



Global Mission Sunday

SERMON

February 2, 2025

Grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus. Greetings to you from your siblings in Christ from coast to coast to coast to coast that make up this part of the family of God we know as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

The epistle lesson today from 1 Corinthians is a well known piece of scripture, extolling the true virtues of love. It includes my favourite line “love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” It is frequently used as a text at weddings.

At a wedding I like to take the text and turn it upside down. I say to the couple, I hate to be the one to break it to you, but even though you love one another you will be impatient, unkind, envious, boastful, arrogant, rude irritable and resentful. You will insist on your own way. Hopefully it will not all happen on the same day.

I go on to tell the couple and their guests that the love being described is God’s love for us. We are asked to emulate that love in our lives as we live in relationships every day.

So what does this text have to do with Global Mission Sunday? I want to make the case for you that Global mission is all about love. Last year I had the incredible opportunity to visit all three of our National Global Mission Partners and see how the ministry they do, that we support, is all about acting out God’s love.

In January 2024 I visited the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) at their request. Bishop Azar said they needed me to come and lift their spirits. This was a difficult yet important time together as I heard first-hand about the impacts of the Israeli-Hamas war and what that means to our partners. The physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual effects of the trauma to those in the region cannot be overstated. During my visit, I heard from families who have lost loved ones, children who are afraid to sleep alone due to fear of the unknown, and young people who increasingly believe it’s pointless to study or prepare for the future. Poverty, hunger, depression, and domestic violence are all on the rise.

Amid this crisis, the ELCJHL is doing all they can with the resources they have, to offer aid and comfort, showing their love, but resources are stretched. We are called to walk in solidarity and accompaniment with our partners who we love and care about. Recently our church participated in the ELCJHL Scholarship Appeal, and earlier this year, we surpassed our goal of \$263,000. We are so grateful for your support!

We continue to support the ELCJHL by providing tuition scholarships to students whose families can't afford the fees. It is a way we show love by supporting the education of those who are in need, making a huge difference to their future.

I also had the wonderful opportunity to visit with our global mission partners in Iglesia Evangelica Luterana Unida (IELU). We have been partnering with them around the expansion of Instituto Evangelico Americano in José C. Paz, located in Buenos Aires. The school had a waiting list of 500 families because they did not have enough classrooms. Through our partnership, we have helped support the construction of three new classrooms and despite delays due to the pandemic I was able to be present for the dedication and unveiling of the new classroom space.

Our next project with IELU is also going to be education-focused at another one of their schools. This project will create more usable space but also space designed to work with students with special needs. Another way that we can show our love with those who have been disadvantaged and marginalized.

During my October visit with the Iglesias Luterana del Perú (IL-P), I also had the opportunity to visit and see first-hand the work we partner with them in Iquitos. Pastor Yoli leads a program in the congregation to support children in the surrounding neighbourhood. The congregation offers a lunch program and tutoring on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. These children live in poverty, often with grandparents while their parents go to try to work in Lima. The lunch and tutoring programs help them to stay in school and again, to strengthen their chances for a better future. In a place of great need, it's a way of showing love.

All of these churches, all of their ministries in challenging circumstances lives out this verse "(love) bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Their love, their belief, their hope and their endurance inspires me to live out faith, hope and especially love in my life and my ministry.

Your prayers, your love, and your financial support help make all of these things possible.

Amen.