

# VOC

Voices Of Compassion



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We are  
called  
to serve

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Cover photo: The Altman Family – Peter, Melissa and their two children, Elijah and Evangelina – have been Lay Missioners in El Salvador since January 2014. Peter and Melissa offer educational support and recreational opportunities, through their local parish of San Juan Bautista, to the children and youth of La India, where many homes lack electricity and/or running water.

Photo credit: Kelly Alfaro



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## MKLM

## Mission Statement

*Maryknoll Lay Missioners is a Catholic organization inspired by the mission of Jesus to live and work in poor communities in Africa, Asia and the Americas, responding to basic needs and helping to create a more just and compassionate world.*

## PLEASE REMEMBER

Maryknoll Lay Missioners (MKLM) is a separate and distinct organization from the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers and Maryknoll Sisters, although we often join together to serve in mission. **MKLM raises all of its own resources to recruit, train, send and sustain our Lay Missioners.**

We need your support!

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## CONTACT US

To visit us, learn more about becoming a Lay Missioner or to support us, please visit our website  
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# OLD FRIENDS AND A NEW BEGINNING

by Sam Stanton



Sam teaching Tanzanian students how to count to ten in Spanish

## Dear Friends,

Since our last edition of *Voices of Compassion*, I've had the privilege of visiting our Lay Missioners in different parts of the world, but I especially want to share with you the impact of my visit to East Africa, where we have missioners working in Kenya and Tanzania. Arriving in Kenya, I met with Russ Brine, who has been in Kenya for over 15 years. Russ has taken a program that the Diocese of Kitale started and turned it into a very solid reality for street-children of the nomadic tribes of northern Kenya. Some students, who arrived at the school as street children, are now doctors, giving back to their country and their fellow Kenyans, based on a solid foundation of Gospel values.

I also visited four of our Lay Missioners who work on the hot and muggy coast of Mombasa, Kenya, a city that has faced violence during the last couple of years. There, Susan Nagele, MD, who has been with MKLM for 31 years, continues her tremendous work coordinating care at the small clinics and hospitals, as the medical consultant of the Archdiocese of Mombasa. Coralie Salvador, Regional Director, who has served with MKLM for nearly 14 years and returned to mission last year, is the administrator of the H.O.P.E. (Helping Orphans Pursue Education) Project that works with children impacted by AIDS.

I then met with Judy Walter, who has worked in Bangladesh, a tremendously poor area near Mombasa, in the St. Patrick's Dispensary, which is part of a parish begun by Kiltegan Fathers. Judy is leaving the clinic in wonderful shape, as she moves on after five years to Tanzania this coming June to work as a Lay Missioner in hospice care, and reflection and spiritual direction at a Mwanza retreat center.

*Photo credit: Susan Carpenter*

Next I was delighted to visit with our newest missioner in Mombasa, Teresa Villaruz, from Santa Clarita, California, a young teacher at St. Francis School, in the area of Kibarini. I was so impressed visiting her classroom and looking at the space that they gave her, an empty room to develop into a library - it's just incredible what she has done to create a nurturing space so comfortable for learning! It is featured in a video on our website at [mkml.org](http://mkml.org).

From there I went on to Tanzania, where we have nine missioners working in Mwanza, along the shores of Lake Victoria, and one working in Musoma, which is about three hours north of Mwanza. I was very impressed with the work of Ashley and Michael Leen, Susan Carpenter, Richard Ross, and Joanne Miya (our Regional Director), as well as the new Lay Missioners who have arrived in the country. Much of the work they are doing is with young women who don't have much of a chance in Tanzanian society, and helping these women prepare for life, by teaching them business and economic skills. One of the women, Mariam, has her own hairdressing salon now, and Michael visits every couple of weeks to continue training her in bookkeeping and balancing her finances. It was so heartwarming to witness the impact this had on Mariam and her little daughters' lives.

I also observed a program in which Ashley Leen builds up the sense of self-worth and personal security in young women, preparing them to be much stronger agents in the Tanzanian society.

And, of course, visiting Liz Mach in Musoma was a real gift. Liz will celebrate forty years as a Maryknoll Lay Missioner, the great majority of that spent in East Africa. Liz is a nurse and has her Masters in Public Health. She is also an excellent communicator,



*Photo credit Sam Stanton*

Lay Missioners Coralie and Teresa teaching in the classroom



Photo credit: Sam Stanton

Maryknoll Lay Missioner Michael Leen meets with Mariam at her hair salon



Photo credit: Liz Mach

Sam and Bishop Michael Msonganzila in Tanzania

and works very closely with the Bishop of Musoma on all of the social programs in the diocese, and very specifically on those that support young women who have been victims of gender abuse. You will find more details of Liz's ministry in our profile on her in this VOC.

