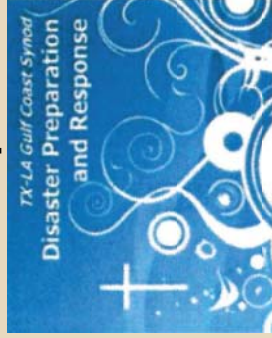


Be Prepared



Have you considered how your congregation will respond in the event of a hurricane or other disaster? Visit www.gulfcoastsynod.org/JusticeDisaster.html to learn more.

Global Justice:

Working side by side with global companions to seek justice

Domestic Justice:

Ecumenical partnership to end poverty in our country

Local Justice:

Community action by congregations to support their neighbor



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Justice News

July, 2010

An occasional newsletter of the TX-LA Gulf Coast Synod Justice Network

The Heartbeat of Immigration Reform is Non-partisan



People of faith, across educational lines, realize that the well-being of 12,000 immigrants in this country has

more to do with treating people like people than it does with anything else. See page 5.

We Have a Need to Give

When we encounter poverty it is so instinctual to want to write a check. But money is power (like it or not). Think about this.



By giving money we run the risk of influencing people's lives in ways we may not intend. See page 9.

Lutherhill - Our Daily Bread

Who eats rice on the floor and who feasts on a three-course meal at the table? You might be surprised!



(pictured above: Pastor Mark England eating pasta) See page 7.

Kan You Kover 100K?

John Lutheran Church in Cat Spring, TX invites you to join them in making a difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ a half a world away in the Central African Republic (CAR).



Sept 30th through Oct 2nd, they will host a 100 kilometer walk (62 miles) to raise money to purchase motorcycles for pastors in the CAR. See page 11.

Also in this issue

- Health Center Dedication
- A Month of Potlucks
- Dates to Note
- Sembrando
- Global Mission Festival
- Bp Hanson on Oil Spill
- Bp Hanson on Immigration Reform
- Book List

This newsletter is designed to help you stay informed about Justice issues and events.

Sembrando

Sowing Seeds for the Future for Children in Peru



Building on the success of Future Seekers, Sembrando is a new ministry in partnership with the Lutheran Church in Peru (ILEP), ELCA World Hunger and the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod.

Sembrando is for children and their families in Peru who look to their neighborhood Lutheran Church for help to build a better future. Your gifts provide children with meals they would not otherwise have, help with homework and support for their family. Sembrando works directly with parents who live in extreme poverty as they struggle to care for their children. Your gift of only \$400 supports the congregation, family and children in their community a year.

The long term goal of this program is to assist every Lutheran Church in Peru to be a mission center for children and their families. This year we begin with 8 congregations. Each congregation, in conversation with parents, has developed ministries that address the needs of their specific community. We, as partners, will accompany them as these ministries grow. This is more than sponsoring a child. It is sponsoring a whole community to wrap a support system around a child. Questions? Contact Peggy Hahn, Assistant to the Bishop at peggy@gulfoast-synod.org, 832-594-5016 or Peru Team Chair, Jim Young at jyoung923@cast.net.

Please Keep Us In Your Prayers as We Travel



Youth in Peru and youth from our synod will spend time together during a Cultural Immersion Trip July 22-July 31.

That means our time will be spent getting to know the Lutheran's in Peru (like this youth in the photo) experiencing local food, worship and fun as well as an excursion to Machu Picchu for a look at the ancient Inca culture.

The 32 people traveling from across our synod ask that you keep us in your prayers and consider how you might also support our partnership in Peru.

Ministry of CAR Lutherans	TLGC 2010 Goal	Sent to Date
Village School Program	\$ 8,000	\$ 2,000
Young Women's Scholarships	\$ 3,000	\$ 1,200
Martha and Mary Women's Center	\$ 5,000	\$ 1,000
Emmanuel Health Center at Gallo	\$ 5,000	\$ 2,125
Motorcycles	\$ 15,000	\$ 5,262

Kan You Kover 100K?

St. John Lutheran Church in Cat Spring, Texas invites you to join them in making a difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ a half a world away in the Central African Republic (CAR).

