment Toward Gender Justice,” the East and Southern Africa team hope to remedy the low percentage of women who have received sufficient education and training to assume leadership roles in churches. To that end, the team hopes to identify pilot programs in the region and provide short-term capacity building trainings specifically for women who show leadership potential. The team has a commitment to raise the percentage of women who report greater knowledge of leadership skills and techniques.

Recently, the East and Southern Africa Team in Global Mission, through the area desk director Benyam Kassahun have been working with **CORATAFRICA**, a Christian ecumenical organization based in Nairobi, Kenya, to assist in achieving our commitment and goal in the gender justice strategy. Funded by a Global Mission grant, CORATAFRICA has been asked to develop and implement short-term training programs for women that will provide them with the capacity for the enhancement of church-based administrative skills, organizational abilities and leadership/management efficiencies. CORATAFRICA's motto is “Called to Enhance Stewardship and Integrity” in the African churches. Global Mission is providing a grant to specifically work on women leadership and gender justice across the region.

In 2018 the team used CORATAFRICA to present a two-week leadership and management training program for Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya. The nine participants were trained to build their capacity in leadership skills and management. The participants reported back their thankfulness to the ELCA for the support in being able to participant in the program. They were very pleased with the skill of the CORAT leadership. Among the topics were stewardship, leadership skills, organizational development, team-building and management, all of them relevant for the ministries to which the participants returned. The nine trainees encouraged us to continue to work with CORAT at developing more such programs. Hence the idea is to specifically address the situation of few women leaders in the churches with administration and management skills.

In 2018, ELCA missionaries Deborah and Joe Troester made the transition from East Africa regional representatives in Tanzania to their new strategic roles with the **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zambia**. The ELCA has several new initiatives forthcoming in Zambia and will look to Deborah and Joe to assist with their development.

Rev. Deborah and Joseph Troester
now serving in Zambia.



Europe, Middle East and North Africa (EuMENA)

A recent trip to Iraq by Said Ailabouni, area director for EuMENA, and Rebecca Duerst, director for Diakonia, gave Global Mission direct exposure to the current situation there. Duerst and Ailabouni focused particularly on the Kurdistan region, seeking insight on how to redefine the ELCA's strategy for engagement. Many areas in Iraq have now been liberated from ISIS control, and some internally displaced people (IDPs) have begun to return. Yet many people remain displaced—not ready to return because of the lack of basic services and the historical trauma they experienced during the period of ISIS control.

The majority of these IDPs are from minority groups, primarily Yazidis and Christians. Since 2014, many women and girls from these communities have been captured and sexually violated by ISIS. Men and boys have been recruited, tortured or killed. Over the past year Global Mission has been supporting Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and its work in IDP camps, and has recently begun a new project through **LWF-Iraq** and the **Baghdad Women Association (BWA)**.

Based on conversations and visits, Global Mission has identified two critical areas of engagement: gender justice and peacebuilding/reconciliation. Gender justice initiatives will include working with survivors of gender-based violence, livelihood opportunities, and empowering them to claim their rights. Peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts will include efforts toward rebuilding a sense of community in affected areas, social cohesion, interreligious dialogue, and trauma healing and psychosocial support, especially among survivors and perpetrators of violence. Religious leaders and women both play critical roles in advancing efforts towards peacebuilding and gender justice, however, they are often also heavily affected by trauma themselves. Therefore, psychosocial support for these groups will also be an important component of the work.

Through continued efforts with LWF-Iraq, BWA, as well as exploring new strategic partnerships, these efforts will help bring about the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of IDPs to their historical homelands, and to prevent further emigration of Christians and Yazidis from Iraq. Furthermore, this framing will impact the ELCA's overall strategy for engagement in the Middle East.

We continue to support **St. Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS)** in Cairo, which provides holistic care and services to over 35,000 refugees per year. In November, Said and Viking Dietrich, the ELCA's regional representative, traveled to Cairo with a delegation from the **Asylum Protection Center (APC)** in Belgrade. Supported by the EuMENA team, the Belgrade delegation had a week to confer with the departments at StARS, meet the leadership, and make field visits. Chris Eades, executive director of StARS, and Kirsten Fryer, an ELCA missionary, organized a highly informative and educational consultation.

In Lebanon and Syria, we are looking into increasing our support for Syrian refugees and internally displaced people through the **Middle East Council of Churches**.