Finally, I want to share with you that after eight years as Executive Director of Maryknoll Lay Missioners, and actually it's my second stint as Director in 30 years as a Maryknoll Lay Missioner, I have decided that it is time for someone else to assume this leadership position of Maryknoll Lay Missioners. So, sometime during 2016, I will be turning this ministry over to another person. Our Board of Directors is in the process of searching, interviewing, and naming a person to take this position. This doesn't mean I am leaving Maryknoll Lay Missioners. On the contrary, I have a lot of energy to continue the work I have done over the last eight years in promotion of Maryknoll Lay Missioners, helping to establish specifically who we are as laity in mission, while building a bright future for an organization that I strongly, strongly believe in, where I will continue to be involved.

I want to thank all of you for allowing me to be a part of your lives over these past eight years, in sharing stories, and sharing the mission of laity in the world today through Maryknoll Lay Missioners. It has been an honor and a privilege, and I look forward to continuing to work with many of you. I encourage you in every way possible to remain active in supporting our efforts. As I have often said, and as Pope Francis reminds us: all the baptized, laity, priests and religious are called to mission. It is a part of the vocation of being a committed Christian, and I strongly believe that and will continue to do all I can to promote mission. Your partnership has been key and will be even more so in the years to come. So thank you. We look forward to our continued partnership, and I look forward to visiting with you, as I energetically embark on this new beginning. If you have any questions, please be in touch.

With gratitude and blessings,

Sam Stanton

## Liz Mach 40 YEARS A MARYKNOLL LAY MISSIONER CONFRONTING GENDER INJUSTICES

Elizabeth (Liz) Mach celebrates her 40th year as a Maryknoll Lay Missioner this year, as MKLM celebrates our 40th year anniversary as well! Liz is our longest serving missioner, and has had a powerful impact on literally tens of thousands of lives by answering her call to mission.

Originally from Pine City, Minnesota, where she was a member of Immaculate Conception Parish, in the Diocese of

Duluth, Liz received her BA in Nursing from the College of St. Catherine (now St. Catherine University) in St. Paul, and her Masters in Public Health from the University of Minnesota. "It was after hearing a Maryknoll priest speak at mass in 1975, that I decided to serve as a Maryknoll Lay Missioner. I went for three years, and I am still there! God makes plans while we think we are making our life's plans, and sometimes they are very



Liz with Lay Missioner Steve Pope, sharing some happy moments with the local children

Photo credit: Sam Stanton



different pathways,” Liz said. Her mission service began in Tanzania in 1976 where she worked until 1982. She then served in leadership and administrative roles for MKLM in the U.S. before moving on to mission in Sudan. Liz then came back to Tanzania to work at the Kowak Health

negative effects of Obstetric Fistula (a hole in the birth canal) and female genital mutilation (FGM) on a woman’s health. She understands the lack of control most of these women have over their reproductive lives and the implication for other health issues, and has made it her

Mutilation (FGM), with this rate being 44% in the Mara Region, where the Diocese of Musoma is located. Twenty-one women die daily in Tanzania from a birth related complication (7,728 yearly). For every woman who dies, twenty others suffer from serious injury during the

## A DANGEROUS ETHNIC TRADITION

Female Genital Mutilation, as they locally refer to as female circumcision or “cutting” is performed on young women, usually by their relatives, as a preparation



Cleaning the donated fish before cooking them

Photo credit: Sam Stanton

Center in the Diocese of Musoma, and the Bugando Hospital in the Diocese of Mwanza, as a nurse and patient advocate. For the last several years, Liz has administered in the Planning and Development Directorate of the Diocese of Musoma, working closely with Bishop Michael George Mabuga Msonganzila.

Liz has worked in village clinics, taught in health centers and been a nurse in hospitals, while always maintaining her outreach to the poor. She has delivered babies in mud huts and in refugee camps and seen firsthand the devastating

life’s work to advocate for those who face gender-based violence. Liz has facilitated women’s access to a cure for Obstetric Fistula and worked with girls who are running from FGM. She has always confronted injustices for women head-on, throughout her work in Tanzania and her 40 years with MKLM.

Tanzania still has one of the highest child marriage prevalence rates in the world, with four out of ten girls marrying before the age of eighteen. Fifteen percent (15%) of the women and girls in Tanzania are forced to endure Female Genital



Liz, in earlier mission days, instructs a local nurse

Photo Courtesy of Liz Mach

birthing process and are left with multiple disabilities including Obstetric Fistula.

While working in the Planning and Development Directorate of the Diocese of Musoma, which coordinates all health, education, communication and social services of the diocese, Liz is able to positively affect the diocesan outreach to the poor, vulnerable and those experiencing a violation of their human rights. This advocacy and work for justice in the areas of health and education fit well with her passion for the rights of women and girls.

for marriage, mostly during November and December, the so-called “cutting season.” In 2008, the diocese began a program to protect girls during these months. The initial rescue camp at that time housed 53 girls, whereas in 2015, there were 650 girls protected by armed security. The number of families practicing FGM in the Mara region is increasing, according to Liz. Currently, FGM is practiced in 23 of the 31 parishes in the diocese.





