



European American Lutheran Association **EALA**

To be a visible and nameable anti-racist witness for a cross-cultural church



SOME REFLECTIVE COMMENTS ON THE OCTOBER 10 BOARD MEETING BY PRES. THOMAS-BREITFELD

Autumn 2014

Inside this issue:

<i>President's Report</i>	1
<i>Interculturalism</i>	1
<i>Meet ALAMEH</i>	2

Six Common Goals for ELCA Ethnic Associations:

- Listen to the non-affiliated to hear relevance.
- Implement ways to serve those under 35.
- Convene caucuses to hear how young adults would become engaged in church.
- Ethnic Associations assist ELCA in drawing clear map for cross-cultural church.
- Engage Associations in developing young adult leadership.
- Establish communications between synods and Associations.

Our EALA Board met on Friday, October 10, 2014, for our In-Person Board Meeting. As the newest of the ELCA Ethnic Associations, we have been in existence for six years. In many ways, we reflect that young age and are still trying to "find our way", to find the appropriate, effective ways to collaborate with our brothers and sisters in the ELCA to create a crosscultural, antiracist church. We reflected on the work we have done, renewed our commitment to continue to raise these issues before the whole church, and worked at structuring ourselves so that our efforts might be more effective.

Because we met at the Lutheran Center in Chicago, we were blessed to have Bishop Eaton with us for part of our meeting, as well as

Pastor Al Starr, Director of Ethnic Specific and Multicultural Ministries. We also met with Heidi Hegstrom from the Gathering Office, because one of our goals is preparing both youth and leaders for the Detroit Gathering. We were grateful for these ways to connect with Churchwide Staff; because for our work to be successful, we have to work as allies with other persons and organizations of the church.

We took a look at our Board membership, and want to create a better balance of young/older, clergy/lay, on the Board. If you would like more information about serving on the EALA Board, please feel free to contact me.

On Saturday, October 11, we were able to meet jointly with the Association of Lutherans

of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage. It was a wonderful day of sharing and learning. We are committed to meet with the other Ethnic Associations as often as possible. Our work is always better when we do it together! The work our ethnic association is committed to - to work as allies with others who want to create a more just and welcoming church that seeks to break the bonds of racism that hold all of us - is not easy work. We invite you to join us, whenever to do that so all of God's children are truly welcome equally at the banquet table. Please feel free to contact me with any questions, comments, or concerns. Praise be to God for calling us into his family and this work!

Pastor Fred Thomas-Breitfeld
President, fhtb5@aol.com.

WHAT DOES "INTERCULTURAL" LOOK LIKE IN A CONGREGATION?

The EALA Spring Newsletter reported that two members of our Board of Directors attended a global mission event that highlighted intercultural and sustainability. Here is an example of an ELCA congregation practicing interculturalism.

The Lutheran Church of Our Saviour in Greenville, South Carolina, happily received a missionary from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO), a companion synod partner with the South Carolina Synod. The missionary's name is Alejandro

Mejia, and he is working through the ELCA's TEEM program to become ordained. Alejandro is a fourth-generation Lutheran from Bucaramanga, Colombia and is well versed in Lutheran theology. He does a great job of explaining that theology to new Spanish-speaking neighbors of the congregation, a large percentage of which come from Colombia as well. Alejandro also teaches confirmation and alternates leadership of the English-speaking services. The model

that LCOS is using to develop this ministry is an "intercultural" one rather than a "multicultural" one. Multicultural already exists in our society. Everywhere in the United States we have people from different cultures coexisting side-by-side. But those different cultures do not necessarily interact with one another in significant ways. Even where an existing traditional Lutheran congregation of predominantly European heritage opens its

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR EALA BOARD TIME TOGETHER WITH ALAMEH

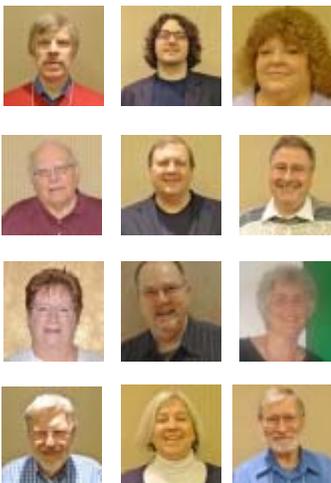


Members of the European American Lutheran Association (EALA) Board of Directors are each assigned as a liaison to one of the other five ethnic associations of the ELCA. Here is a report by Cathy Crimi on her experience with ALAMEH.

"...the Middle East is the cradle of Christianity, and that if we embrace our Christianity, we also have to recognize our faith heritage that begins in the Middle East..."

[Join the EALA as a registered partner, working for racial justice and inclusion at \[crossculturalchurch.org\]\(http://crossculturalchurch.org\)!](#)

Board Members



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Attending this year's ALAMEH Assembly was a gift of renewing and making new friendships, sharing stories, worshipping and breaking bread together.

As anticipated, I learned and experienced much in the time together. Rev. Rani R Abdulmasih's sermon in opening worship reminded us of the abundance and expansiveness of God's love. If we truly accept God's love, we emanate that love to all people. Rev. Abdulmasih provided an amazing example of how to preach in settings where not everyone speaks the same language, yet want to worship together. Despite the frequent use of Arabic, he made sure English speakers had a sense of inclusion.

The Keynote Speaker was Gabi Habib, General Secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches. He reminded us, as U.S. residents, that the Middle East is the cradle of Christianity, and that if we embrace our Christianity, we also have to recognize our faith heritage that begins in the Middle East, and that those whose cultural heritage comes from the Middle East are descendants of the early Christians, making their Christian heritage much more extensive than most others. We also are called to encourage our government to end the biased and senseless militarization in the Middle East. We have to learn as a nation that we are not entitled to all the world's resources. We also have to take responsibility for the hatred we instill in others by our greed. We can all become active in encouraging our politicians to work for peace, not war and militarization. We can encourage interreligious dialogue that will help us to relate to others on a personal level and hear their stories. We also can travel to the Middle

East to learn the realities of all the peace efforts that are in progress, instead of relying on the sensationalized media for our truths. And by exercising moral courage, we can also join those efforts that work to build relationships and bring peace to the Middle East. All of these actions will bring us to a better understanding and respect for cultures that are in some ways different from our own, but also have threads that tie us all together.

My ongoing personal challenge, and that which I raise to others, is to see the face of God in all people we encounter. If we find that abundant love of God that Pastor Abdulmasih spoke of, that exists in others and ties us together, we can make significant changes in our communities and world. I give thanks for the ongoing relationships that continue to be built between us personally, and the ethnic associations of the ELCA. As we work together, we can become the church that was envisioned at the inception of the ELCA – a church for all people.

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doors to people of another culture, the existing congregation tends to be a benevolent host to a separately organized group. In our intercultural model, we talk about Our Saviour/Nuestro Salvador as being one congregation, one body in Christ that offers worship services in two different languages. The more historic group is not the host to the newcomers. We are intentionally seeking out ways to mix the two cultures. Anglo people participated with their new neighbors in a recent fiesta scheduled for Hispanic Heritage month in October. Both groups work side-by-side on work days where physical labor does not require a complete fluency in each other's language. The youth from the Spanish-speaking families are bilingual and enjoy participating in combined youth activities with their English-only peers. We are currently making plans to celebrate feast days for both la Virgen de Guadalupe on December 12 and Sankta Lucia on December 13.

It is not easy nor comfortable to cross lines of difference created by culture and language. But the Lutheran Church of Our Saviour is being intentional about finding ways to go beyond mere coexistence to interaction.

~Pastor Mark Cerniglia, Senior Pastor