

"In Mission with El Salvador" / "En Misión con El Salvador"

Synod of Alberta and the Territories, ELCIC

2018 Annual Report

As is to be expected, in this 31st year of ministry in El Salvador, 2018 was another full, intense, and rich year of ministry, on behalf of the ABT Synod's program, "In Mission with El Salvador" / "En Misión con El Salvador."

Unfortunately, early in 2019, my 2018 agenda / appointment book went missing. This is where I had my day-to-day activities recorded. Consequently, this annual report will have less detail than it would otherwise have contained. Perhaps that is for the best.

I continued on as board member of CRISPAZ for my 10th year, beyond the normal limit of 9 years, at the request of the CRISPAZ board. I served as executive secretary for this, my second year, at the request of the board. My "retirement" from CRISPAZ came at the time of our annual meeting in November. It has been a valuable experience of solidarity and service, especially to Salvadorans and to supporters in the USA. We did enjoy yet another visit from a Canadian delegation hosted by CRISPAZ. Luther College in Regina sent a high school delegation of 18 youth and 4 adults for 10 days in February 2018, after missing a couple years. It was an enriching and worthwhile experience for all involved.

2018 was an election year in El Salvador. These elections were municipal and legislative. Again, I served as election observer and assistant through the CIS, along with a diverse team of 70 persons from 12 countries. Again, this was a rewarding way of immersing myself in the Salvadoran population in a variety of election-related settings, along with a small team, and the full team, of CIS volunteers, some here just for the election week, others for several months of planning, coordination, reporting, and evaluation. My contact with these folks is frequent and ongoing. At various points we linked with other election observation teams, such as the ecumenical team, led by Lutherans, and with several Lutheran members, both Salvadoran and international.

IPAZ--Pastoral Initiative for Peace--continued to meet for three hours weekly throughout the year in Bishop Gomez's office. IPAZ planned numerous events, especially press conferences, and responded to numerous requests for assistance in cases requiring dialogue. It suffered some attrition, through the death of two founding members, the imprisonment of a couple regular members, and the loss of interest and distancing of numerous other members. Bishop Gómez attributes such distancing to fear, since the government was becoming more and more threatening in its opposition to dialogue as a way of promoting peace in Salvadoran society, which is the conviction and dedication of IPAZ. Others may see it as a failure of IPAZ to maintain a consistent strategy or to follow through on the numerous ambitious and promising ideas and proposals presented by diverse members of IPAZ.

As prison ministry continued to be an impossibility, especially due to the government's "extraordinary measures," now in their third year, prohibiting members of civilian society from entering prisons, and maintaining the prison population extremely isolated and out of range of communication with the outside world, I linked up with the Lutheran Church's "Pastoral Migrante," (Ministry to Migrants), seeking to respond to the myriad needs of those who have left home or are feeling the need to do so (such as those fleeing to the USA, and those deported from the USA), due to a variety of reasons.

I continued to rework and revise my DMin thesis--"Dialogue as a Faith Response to Social Violence in El Salvador"--throughout the year. It focuses on the faith response of IPAZ and its pursuit of dialogue leading to social peace.

I participated in the AIDS Conference, including the Interfaith Pre-Conference, for a week in July. This bi-annual event was held in Amsterdam this year. There I joined numerous long-time friends and over 20,000 new colleagues. The event met my high expectations, built up over a couple decades of attendance. My primary disappointment is that the event, and its numerous interwoven themes, such as discrimination and exclusion, are of such little interest to most Canadian Lutherans.

I continued to accompany the HIV mutual support group at Rosales Public Hospital, primarily at their bi-monthly three-hour meetings, attended by about 50 persons. These are led by a team of psychologists and social workers at the hospital, who welcome my participation enthusiastically, along with the members.