Liz teaching young girls in Tanzania how to take their pulse

Photo Courtesy of Liz Mach

“People will say that a woman cannot be married in her ethnic tradition if she is not circumcised,” says Liz. “However, we are recently seeing with youth their understanding and desire to marry whomever they choose. This is why it is so important to have men and boys as part of our programs, as they help make the change. It really is about education for all. Once people understand the consequences of FGM and what it does negatively to a girl or woman’s life throughout her reproductive years, they are willing to make the changes needed.”

## JIPE MOYO! GIVE HEART!

For the past five years, Liz has overseen Jipe Moyo! (Give Heart!), a shelter offered through the Musoma Diocese, and the Immaculate Heart Sisters who run the program, for girls running from any Gender Based Violence (GBV) including FGM, Child Marriages, Domestic Abuse and Sex Trafficking. Jipe Moyo! offers nearly 50 girls a year-round, safe haven for full-time stay, with victims welcomed to stay as long as needed. Liz is working to develop opportunities to expand the shelter’s space in order to allow additional girls to secure a safe environment.

“We try to enroll the girls into schools, to get them into vocational school, or primary or secondary school, knowing that education is what is going to make the difference. If we can get them educated, then we have a chance for them to have something to look forward to. Most of these children we will try to reintegrate, but we have some children here who were in child marriages or in some form of an abusive situation and we cannot return them to their homes. They have to stay with us.”

Education among community members to raise awareness is an important aspect of the ministry’s effort, especially since police, family members, catechists and local religious are often the individuals to identify situations of GBV and bring girls who have been abused to Jipe Moyo!. Liz helps coordinate and hold seminars on traditional harmful customs and is now working to develop a legal counseling program and a tutorial remedial year for girls wanting to enter high school. One sure way to combat issues of GBV is to educate all girls and hopefully slow the process of early marriages and early pregnancies. If a girl has a chance to go to school, the knowledge gained and possible delay in marriage may generate economic independence, and a bright future of raising her family out of poverty.

As Liz reinforces, in this line of work education of girls is critical. Her slogan is **“EDUCATE A GIRL: PREVENT EARLY MARRIAGES AND EARLY PREGNANCIES!”**



Sharing a good laugh with two local children

Photo credit: Cecilia Espinoza



# A Story of Hope

## by Maryknoll Lay Missioner Hang Tran in Cambodia

Hang Tran became a Maryknoll Lay Missioner in December of 2013. Her ministry in Cambodia has included collaborating with public and private healthcare providers, coordinating the staff operations at two healthcare shelters, and teaching kindergarten health education, serving approximately 2,000 patients and their families. Hang has a graduate certificate in Public Health and a B.S. in Chemical Engineering, both from the University of Texas. She shares the following story about working with orphans in Phnom Penh: In 1990, the Missionaries of Charity started welcoming

the abandoned and the sick in the capitol of Phnom Penh, then later established other houses in Cham Chaov – an outskirt area of Phnom Penh, and in Siem Reap – a northwest province near Thailand. The year 2015 marked the 25th year anniversary of their mission in Cambodia.

In my work at the Missionaries of Charity orphanage, I get to know many little “cherubs” or “screaming engines,” depending on the time of day or mood they are in at that moment. One of the newcomers to the orphanage is a seven-month-old baby girl named Naruth. She has the most adorable expressions and cries when stretching out her arms to get my attention, then quickly smiles when her eyes meet mine. She seems to enjoy various activities and the other children, and has no problems expressing her needs for comfort. Naruth is a natural explorer and will turn some toys upside down or pull them apart just to satisfy her curiosity. Feeding her is easier than with the other children, since she eats from start to finish without getting distracted or turning to play. Overall, Naruth has adjusted well to her new environment and all it has to offer.

Hang Tran at the Missionaries of Charity orphanage in Cambodia

*Photo Courtesy of Hang Tran*



Hang multi-tasking at the orphanage, creating a nourishing environment

*Photo Courtesy of Hang Tran*

Naruth's arrival to the orphanage was nothing short of a miracle. She came from a village in the province of Kong Pong Thom (approximately five hours by bus, north of the capitol of Phnom Penh). Naruth's parents are not married. Her mother is mentally ill. Her father is a drug addict who abused her mother. Naruth also has an older sister, who is nearly two years old. Their grandmother had the wisdom and the opportunity to send both girls to the orphanage, as their parents are not capable of caring for them.

