

March 2019 Newsletter



Greetings Supporters!

Blessings to you and yours this Lenten Season! Lent is a season in the church year where we have a chance to create space to reflect on the ways that God is at work in our lives and in the world around us. With gratitude, we share with you ministry updates from our time serving as YAGM Country Coordinators in Central Europe. In this Newsletter you will hear more about:

- The Young Adults in Global Mission Spring Retreat in Serbia.
- Continued Ministries with City Park Lutheran: Sunday School; Chinese Calligraphy classes; & ecumenical ministries with fellow English-speaking pastors and congregations in Budapest.
- Rachel reconnecting with her YAGM service site in Cairo, Egypt.

God's Blessings, Pastors Rachel & Zach

Pictures Bottom Left: Pr. Rachel, Pr. Zach & Pr. Kirsten Fryer at St. Andrews United in Cairo, Egypt. Upper Right: YAGM Central Europe touring Novi Sad, Serbia with volunteer tour guide, Martin Javornik. Bottom Right: Leaders of the Ecumenical Prayer Service in Budapest, Hungary.

YAGM Central Europe Spring Retreat



Rachel leads Group reflection during Bible Studies with YAGM



After discussing the texts, the YAGM expressed the core meaning through art, poetry, and drama.

Part of our service as country coordinators is to organize and facilitate retreats for the YAGM missionaries. In February, the YAGM in Central Europe gathered together in Fruška Gora, Serbia for their Lent/Spring Retreat. The overall theme of our time together was exploring different narratives and perspectives to better understand the whole truth of God's love in the world. One avenue for this learning was through our Bible Studies. The YAGM were divided into three groups and assigned either the gospel of Mathew, Mark or Luke. By studying these parallel texts, the YAGM had a chance to get a feel for their gospel's style and themes. After small group time, the YAGM responded to their text through a different artistic medium each day: painting, poetry, and drama. After the small group reflection, we shared our learnings and reflections as a whole group. It was a joy to share in this creative reflection time with the YAGM missionaries.

This year, seven YAGM CE serve in Hungary and three serve in Serbia. Another aspect of exploring different narratives was to incorporate further learning about the history of Serbia as well as the history of the Slovak Lutheran Church in Serbia. It was particularly special to learn about the Serbian Orthodox Church from practitioners of the faith including our guide and the monks and nuns of the monasteries we visited. When touring the city of Novi Sad, our guide was Martin Javornik, a member of the Slovak Lutheran Congregation in Kulpin, Serbia and the son of the pastor there. Martin not only shared about the history of Novi Sad, but about his experiences as a Slovak Lutheran living in Serbia.

It was a full week of learning, laughter and reflection. It was a time set apart when we could see more clearly the ways God is using the unique gifts of each of us to share God's love with our hosting communities in Hungary and Serbia.



Our group toured the Serbian Orthodox monasteries of Fruska Gora. We learned not only about the history of the Serbian Orthodox church but current spiritual and cultural practices.

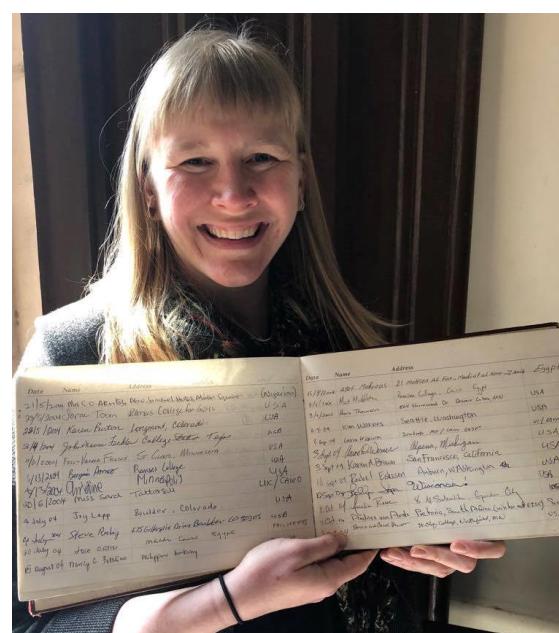


In small groups, the YAGM created and led evening prayers for the group

There and Back Again: Rachel visits her former YAGM ministry site in Cairo Egypt.