Dawudiya Camp, near Duhok, in northern Iraq, provides refuge for internally displaced persons (IDPs). (Photo: Said Ailabouni)

In September 2018, six ELCA synods and their German church companions came together for three days for the inaugural ELCA German Consultation at the churchwide offices. Two years ago, a meeting of the six synods took place with some German companion participants, but this meeting brought together the bishops and principal actors for each relationship: **Minneapolis Area Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Saxony, Leipzig District**; **Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Saxony, Löbau-Zittau District**; **Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod and the Evangelical Church in Central Germany**; **Southeastern Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, Augsburg and Schwaben Region**; **Southern Ohio Synod with Trinity Seminary and the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of North Germany**; **Upper Susquehanna Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, Ansbach Wurzburg Region**. Southwest California Synod participated as an observer. Presentations and discussions focused on migration, church reorganization, interreligious dialogue, and youth and relationship development.



From left to right: Gabi Oehme, Johanna Olson, Friedemann Oehme and James Nieman. (Photo: Johanna Olson)



Attendees of the ELCA German Consultation. (Photo: Johanna Olson)

In mid-October, the Rev. Friedemann Oehme, ecumenical officer for the **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Saxony**, visited the churchwide offices, accompanied by his wife, Gabi, and the Rev. Morris Wee, **Minneapolis Area Synod**, who served as translator. Meetings were also held with LSTC's president, James Nieman, and dean, Esther Menn.



Viking Dietrich and Bishop Jim Arends at the Czech Brethren 100th anniversary. (Photo: Viking Dietrich).

Viking and James Arends, bishop of the **La Crosse Area Synod**, attended the 100th anniversary celebration of the **Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren** in Prague, Czech Republic. Formed in 1918, the ECCB united a number of Protestant churches amid growing recognition of the important role Czech protestants played in the Reformation. Since then, it has endured World War II and its aftermath as well as a long period behind the Iron Curtain. For these reasons, the anniversary celebration was given the title “An Uncertain and Complicated Journey.” La Crosse Area Synod and the ECCB are in a companion synod relationship.

The seventh Women’s Seminar convened in October 2018 in Wittenberg, Germany. Kit Kleinhans, dean of **Trinity Lutheran Seminary**, led 19 participants from companion churches in Europe to explore the role of women in the Reformation and in serving church and society today. Kit was assisted by Cindy Halmarson, former desk director for EuMENA, and Bishop Martina Helmer-Pham Xuan, former regional representative for EuMENA.



Participants of the seventh Women's Seminar in Wittenberg, Germany gather for a photo in front of the doors of Castle Church.

Mission Formation

The Mission Formation team creates resources, conducts training, and hosts events to equip members in the re-formation of Global Mission engagement narratives and practices through experiential learning.

This year one of the highlights, along with domestic events, was when we partnered with our global companions. Three GLOCAL partnerships with theological seminaries in India (**United Theological College, Andhra Evangelical Theological College, Gurukul Theological College**) cultivated conversations around missiological engagement, worship and culture.

We look forward to continuing these partnerships with our companions to engage and deepen our understanding and practice of mission, to collectively receive the gifts of the global church, and to share resources that leaders can take home to their respective ministries.



Glocal music educators, GM staff, and United Theological Seminary staff in Bangalore, India (Photo: Sunitha Mortha)

Lutheran Office for World Community (LOWC)

The UN General Assembly endorsed two new agreements on behalf of people on the move.

In recent months the Lutheran Office for World Community (LOWC) monitored the concluding phase of United Nations negotiations toward new non-legally-binding compacts on refugees and migrants.

Drafted at the United Nations' Offices in Geneva, Switzerland, by the **Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees**, most member states endorsed the new Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) in the UN General Assembly on December 17, 2018. There were just two votes against the adoption (Hungary, United States) and three abstentions. The GCR is a new agreement aiming to forge a stronger and fairer response to refugee movements. At an event following the adoption of the resolution of endorsement, remarks were made by the President of the 73rd Session of the General Assembly, H.E. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, the Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed, and the UN Deputy Secretary-General and High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi.

After almost a year of negotiations in New York City (observed by LOWC staff and involving LOWC's participation in several advocacy groups), the General Assembly voted on December 19, 2018 to endorse the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration with three Member States voting against (Hungary, Israel, United States) and two abstentions. The compact had been adopted at an intergovernmental conference held in Marrakech, Morocco from December 10-11, 2018. It is the first-ever international cooperation framework for effectively addressing issues that concern the world's 258 million people on the move and countries of origin, transit and destination.