There are no official systems or services in the villages to address the needs of individuals with mental illness or drug addiction. The families of these individuals lack the knowledge and resources to cope with them. Too often their own families and communities shun these individuals. As appalling and

disturbing as Naruth's story sounds, it is not an isolated or unique incident. The orphanage has other children who come from different villages and provinces sharing very similar background narratives.

In many aspects, the children at the orphanage are the lucky ones. It is through God's grace and the good will from helping organizations and individuals that Naruth and her sister have been saved. They have escaped the vicious cycles of abuse and neglect and have been transplanted into a nourishing and caring environment that will enable them to develop to their full potentials. These children now have a better chance for a brighter future.

# Join Us in Creating a More Just and Compassionate World

Maryknoll Lay Missioners  
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## Called From Baptism

### Contributions by Charlie Petro Maryknoll Lay Missioner

Pope Francis reminds us that all Christians, by virtue of baptism, are called to mission. It is a part of the vocation of being a committed Christian. Young people hear it with fresh ears and a desire to begin their lives with a spirit of service. Those entering the second half of their lives hear it through the wisdom gained from their experiences. Single people respond to the call to mission with dedication to Gospel values and service. Families respond with a passion to share the love they feel for each other with the world.



Maryknoll Lay Missioner Class of 2015 (l. to r.) Jim & Marilyn Kott, Sonny and Hong Nguyen, Hiep Vu & Tawny Thanh, Charlie & Guadalupe Petro, Stephen Pope, Claire Stewart, with young Charles and Veronica Petro

*Photo Courtesy of MKLM*



The Maryknoll Lay Missioner Class of 2015 represents the growing diversity of the Catholic Church in the United States. Of the ten adults MKLM sent to Bolivia, Brazil and Tanzania, five were born outside the United States. Four are under the age of forty, while the other six are over the age of fifty. Each new Lay Missioner has a unique story, demonstrating how the call to mission reaches laity from many different backgrounds. Having received their call, these fine people have now been in their mission country since January 2016 and are changing each day.

**Marilyn and Jim Kott**, from Redlands, California, built their lives together serving their country as Air Force officers. After retiring, they felt ready to take another service step by responding to the Church's call to mission. "Serving others in this capacity comes from the same desire that serving our country did," said Marilyn. Jim and Marilyn participated in Church and service for many years and are inspired by the history of the Maryknoll movement and honored to follow in the footsteps of Lay Missioners and all Maryknollers.

This year they have been learning their way around São Paulo, a city with over 21 million people. One ministry that is calling them is the Archdiocese's prison visitation ministry, which requires its participants to be trained and verified. The need is great. During the ministry visits, prisoners are provided with some necessary supplies, some communication with family members (if they even know they are in jail), and sometimes it's just another human being lending an ear or saying some kind words. Until late June, Marilyn and Jim will spend most of their time in intensive Portuguese language training in São Paulo and



Jim Kott sharing a moment with two local boys in São Paulo

learning about Brazil and its people so steeped in such a rich culture.

**Hong and Sonny Nguyen** responded to the call to mission with MKLM later in life. The couple was deeply moved when visiting children in orphanages in their native Vietnam. Sonny reflected on this experience, "When we were in the U.S., we thought that just raising money would be enough. But, no, the children also need love. That's why we decided we needed to get involved personally." Besides their time in intensive language and Bolivian culture school in Cochabamba, Hong and Sonny have recently begun volunteering at Solomon Klein Orphanage in Cochabamba. "There are more than 160 "bebes" and "ninos," from birth to six years of age, and almost all of them were abandoned by their own parents," Sonny notes. "Some of them came with evidence of alcohol, drugs, and/or other substances in their blood, while others suffer from various physical or mental disorders. But -- ALL of them are so cute, so precious, and ALL of them are so in need of love."

Mission was the foundation of **Guadalupe "Lupe" and Charlie Petro's** relationship. The couple met while Charlie, from New Port Richey, Florida, served for two years as a lay volunteer with the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers in Lima, Peru. Guadalupe and Charlie are serving in Mwanza, Tanzania, with their two children, Charles (6 years old) and Veronica (5 years old). Guadalupe, a native Peruvian, explains, "We want our children to understand the importance of mission in our lives—the importance of serving others, living simply and having an international perspective." Now, after four months, Charlie and Lupe are very pleased with the quality education their children are receiving. The family has moved into a house, and made extensive progress learning Swahili from a teacher who stays with them during the week. They will begin their ministry work the 2nd week of May.