Amany was a teacher in the Children's Education Program at St. Andrews Refugee Services in 2004. A good friend to me during my time serving as a YAGM! She is now one of the directors of the education program that serves thousands of young refugees in several locations across Cairo. I'm so grateful for her friendship!



Rachel holds open the guest book at St. Andrew's United Church in Cairo to find her signature from 2004. Delightful and strange for me to see the concrete reminder of that first day worshipping with the community at St. Andrews 15 years ago.

In May 2004, I graduated from California Lutheran University and answered a call to serve as a Young Adult in Global Mission in Cairo, Egypt. Like so many of our Young Adults in Global Mission, I stepped out in trust not knowing where the spirit of God might lead me that year.

My placement was to serve with St. Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS) as the Children's Education Director. My role was to find and create educational opportunities for the children's teachers, help to organize the English-speaking volunteers, and some administrative tasks as they came up.

However, the most meaningful aspect of my year was not the day to day tasks that I completed, but the friendships I made along the way. When the teachers had a moment, we would connect over cups of instant coffee and I would learn more of their experiences living as refugees in Cairo. I heard stories of their pain, their struggle and their living hope for what life could be. At lunch breaks I would join the chaos of the small yard and lunch space. I learned to be vulnerable, to play soccer for the first time, to practice my Arabic, to be corrected, to be present and to listen.

Visiting Cairo, the sensory experiences came back to me in pieces, it was like a Spring rain storm that starts with soft drops and grows in strength and force. At first, it was a word here, the smells of certain foods, the energy of Cairo itself and then whole sentences, expressions, cultural practices, all came back. It was a most refreshing rain.

Being able to be present in the place and ministry where I served 15 years ago re-energized me for our service with the YAGM volunteers in Central Europe. I continue to reflect on my experiences during that year and how God was at work within me and the community in which I served. While the world and program has changed since I served in Cairo—some aspects remain constant: the power of God's love to manifest in community, the connection to our fellow humans across the world, and the ability to put names and faces to people living across the world from where we grew up, people we now know as friends. Transformed during my time as a YAGM, it is an honor and a blessing to be part of the transforming power of God in the lives of the young people with whom we serve in Central Europe.



Sanny (陳德琴) a member of City Park Lutheran who volunteered to lead a Chinese Calligraphy and art class for the community.

It has been an exciting and busy start to the year for the City Park Lutheran congregation. In January, we kicked off our first official Sunday School class. In part because we are a young congregation, we literally and figuratively are growing into our Sunday School offering. The young children that we have baptized the years we've served here in Budapest are now arriving to the age of being eligible for Sunday school. At present, our Sunday School is offered the first Sunday of the month, and is open for children ages 3-12 years of age. Because of our new outreach to the Chinese Christian community in Budapest, we've experienced anywhere from 5-20 Sunday School participants! We are grateful to be able to teach young children about God's love, and look forward to seeing how our Sunday School classes reach some of our congregations youngest members!



Pastor Rachel leading Sunday School for the younger age group.

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

The Third week of January, City Park Lutheran joined together with other English speaking congregations in a service of the word around the topic of God's Justice. Pr. Zach worked with pastors from St. Margaret's Anglican Episcopal Church and St. Columba's Scottish Rite Mission to organize the evening service.

Representatives from the different congregations spoke about the ways that they are witnessing God's redemptive justice within their communities. Many of the speakers addressed ways they saw hope through intercultural and interpersonal connection. On behalf of City Park Lutheran, Pr. Rachel spoke about the global YAGM program and the connection to God we can experience by embracing vulnerability in community.

Ash Wednesday

FOR THE SECOND CONSECUTIVE YEAR CITY PARK LUTHERAN PARTICIPATED IN AN ECUMENICAL ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE. THIS YEAR, THE SERVICE WAS HOSTED BY ST. MARGARET'S ANGLICAN EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN BUDAPEST. ELCA GLOBAL MISSION ASSOCIATE PASTOR ANNE MORAWSKI PARTICIPATED IN THE SERVICE AS WELL. TOGETHER WITH PASTOR ZACH, PASTOR ANNE APPLIED ASHES TO THE FOREHEADS OF THOSE IN ATTENDANCE, REMINDING THEM OF THEIR MORTALITY AND NEED FOR REPENTANCE.