On Nov. 2, the LOWC office hosted the Rev. Dr. Elieshi Mungure, Africa secretary for the Lutheran World Federation, and other ecumenical and UN-related colleagues for a regional update.

Dr. Mungure pointed out that a subregion of considerable concern is the area around Lake Chad, where civilians in Nigeria, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo face unstable, often violent conditions due to poverty, politics and other factors. Amid these situations, however, member churches of the LWF are pursuing initiatives for peace at the national and subregional levels, such as the **Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA)**. Launched by a number of African churches, the program promotes cooperation and collaboration across diverse linguistic, ethnic, religious and cultural frontiers.



The Rev. Dr. Elieshi Mungure, Africa secretary for the Lutheran World Federation, with ecumenical and UN-related colleagues. (Photo: Christine Mangale)

Peace Not Walls (PNW)



Bishop Davenport, Bishop Clements and Bishop Skow-Anderson gather for a photo. (Photo: Laurie Skow-Anderson)

The ELCA is revisiting its Peace Not Walls strategy to identify the core issues essential for peace in the Middle East. The church is committed to seeing Israelis and Palestinians coexist in justice and peace as citizens of viable and secure Israeli and Palestinian states. For years we have advocated for an end to the Israeli occupation and for a shared Jerusalem that can serve as capital to both Palestine and Israel, a city offering access and full rights to Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

This year, young leaders trained in the PNW strategy will be leading six trips to Israel and Palestine for young adults of color. These trips are part of the second phase of the Peace Not Walls Young Adult Initiative. One of the goals of this second phase is “Equipping young adults of color to lead trips that specifically focus on the intersection of race, culture and class by using a global lens that has local implications.” The trips are designed to be affordable for young adults, and the leaders are encouraged to raise funds to help offset the costs. Leaders for the first trip, scheduled March 2 through 12, have raised enough money to cover on-the-ground expenses; leaving trip participants responsible for only their airfare. People interested in joining a future trip can visit <https://peacenotwalls.wordpress.com/> to learn more.

In November 2018 a PNW pilot program gave ELCA seminarians the opportunity to develop projects they could use in their ministries to support the foci of the Peace Not Walls initiative: accompaniment, advocacy and awareness raising. Students from the **Lutheran Seminary of Theology at Chicago**, **Wartburg Seminary**, and **Trinity Lutheran Seminary** were accepted to undertake their projects. One of these groups will be chosen to present their project at the annual PNW gathering, May 20-22 in Chicago, Ill.

In January, three new bishops traveled to Jordan to learn about the **Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land** and its history amid the occupation. Bishop Patricia Davenport of **Southeastern Pennsylvania**, Bishop Jeff Clements of **Northern Illinois** and Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson of **Northwest Synod of Wisconsin** were accompanied by the Rev. Said Ailabouni, EuMENA area desk director, and Johanna Olson, ELCA manager of relationships.

AMMPARO: Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunity

Migrant families cross the river into Mexico.
(Photo: Fernando Arucha)



In early October 2018, even before the first migrant caravan left Honduras, ELCA companions began to share information, news stories and photos about the coming exodus through the AMMPARO WhatsApp group. We asked for international accompaniment of these caravans, which include large numbers of mothers and children. Caravan members decided to travel together rather than make the trip alone because of the safety in numbers that the caravans offered.

Praying on the bridge between Guatemala and Mexico.
(Photo: Fernando Arucha)



On International Migrant Day, Milwaukee Synod leaders bring their U.S. senators letters from 1,000 ELCA members pledging to stand with asylum seekers in Tijuana. (Photo: Mary Campbell)

Several caravans left Honduras and El Salvador in late October and early November, crisscrossing Guatemala as other ELCA companions provided humanitarian aid and human rights accompaniment. Shortly after the first caravan left Honduras, the **Comisión de Acción Social Menonita** deployed staff to accompany the caravans continuously for over two months as they crossed into southern Mexico, made the long trek north and arrived at the northern border. Similarly, the **Sinodo Luterano Salvadoreño** deployed two members of its corps of youth reporters to accompany the caravan that departed San Salvador on October 31 and crossed into Mexico the first weekend of November.