**Stephen Pope**, a teacher and coach from Boston, first began to hear a call to mission when he was very young. His aunt Barbara Pope was a Maryknoll Lay Missioner before he was born, but she told stories of her time in Latin America with such passion and joy that Stephen could feel how transformative the experience was for her. "I'll hopefully be a more loving, kind person who can think differently—more broadly and deeper—and think from a different point of view." Stephen is anticipating how mission in Mwanza, Tanzania, might impact his life and the lives of those he will serve. Since arriving in January, he has gained a basic foundation in the new language, as he begins his fourth and final month of Swahili language school in Musoma. Stephen says, "I'm trying to



Hong (right) feeding a baby at an orphanage in Cochabamba

Photo credit: Sonny Nguyen



Locals drying their laundry after washing it in the river

Photo credit: Sonny Nguyen

stretch my mind and heart in many ways, and am eager to move to a bigger city in Mwanza, where I will teach high school Bible Knowledge, among other tasks."

An International perspective influenced **Claire Stewart's** decision to become a Maryknoll Lay Missioner. After graduating in 2014 from Spring Hill College in



Alabama with a degree in International Relations, Claire, who was born in Nashville, Tennessee, worked in Houston helping asylum seekers navigate the asylum process. Listening to the stories of asylum applicants inspired Claire to go on mission with MKLM. "Each person had a different story about how they had suffered persecution in their country of origin. Those applications helped me realize there are a lot of people suffering from global injustice," Claire said. "There's a global need for a little bit of mercy." Claire has been busy learning the language and observing the culture in São Paulo, Brazil. In addition to experiencing subways "packed like sardines" and spending plenty of time in language school, Claire has visited Lay Missioner Greg Fischer's "Rostos da Migração" (Faces of Migration) Project, and walked in the Povo da Rua Good Friday Procession, while also exploring various ministry possibilities, including the orientation for working in prison ministry. She is looking forward to the everyday challenges of life and ministry in São Paulo.

**Tawny Thanh and Hiep Vu** returned to MKLM after a five-year hiatus to care for Hiep's father. The couple, also natives of Vietnam, spent 10 years working as Maryknoll Lay Missioners in Southeast Asia. Their return marks the beginning of a new experience for them as they shift from Southeast Asia to South America. Living in California most recently, they met many friends in their parish who spoke Spanish. Tawny explains why they're happy to serve in Cochabamba, Bolivia, "By the time we retire and come back, knowing Spanish and Latin American



New Lay Missioners being welcomed to Brazil. (l.to r.) Sr. Isabel Araujo, MM, Jim Kott, Kathy Bond, Claire Stewart, Sirkit Noronha, and Marilyn Kott

*Photo Courtesy of the Kotts*

culture will enable us to help the diocese with many things."

Hiep explained that he didn't think he ever left being a Maryknoll Lay Missioner during his hiatus. In fact, Hiep feels he has always been a Lay Missioner in some way. "I think it's in my blood," he said. Hiep's desire to serve others from the time he was young was the beginning of a path that led him to MKLM. Tawny added that now that they are Maryknoll Lay Missioners, everything they do to help others, whether at home or overseas, is a form of mission. "When we reach out to others, we do it from a missionary point of view," she said. Currently, Hiep and Tawny are in their last months of language classes and living with a Bolivian family, which luckily includes a wonderful 86-year-old woman named Leonor, who happens to be a terrific cook. They really enjoy engaging in daily conversations with the Bolivian locals, as they explore their potential

ministries in Cochabamba to discern where they are most needed.

While each new Lay Missioner is unique in the path that led him/her to join our Class of 2015, they all go forth with a heart burning to serve God. MKLM's Class of 2015 joins a committed force of Lay Missioners already working in the field who are striving to model Christ's love and compassion as they offer much needed services and aid to economically poor communities around the world. The transformative nature of a response to this call to mission will help these newest Lay Missioners encounter Christ in new ways throughout their lives, whether they stay

with us for many years or return home after their first three-and-a-half-year commitment. When they became Maryknoll Lay Missioners, they became Lay Missioners for life!

MKLM is now accepting applications for the 2016 Class. Maryknoll Lay Missioners' 10-week orientation program begins October 2016 in Ossining, N.Y. If you are interested in applying, please contact Recruitment Manager **Lindsay Doucette at 914-236-3489**

or email her at [join@mkml.org](mailto:join@mkml.org).

Visit <http://www.mkml.org/become-a-missioner> to learn more.

Magdalena, Swahili language teacher (left) with Lay Missioners in Tanzania – Lupe, Joanne, Charlie, Kristle, Susan, and children Veronica and Charles



*Photo credit: Sam Stanton*



# THROUGH SERVICE WE LEAD OTHERS TO CHRIST

BY DEACON PETER BARCELLONA

I've had the privilege over the past several years to accompany Maryknoll Lay Missioners' "Friends Across Borders" on several mission immersion trips. The first trip was to El Salvador, and most recently to Tanzania. It is one thing to read about the works of MKLM, but to accompany Lay Missioners in their mission field was an eye-opening experience for me -- to witness firsthand the life-changing works of the missioners, living and working among the poor, and how their programs are helping the destitute to overcome poverty and maybe create a better life for themselves.