Not being able to conduct seminars in prisons freed me to accompany the two week-long health brigades in March, conducted by Lutheran teams of about 15 members each from ELCA churches in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. These provided me with welcome immersions into numerous Lutheran church-communities in El Salvador, as well as an opportunity for mutual enrichment with numerous ELCA Lutherans, from youth to seniors, lay members to bishops. They have developed these health-days over the years into smoothly-flowing, effective events of holistic health services (up to 20 different kiosks), faith and social accompaniment, and solidarity.

I had a couple opportunities to preach at Resurrection Lutheran Church, once at the Monday morning staff devotional.

2018 was a good year for contact with numerous ELCIC congregations throughout the ABT Synod.

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Following is the report sent to Bishop Larry following this brief tour:

In Mission with El Salvador / En Mision con El Salvador

June 2018 AB/SK Speaking Tour

June 10, Sunday -- Calgary, Lutheran Church of the Cross

About forty people returned to the sanctuary for this session, a coffee-hour presentation. Folk were supportive, with many good questions. The highlight of this session was the participation of a family of Salvadorans, including the parents and two teen-age children, son and daughter. All were fluent in English, and each gave a brief testimony about their departure from El Salvador and settlement in Calgary nine months earlier. They attend Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, where I had hoped to meet up with them again on 24 June, but they were not present that day. Folk were glad to hear their story and welcome them.

June 14 - 16, Thursday - Saturday -- Camrose, AB, ABT Synod Convention, Augustana

Here I addressed the plenary session for twenty minutes, during which time my focus dove-tailed with that of keynote speaker Dr. Ana Madsen with respect to the death, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus

Christ, as lived out by and in the people of El Salvador. This was graciously hosted by Bishop Larry Kochendorfer, a firm supporter.

I also addressed a luncheon session, attended by thirty persons. The half-hour available seemed inadequate to address the interest and concerns of those present. Nevertheless, it was a worthwhile session, sparking further discussions in the days following.

Prior to the convention, I visited at some length with the staff of the Indigenous Centre on the lower level. Such persons and spaces always seem a natural link to our ministry "In Mission with El Salvador", and I often encourage our ABT Synod and its congregations to pursue and deepen such relationships on our shared lands, for our mutual learning and strengthening. Sadly, I have heard many disparaging comments from Lutherans over the past month with respect to our First Nations brothers and sisters. I do hope such negative attitudes can be overcome, for the well-being of all in our shared nation.

June 17, Sunday -- Camrose, Messiah Lutheran

I was asked to offer the children's sermon and sermon during the worship service as well as lead a discussion during coffee fellowship following worship, which was attended by about 50 persons.

I have spoken numerous times at Messiah over the years, so this congregation is well-aware of our shared ministry in El Salvador, and continues to be very supportive, financially, and through their concern and prayers. Ray Blacklock continues to be the enthusiastic and well-informed liaison.

June 19, Tuesday -- Saskatoon, Augustana Lutheran

Here the format was coffee and conversation with twenty participants in a circle in the church basement. Many were friends and colleagues from decades past, going back to seminary years, and some who had visited El Salvador. Pastor Marilyn Fowlie-Neufeld led this event with dedication, enthusiasm and awareness. The session went on for over two hours, which may have been too long for some.

June 20, Wednesday -- Outlook, LCBI

Here I spoke at the daily chapel service, which was attended by faculty and 75 students, perhaps less aware of El Salvador and this ministry than long-term supporters, but enthusiastic, nevertheless.

A more in-depth exploration of the mission of the church with eight friends gathered at Akre's home in the evening.

June 21, Thursday -- Regina, Christ Lutheran

This was a small gathering of ten, mostly elderly, with warm concern. The oldest gentleman, in his 90's, left after the first hour, as is customary, according to what his son told me at Church of Our Saviour in Calgary three days later. Pastor Dennis Hendricksen hosted this session with his usual passion and awareness. He stayed on later to chat with my cousin Glenda Hunter and me.

