

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

### Annual Report -- 2019

2019 was another year of intense, challenging, and rewarding ministry.

Several areas from previous years were no longer a part of my schedule:

- 1) CRISPAZ board membership (last 2 years as secretary);
- 2) *IPAZ* ceased to function, after a decade of promoting dialogue to reduce violence and increase communication, trust, and well-being in Salvadoran society;
- 3) DMin. was wrapped up in March, 2019;
- 4) prison ministry continues to be blocked.

Since I am no longer involved with prison ministry, I was freer to accompany, once again, two medical brigades from Wisconsin, for one week each (four community health fairs each). These were marvelous opportunities for ministry--accompaniment and solidarity--both with the 15 and 21 USA visitors, as well as with the local folk attending each fair. I assisted with translation, and with the yoga and pharmacy areas.

A new area of ministry absorbed most of my time and energy. This was as a third member of the Salvadoran Lutheran Church's Pastoral Ministry to Migrants. My primary role was as a liaison to the civil society networks addressing this theme. This meant accompanying the *MSDF* (Table for Support for Violently Internally Displaced). It also extends to other related populations: migrants; internally displaced; returnees; deportees.

My life is filled with displaced persons, as I always have several living in my home, and numerous others dropping by for support. These are Salvadorans from all periods of my life and ministry in El Salvador, especially from the five years we worked with street youth in neighbourhoods near my home. These youth are now parents, almost grandparents. This arrangement presents daily challenges and joys, on personal, interpersonal, and household levels, since most live "calamity-a-week"-type lives.

This table is made up of 15-20 national and international organizations, from civil society: church, health, human rights, and educational institutions (e.g., Red Cross, *Médicins Sans Frontiers*; Jesuit University; Archdiocese, etc). The primary challenge throughout the year was to draft appropriate legislation to be presented to and passed by the legislative assembly, in response to a demand from the Supreme Court. This process was already delayed by a year. This process was complicated by a change of government mid-year, which meant change of personnel at all levels, and resulting change of policies and *modus operandi*. This network was often left re-acting to such changes, rather than being able to move forward with its proposals

In terms of time involvement, there were many meetings, fora, workshops, conferences, press conferences, etc., often as an entire body, at times by one individual organization, including our Salvadoran Lutheran Church, or sometimes two or three in coordination.

Personnel tend to be half my age, professional lawyers, social workers, psychologists, etc. They are all very competent and dedicated. I am consistently impressed by their commitment and their success. From my perspective, I encourage more first-person involvement on the part of the "victims"--i.e., "Don't talk about us, without us." These life-stories would often have more impact on the public and on politicians and the media, than expert discourses, I feel.

Another ongoing area of involvement is with the *Fe y Esperanza* Historical Memory Association. The focus here is more on the refugee community of the mid-1980s than on the orphanage of my years as chaplain (1988-94), but there is considerable overlap of persons and identity. This involves two major annual events (May 5 and Dec 28), and all the planning and fund-raising leading up to these, including all-day excursions or outings. Our *Fe y Esperanza* committee conducts weekend visits to and meetings with numerous communities where *Fe y Esperanza* members have re-settled, around the country. It also involves accompanying many other events (vigils, fora, conferences, marches) relating to the war-history of martyrdoms and massacres, organized and hosted by other communities and organizations.

I continue to accompany the HIV mutual support group at Rosales Public Hospital. We meet bi-monthly, led by a rotating team of psychologists and social workers from Rosales Hospital, and guests they invite, plus other events, such as AIDS Day (Dec. 1), Christmas, and occasional outings. Jesús and I facilitated three workshops, on the themes of loss and death. These were well-received.

