

The Next Chapter...

by Kari (and Justin) Eller

Global Mission Personnel - ELCA



March - October, 2014



Oh who can make a flower grow? I know I can't, can you? Oh who can make a flower grow? No one, but God it's true.

After many long months of winter, we are rejoicing here in Buenos Aires for the beautiful days of sunshine and flowers, which have recently begun to bloom. This past winter for us has been a really big learning curve as a family. We moved as you all know in January from Bolivia to Argentina and while we were physically settled, it has taken a lot more than buying furniture to finally find "our feet."

We moved to Buenos Aires because of Justin's new position as Regional Representative of southern South America, a position that keeps him traveling throughout the year, 1-2 weeks more or less each month. That means, that for 1-2 weeks every month, I get to be super mom, doing everything I normally do and trying my best to hold life as my son knows it together, despite Justin's absence. From experience, I can say... this is hard, but with practice, it is getting easier.

Throughout it all, community, God's family in the here and now, has played an important role. Without it, I feel that the transition would have been impossible. Community is intentional, it takes time and courage and effort to vulnerably say in words and actions, yes, I would like to be a part of this. Not everything works out, but eventually something does, and it is truly an amazing feeling, just like watching seeds pop out of the ground, growing into artfully crafted decorations of nature.

Life for us has changed and from March to October, 2014 we have seen and experienced God's presence in many ways. The following pages are a few of our highlights. I invite you, a big part of our community, to read and share our newsletter, reflecting not only on our experiences, but your own as well during this time, knowing that God's hand is always leading us and God's love always supporting us. Together, we are always being made new.



Love,
Kari

March, 2014

Trip to Cuzco, Peru and Punta Arenas, Chile

Visit from Rev. Dr. Shauna Hannan, Homiletics Professor at PLTS.

Skype conference with Bethel Lutheran, Montana

Immigration- Residency process

Everette began preschool

CPD Skype conferences

Cuzco, Peru

In Cusco, Peru, I visited the ELCA-supported project: Association Huch'Uy Runa, a school, training center, and boarding house for children. Children who are part of this project attend school half the day and learn a trade skill (like carpentry, metal work, ceramics,



painting, handicrafts, bakery, etc.) the other part of the day. Due to the economic realities in Cusco, some children have to stop their formal education after the 6th grade and go to work in order to help feed their family. This project not only helps them with their education and trade skill training, but also feeds them two meals a day. According to the director of the association, some of the children in the program would go hungry if it weren't for this blessing. The harsh reality for many of them is that they cycle between the loving, supportive, affective environment created at school and the desperation, isolation, discouragement, and hunger the children experience at home. Many of the students don't want weekends or holidays because it may mean they may not eat. One of the most fascinating aspects of my visit is that I saw and felt again the great sense of respect and dignity generated among the students by the staff because often there are age differences in grade-level classes. For example, if a student shows up and is 12 years old and has never been to school, then they start them out in first grade. The school uses workshops to help create a multi-age environment where one's age isn't as important as learning and practicing a trade skill. I know that this

is one place where the kingdom of God is visible and made real.

Punta Arenas, Chile

Punta Arenas, Chile is in the Magallanes (Strait of Magellan) region of most southern part of Chile, right near Antarctica. I went there with a companion synod delegation from Western Iowa to visit a Lutheran congregation and school in Punta Arenas.



One of the most eye-opening parts of the visit was learning about the tragic realities and inhumane genocide of the original/indigenous Selk'nam (also known as the 'Ona people)

peoples who had lived for thousands of years in the Patagonian region of southern Argentina and Chile, including the Tierra del Fuego islands before the Europeans arrived in the late 19th century. With the group we also visited Fort Bulnes National Park Reserve and enjoyed a traditional lamb asado (grilling).



Everette's 1st day of preschool in Buenos Aires! He was a very happy boy that his uniform is blue (his favorite color). We walk him to and from school every day. Along the way he looks for "Mr. Bean" cars (antique Fiats)!!



April, 2014

Trip to Colonia, Uruguay

IELU Children's Workshop

Justin incorporated into the IELU as a pastor (left)

CPD- Gathering planning

Portuguese class

He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.