Global Mission's regional representative met with members of the Salvadoran caravan during their first days in southern Mexico. He also accompanied one of the caravan-monitoring teams along the southern border that were organized by members of the **Grupo de Trabajo sobre Política Migratoria**, ELCA's newest AMMPARO companion and one of Mexico's largest and most respected migrant-rights networks. These initiatives were invaluable in monitoring the actions of the Mexican government and advocating for the human rights and special protection needs of vulnerable migrant children and families in the caravans.

Finally, when the caravans reached Mexico City, the **Iglesia Luterana Mexicana** and the **Comunidad Teológica** provided humanitarian and spiritual support for migrants as they rested for a few days before moving north toward the Mexico-U.S. border.

Though the caravans had originally planned to divide into smaller groups at the U.S. border, dangerous gangs and cartels in Mexican cities near the Texas ports of entry made it necessary for the caravans to go instead to Tijuana. Tijuana has a long history of receiving migrants and guarantees them a greater degree of safety. As thousands of migrants arrived in Tijuana, the U.S. government reacted by putting in place an illegal numbering system by which only 10 to 50 migrants have been allowed to cross the border each day. Thousands have camped out near the border wall for weeks on end. When an ELCA delegation talked with these families before Christmas, they shared their desperation and sense of being stuck indefinitely with meager resources. Many are living in tents, which flood when it rains.



Migrant families in the caravan wait to cross the border from Tijuana into the U.S. (Photo: Fernando Arucha)

Some migrants who were originally part of this makeshift "tent city" were moved to another location, called El Barretal, that is under the control of the Mexican government. Human rights and church groups have been granted little access to El Barretal, and the migrants staying there have accused the government of violating their human rights. Congregations in the **Pacifica Synod** have connections with Tijuana shelters both for single men and for migrant women and families. The congregations report that the shelter for women and children is filled way beyond capacity as staff struggle to provide shelter for as many families

as possible. In response to the illegal numbering system, ELCA members have signed pledges to stand with asylum seekers. To mark International Migrant Day on December 18, the **Greater Milwaukee Synod** presented its U.S. senators with 1,000 pledges. For ways you can assist migrants in the caravans, contact AMMPARO program director Mary Campbell at mary.campbell@elca.org.

Companion Synod Program

With great joy we welcome Cynthia Zamora as the new Manager for Relationships for Asia and the Pacific/Madagascar, West and Central Africa. Cynthia has a Bachelor of Arts in communications from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, with a concentration in journalism and a minor in Latino/a studies. Cynthia has served the ELCA for 21 years, 10 of those with Global Mission.

Covenants: An Important Document Across Regions

There are 126 companion synod relationships of great variety and complexity in 64 of our 65 ELCA synods.

Some relationships are synods relating to a national church, while other synods relate to a fellow synod or diocese. Some synods relate to multiple companion churches in one country, while other synods relate to specific companions in the same country. Some synods relate to the same companion. Some synods have one relationship (which can be constitutionally supported), other synods have as many as five relationships. Some relationships are brand new; some are over 50 years old. Some relationships have concluded, and some are dormant.

As Managers for Relationships, we see all the variety and complexity of how accompaniment is lived out in these relationships.

As Managers for Relationships, we have noticed that one dominant value, amid the variety, complexity and life of these relationships, is the enduring use of the covenant.

The Companion Synod Relationship covenant is an agreement where the participants and principles of the relationship set forth shared beliefs in Jesus Christ and values, specific rationales intentions and dreams. Here again, we see complexity and variation among the covenants. Several synods review covenants every three to five years to assess the state of the relationships, plans and strategic alliances. Other covenants were written a long time ago and are rarely referenced. However, for most companion relationships that hold covenants, the agreement is a cornerstone. The covenant is a reference and guide on values and goals to its participants. To external audiences, such as government officials, the covenant often becomes a primary source for substantiating the relationship, a historical record, and can be critical in securing visas.

Managers for Relationships are encouraging synods and others to review past covenants and/or develop new covenants with their companions. The process of reviewing or writing a new covenant has value; from the judicatory or church leaders participating to the caretaking practitioners of the relationship. To explore the existential reasons for why the relationship exists and endures brings people together. All synods are encouraged to talk to a Relationship Manager to explore the use and meaning of a companion relationship covenant.

