

Global Mission Team

Mission: To lead our synod into a deeper relationship with our ELCA Global Mission partners by sharing knowledge, modeling accompaniment, and facilitating and fostering congregational connections with the global body of Christ.

In 2024 the Global Mission Team met six times in person and via Zoom. A good portion of our agenda focused on offering support to the Lutheran Church of Liberia through shipping of 50 boxes of worship materials and theological books donated by retired pastors and closed congregations through a partnership with Global Health Ministries. Thanks to some generous individuals and congregations, who added to our reserved funds, we easily met the cost for this shipment.

Bishop Miller has been able to visit our companion churches in the last couple years, but we would like to enable more to experience these exchanges. The Team continues to discuss how to raise monies to support possible trips to Germany and Liberia in the future and to fund other Global Mission activities.

June was a busy month not only with synod assembly, but also a visit from Rev. Brian Palmer, our ELCA missionary to the Lutheran Church of Liberia. He visited numerous churches that offer him financial support and hosted our global meeting at Camp Mount Luther where he makes his home base while on USS territory. Brian is not only a teacher at Louis T. Bower Lay Leaders and Ministry Training Center in Totota but is now Dean of the new Lutheran University in Liberia. Bishop Miller shared his experience of the Holy Land, where he had traveled with other ELCA bishops and staff, and where he met with leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, as well as ecumenical leaders.

In August, Bishop Miller attended the Association of Liberian Lutherans In the Americas convention in Ohio. He was able to make more connections with the members of ALLIA and hear how they are supporting ministry and businesses in Liberia.

Rev. Linda Johnson Seyenkulo made her last visit to Upper Susquehanna Synod as an ELCA missionary to the Lutheran Church of Liberia in October. She retired at the end of 2024 and is now living full-time in Liberia with her husband, Bishop Emeritus Rev. Jensen Seyenkulo. God's blessings be with them in their retirement. If any congregation or individual has financially supported Rev. Linda Seyenkulo in the past, we encourage you to make your financial contributions to Rev. Brian Palmer. These contributions can be sent directly to the ELCA or with your regular Mission Support to the Upper Susquehanna Synod earmarked for Rev. Brian Palmer, ELCA missionary support.

We continued to offer prayer intercessions for weekly worship that uplift our global partners: Kirchenkreis Ansbach-Würzburg in Bavaria; Lutheran Church in Liberia; Lutheran World Federation; Young Adults in Global Mission; Global Health Ministries; Camp Mount Luther and Seafarers International. We encourage you to use them in worship, post on your Facebook page, bulletin boards and anywhere that folks will see that we are part of the wider Church.

Rev. Marsh Drege, Seafarers International, came to the Upper Susquehanna Synod with two vans to help transport our collection of 997 seafarer bags. Well done USS churches! It is the most ever collected. Pastor Drege reminded us of this synod's generosity over the years, having given 700 bags in 2020, 733 in 2021, 789 in 2022, 798 in 2023.

Bishop Miller visited our companion church, the Kirchenkreis Ansbach-Würzburg prior to attending the ELCA Wittenberg Center Seminar. He met with Regionalbischöfin (Regional Bishop) Gisela Bornowski, Kirchenrat Dr. Gerhard Gronauer, and Dekan (Dean) Matthias Büttner, toured the historic Altstadt (old city) of Ansbach, and gave a sermon at St Gumbertus Church in Ansbach, translated by Klara Büttner, daughter of Matthias. Bishop Bornowski also took Bishop Miller to visit Neuendettelsau, where they saw the home of Wilhelm Löhe and toured Mission EineWelt (Mission OneWorld), the center of Global Mission for the Bavarian church.

Special Report: ELCA Wittenberg Center 25th Anniversary Seminar

In late November Bishop Miller and Lowell Leitzel (Sharon, Selinsgrove) traveled to Germany to represent our Upper Susquehanna Synod at the 25th Anniversary Celebration and Seminar for the ELCA Wittenberg Center. The week-long event was organized and led by the new Wittenberg Center director, the Rev. Bridget Gautieri, who began her service there thirteen months ago. She is the first full-time director there in about fifteen years. The opening worship service with Holy Communion took place in the Castle Church, where Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses on the church door. The closing service, also with Holy Communion, took place in the Stadtkirche (St. Mary's Town Church), where Luther preached.

Each day was filled with a variety of activities, including Morning Prayer, Mid-day Prayer, Evening Prayer, Bible study and a variety of seminars related to the center's history and on-going mission. Special guests included a variety of leaders from the ELCA Service and Justice Home Area and eight Young Adults in Global Mission, four of whom are serving Hungary and four in the United Kingdom. These young people helped lead worship services and the Bible study sessions, which focused on the five values of the accompaniment model: vulnerability, inclusivity, sustainability empowerment and mutuality.

Also in attendance was the Rev. Dr. Gerhard Gronauer, Assistant to Regional German Church Bishop Bornowski, representing our companion synod, the Kirchenkreis Ansbach-Würzburg. Six of our ELCA synods have companion synods in Germany: Three of them (USS, Northwestern PA and a synod from Minnesota) sent representatives to this event. Bishop Miller and Lowell met with the Assistant Bishop Gronauer to discuss how we can work together to increase awareness of companion synod relationships and improve communication with one another about our mission together as Church.

We are grateful for the faithfulness of our members who give of their time voluntarily to fulfill our mission as the Upper Susquehanna Synod Global Ministry Team. Thanks to Rev. Ann Zimmerman, chair; Rev. Jim Vitale; Rev. Karen Ward; Rev. Kerry Aucker; Lowell Leitzel; Beverly Hoffman, Bishop Craig Miller and others who have given of their time to special projects.