June 24, Sunday -- Calgary, Lutheran Church of Our Saviour

I preached a story-telling sermon in the midst of a musical but not traditional liturgical worship service, with the sanctuary full. I enjoyed lengthy chats with numerous members after the service, followed by

lunch at the mall with Pastor Lee Woolery and two elderly couples. Pastor Lee was a fully-immersed host.

June 25, Monday -- Airdrie, Lutheran Church of the Master

This was a small gathering with Pastor Tim Wray, his parents and three others, with an intimate and in-depth discussion, all demonstrating great interest.

June 26, Tuesday -- Olds, St. Paul's Lutheran

This was a gathering of 25 enthused participants, including some from Grace, Bentley (Gail & Phil Berg and friends), warmly and enthusiastically hosted by Pastor John Lentz.

June 27, Wednesday -- Millet, St. Peter's Lutheran

I gave a presentation in the sanctuary for twenty participants, followed by discussion in the basement over coffee, with some very socially-aware and concerned members. Pastor Sorenson was away on vacation, but the evening was well-hosted by lay members. One of these families hosted me overnight at their farm. As it turned out, the tomb of the 19-year-old youth, which I had noticed in the graveyard before this event, was their son, who had died only months earlier.

July 1, Sunday -- Edmonton, Holy Spirit Lutheran

I preached at the well-attended worship service and assisted with communion, with lengthy discussion over coffee hour following, including with numerous visitors. This was followed by lunch at a restaurant with the pastors and spouses. Pastors Trish Schmermund and Lindsey Jorgensen-Skakum were most gracious and impassioned hosts.

July 2 & 3, Monday & Tuesday

Camp Kuriakos, Prime Time, provided a fine opportunity to share the ministry over meals and coffee with numerous senior campers, as well as with some staff and especially with keynote speaker Pastor Richard Reimer and his wife Dana.

This short speaking tour I feel was most worthwhile. Visiting congregations in our ABT Synod always encourages me, both with respect to the ministries in each congregation and in the Synod as a whole, as well as with respect to the support demonstrated for our joint ministry "In Mission with El Salvador".

Respectfully submitted,

Brian

Rev. Dr. Brian Rude

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I met with several delegations to El Salvador throughout the year, including the high school student group from Luther College, Regina. Others were Roman Catholic, Methodist, UCC and Lutheran delegations from Ontario, BC, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., Wisconsin, Minnesota, Colorado, Norway and Germany.

My home continues to be filled with displaced Salvadorans, unable to live in their own homes with their families due to threats and violence. There are usually 3 or 4 permanent residents, besides up to a dozen occasional guests. I assist these with free room and board, some with bursaries, or funds for family, health, phone or other expenses. Daily this calls for discernment over what it is they "want" and what it is they "need," as well as some assessment of the reality of their needs. This applies also to the requests of numerous others in need, who do not live in, or stay at, my home.

I join the 35 Lutheran pastors from around the country most Wednesday mornings, for worship, study led by a rotation of pastors or guests, wrapping up with lunch fellowship.

I sent out the following e-newsletters in 2018:

Jan. 3--El Salvador Negatives and Positives, past and future

Mar. 9--Democracy--More than an Occasional Vote

April 1--Holy Saturday

April 2--¡Gracias!

April 4--Easter Victory

April 20--vicissitudes and beatitudes

May 20--Pentecosting

Sept 15--Harvest in El Salvador

Sept 23--There is still some English spoken in England: Celebrating Racial Diversity

Oct 12--A Tribute to Rev. Don Johnson, Friend of El Salvador

Oct. 12--cellphone change of number

Oct. 15--San Romero

Oct. 25--THIRTY

Dec. 10--Human Rights

Dec. 21--Christmas off the Edge

Dec. 23--Christmas life and light

I would like to thank all who make this ministry possible, from administrators to donors, those who pray and those who write, those who visit and those who minister at home.

May God continue to bless this ministry, and to bless us all, throughout 2019 and beyond.

To God be the glory.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. Brian Rude

18 April 2019