Companion Synod Program in Asia and the Pacific

In January 2019, the Rev. Y. Franklin Ishida, program director for Asia and the Pacific, and the Rev. Chandran Martin, regional representative in Asia, joined a delegation from the **Northeastern Minnesota Synod** that had arrived in India to sign the synod's first covenant with the **South Andhra Lutheran Church**. In this document the new companions agreed to share with each other statements of vision and mission so that each might better understand the other's unique context for mission and ministry. They also agreed to be walking partners and remain intentional about reviewing the covenant as needed as an expression of their developing relationship.

Companion Synod Program in East and Southern Africa



Bishop Stephen Delzer, Dr. Rev. Rafael Malpica Padilla, and Rev. Benyam Kassahun sign the new companion relationship covenant. (Photo: Kevin Jacobson)

On January 25, 2019 a new companion relationship covenant was signed by the **Southeastern Minnesota Synod**, the **Evangelical Church in America – Global Mission** and the **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Africa – Mission in South Sudan**. The parties agreed to walk and work together in advocating justice, peace and gender equality; to pray regularly for each other; and to strengthen one another through life-giving ministries. We rejoice in this new relationship and reaffirm our commitment to expanding the ELCA's international outreach through the companion synod program.

Companion Synod Program in Europe



Members of the Russia Network gather in the lobby of the ELCA churchwide offices. (Photo: Johanna Olson)

In late October 2018, the three synods partnering with church companions in Russia, **Northwest Washington Synod**, **Northeastern Minnesota Synod** and **Central States Synod**, came together for an inaugural event, the Russia Network Meeting. For the past two years, conference calls have been convened by Johanna Olson for the three synods to share updates on their relationships and discuss common topics around visas and current events in both the U.S. and Russia. The October meeting, which lasted for two days, gave synod leaders

the chance to discuss the opportunities and challenges of their relationships, assess the current political context of their covenants, share the timelines of their relationships, and consult by phone with Bradn Buerkle, a GM missionary serving in Russia.

Companion Synod Program in Latin America and the Caribbean



Attendees gather on the closing day of the Salvadoran Lutheran Synod's gathering of church companionships in La Palma, El Salvador. (Photo: Rev. Chris Manke, St. Matthew's Ev. Lutheran Church).

In November 2018, the **Salvadoran Lutheran Synod (SLS)** hosted its fifth gathering of church companionships in La Palma, El Salvador. The main goal of this gathering was to unify paths in the mission of the SLS and its companions by learning about the mission context of the SLS and its current priorities in the areas of migration, political advocacy, climate justice and human rights. In addition, a plenary session allowed the group to evaluate and revisit the agreements of the previous gathering, in 2015, and to formulate new commitments for their 2018 declaratory letter. International participants got a chance to visit micro-regions of the SLS and connect with siblings of their companion churches. Representing the ELCA at the gathering were the Global Mission unit, three congregations (**Advent Lutheran Church** in New York, **Holy Trinity Lutheran Church** in Colorado, and **Iglesia Luterana Cristo y San Juan** in New Jersey), and the SLS's four companion synods (**Greater Milwaukee Synod**, **Sierra Pacific Synod**, **Southwest California Synod**, **Metropolitan Washington D.C. Synod**). Flor Chavez, who has been serving in the position on a part-time basis, was officially presented as the new coordinator of the SLS Sister Parish Program.

Companion Synod Program in Madagascar, West and Central Africa



Bishop Erik Gronberg (left) with Bishop Jensen Seyenkulo of the Lutheran Church in Liberia (LCL), Bishop Samuel Thomas of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in The Gambia (ELCTG), Bishop Moses Kobba Momoh of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sierra Leone (ELCSL) and Bishop Emeritus Thomas Barnett of ELCSL

In late October 2018, the **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sierra Leone** celebrated its 30th anniversary. To mark the event, Rev. Dr. Andrea L. Walker, Global Mission's area director for Madagascar, West and Central Africa, accompanied Bishop Erik Gronberg of the **Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod** on a visit to NTNL's companion church, the **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sierra Leone**, to meet with its Bishop, Rev. Moses Kobba Momoh, and other church

leaders. This was Bishop Gronberg's third trip to Sierra Leone but his first as bishop. Others who attended the celebration were Bishop Jensen Seyenkulo of the **Lutheran Church in Liberia**; Bishop Samuel Thomas of the **Evangelical Lutheran Church of The Gambia**; Rev. Kris Totzke, NTNL bishop's associate for

leadership formation and congregational care; and Dr. Paul Bjerck, a lay member of **Gloria Dei** in Lubbock, Tx., and a professor of African history at Texas Tech University.

