

# STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION | 2009

## Working As One Body On Two Continents

### North, South and Central America

**T**hirty-seven ELCA missionaries serve in a dozen Lutheran church bodies in Latin America and the Caribbean. At least 1,000 more people participate in the lives of these churches through the **ELCA Companion Synod Program, which links ELCA synods with Lutheran churches around the world.**



With so many people engaged in this ministry, moving forward together can be challenging. The Lutherans in the Americas consultation helps. Hosted every three years by ELCA Global Mission, this event **gathers Lutheran leaders from North, South, and Central America and the Caribbean for mutual planning** and discernment around ministry.

At one meeting, the ELCA Montana Synod and the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church (BELC) found common ground. The Bolivian church is indigenous, made up of Aymara speakers. The Montana Synod has an outreach to American Indians. Domestic violence is an issue in both communities. Both communities serve large rural regions and face similar challenges of sustaining small churches in remote

areas. "Discovering our similar challenges opens new ways we can look for solutions together," says BELC president, Pastor Cristóbal Alejo, after last year's gathering.

Montana Synod Bishop Jessica Crist says, "With our help, the BELC retreat center at Lake Titicaca is

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About \$1 million of the ELCA Global Mission budget helps equip ELCA members for direct engagement in global mission.

nearly complete. We can collaborate on helping the center sustain itself and offer programs that educate and empower women leaders." Alejo adds, **"We will work together as one body even though we are very far apart."**

For more Stories of Faith in Action, visit [www.elca.org/stories](http://www.elca.org/stories). Do you have a story to share? E-mail us at [stories@elca.org](mailto:stories@elca.org).



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God's work. Our hands.

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