On September 30th through October 2nd, they will host a 100 kilometer walk (62 miles) to raise money to purchase motorcycles for pastors in the CAR. Seventy-one pastors (12 of whom are retired) serve church members in their assigned 100 km2. Many of them walk, earning the equivalent of \$70 a month in this itinerant ministry.

Motorcycles, in addition to helping pastors carry out their duties, are also the best mode of transporting people with medical needs to hospitals and clinics. Each motorcycle costs roughly \$2,500.

St. John is inviting individuals and teams to commit to walking and to obtain sponsors. The route will take you from Cat Springs through Bellville, Brenham, Welcome, Industry, New Ulm and back to Cat Spring. If you want to take part, but cannot do the whole 100K, please consider taking part in one segment of the walk, or contribute by being a sponsor or helping along the route. Registration deadline is September 20, 2010. Check out the Let's Take A Walk brochure and sponsor sheets or visit the Kan You Kover 100K website for pointers on training.

Gallo Health Center

In the dusty village of Gallo, there was joy and celebration among the 2,000 people who came out for the dedication of the long-dreamed-of Emmanuel Health Center on January 19th, 2010.

The clinic will change the lives of people from the many, many villages in the Gallo area, Lutherans and non-Lutherans alike.



One of the first babies born at Emmanuel Health Center

Dedication of Emmanuel Health Center

by Carolyn Jacobs



In the dusty village of Gallo, there was joy and celebration among the 2,000 people who came out for the dedication of the long-dreamed-of Emmanuel Health Center on January 19th, 2010.

Women cooked outdoors for the crowd, and the ceremonies included singing and dancing. Under Medical Director, Dr. Christa

von Oertzen, German missionary, the clinic will change the lives of people from the many, many villages in the Gallo area, Lutherans and non-Lutherans alike. A number of babies have already been born in the new Health Center. Not only will the clinic provide medical treatment, but it will also be a locus for community-based health education and primary health care programs.

The clinic includes examination rooms, an operating room, patient rooms, an outdoor covered waiting area, a dispensary, water delivery system, septic system, and more. It will be a model for this type of facility in Africa. The project also includes staff training.

Your prayers and support are needed for fully completing this project. Still being sought are funds for staff housing, solar panels and solar lamps, gas refrigerators for storing medicines, an incinerator for medical waste, and conversion of two containers that delivered medical supplies into permanent storage facilities.

Realization of the Center is the fruit of many years of planning and partnerships. It was coordinated and funded through Global Health Ministries and Lutheran Partners in Global Ministry, conceived of by the EEL-RCA (CAR Lutheran church) and the Gallo grass-roots committee, and received contributions from many individuals and partners-ELCA Global Mission, CAR's three companion synods, German and Danish Lutheran Missions, Catholic Mission, several NGOs, and the UN World Food Program. Major funding came from two or three individual congregations.

A local contractor was hired, who recruited workers on site. Global Health Ministries provided the project manager, Teresa Obwaya, originally from Kenya, and her interpreter and assistant, Eunice Olson, originally from CAR. The clinic is named in memory of the former Director of Health for the EEL-RCA, and in praise of Christ, called Emmanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23).

Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod has a goal of \$5,000 this year for the Health Center. A video is available to show in your congregation to generate support. More detailed information about project needs is available on the Web sites of Global Health Ministries and Lutheran Partners in Global Ministry.

Global Mission Festival - Sunday, October 24

with Guest Speaker Brian McLaren

Living Word Lutheran Church in Katy will hold its seventh annual Global Mission Festival on

**Sunday, October 24
from 1:30-6:30 p.m.**



This year's speaker is Brian McLaren, an author, speaker, pastor, and networker among innovative Christian leaders, thinkers, and activists who was named one of America's top twenty-five evangelicals by Time magazine in 2005. As a former mission agency board chair, a grandson of pioneer African missionaries, and someone who travels extensively and works closely with missionaries and missiologists, Brian has a unique perspective on the challenges facing global mission today.