Immigration- Residency process continued

-Matthew 28:6

IELU Children's Workshop

The Lutheran church in Caseros (Gran Buenos Aires) is also a school for around 1,000 pre-school to 12th grade students. While a number of the students are Lutheran, the school is open for anyone in the neighborhood. Pastor Daniela Cainzos of the IELU is the school's chaplain and noticed that there were students who wanted to learn more about Jesus and the Bible outside of class. As well, she mentioned that because the majority of students who attend the school live in small apartments and there are few areas where children can simply "run around," having a chance to socialize outside of school hours with friends for a few hours and get out of the house is very important for both them as well as their parents. The first IELU children's workshop happened around Easter on a Saturday afternoon with approximately twenty-five children ranging from five to 10 years old. Activities included: painting Easter scenes on big canvases and tracing their hands on a cross, both of which were used to decorate the school, outside games, snack, a discussion circle where students shared what they knew about Easter with their peers and adults listening in, and prayer. The workshop was so successful that students asked that the next month's workshop last



longer and their parents later asked when workshops would be available for them!! This workshop, like later workshops work on a \$0 budget. They began because of a need of the students and all of the materials needed have been donated by workshop facilitators. -Kari



Portuguese class

As the ELCA Regional Representative in Southern South America, and relating to the Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana do Brasil (IECLB), I use Portuguese on a weekly basis. Therefore, starting from before we left Bolivia, I have been slowly learning Brazilian Portuguese (my third language through my second) in order be able to better relate and communicate. In Buenos Aires I took the class: Portuguese for Argentines, however my Spanish has been heavily Bolivianized! Hearing yet another language threw my brain for a loop and since it didn't mentally register as an already somewhat familiar language, I wanted to respond to the professor's Portuguese questions with "jisa", "janiwa", "ja", or "nein" (yes and no in Aymara and German). Let's just say that it took a good couple of weeks for me to get into the groove of Portuguese!

-Justin

May, 2014

CPD book delivery

The ELCA Latin America and Caribbean Christian education project that I coordinate, “Equipping God’s People” (CPD-acronym in Spanish) worked both last year as well as this year to write a book on Popular Education in Christian Education. We decided to write the book in order to systematize diverse experiences with Popular Education methodology in Christian education by Lutheran churches in Latin America and the Caribbean Region. It is intended for use by churches: on a personal, congregational, district and national level, for today’s generations and those of the future. It aims to greater articulate Lutheran Christian education work in Latin America and the Caribbean, to initiate dialogues in which we can collectively think about the state of Christian education in our Lutheran churches today, and plan for the future, in the spirit of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. It is written in Spanish and currently being translated to English. Authors are: Kari Eller (Coord.), Isabel Díaz Medina, Lautaro López Stefoni, María Eugenia Calvin Pérez, Karen Lee Anderson, Ana María Jara Justiniano, Justin Eller, Ángela Trejo Haager. The book was printed in Bolivia through ISEAT (the seminary that Justin and I worked at), and a representative (who is also a good friend) was kind enough to bring them by land (it’s a 3 day bus trip) to Argentina!!



On the importance of self-care

This year, I have been sicker than most. Nothing terrible or chronic, just sick. In May, I finally got to the point where I was saying, “I’m sick and tired of being sick and tired.” Much of it is because I travel in airplanes a lot and changes in climate, air, allergens, and food all make for a nice recipe for a cold, bronchitis, or pneumonia. One of the most important lessons that I have had to learn as a pastor and Regional Rep is that it is okay to stop, slow down, and take care of myself. In all of this, eating (good) real food, getting appropriate amounts of sleep, and letting go of certain stressors have helped me start to strengthen my immune system and build my defenses against colds and flus again. -Justin



Birthday parties

Birthday parties for children in Argentina are a REALLY big deal! Parents typically rent out a party place, decorate it, hire entertainers for the children, and buy food and party favors. The school where Everette attends has a suggested rule, if you invite one friend from class, you should invite the rest. This suggested rule and the fact that there are 23 other children in Everette’s class means that this year, we have been to quite a few birthday parties!! I have to admit...they are fun! Usually, at some point there is always a dance part, where to me, it turns into a 6th grade-like dance complete (once even with disco ball, black lights and capes/tiaras). Whatever the theme or interest, the birthday girl or boy also dresses up before blowing out the sparkler-like candle on top of the cake. While this type of party is not a part of our tradition, it is one that we are definitely enjoying!! -Kari





June, 2014

Trip to Porto Alegre, San Leopoldo, San Paulo, Brazil

Skype conference with Bethlehem Lutheran Peace Camp

Family Vacation

ELCA In-house week

IELU Children's Workshop

World Cup 2014- Brazil

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.