In the summer of 2013, I had my first opportunity to travel with MKLM's "Friends Across Borders" to El Salvador. My first impression upon arriving was how beautiful the landscape was, with its lush countryside and volcanoes, but deep

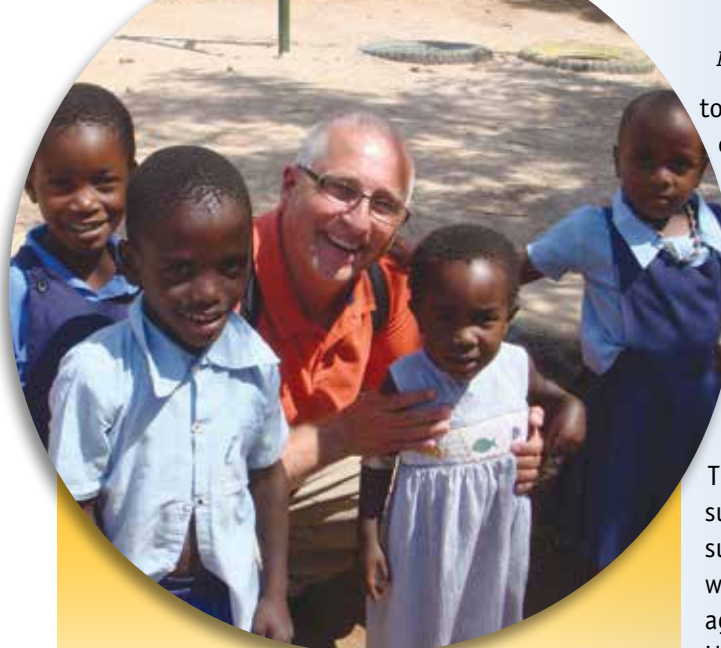
inside that beautiful landscape, I witnessed poverty that at times was unimaginable. Most of the base communities I visited had limited access to clean water and lacked basic sanitation. There was also a lack of adequate nutrition and health care. Many in El Salvador have had little or no schooling, some are illiterate. Men often leave their families in search of work, leaving the women to raise their children alone, usually in hostile and gang-ridden villages and base communities.

It is easy to see how the cycle of poverty is perpetuated by their lack of basic human needs. But, I saw the face of Jesus in the faces of the Salvadorians I met, who struggle each day for their daily bread. Even in their struggles, they showed me warmth and hospitality and how their deep sense of faith and joy in life were a witness to their love of God.



Deacon Peter Barcellona enjoying the company of the next generation of Salvadorans

Photo Courtesy of Peter Barcellona



Peter on a Friends Across Borders (FAB) trip in Tanzania

Photo Courtesy of Peter Barcellona

to address the lack of education in the base community. I was most impressed with Larry's motto "God first, studies second, sports third."

I also visited the base community of Monte San Juan with Maryknoll Lay Missioner Peg Vamosy. There we observed a totally sustainable farm which supports an entire family, with Peg's help as an agriculturist from the United States. She has taught this family of 19 to live entirely off their land and it also allows them to

In my travels with the Lay Missioners to the different base communities, I was able to witness the actual struggles of the Salvadorian people, and also how the Maryknoll Lay Missioners are working in the base communities and villages on projects that include literacy and education, soy nutrition, sustainable agriculture, HIV/AIDS health care, and programs to help children stay out of gangs, which have a heavy influence in their communities.

I witnessed the ministry of Maryknoll Lay Missioner Larry Parr when I visited the base communities of Las Delicias. Larry works with the FEDESCA Foundation, promoting alternative youth activities to keep young children from joining gangs. The facility is a safe haven for the children, offering them a library, computers, a garden and art rooms. Larry also started a soccer team "Playing for Peace," and scholarships are offered

take their excess crops to market, thereby giving them a small income. I was most impressed by the simplicity of the lives of this family; their genuineness and hospitality shone to us was heartfelt and sincere. While lacking material possessions, they were rich in faith and love for each other and their community.

Finally, I visited the Village of La Esperanza in Cojutepeque with Maryknoll Lay Missioner Rick Dixon. This village was created along a discontinued railroad track. It is basically a squatter village with a very heavy gang influence. Here I witnessed the worst poverty I had ever experienced. There is a small building in the center of the community which Rick uses to tutor the children and to hold social activities to help keep the children away from the influences of the gangs. To the people of La Esperanza, Rick is a "blessing." Rick's love and concern for the people of La Esperanza is very evident.





FAB trip in Tanzania, led by Fr. Bill Vos, MKLM Board Chair (center)

Photo Courtesy of Peter Barcellona

I was overwhelmed by the kindness the villagers showed me, but left with a heavy heart knowing the great challenges these children face each day.