Join us for worship at 2:00 p.m. (gathering music and slide show begin at 1:30). Special children's programming including global art, music, and games will be provided during worship for ages 3 - 7. Beginning at 3:30, there will be exciting Festival activities for all ages:

- Global Market Place with fair trade arts and crafts sales.
- Credit cards will be accepted
- Global Music with Bayou City Pipes and Drums, Steel Vibrations (Caribbean-style music) and Mariachi MECA
- Global Fun for all ages with mission displays and hands-on activities representing ministries around the world
- Global Food with a wide selection of cuisines from local international restaurants

• Q&A with Brian McLaren from 5:00 - 5:45 pm

Who should come? Anyone and Everyone!

Youth groups / Seniors' groups / Families / Women's groups / People who like to eat / People who like to worship / People who like to have fun / People interested in global mission / People who like to shop

For more information, visit www.livingwordkaty.org, or call the church office at 281-392-2300. Special thanks to Thrivent for their support!

Dates to Note:

August 13-14 ~
Leadership Gathering
at St. Paul's in Brenham

August 27-28 ~
Leadership Gathering
at Christ the King in Kenner

September 10-11 ~
Leadership Gathering at Zion in Houston

October 24 ~ Global Mission Event
at Living Word Lutheran Church, Katy
featuring Brian McLaren

Bishop Hanson's Letters: Gulf Oil Spill & Immigration

June 28, 2010



Sisters and brothers in Christ,

The oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is both heartbreaking and infuriating. It causes deep sorrow, both for the initial loss of human life and for the deep and lasting damage to an ecology that provides life and livelihoods for so many of God's creatures. At the same time we grieve that the natural beauty of this region, a sign of God's marvelous creativity, has been defiled.

Moving to indignation and anger over the neglect and carelessness that led to this disaster, both in private industry and in government regulation, is understandable. However, to do so without recognizing the responsibility we all share -- as consumers of petroleum products, as investors in an economy that makes intensive and insistent energy demands, and as citizens responsible for the care of creation -- lacks credibility and integrity. An honest accounting of what happened (and what failed to happen) must include our own repentance.

July 13, 2010

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

The time has come for immigration reform in the United States. Yes, the issues are complex and not easily resolved. It is understandable that people are wary of engaging this politically and emotionally charged issue.

Yet it would be tragic if we withdrew as people of faith and our voices fell silent. We have an opportunity for evangelical witness to our faith in God who is present in the stranger and calls us to extend hospitality. "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Romans 15:7 NRSV).

Read more at www.elca.org, search for *Recent Messages and Statements*

Could Your Next Potluck End World Hunger?

More than a billion people around the world are hungry. Many struggle to live on less than \$1 per day. What if we could join together to make a difference in the fight against hunger? What if it started at your next potluck?



The idea is simple. Host a potluck, include a talk or activity about hunger and take a collection for ELCA World Hunger. Thirty congregations are already on board. Will yours be the next to join them?

Register your potluck and find great resources at amonthopotlucks.org.

up their homeland, move away from family, wrestle with a new language and feel like criminals unless they have no choice. The world is messed up, to be sure, but in the end, people come because they have a glimmer of hope. The same hope our ancestors had.

The Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson, in the grievances against King George lists: "He has endeavored to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands." It is our heart as a country to welcome immigrants - this essentially who we are.

There is more. Please take time to get informed. Congregations can have open conversations about this critical faith issue with trained facilitators. We have good resources on our synod webpage, including Immigration Myths & Realities and the Inter-faith Platform on Immigration Reform.

A Need to Give

September - Peru
October - CAR

November -World Hunger
December -Local Justice

We have a need to give. I am struck by this. When we encounter poverty it is so instinctual to want to write a check. We feel ourselves being drawn in to caring with check-in-hand, so much so that I think start to feel resentful or find ourselves avoiding uncomfortable situations not just because they hurt our heart but because they also hit our bank account.

Yet we can't help ourselves. Every Peru Team meeting is filled with conversations about "what we can do." The conversation is more about money then we actually intend it to be. Though it is never said out loud, I get the feeling we do that because we KNOW God is calling us to give. In some ways I would even say that giving money is exciting. So we should give.

But it's not that simple. We really have to work at building global relationships and cross-cultural partnerships before jumping in with financial gifts. Money is power (like it or not.) Think about this. By giving money we run the risk of influencing people's lives in ways we may not intend.