-Mark 6: 30-31

Family Vacation



ELCA In-house week



IELU Children's Workshop



Celebrating our 10th anniversary!

Twice a year, the Global Mission Unit of the ELCA holds a week-long meeting in the churchwide offices for GM Office staff. Since it is held in the office, it's called "In-house". I was invited to attend this past in-house meetings because I was a member of a participatory planning group of GM staff and mission personnel. This In-house focused on doing an analysis of various relationships within the unit. While there were days of intense sessions, we also had devotional time together, played games, and laughed. -Justin

This workshop centered around the parable of Jesus and the feeding of the five thousand. Students read the parable, we talked about what that meant to them, they practiced sharing food, played games, sang, prayed and then wrote on paper cut outs of bread and fish something that they could share with others. At the end of the workshop, students as well as parents were invited to stay for a worship service for children. On a personal note, helping out with these workshops it is really neat to see how children who were very timid the first time coming are now excited and participating, Everette included!! -Kari



July, 2014



It was a profound experience to witness the marching of Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo—Las Madres de los desaparecidos. Learning of the years in the later 70's and early 80's when 30,000 men and women went missing, and knowing that some of these same women started marching and protesting peacefully then, and continue to do so today was very moving.

Deborah Lund

These are/were women who wouldn't stop at anything to find their "disappeared" children and grandchildren. They were ordinary women who were willing to face the military junta. They made their cause known internationally. They are responsible for establishing the first genetic blood bank in Argentina and forerunners in developing research that would help identify the children when found. *Mary Magstadt*

Being there in Argentina when the news broke that the president of the grandmothers of the disappeared (as many grandchildren were born, then "adopted" by the military in the late 1970's and 1980's) was reunited with her grandson brought me chills. The patience and persistence in seeking justice by so many women throughout so many years is most admirable and quite unbelievable. *Deborah Lund*

As I continue to read (about "las abuelas") my admiration and respect for them grows and knowing that I was there to witness them marching will remain with me always. *Mary Magstadt*

IELU-Nebraska delegation visit

July 26 - August 6, 2014 it was an honor to accompany with Justin the delegation from Nebraska to the IELU as their interpreter. The delegation (five fabulous women) had a chance to: visit and talk with the national church leaders of the IELU, worship with the Santo Sacramento congregation, have supper with the Cruz de Cristo congregation, visit the Jose C. Paz congregation and the Hogar Ambruster, tour the fair in San Telmo, witness the marching of the "Madres de la Plaza de Mayo," chat with women from the San Mateo congregation in Corrientes, tour Corrientes and Resistencia, participate in an IELU women's gathering in Resistencia, worship with two congregations in El Dorado and witness strategic planning, and visit Iguazú falls. Throughout their time in Argentina, the themes of Lutheran heritage and identity in a changing context, immigration, and women's empowerment and rights played strong. Most all of the delegation will present or have presented about their experience at their local congregations this fall through adult forums, temple talks, and to different congregational level committees or groups and/or other congregations in the Synod. -Kari

July, 2014



IELB-FLBC Montana youth delegation

I had the pleasure of accompanying a young adult delegation from Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp (FLBC) in Montana to Bolivia in July. It was a fantastic trip where I had the chance to meet some awesome young people with huge hearts. My role was that of an interpreter, but not only between Spanish and English, but also of the cultural pieces. Having lived in Bolivia for almost five years does not make me an expert in any way. However, it does allow me to understand some of what foreigners from the US context see, feel, and hear (or not) when they are in Bolivia. We traveled with the Pastor-President of the IELB to Sorata for a youth camping trip where we share a few days in workshops, meals, games, and worship with the youth from that region. We then went to Cochabamba to spend some time with children in an after-school program at the local Bolivian Lutheran congregation. The Montana delegation finished their trip with time spent in conversation and sharing with young adults from La Paz. For me, I experience God in many smiles, hugs, stories, tears, and dreams shared throughout our time together. -Justin



IELU Ordination

Pastora Daniela Cainzos

But now thus says the Lord,

he who created you, O Jacob,

he who formed you, O Israel:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name, you are mine.

