

NACHRICHTEN AUS BERLIN



Insights and experiences from ELCA missionaries Marissa and Viking Dietrich in Berlin where Viking serves as Regional Representative in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Global Mission.

Dear Friends,

Even in the midst of a pandemic, September brings a familiar feeling as students and teachers return to school and temperatures begin to cool. The cycle is familiar and normal, yet things are very different this year. In our family, our son Isaac moved to Pittsburgh and our daughter Margaret returned to the Netherlands, both for their university studies, but classes are online. Marissa is back in the classroom teaching, but her colleagues anticipate and wait for Covid 19 cases to appear predicting an eventual return to online teaching.

Our Central Europe Teacher program was severely impacted when the EU did not open its borders to Americans. Our newly recruited teachers struggled in the face of so much uncertainty, showing an amazing commitment and flexibility, but eventually we all had to admit that Covid 19 related travel restrictions would prevent them from participating this year. Some of our teachers already present in Slovakia are starting classes again, but of course with lots of new rules. Typical rules in European schools include staggered arrival times for students, mandatory masks when moving, physical distancing in classrooms, reporting of symptoms, etc.



Sue Strekal and Megan Freudenberg, returning CET teachers, confront new challenges on the first day of school in Bratislava. Photo Credit: Megan Freudenberg

It is a very challenging situation for students, teachers and parents all around the world. I am sure many of you also have personal stories to tell as your family or friends confront the risks of returning to school during the pandemic. Let's keep all of them in our prayers throughout this fall as we all "wait and see" what will happen.

If you wish to support Covid 19 relief efforts, please consider giving to the ELCA's [Lutheran Disaster Response](#) . LDR is also supporting relief efforts for storms and fires in the USA as well as other world crises you can see on the website.

75th Anniversary of the End of WWII Commemorated



Members of ELCR participating at the event. Photo credit ELCR

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Russia, a church that founded by German speaking migrants to Russia and a church that suffered greatly during the War and the Cold War due to its German heritage, commemorated the end of WWII in Moscow on Sept 2, 2020 at the Lutheran Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul.

German Ambassador Paul von Geyr hosted a reception at his residence on the eve of the event. At this event the Ambassador presented Archbishop Dietrich Brauer with a Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit to the Federal Republic of Germany. The Service Cross was awarded to the Archbishop for his fruitful work in reconciliation by the German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier.



Archbishop Dietrich Brauer receiving order of merit award from Ambassador von Geyr. Photo Credit ELCR

In memory of the countless victims of all wars, [Johannes Brahms's "German Requiem" was performed in the Cathedral by the State Academic Bolshoi Symphony Orchestra](#), Lior Shambadal conducting. As an opening to the concert greetings were read from German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Moscow Mayor Segei Sobyanin. In her greeting, Merkel expressed the gratitude felt by the German people toward the victorious countries for extending a hand of reconciliation to the Germans after the war. "The willingness to dialogue and reconciliation has been and remains invaluable to this day. Since it is a central element of German-Russian relations, it must be supported and preserved."



Performance at St Peter And Paul cathedral. Photo Credit ELCR

Immediately before the start of the concert, an exhibition "Christian Martyrs - Victims of Nazism" was opened within the walls of the Cathedral. The exhibition presents the fate of German priests who acted against the war during the years of the Hitler regime, who were persecuted for their beliefs by the National Socialists and were subsequently executed by them. Originally scheduled for May 8th to coincide with the date of the end of the war, the event was postponed due to Covid 19.

From Beirut, Lebanon



Photo Credit: Middle East Council of Churches

The Middle East Council of Churches considers itself a tangible and active expression of Christianity in the Middle East. It's mission is to “build bridges” between churches within the region, between Christians and Muslims, and also between Middle East churches and Christians around the world. In partnership with churches from around the world including the ELCA, MECC encourages interfaith dialogue, supports minority Christian populations, offers post-war trauma healing throughout the region and now, most recently, emergency aid to victims of the Beirut explosion.

The ELCA works with MECC in many ways. For some time, through its [Lutheran Disaster Response](#), the ELCA has supported MECC's efforts to bring relief and aid to refugees fleeing war torn areas of the Middle East. It has also supported MECC's efforts to help priests return to their home areas, often destroyed, in order for them to help communities find renewal and restoration. Most recently, the ELCA lent a hand to the MECC efforts to bring food and hygiene kits to elderly and disabled people who lost access during the COVID 19 lockdowns to necessary provisions.

Since August 4, when Beirut suffered terrible loss from an explosion in the Beirut Port, MECC has been involved with relief efforts. The following description comes from [the MECC Website](#) “After an initial explosion, a subsequent blast caused widespread damage, with reports of damage more than 20 km from the port area. Hundreds of buildings including grain silos storing around 85 percent of the country's grain, and numerous residential places have also been damaged or completely destroyed. Three Christian hospitals in the Beirut Area, which welcome both Christian and Muslim patients, were severely damaged. Additionally, many historical church related schools in Gemmayzeh, Mar Mikhael and Achrafieh were badly affected just before the coming academic year in September. The Christian quarter of Beirut is totally devastated and at least ten churches have been destroyed.” MECC issued the following statement:



Photo: Jowana Khalil/ MECC
Communication and PR Department

[MECC Statement to the Churches of the World and to Its Partners, Support to the devastated city of Beirut and to its distressed people](#)

Thank You for your support

KEEP IN TOUCH...

WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Marissa and I share our news in these bi-monthly newsletters to give you an up-close look at our church's work in Europe and the Middle East. We would love to hear from you, too. You can write to us by email:

Viking.dietrich@elca.org

or at :

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SUPPORT GLOBAL MISSION!

By check: Make payable to "Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" with "Viking and Marissa Dietrich GCS 2050" in the memo line. Give through your synod office or mail your check to: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Gift Processing Center, P.O. Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009.

By credit or debit card: See ELCA.org/MissionaryGiving or call 800-638-3522 and specify "Viking and Marissa Dietrich GCS2050".

By automatic monthly bank withdrawal, or to establish a covenant of prayer, communication and support: Contact 800-638-3522, ext. 2820, or globalchurch@elca.org.

For contributions to the ELCA's Covid-19 Response go to:
[ELCA Covid-19 Response](#)

I also want to thank all of you who support the work of the ELCA's Global Mission through prayer and important financial contributions.

For congregations that have submitted a covenant of support -

First Lutheran, Colorado Springs, CO;

Faith Lutheran, Somerset, PA;

Holy Trinity, Lanse, PA;

Palm Lutheran, Palmyra PA;

Trinity, Mechanicsburg, PA,

St Matthew, York, PA.

For all who have sent financial support to Global Mission in our name -

The Cozmanoff family, Avon, IN;

Shirley Smith, Turbotville, PA;

Friedens Lutheran, Friedens, PA;

the Allegheny Synod, Altoona, PA;

Centerville Lutheran, Newville, PA;

St John, Montgomery, PA.

Special word of thanks and welcome to our newest sponsoring congregation:

Trindle Springs Lutheran, Mechanicsburg, PA

"Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid!" (Matthew 14:27).