For example, I have seen situations where caring people have giving new friends in foreign countries money out of the goodness of their heart that has resulted in major problem for the person on the receiving end. When one person in a family, or in an organization, or in a community winds up with more money than they usually make in a month or even a year in some cases, it distorts their reality and creates tension among their peers. However when we give our money through trusted and well-crafted programs with transparency and accountability, amazing things happen.

Please consider joining other congregations in taking special offerings for specific ministries so that together we can make a big impact - a just impact that works towards systemic change in our world.

Let's make September our Peru month, October our Central African Republic Month, November World Hunger Month and December the month to support a local ministry in your own community. If we can align our desire to give with real need through our partners, we can make a difference.

The Heartbeat of Immigration Reform is Non-partisan

Human-Rights-Flesh-and-Blood Stories of Hope

by Peggy Hahn

People of faith, across ecumenical lines, realize that the flesh and blood involved in the well-being of 12,000 immigrants in this country has more to do with treating people like people than it does with anything else. The stories are heartbreaking yet laced with hope. None of us can listen without also hearing the voice of our own ancestors who came to this country from some-place-else for reasons not so different than those coming today. But there are differences... Let's talk about language for a minute. "Why don't those people learn Spanish?" My family still remembers speaking German at home, worshipping in German and having a hard time at school with English. But they did it. In fact in some cases people were forced to give up "their language" and maybe even some of their culture, to "assimilate." I doubt anyone can look back on that as a good thing. The difference today is that we live in a global, internet-connected world. I email with people in Spanish almost daily and sadly I don't speak Spanish - instead I Google Spanish, and they Google English! We have tools available to us that our ancestors did not have.

The short answer to the language question is language is changing along with the changes in technology, due more to our increasing capacity to communicate than anything else.

Then there is the "How can you help people when they are breaking the law?" Good, law abiding citizens aren't all that excited about aiding lawbreakers, but what if the law is part of the problem? Did you know that when your family immigrated to the US there were provisions that provided an accessible immigration process, but today the wait can be up to 20 years, if at all? The delays in the system are staggering. We are not calling for amnesty, rather for a fair way for people to earn their citizenship. By the way, the law being broken by most immigrants in this country is not a criminal offense - it is much more like a speeding ticket we might get on the way to church.

What about the "Cost?" We have been led to believe that immigrants are "milking the system." Actually, it is estimated that immigrants pay \$90-140 billion dollars a year in federal, state and local taxes. They also contribute to Medicare and as much as 7 billion dollars a year into the Social Security Fund which they will most likely never personally benefit from.

But the cost is more than money. From the immigrant's perspective, the cost is immense. Living in a country that makes you feel like a criminal for wanting to work is something the rest of us can't begin to understand. A lack of access to health care, living in fear of deportation and family separation, along with the incredible struggles for young people coming of age in a country where they have been educated by public schools but cannot attend college or get work is a trap. Young people ready to go to work...ready to learn, but without access to either. So why do they come? Frankly, because they have no choice. People don't give

Our Daily Bread



This summer, campers at Lutherhill are participating in The Daily Bread Program. With the help of an ELCA World Hunger Education and Advocacy Grant, campers on site help tend the vegetable garden, sort recycling and work the compost pile all to help teach campers about caring for God's Creation. Along with Lutherhill Day Camps, they also participate in a Hunger Meal (an experience which simulates the realities

of world hunger).

On the day of the hunger meal, as they enter the dining hall, campers and staff draw a marble that represents which meal they will have. Sixty-five percent (65%) of the participants are assigned to an area taped off on the floor where they eat rice. Twenty percent (20%) also eat on the floor, but eat rice and chicken, while 10% eat pasta in chairs. A small group (5%) eats a three course meal at a table setting.

As the campers on the floor sit and wait, the staff graciously serves those at the table and eventually serves the others. After everyone has eaten they process the experience, talking about how it feels to be sitting on the floor or being served the fancy meal. They talk about what it would be like to eat rice for every meal. The counselors continue to process the experience with the campers throughout the day, and then close with a worship that talks about how we are called as Christians to use our blessings to serve others.



At the end of the week the offerings that are collected on day camps are given 100% to ELCA World Hunger and onsite offering is tithed to World Hunger. They also have shirts in the camp store with the Daily Bread logo on them, with \$3.50 from every shirt sold going to World Hunger. Receipt of the Hunger grant and creation of the Daily Bread program were due to the efforts of Jen Kindsvatter and Geoff Roach.