-Isaiah 43:1

August, 2014



Everette's 4th birthday!

Despite the fact that we like traditional Argentine children's birthday parties, we decided this year to keep Everette's

birthday a smaller congregational party! We celebrated Everette's 4th birthday August 15th (and mine-belated) after church with the Cruz de Cristo congregation. We didn't rent out a party house or invite his classmates, but there were Mickey Mouse decorations and lots of cake and ice cream...just what he asked for! We did, however include the really cool sparkler-like candle!! -Kari

A visit from Rev. Dr. Patricia Cuyatti, LWF

As the Latin America and the Caribbean Secretary in the Mission and Development Department of the Lutheran World Federation, the Rev. Dr. Patricia Cuyatti is quite a busy woman. This August, she paid a visit to the IELU to visit churches and have meetings with national church administration. Justin, and I also know her from LSTC as she was our neighbor and we were delighted to be able to see her again and catch up! -Kari



IELU Children's Workshop

This workshop focused on the parable of the Sower. Children attending literally planted flower seeds (and one onion seed by accident!) in front of the school. As children who live in apartments, touching dirt and connecting with nature was both intriguing and well, dirty! They read the parable and discussed its meaning and their connection to it, sang, prayed, ate and played games.



Afterward, there was also a worship service for children, their parents and the congregation. They left with packets of seeds to plant in their homes and with "seeds" of hope for their families and community. -Kari

Working preacher



When I was still teaching at ISEAT, the ecumenical seminary in La Paz, I committed to writing four commentaries in Spanish for the Working Preacher

website hosted by Luther Seminary in Minneapolis. The four texts that I was assigned were covered Reformation Sunday, All Saints Sunday, one of the last Sundays in the Ordinary (time after Pentecost) season, and Christ the King Sunday. The themes range from freedom in the truth, the "Beatitudes", the "Parable of the Talents", and the "Final Judgement." The commentaries can be found at: https://www.workingpreacher.org/profile/default.aspx?uid=2_eller_justin_everette. -Justin

Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching.

-1 Timothy 4:13

September, 2014

Shopping for the CPD Gathering

With the CPD Regional Gathering planning almost completely done, I had a lot of fun designing and ordering Gathering materials such as the banner, pens, folders and business cards! -Kari



Bible Study- The Kingdom of God

Since September is the "Month of the Bible", I led an evening ecumenical Bible study based the 2014 theme: Go and Announce the the Reign is Near (Mt 10:7). We gather about 35 participants from the Catholic, Methodist, Lutheran, Anglican, and Reformed congregations in the Belgrano neighborhood. We discussed how the imperative, go and announce, has a mission tone, of being sent and is found in the context of Jesus sending the chosen twelve. We explored what is the reign of God/heaven, where and when is it. The Reign of God was the central message of Jesus and it framed his purpose on earth (Mk 1:14-15; Mt 4:23; Lk 4:43). We concluded our study understanding that the reign is here and now, between, within, and among us (Lk 17:21) and is at the same time yet to come in its fullness (Mt 25:31-40). When Jesus announced that the reign had come close, he was saying that the reign (governance) of God through grace, forgiveness, liberation, salvation was breaking into the world through the Messiah, the Christ. In Jesus, God was manifesting a new attitude or lifestyle based on unconditional love and redemption. -Justin

For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you."

-Luke 17:21b



Rev. Raquel Rodríguez IELU

This September, the ELCA Area Program Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Rev. Raquel Rodríguez visited the IELU. As Regional Representative, I accompanied her on her visits to the faith communities (congregations) in Comodoro-Rivadavia, Esquel, and Bariloche. In Bariloche, we participated in a workshop where women from the congregation made blankets and clothes for mothers and infants at the hospital who can't afford them. We also went to a nature reserve park and lake in the mountains of Esquel to take in God's marvelous creation in all its beauty. Returning to Buenos Aires, we met with national church administration about the ELCA sponsored projects of the IELU. -Justin

