

Short Term Global Service
ELCIC Mission in the World

The ELCIC Mission in the World provides opportunities for international service for long term missionary service and for short term service of 6 months to 2 years through Volunteers in Mission. We repeatedly receive requests for placements of 2 weeks to 2 months.

When people are not able to volunteer through their church, they look elsewhere, and so we have ELCIC members volunteering with World Vision, Samaritan's Purse, and various other organizations. They advertise these experiences in their congregations as mission trips. It results in approaches to mission that differ from what the LWF has articulated as theological and practical considerations of mission, and it results in considerable financial support being directed away from Lutheran mission and ministry.

The rationale has been that we cannot expend the staff time required to organize short term mission trips or arrange placements for such short periods of time. We should also ask if we can afford not to respond to what our members are asking and lose them and their financial support to other organizations.

Our partner churches and organizations are asking for shorter term volunteers as well as the volunteers that serve more than 6 months. If our volunteer placements are driven by the needs and requests of our partner churches and organizations, as in being In Mission for Others, we also need to be responsive to what is being asked of us.

In January, 2008, Bishop Julius Paul visited the ELCIC. Bishop Paul has invited us to send volunteers. He said that 3 month placements at Bethany Home (for persons with disabilities) are "ideal." When I visited Augusta Victoria Hospital in May, 2008, Dr. Tawfiq Nasser said that volunteers in nursing who could lend support to staff are needed and welcome for any length of time. They are welcome to come for 2 weeks.

To date I have linked as many short term volunteers as VIM/IVS volunteers: 3 and 3.

1) Gerry Roehr (ELCIC Real Estate Consultant) has applied to serve with VIM. In the course of inquiring about a placement through Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) He was invited to participate in a 3 week runway upgrading project in Madagascar.

2) I received an inquiry from a teacher looking to volunteer for the summer months. As a result of the relationship being developed with Bethany Home in Malaysia, I referred her to the director.

In both cases I clarified that since these placements were less than 6 months, my role would not extend beyond linking them. This kind of brokering does not require much time on the coordinator's part, but is helpful to the placement organization.

3) I received an inquiry from an Alberta family planning a trip to Botswana. With CLWR staff connections in Africa, I linked the family with the Lutheran Church in Botswana, and used the opportunity to share information that would be helpful to the family as visitors to another culture and church. They have been appreciative of the information and assistance.

It saddens me that we have no place in our Mission in the World programs to lend support to such work as that being done by Connie Landstrom in Tanzania or Gertrude and Erwin Buck who have been teaching at Gurukul Seminary in India.

Given the considerations of time and cost with the shorter term placements, some modifications could be developed. The ELCA does not conduct face to face interviews with volunteers serving for less than 9 months. It may be that an interviewer or interview team could be utilized within the synods to assist with screening applicants. This would also encourage more people to be involved.

My proposal for short term global service is that the role of the International Volunteer Coordinator allow for lending support to volunteer placements of less than 6 months where it promotes the mission and ministry of a partner church or organization, a companion synod, other Lutheran church bodies, and recognized mission organizations. The support may take the form of:

- a) linking volunteers and placements and/or
- b) screening volunteers and placements and/or
- c) promotion, which may include advertising and accepting financial donations.

There is no need to create a new program, only to respond to the requests being made by both placements and volunteers. If a name needs to be given to those serving for less than 6 months, in order to distinguish them from the Volunteers in Mission program, perhaps the term "Global Servants" could be used.

Respectfully submitted,
Sr. Monica Denk
International Volunteer Coordinator
July, 2008

The Program Committee for Mission in the World recommends that volunteer placements of less than 6 months, which do not qualify as Volunteers In Mission placements, be recognized by the ELCIC as "Global Servants."

These placements shall promote the mission and ministry of a partner church or organization, companion synod, other Lutheran church bodies, or other organizations whose objectives and methods with which the ELCIC can identify.

Moved / Seconded / Carried July 19, 2008

The Short Term Global Service document will accompany the recommendation as background information. M/S/C July 19, 2008