Serving the Homeless in Birmingham



Marieke Alsguth participated in the Youth Works trip to Birmingham, AL with Advent Lutheran Church in Houston. Marieke joined 9 other youth from Advent to spend a week serving the community of Birmingham by cleaning living space in a women's shelter, serving breakfast to the homeless of Birmingham, and working with an affordable housing ministry (B.E.A.T.) with an African Methodist Episcopal congregation in the Ensley neighborhood where she help to restore hope to an area that has been hit hard by layoffs and other social ills. She wrote a brief reflection of her experience.

Marieke writes:

Serving breakfast to homeless people is something I would never had done, but my recent trip to Birmingham, Alabama, changed that. Our second day of work, we were sent to the Church of the Reconciler, a church for the homeless community of Birmingham.

Upon our arrival, a look out of both sides of the van windows showed rough, rag-tag looking people sitting on curbs and watching us as we hopped out of our vehicle. Seemingly automatically, we clumped together, a bit overwhelmed by the people watching us. I was a little uncomfortable, as were a few others in our group. We were greeted by a kind and energetic man that whisked us away to the kitchen, where we met the pastor of the church. He greeted us and thanked us for coming, and quickly set us to work.

Though it was undeniably hot, the atmosphere in that kitchen was warm and friendly. We had some of the regular members in the kitchen, where they conversed among each other while they worked and often included us kids in the discussions.

"Serving breakfast to homeless people is something I would never had done, but my recent trip to Birmingham, Alabama changed that."
Marieke Alsguth

I couldn't really see the people when they got their plates, because I was in the back, but from what I could tell the people were really grateful for what was given to them. When we passed by, people would smile at us and thank us multiple times.

After the food was served, the pastor escorted us to the sanctuary, where he explained how and why the church was started. Birmingham, Alabama is known as the Magic City, because seemingly overnight, the small town became one of the biggest power-house cities in the south. Iron and ore was discovered there, and many opportunities for jobs began to spring up. Newly freed slaves flooded in to find work. But once the mine owners found out that getting workers from overseas would be cheaper, they packed up and left almost as quickly as they came. Peoples' jobs were lost, and they could no longer afford their homes and cars. Racism kept many blacks from getting new jobs. Many of the descendants of those that became homeless are still homeless. But homelessness was something that was covered up by the extreme racism in the city.

The two biggest churches in downtown Birmingham were split up and destroyed because of racism. So the idea of the Church of the Reconciler was born. They would have a multi-cultural church where people of all races could come and worship together. The Church of the Reconciler opened its doors, and the unexpected happened. The homeless came in. The leaders of the Church of the Reconciler decided that instead of casting away the homeless people, being no different than the previous two churches in Birmingham, they would have the church help any homeless person that came in.

In the end, they do have a multi-cultural church; the homeless people there came in many shapes, sizes, and colors. But they all got along and were thankful for the people at the Church of the Reconciler who were helping them.

The church not only serves meals and has services, but they have an open closet so the homeless people can get new, clean clothes in exchange for their old, dirty ones. Every week they are called up to get new clothes, and the cycle goes on from there. Most of the clothes are donations from the community.

In addition to giving meals and clothes, they have a vacation bible school in the summer for students and classes for the adults to help them have an understanding about how to take care of money and how to interview for jobs.

As our time at the church drew to a close and we piled back into our van we were happy to have played a small role in one day in the life of this mission. We know that the people at the Church of the Reconciler will be back tomorrow and everyday to extend their hands to those in need.

Book List

The Great Emergence

How Christianity is Changing and Why
by Phyllis Tickle

Deep Justice in a Broken World

Helping your Kids Serve Others and
Right the Wrongs Around Them
by Chap Clark & Kara Powell

Our Day to End Poverty

24 Ways You Can Make a Difference
by Shannon Daley-Harris and Jeffrey Keenan

They Are Us

Lutherans and Immigration
By Stephen Bourman and Ralston Deffenbaugh

The Promise of Despair

The Way of the Cross as the Way of the Church
By Andrew Root

A Failure of Nerve

Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix
By Edwin H. Friedman