In addition to celebrating the church's 30th anniversary, the group met to discuss the strategic direction of the ELCSL. Among the topics discussed were supporting education and care for children; working for gender justice, health care, and the empowerment of women; and developing and training evangelists and pastors. The trip helped reaffirm the commitment between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sierra Leone and its companion synod relationship with the Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod.

International Leaders Program (ILP)



The 2018 Global Leadership Academy brought together women from around the world to network, learn and develop action plans for gender justice in their contexts. (Photo: Kaleb Sutherland)

The International Leaders Program continues to accompany global companion churches and institutions in creating opportunities for education, training, and leadership development for the sake of mission and ministry. Along with the steady work of awarding international scholarships, our team continues to seek new ways to respond to our companions priorities in preparing and networking leaders for the future.

A key highlight of this work was the first-ever Global Leadership Academy, a leadership and networking event for women from companion churches and institutions that was held in Hyderabad, India, in November 2018. The event,

which grew out of the International Women Leaders initiative, brought together women from 12 companions (as well as from the ELCA) for a week of learning, networking, and capacity building, grounded in faith and a

common commitment to gender justice. Built around the themes of interculturalism, gender justice, leadership and accompaniment, the academy created spaces for women from diverse contexts to share their own stories and best practices, as well to ground this learning in the unique context of India. The event was hosted by the **Henry Martyn Institute**, a premier center of learning dedicated to interfaith scholarship and action in communities, and a key ELCA partner for decades.

Academy participants also had the opportunity to participate in an intensive workshop series on project planning, monitoring and evaluation. With the support of the Global Mission Diakonia staff, participants left the academy with detailed community analyses and action plans, key foundation work for a project related to gender justice that each will undertake alongside their sending churches and institutions. Global Mission will continue to engage with these participants as their essential work unfolds in the coming months. The academy was also enhanced by the Mission Formation GLOCAL musician educators, whose song and story, provided throughout the week, lent depth and joy to the conversation and community.

A truly successful cross-team collaboration, the academy was rooted in the fertile ground of many different sections within Global Mission and the entire CWO. The ILP team thanks GM administration, the Asia Pacific desk, Mission Formation, Diakonia, and ELCA World Hunger for their presence and contributions.

The “traditional” scholarship work of the International Leaders Program and the scholarship work of the International Women Leaders continue in full force. Together they support educational opportunities in a variety of subjects for individuals with differing educational levels and places of study. Currently, more than 130 individuals in our companion churches receive support for degree programs and other leadership development experiences.

Diakonia

Over the past year, the Diakonia team has made it a priority to support companion churches and partners in increasing the impact of their programs through mutual sharing and socialization of knowledge among each other. Working with Global Mission and companion staff, the team has organized opportunities for churches to exchange stories, experiences, best practices, and lessons learned. Building organizational capacity in times of disaster was the objective of the emergency response training between **Educacion Popular en Salud/ Popular Education in Health (EPES)** in Chile and **Servicio Ecumenico de Pastoral y Estudios de la Comunicación (SEPEC)** in Peru focused on sharing expertise and experience around building organizational capacity in times of disaster; a school management training between companion churches in Bolivia (**Bolivian Lutheran Church -IELB**) and Argentina (**United Evangelical Lutheran Church- IELU**) focused on developing horizontal relationships and providing knowledge exchange to strengthen educational



Group photo at the EPES central office in Santiago, Chile.

diakonial work. A consultation bringing together the **Asylum Protection Center (APC)** in Serbia and **St. Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS)** in Egypt strengthened each organization's capacity to support migrants and refugees with legal, educational, and psychosocial support, as well as through community outreach.

One more opportunity occurred this January, when EPES held its **10th International Training Course on Popular Education in Health** in Chile. Popular Education is an educational methodology that places an emphasis on the knowledge within the community, participatory practices, and social determinants of health. Social determinants are the root causes of health issues within a community, often caused by injustice and inequality. So-called "food deserts" are a good example: these communities are constrained socially by a lack of grocery stores and markets that offer fresh food.