In the summer of 2015, I had the privilege of being ordained a Deacon. At my first mass, at St. Anthony of Padua in New Jersey, two Maryknoll Lay Missioners attended - Cecilia Espinoza and Debbie Northern. Also that summer, I had the opportunity to travel to Tanzania, Africa, to again witness the incredible works of the Maryknoll Lay Missioners. The small villages I visited have preserved their purity, simplicity and peacefulness. They are in great contrast to much of what we have become accustomed to in the United States. Many of the children run and play without shoes. When foreigners like me arrive, they are quickly

approached by the children with a fearless and trusting curiosity. Everywhere I turned, there was giggling, laughter and smiles.

I gained a unique insight into the present-day struggles of the people of Tanzania, accompanying the Lay Missioners as they went about their daily ministries. The Maryknoll Lay Missioners are working side by side with the villagers, on income generating projects, literacy and education programs, and with skill training and entrepreneurs. I had the opportunity to visit several of these programs.

Lay Missioner Richard Ross works at the Lubango Center which has six programs for women and children. They are

programs of empowerment meant to lift women up to be self-sufficient. Then there was my visit to the EBLI "Education for Better Living" organization, which is a young mother's entrepreneurship program overseen by Maryknoll Lay Missioner Michael Leen. His wife, Ashley Leen, runs the LULU project. These programs help young teenage mothers and other vulnerable girls, who have not had the opportunity to develop their education, to discover their talents, plan their futures and start small businesses. Another visitation was to the Uzima Centre, which is an education and health program coordinated by Maryknoll Lay Missioner Joanne Miya. This program provides services to people living with HIV/AIDS and to orphans and vulnerable

children. Joanne also teaches children to make correct choices about staying in school and avoiding teen pregnancy. One thing that stands out about the Tanzanian people is their deep faith and how it encompasses every aspect of their lives. This, along with their daily joyful spirit, despite all the hardships, was a witness to their tremendous faith in God.

My first-hand experiences with the Lay Missioners through the "Friends Across Borders" immersion trips have allowed me to be a witness for my faith to the most vulnerable and marginalized of society. One thing I learned among the poor was

that those with the least give the most of themselves without counting the cost. Blessed Mother Teresa once said, "The poor give us much more than we give them. They are such strong people who live day to day. We have so much to learn from them."

I now help raise awareness of the needs of the Salvadorian and Tanzanian people by giving presentations and raising funds to support Maryknoll Lay Missioners and their ministries. My mission experience has been life changing. It is through our service that we lead others to Christ.

Peter (center) visiting with a family in rural El Salvador



Photo Courtesy of Peter Barcellona





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### UPCOMING MISSION AWARENESS TRIPS

- **TANZANIA, August 5 – 15, 2016**  
Deadline for signups: June 5, 2016
- **CAMBODIA- JustFaith Ministries, August 12 – 21, 2016**  
Deadline for signups: June 12, 2016
- **BOLIVIA, October 29 – November 10, 2016**  
Deadline for signups: July 30, 2016
- **BRAZIL, November 5 – 15, 2016**  
Deadline for signups: August 5, 2016
- **CHILE-Notre Dame-Marquette, February 10 – 26, 2017**  
Deadline for signups: October 10, 2016
- **EL SALVADOR - JustFaith Ministries, June 9 – 18, 2017**  
Deadline for signups: February 9, 2017
- **TANZANIA- JustFaith Ministries, August 4 – 13, 2017**  
Deadline for signups: April 4, 2017
- **BOLIVIA, August 11 – 20, 2017**  
Deadline for signups: April 11, 2017
- **CAMBODIA, August 11 – 20, 2017**  
Deadline for signups: April 11, 2017



### CONTACT US TODAY:

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## COUNTING AND SHARING HIS BLESSINGS

Contributed by Michael Moore

Michael Moore (a.k.a. Sugar Bear) began donating to MKLM in 2005. He was very interested in the Soy Program in El Salvador and his first gift was to this ministry. He first learned of Maryknoll through the Catholic grade school he attended, and discovered Maryknoll Lay Missioners through the MKLM website in 2005. Michael has lived in Florida, ever since he



Sugar Bear in his yard with St. Francis statue

Photo Credit: Johanna Moore

hitchhiked there from Ohio in 1977 in search of employment. He soon found work as a roofer and continued in that profession for many years. Sadly, Michael suffered from alcohol and drug addiction for most of his life; fortunately, he stopped using drugs in 1984. But beginning in 1998, events took place in Michael's life that would forever change him. He shares with us his beautiful story of conversion, and how he opened his heart fully to God's will.

*"But beginning in 1998, events took place in Michael's life that would forever change him."*

"In October, 1998, I was having a great day at work. During my lunch break, I was reading a *Time* magazine article about a famine that was occurring in Africa. But it was the picture that transfixed me, that of a six-year-old girl starving to death. She was peering directly into the lens, with the thousand-yard-stare that all combat veterans are familiar with after viewing

and suffering overwhelming horror. As I gazed into her face, her eyes looked directly into mine, penetrating my very soul, and I had what 12-step programs call a "moment of spiritual clarity."

