

# Walking Together

“Were not our hearts burning...while he (Jesus) was talking to us on the road”



## Touching Down in La Paz

“Our hours are minutes when we hope to know, centuries when we know what there is to learn.” Antonio Machado

I am discovering life in Bolivia 2016, is very different from life in Peru 1982! Over the last six months I have been warmly embraced by the Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Boliviana. I come to serve, to walk together, at the invitation of the Iglesia Evangelical Luterana Boliviana (IELB-Evangelical Bolivian Lutheran Church) in a program of Pastoral and Leadership training.

1

### LISTEN/PRAY

Spirituality is that attitude which puts life at the center, and defends and promotes life against all the mechanisms of death, desiccation, or stagnation. Leonardo Boff

2

### SEE/FEEL

Everyday riding the minibuses I read the graffiti...reminds me of a quote from Eduardo Galeano (author "The Open Veins of Latin America) "The walls are the publishers of the poor."

3

### ACT

“If there is no friendship with them (the poor) and no sharing of the life of the poor, then there is no authentic commitment to liberation, because love exists only among equals.” So you say you love the poor? Name them. Gustavo Gutiérrez



David Thorp  
Pastoral Educator  
and Trainer of  
Leaders



A ministry of  
solidarity and  
mutual learning.  
Pastor Emilio  
greet Pastor  
Dave at airport



In worship we  
celebrate Life in  
Christ itself.

Working together as partner churches, the ELCA and the IELB, accompaniment means “walking together in solidarity that practices interdependence and mutuality. In this walk, gifts, resources, and experiences are shared with mutual advice and admonition to deepen and expand our work within God’s mission.” Much of walking together in the last six months has also meant, taking the time to listen, pray, see, and feel. On numerous occasions I have even been asked to act!

## Getting to Know the IELB

### The Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Boliviana.

March 11, 2016

Taller en Batallas apoyando a las medicinas tradicionales. Workshop in Batallas (Lake Titicaca District) supporting traditional medicines

March 21, 2016

Yesterday I was walking the streets of La Paz, Palm Sunday. There were many “caceras” selling palms.



I was remembering the words of Crossan: “In 332 BCE, three centuries before Jesus’ Palm Sunday entrance, Alexander the Great, having conquered “Tyre and Gaza after terrible sieges . . . Jerusalem opened its gate without a fight.” And we can “Imagine the victorious Alexander entering Jerusalem on his famous war-horse, the black stallion Bucephalus.” (Ox Head)

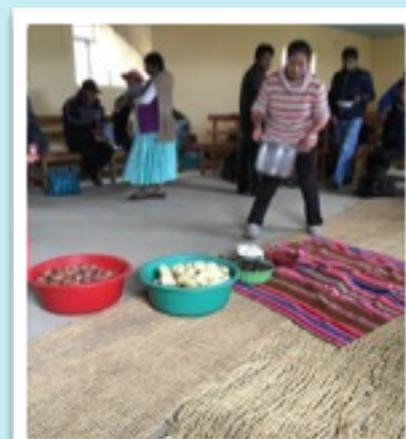
Pilate will make a similarly militaristic triumphal entry to Jerusalem — with war horse, chariot, and weapons — each year in the days before Passover to remind the pilgrims that Rome was in charge.

Mark has a colt that has never been ridden; Matthew, wants two animals, a donkey with her little colt beside her, and that Jesus rides “them” in the sense of having them both as part of his demonstration’s highly visible symbolism. In

## COMMUNION, COMUNIÓN: UNION OF THE COMMON IN JESUS

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other words, Jesus does not ride a stallion or a mare, a mule or a male donkey, and not even a female donkey. He rides the most unmilitary mount imaginable: a female nursing donkey with her little colt trotting along beside her.”(J.D. Crossan “The Last Week”) What statement might Jesus be making?

April 3, 2016

Today, I suppose as I should have been attentive to worship (which I was) I also observed a mother nursing, a mother encouraging her child to participate, an elderly woman stoic, dressed in wools. Many in need yet soliciting support "por los necesitados y enfermos"....so tonight a little Neruda...Ode to my Socks

April 15, 2016

Everyday riding the minibuses I read the graffiti...reminds me of another quote from Eduardo Galeano (author "The Open Veins of Latin America) "The walls are the publishers of the poor."

April 24, 2016

Cada vez que me voy a una Iglesia de la IELB, cada domingo, siento la presencia del Divino Espíritu de vida.



Pastor Eulogio blessing children at the Instituto Luterano



La Finca, Cobija, Bolivia

April 30, 2016

After a number of days in Cobija, visiting the Lutheran Children’s Center and cattle farm. I find myself marveling at the places we find Jesus. Love these words...Lutherans are literalists, but in a different way from what you are probably thinking. We don't take the words on the Bible's pages literally. like the biblical literalists do. We understand that when we open up the pages of the Bible, we literally encounter Jesus Christ himself. We take our encounter with Christ himself in Scripture too seriously to take the Bible literally. (Thank you for this insight, Steed Davidson! and Gordon Straw).