GM has supported this training course through EPES since its inception in 2010 by sending ELCA members and staff and congregants from companion churches in the Latin America region. This year, in addition to Latin American participants, GM sponsored the attendance of five African participants – from Zimbabwe, Senegal, Madagascar and Tanzania – who staff community-health projects at home. The course has learnings across continents, possibilities for continued relationships, a mutual commitment to work that addresses injustices at the root causes of poor health, and the empowerment of communities. This program is one way in which ELCA Global Mission facilitates sharing of knowledge among companions.



Through Lutheran Disaster Response — Tsunami Responses in Sulawesi, Java and Sumatra, Indonesia

Last September, a 7.4-magnitude earthquake struck Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, triggering a tsunami that hit the city of Palu with crests reaching 18 feet. Then, in December, the Indonesian islands of Java and Sumatra were struck by a tsunami triggered when a large chunk of the Mount Anak Krakatau volcano slid into the ocean. Thousands of people across Indonesia were impacted by these disasters. "I lost my appetite," said Mulyadi, a 40-year-old tsunami survivor. "I worry [the] tsunami [will] happen again." In the immediate aftermath of each tsunami, ELCA companion church **Huria Kristen Batak Protestan** sent medical teams to care for affected families. A health post was established in a temporary shelter in Banten (a seven-hour drive from Jakarta), and a team of three doctors and five nurses traveled to impacted communities to provide food and medical care. Future efforts may include assisting survivors such as Mulyadi with immediate and ongoing psychosocial support to address the trauma of repeated disaster.

Global Service Team

The ELCA, through the Global Service team, called, trained, and sent 106 new missionaries into service in 2018. We thank God for their witness and service in Christ's global church. The breakdown by pattern of service is as follows:

- Long-Term (four-plus years, salaried): 6
- Central Europe Teachers Program: 5
- Japan-3 Program (three-year, stipended teachers): 3
- Global Mission Volunteers (self-funded or supported directly by the companion church): 7
- Global Mission Associates (ELCA rostered ministers serving in international congregations): 4
- Horizon International Seminary Interns: 3
- Shared Personnel Placement (jointly appointed by GM and companion synod): 2
- Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) volunteers: 76



New Japan-3 missionary Jordan Collins-Brown (center) with colleagues in the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church

Global Mission is currently recruiting for the following positions:

- YAGM Country Coordinator – Jerusalem and the West Bank Program
- Pastor – Nairobi International Lutheran Congregation
- Pastoral Associate to StARS & Pastor of St. Andrew's Congregation
- Professor – Lutheran Study Center in Indonesia
- Central Europe Teacher Program
- Communications Consultant in Kenya
- Japan 3 program
- Regional Representative – Southeast Asia

Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM)

Among many exciting things happening in the YAGM program is the addition of Dan Beirne to the staff. Dan joins the Global Service team as program director for YAGM Leadership Formation and Alumni Engagement. He will focus on pedagogical and theological foundations for our discernment, orientation, and re-entry events and on volunteer support. However, Dan will spend about half his time on developing a new strategy for YAGM alumni engagement that will enhance church leadership and congregational vitality. In the coming year he will be making visits across the ELCA to dream and plan alongside YAGM alumni and synodical leaders. You can reach him at Dan.Beirne@elca.org

The ongoing difficulty in obtaining U.S. visas for South Africa has forced Global Mission to discontinue the YAGM program in companionship with the **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa** for the foreseeable future. The staff will move to Tanzania for the 2019-2020 program year. We are grateful for

the flexibility of our YAGM country coordinator, the Rev. Alex LaChapelle, who will also make the move to Tanzania, and for the graciousness of our companions in the **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania** in welcoming our volunteers. We are also exploring a new program start in Nepal, expected for 2020.



YAGM Abby Larson (right) with King Mic and Gael, two of her students at Rwamagana Lutheran School in Rwamagana, Rwanda.

Staff transitions and other challenges made for a bumpy 2018 in the YAGM program, but applications are up, thanks in large part to the excellent work of last fall's short-term recruiters. Consideration of this year's application closed on February 15. Please keep our candidates and staff in your prayers in this season of discernment. Finally, a word from current Rwanda YAGM volunteer Abby Larson (**Northern Illinois Synod**). Enjoy this excerpt from her most recent newsletter:

"Turi kumwe. This simple little phrase has come to take up a pretty big part of my heart. The literal translation is "we are one ... " Turi kumwe. Even though it's 2019 and we've been trying to figure out how to live like our main man Jesus for two milleniums, we still let divisions push us apart. We still build walls to keep out our brothers and sisters in Christ -- those in our towns and those at our borders. In our fear of the unknown and in our fear of unhappiness, we dig deeper into our divisions. We hide behind these dividers. But the path to happiness is not a solo hike and it's full of crazy unknowns. In my experiences, I've found that pure joy comes from authentically being with others. It means striving to walk with Jesus on the daily and through Him, walking with people who look at the world differently than I do and sharing genuinely with them – to be one, turi kumwe ... "

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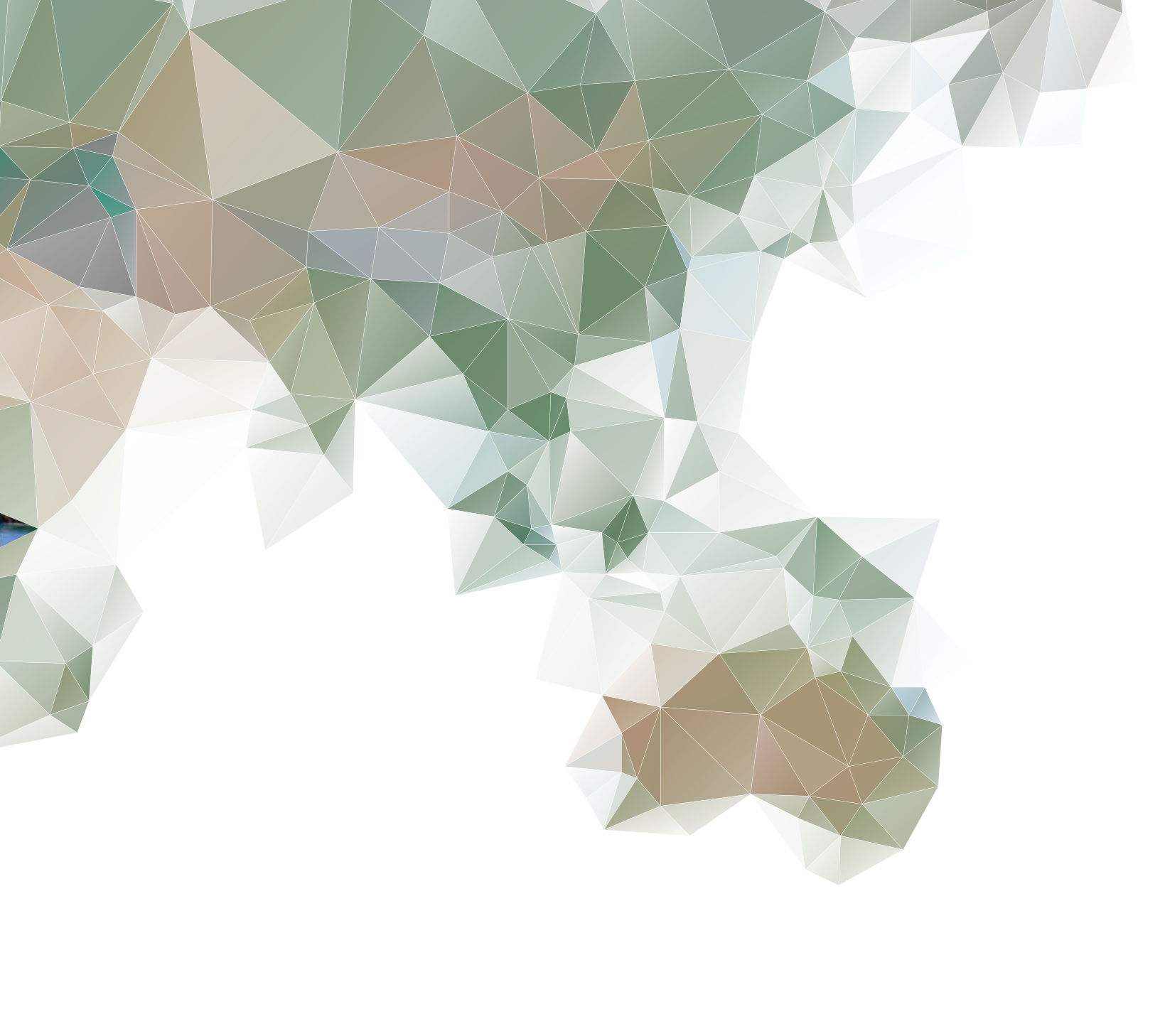
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