October, 2014



CPD 2014 SOUTH AMERICAN REGIONAL LUTHERAN EDUCATOR GATHERING

October 1-5, 2014 Lutheran educators from the ELCA companion churches of Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Bolivia and Colombia gathered in San Alfonso, Chile to:

- discuss and launch the new CPD book on Popular Education in Christian education
- get to know each other and share about Christian education in their contexts
- create Lutheran Christian education didactic materials using Popular Education methodology based on the current needs of the church

To create the didactic materials, educators performed a diagnostic and concluded that the materials should focus around the topics of sexuality, violence and planning in general. These materials, when finished will be uploaded to the CPD website and available for anyone to download for free.

It was an absolutely amazing gathering and everyone left happy, motivated and inspired to continue work in their context. The CPD project began in 2011 and is currently up for renovation. If renewed, the project aspires to host three other gatherings for Lutheran educators, continue to support them in their work and to create with them new materials in Spanish. Lutheran Christian education is important in the region and has something to proclaim and teach as we march toward the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. I invite to visit the project's website <http://capacitandoalpueblodedio.org> and consider how you might share in the movement.

-Kari

Prayer requests



-for West Africa: the tragic impacts of Ebola on communities, families, and the church (For more information and to read more about the ELCA's response, <http://www.ELCA.org/News-and-Events/7699>)



-for Palestine and Syria: the ongoing wars, violence, and displacement of peoples

-for Christian educators in Colombia, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, and Bolivia who participated in the "Equipping God's People" (CPD) gathering in October 2014



-for missionaries around the world (See the next page for links to fellow missionary websites/blogs!)



-for children and educators from the Lutheran school in Caseros



A little bit about the Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Unida (IELU)

The IELU has 31 congregations and missions with a total churchwide membership of approximately 11,000 individuals. While there is a concentration of IELU congregations in the Greater Buenos Aires area, the IELU's presence extends throughout five districts with distances of 3,600 kilometers between its northernmost congregations in Misiones and those in Patagonia. The IELU has one congregation in Montevideo, Uruguay. The church runs six schools, a home for people living with HIV/AIDS, a home for women, one for men, and four student hostels as well as several day care and community centers.

(Shared from <http://lutheranpartners.org/projects/south-america>)

The Next Chapter..

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Also, check out the ELCA's *Hand-in-Hand* newsletter and the *Global Links* newsletter <http://www.elca.org/Resources/ELCA-Global-Church-Sponsorship>

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

-Matthew 5:16

Also, be sure to check out fellow global personnel websites/blogs:

Cameroon	Elisabeth Johnson	http://camerooniangrace.wordpress.com/
Central African Republic	Susan Smith	http://susan-car.blogspot.com/
Egypt	Kirsten Fryer	http://kirstenincairo.com/
India	Megan Ross	http://megsthewanderer.wordpress.com/
Japan	Laura Fentress	http://30monthsinjapan.blogspot.com.ar/
Japan	Caroline Keenan	http://carolinekeenand.blogspot.com.ar/
Japan	Tauna Roth	http://etinjapan.blogspot.com.ar/p/elca-global-missions.html
Jerusalem	Carrie Smith	http://knitpurlpraypreach.blogspot.co.il/
Jerusalem	Danae Hudson	http://hummusnotwalls.com/
Jerusalem	Angela and Martin Zimmann	https://www.facebook.com/ZimmannsInTheHolyLand?notif_t=fbpage_fan_invite
Liberia	Brian Palmer	http://tryingsmall.wordpress.com/
Madagascar, West/Central Africa	Morsal Collier	http://westafricabound.org/
Malaysia	Wendolyn Trozzo	http://flungforthanew.wordpress.com/
Mexico	David Brondos	https://sites.google.com/site/dbrondos/home
Nigeria	Mary Beth Oyebade	http://www.marybetho.blogspot.com.ar/
Papua New Guinea	Ann Klavano	http://newguineacall.blogspot.com.ar/
Russia	Bradn Buerkle	http://www.russiancorrespondent.blogspot.com.ar/
Tanzania	Randy and Carol Stubbs	http://s421181158.onlinehome.us/
Tanzania, Kenya	Joe and Deborah Troester	http://africanwaterlog.blogspot.com.ar/
Uganda		