"In 1998, I was a nominal Catholic, not attending

mass, not even being active in recovery programs. I soon realized that when I died and met God I wouldn't be able to tell Him that I had gone all out in helping the poor through Works of Mercy. I kept staring at the picture of the dying girl and I didn't even try to stop the tears. From the anguish of my soul came the most fervent prayer of my life: 'Dear God, please let me suffer according to Your will, so that I may grow in humil-

ity and love, so as to become a humble tool in your hands to help the poor and the dispossessed.' They say that when the student is ready, the teacher shall appear. After twenty years of roofing I was ready for a change, but decided to leave it up to God. On January 19, 1999, I fell off a roof, suffered a total severance of the spinal cord, and instantly became a paraplegic for life. On the way to the



Photo Courtesy of Ann Greig

hospital I was in incredible pain and the paramedics were sticking I-Vs into my arm, but my soul was rejoicing with this incredible ecstasy. I remembered my prayer and knew without a doubt that it was being answered and that I was embarking on a brand new spiritual adventure."

In 2005, Michael moved to a Catholic Worker house in Lake Worth, Florida, where he attends Sacred Heart Parish. After attaining sobriety, he volunteered at hospice and for the Special Olympics for 10 years. During 2006, he started working on *Sugar Bear Comics*. The comics are one of the ways Michael spreads the Good News in a gentle and humorous way. He hopes to get people thinking about God and helping each other. He is also an advocate for the homeless in town, attending local community meetings and writing letters to local newspapers



Sugar Bear promoting his comics

Photo credit: Brian Kirsch



Lay Missioner Ann Greig instructing Soy Program participants

reminding them of the poor and homeless living in their community. Michael recently advocated for the water fountains in downtown Lake Worth to be turned back on after an unannounced shut off. For many of the homeless, the drinking fountains are their main source of fresh water. Michael spends a lot of his time with the homeless in Lake Worth. "I am so honored to be accepted by them as a friend. Sometimes by giving someone who's down and out a hug, a kind word, a gentle smile and tons of compassion, it is a win-win situation despite my limitations. I believe that God works through broken vessels, and I want to inspire people with my humble witness."

When asked what propels him to give, Michael responded, "One of the biggest blessings of my life was that my parents enabled me to attend Catholic grade school. I learned at an early age that most of the world doesn't live like us Americans. I am so blessed to have food, shelter, loving parents, an education, the ability to see, to hear, faith in God, and a million other blessings! Thus began my empathy for those less fortunate than myself."

# Where are they NOW?

## JUDY RESS

Returned Maryknoll Lay Missioner Judy Ress joined our organization in 1990 and served for 20 years in the country of Chile, until December of 2010. She still lives there and has continued to work in the two organizations she helped to found when with MKLM: The Conspirando Women's Collective, and Tremonhue (formerly Capacitar-Chile), a center dedicated to holistic health and eco-spirituality. Judy notes that since the 1990s, the Lay Missioners in Chile have been holding ecological retreats and workshops, inspired by the work of Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme. She and returned Maryknoll Lay Missioners Ted and Maruja Gutmann-Gonzalez continue to promote a new cosmology that reconnects all of us with the earth community. "We travel hither and yon giving workshops and retreats," says Judy. Over the years, they have also developed beautiful materials and rituals to celebrate this evolving spirituality. "When Laudato Si came out, we danced with joy!"



Judy Ress in healing session with patient

Photo Courtesy of Judy Ress

"We also belong to an ecumenical coalition which cares for the earth and has published a web page on the encyclical and how it relates to the Chilean reality." As of late, Judy has been traveling to speak about her historical novel, *Blood Flowers*, now translated into Spanish, dedicated to the four women murdered in El Salvador in 1980. In an earlier life, she was a member of the Cleveland Mission Team to El Salvador, when she lived in Ohio. Having spent so many years facilitating the healing process by training dozens of health workers in the protocols of post-traumatic stress therapy, we are so inspired by Judy's life-long devotion to ecological issues, and her continued care and kindness toward everything that lives and breathes on this ever-evolving planet.

As Judy's story illustrates, the ministries that our Lay Missioners began overseas don't end when they return home. Rather, our returned missioners continue to serve people in need and "live out the Gospel" across our nation and beyond. Please visit our "Returned Missioners" page on [www.mklm.org](http://www.mklm.org) and our "Always A Missioner" Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/AlwaysAMissioner](https://www.facebook.com/AlwaysAMissioner) to stay connected and learn more.





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Lay Missioner Peg Vamosy



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*May God bless you as you bless others with your gifts!*