I had the opportunity to preach on four occasions throughout the year:

- 1) Jan 6, Church of the Cross, Calgary, Alberta -- I continued their Advent-Christmas tradition of dramatizing the Sunday themes. This involved an in-depth interview with three wise women (no wise men were available or willing);
- 2) Two Monday morning staff devotionals at Resurrection Lutheran Church (Aug 19, including presiding at Eucharist, and Oct. 14);
- 3) A dramatic re-enactment of our arrest and imprisonment from Resurrection Lutheran Church, 30 years later. This was significant for me, since Bishop Gómez has always told this story from his perspective, focusing on the subversive cross, which was "arrested" with us on that occasion. My vision is to include more of the personal testimonies of the many faithful people, both Salvadoran and international, who embody that cross. This dramatized testimony was a significant step in that direction.

I accompany the Salvadoran pastoral team regularly:

- 1) Monday morning staff worship;
- 2) Wednesday morning continuing education fora;
- 3) annual retreat, two days in December, to the western part of El Salvador;
- 4) the first week of August, the festival anniversary;
- 5) the wake and funeral of Bishop Medardo and Pastor Abelina Gomez's son Balduino;
- 6) the wake and funeral of Onan Rodríguez, son and brother of numerous Lutheran pastors;
- 7) numerous ordinations and anniversaries.

"Facebook" might be considered a diversion or pastime. For me, it often seems like an alternate mode of ministry. I am in contact with over 1,000 "friends" from around the world, representing a great diversity of humankind from my entire lifetime. It enables me to keep in touch with dozens of folk from each of my previous diverse ministries, especially orphanage folk and street youth. I find I do more "preaching" on Facebook than in church spaces . . . and often offer listening, counselling, and encouragement. It provides me with a great support network, as well. About 20-30 Facebook friends do excellent research for me, recommending--"sharing"--what I trust--know--will be most worthwhile reading.

Two weeks of study leave were taken around my DMin. thesis defense at the Toronto School of Theology, U of Toronto, March 31, 2019. I graduated in absentia on May 8.

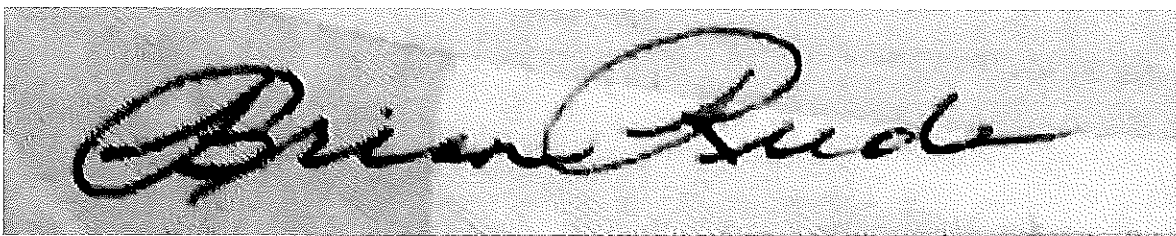
Vacation time included: the first week of January, still in Alberta after our extended family Christmas retreat at Camp Kuriakos; the second week of April in Cancún, on my way home from my DMin. leave in Toronto; the month of July in Alberta, around my niece Tova Berg's marriage to Derek Rude.

I was privileged to host many visitors:

- 1) several *CIS* volunteer English teachers, most from the USA, in my home and at the beach;
- 2) Jim Hodgson, Moderator Jordan Cantwell, and Cathy, National UCC Council, in my home;
- 3) Bill Fairbairn, Director of Inter Pares, Toronto, in my home;
- 4) a grad party in my home;
- 5) a 24/7 drop-in centre (nobody's counting).

I am grateful for the ongoing support and encouragement of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories, both officially, through the Edmonton office of Bishop Larry and staff, as well as the generous and faithful support from so many congregations and individuals. This is indeed a communal ministry, shared by so many, in El Salvador, in Canada, and beyond. May God continue to guide and direct us all in this ministry: "In Mission with El Salvador / *"En Misión con El Salvador."*

Respectfully submitted,

A black and white photograph of a handwritten signature in cursive script. The signature reads "Brian Rude" and is written in dark ink on a light-colored, textured background.

Brian Rude  
The Rev. Dr. Brian Rude  
17 February 2020