



EL CAMINO SOLIDARIO

<THE PATH OF SOLIDARITY>

MISSION NEWSLETTER FROM KATE LAWLER AND DAVID WUNSCH

February/March 2006



Living in God's amazing grace

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Inside This Issue:

Reach of Christ's Table	P. 1
The Spirit that Dances Between	P. 1
Fellowship in Bolivia	P. 2
On a Personal Note	P. 2

The Reach of Christ's Communion Table

May God's Love, Grace, and Goodness which surpasses all understanding be with you! For us, Fall is arriving in the Southern Hemisphere along with a new season of questions for reflection about the church's mission. Over the past two months we have visited community kitchens in Peru, a microcredit program in Bolivia, a hostel for people living with HIV/AIDS in Argentina, and a childcare center in Chile. All of these efforts are central to the ministries of our companion churches in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Peru and Uruguay. Through these efforts, Christ's Light is made known and some basic needs of our brothers and sisters are met.

However, these ministries are also teaching us something new about "being" church, at least something that is new to us. By bringing each of these ministries into the body of the church, we do more than live out our faith by serving those outside the church's doors. Rather the doors are opened and the pains and challenges of human life are brought inside with the potential to transform the church. Another image is that of Christ's communion table extending beyond the walls of the church, reaching out to the stigmatized, the poor, hungry and the marginalized. Today we pray for the strength, the courage, and the commitment to extend the reach of Christ's table, and that we may be transformed into a more loving, inclusive church by the presence of all who find a place there.

The Spirit that Dances Between: Hope and Solidarity in Chile

In January, Kate traveled to Chile to participate in the opening of a health center in Concepcion by the organization, EPES (Popular Education in Health). EPES was founded by ELCA (then LCA) missionary Karen Anderson in 1982 during the military dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet. EPES started as a project of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELCH) and became an independent foundation in 2002.

EPES is an extraordinary organization that transforms the lives of women, families, and communities through a long-term approach to health education and community mobilization. EPES addresses the structural causes of health problems by training small groups of people (continued on page 2)



Above: A mural in the entryway of the EPES Concepcion Center was jointly designed by artists from Owatonna, MN and Chile. Pictured (and clowning around) here are artist Rev. Scott Duffus from Owatonna (center) and Chilean artists, Rodrigo (left) and Lui (right). Owatonna artist Steve DeLaitsch is not pictured.

Fellowship with Companions in Bolivia

In January, David went to Bolivia, South America's poorest country, for 10 days to visit the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church. Of the countries where we are working, Bolivia has the largest Lutheran church with approximately 18,000 members. It is a church of people who speak Aymara and Quechua (most also speak Spanish). This is a church that is still in mourning and transition after their president was killed in an automobile accident about a year and a half ago.

David especially enjoyed this experience of worship and fellowship. For example, when David preached one Sunday, the pastor followed David's sermon with a very spirited commentary, punctuating David's main points in a way that guaranteed they got through in case they didn't the first time around. The service followed an hour of singing (not easy at an altitude of 13,000 ft where oxygen is scarce) and another hour of bible study.



Youth group at the Santisima Trinidad Congregation in El Alto, Bolivia.

(Bolivia, con't)

The timing of David's visit to Bolivia was ideal because he was in La Paz on the day that Evo Morales was inaugurated as Bolivia's new president. Evo Morales is the first indigenous president of Bolivia, even though it is a country's whose vast majority is indigenous people. In addition to the formal inauguration ceremony, the previous day there was an indigenous ceremony held at a pre-Incan site where Morales was raised up as the first indigenous leader in 500 years.



David receiving the traditional gifts "for the journey" from members of the Lutheran church in Bolivia (IELB)

On a Personal Note

The kids are doing very well and are speaking more and more Spanish everyday. They are even picking up the Italian-style hand gestures that people here in Buenos Aires use as punctuation (no obscenities yet, as far as we can gather!). School is now back in session. Emily started 1st Grade and Matthew is in nursery school in a three-year-old class. We also enjoyed a wonderful visit from Kate's parents in February.

EPES Continued...

to identify health problems in their communities, and together to study these problems and seek systemic solutions. The celebration around the health center opening provided the opportunity to eat, dance, ride on the bus, and talk at length with the EPES health promoters. Hope and strength radiates from these women who have deeply lived the pain of their country as well as the joys and achievements of a movement that promotes human rights and social justice. The health promoters' knowledge of the health issues that affect their communities (for example, HIV/AIDS, mental health, reproductive health, domestic violence, environmental degradation) coupled with the authenticity of their human interactions are two important ingredients to their success. Many of the health promoter groups have names in Mapuche, one of the indigenous languages of Chile, that convey the strength of their identity as women and as Chileans, for example "flower that grows in the desert", "Sisters of the People" and "Alert Woman."

The trip also provided the opportunity to witness an extraordinary example of global mission and cross-cultural exchange. Two U.S. congregations, Trinity Lutheran from Owatonna, Minnesota and Prince of Peace from New York State, and a number of individuals, all connected to EPES through Karen Anderson, came to celebrate the health center whose construction they helped support. Artists in Owatonna have even created a symbol of two dancing figures "the Spirit that Dances Between" that they have made into sculptures and jewelry representing the relationship between EPES and Owatonna. A U.S.-based foundation, Action for Health in the Americas (AHA!), has been created to support EPES' long-term sustainability. To learn more about EPES and how you can support, visit: www.epes.cl.