May 1, 2016

I have been thinking a lot about internalized racism these days...as a white person I simply do not understand the depths of this. Maybe it is my own needed work, that makes seeing so hard. Yet, I see it in such blatant forms as my Aymara professor, who is a noted anthropologist and linguist, shares a glimpse here and there. Jaqamau sartata. (I don't know how to do the double periods over an a) "Como gente vas a andar..." The advise mothers give their children when they leave the house...."remember to walk like a person." Culture so denied that mothers

have to worry about how their children will present themselves in the dominant culture.

May 3, 2016

I have just come back from a center that is dedicated to young women. Some are orphaned, some come from conflicted families. The purpose of this center is to create a living environment for the advancement and education of young women. The center Verena Wells.... is named after a 19 year old German volunteer who died in a car crash while serving the church here. I loved listening together the giggles of the residents, as they conversed with the president of the IELB, Emilio Aslla Flores. I loved the fact that church members, administrative leaders of the church, laborers, and even persons like myself, lifted a shovel, carried cement, ate together to create community. Together, codo a codo, with lifted praises to the resurrection (life conquers fear and death) we lifted praises with cement in our shovels and said to life, Jesus, prevails.



Clemente, Secretary of Development, Pastor Emilio Aslla, President of IELB and myself at the Center Verena Wells and Lutheran church of Caranavi

May 11, 2016

“If there is no friendship with them (the poor) and no sharing of the life of the poor, then there is no authentic commitment to liberation, because love exists only among equals.”

So you say you love the poor? Name them.

Gustavo Gutiérrez

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Leonardo Boff

May 12, 2016

I am still trying to wrap my head around creating a curriculum about a "Bolivian Lutheran identity" intuitively this still feels amazingly colonial...I was wondering what it might be like to create a curriculum...Bolivian identity the new reformation for lutherans...

Ken, a friend, and wisdom holder, posted a great reflective piece. it sparked some dialogue and I found myself saying....I live in Bolivia. Internalized racism is as prevalent here as in US. My journey is to experience "metanoia" turn around and dismantle "white, classist privilege " for the sake of the gospel.....it is hard individual work.

"A church that doesn't provoke any crisis, a Gospel that doesn't unsettle, a word of God that doesn't get under anyone's skin, a word of God that doesn't touch the real sin of the society in which it is being proclaimed-What Gospel is that? Oscar Romero

May 20, 2016

Tomorrow I have to give a talk on "stewardship" in Spanish "mayordomía". In Spanish the roots go back to the conquest. A "mayordomo" (steward) was a person of mixed Spanish/Indian/Indigenous blood hired by the patron (Spanish land owner) to keep the Indians/slaves in check. The word is so loaded with internalized oppression and outright exploitation, yet, used so freely amongst the Christian community as "God's Plan" the lack of analysis is driving me crazy. I am wondering how to present the oppressive nature of the word yet capture God's desire for the harmonious relationship that was intended in the creation...the grand sense of the Pentecost community where all was shared and distributed equally (by the way the Christian community brought this to life long before 'Das Capital)'...

The workshop went very well and we explored Aymara words and world views consistent with Christian intent regarding stewardship as alternative models.



May 22, 2016



A NEW ROOF FOR NUEVA JERUSALEM VIACHA

June 2016

Early June found me in Apolo leading a workshop on Lutheran Identity (June 2-6). Later we were in Sorata for a Pastor's conference (June 17-19). A week later we were in Calamaya at the Jessica Crist Center for a workshop with Pastoral leaders (June 22-25). From there we went to an anniversary celebration in Millipaya (June 25-26). The end of June through early July we were in Cochabamba offering a workshop for teachers of Sunday School as well as Professors in the various Lutheran schools in Bolivia. Here we explored the role of psychology and pedagogy as well as developmental stages of children.

July 2016

Two major workshops here and a wedding. The first workshop with with the Youth of the IELB from the District of La Paz, held in Coroico, Bolivia. This is now my third trip to Coroico. We looked at our identity as Lutherans as young people. I have to admit was totally impressed with the commitment of these youth and their genuine curiosity and desire to deepen their faith lives.

July 28-31

My first trip to Santa Cruz for a workshop with families/parents of the children who attend the Lutheran School Fe y Esperanza and with the teachers who teach there. Pastor Emilio Aslla made a great presentation to the parents and I looked at pedagogical methods the aid students in seeing themselves as learners. This was one of those places where the remnants of missionary colonialism still are visible. There is an infrastructure that needs to be maintained and teachers that need to be paid. Bolivian law requires that any family with more than two children going to a parochial school be offered free tuition at the school for any children beyond two. In other words, if you have five children you pay for two and three go for free. This is very burdensome on the school in its quest to remain self sufficient. It just feels like there must be some way for the international church community to be more responsive.

The great gift here is a sense of hospitality and welcome...and yes to understand why it is to be dependent upon God....maybe that is the true revolution to come to that awareness!

Yes there have been significant changes in my faith life, my world view, the sense of collective struggle. I think the biggest gift is the value of community. I really have great hope for the church as an expression of community.

Workshop on Lutheran Identity participants Apolo



Radio Luterano "Manantial de Vida" Sorata

