



Latin American Mission Program (LAMP)

LAMP Founding

LAMP is the foreign mission program of the Diocese of Charlottetown (listed on the web page among ***Diocesan Ministries***). LAMP was founded in 1967 by Bishop MacEachern and a committee of clergy and religious sisters. The initiation was prompted by a call from Vatican Council II to share church personnel with Latin America and other Global South regions.

LAMP's Vision

The vision of the Latin American Mission Program is framed by a living faith in the God of the Bible, the continuous revelation as expressed by the Church, and a dynamic reading of the “signs of the times” especially as experienced by marginalized peoples. LAMP’s theological orientation is based on ***God’s preferential option for the poor***. LAMP attempts to express the reality that the Church is missionary by its very nature. LAMP envisions a world of peace, social and ecological justice. Realizing our vision involves sending and receiving people to and from Latin America and welcoming and engaging with social justice advocates in PEI. It involves “going out” to the realities of people, especially the disenfranchised, in both Latin America and Canada.

LAMP Goals

The first and main goal of LAMP was, and still is, to send out and receive back missionaries. The conventional length of the foreign mission is 3-5 year. The missionary’s return home is considered as a “return mission”. There is also short-term missionary activity. The second goal is to organize and present mission education programs in the Diocese.

The Missionaries

One year after the founding, the first LAMP missionary, Reverend Andrew Macdonald was sent to the church in the Dominican Republic (DR). Within three years there were two clergy, two religious sisters and two lay people with their two children in that mission. Since the beginning six priests, five religious sisters and twelve lay people have served with LAMP in Latin America. Seventeen of the twenty- three missionaries were sent to the Dominican Republic; and six, long-term and short-term, served in other countries (St Vincent and the Grenadines, Nicaragua, Jamaica, and Guatemala).

Currently, a young missionary, Scott Smith, is re-entering the Diocese of Charlottetown after four years working with impoverished children and their families in remote areas of the Dominican Republic. Like all previous LAMP missionaries, he participated in a year-long pre-missioning orientation program which: accentuated the integral relationship between Gospel faith and the work for social justice; emphasized the importance of knowing history, culture, language and customs of the mission country; challenged the ineffectual paternalism so prevalent in Canada of responding to systemic injustice by offering charity. He was encouraged to learn with and from impoverished people how to name the root causes of their poverty and to learn with and from them what faith response and action is necessary and possible in order to find and act on solutions. He, like other LAMP missionaries, made a life-long commitment to mission and is encouraged to be active with a faith response to social justice issues in Canada. The root causes of the social injustice which burdens the Dominican people and many Canadians are the same. Global social issues affect Canadians. Dominican social issues affect Canada. He is also challenged to make clear what role Canada plays in creating poverty in the Global South.

LAMP’s sending out and receiving back of missionaries also takes place in the form of “short term”. This may be for six months to a year. It involves the same orientation and essentially the same expectations as apply to long-term mission. Another aspect of this is the “DR Faith and Justice Experience”. It is an intensive three-week program especially for youth which includes eight days in-country orientation with reflection and analysis; ten days living with a Dominican family and two days working in a solidarity project. Many of the youth come back to the Diocese as changed people and are

visible in many faith and justice activities. This program took place six times since 2001. There is a DR Faith and Justice Experience planned for 2017.

LAMP's Diocesan Education Programs

Twice a year, LAMP organizes programs, addressing situations which are common concerns in Canada and in the Global South. In the Spring, usually using an interactive workshop model to analyze and find action around such topics as new cosmology, threats to the ecosystem, land ownership and use, protection of water systems, aboriginal rights, violence against women and children, fair wages and livable incomes. In the Fall, there is an annual Daniel O'Hanley Memorial Lecture, usually with guest presenters from, or attached to, the Global South. The themes are similar to the Spring events, but with more concentration on the messages of social justice organizations from the South. In the Memorial Lecture, there is always a corresponding message presented by parallel local organizations. In all the events, the voice of Latin America is loud and clear.

LAMP's Ongoing Structure and Operations

LAMP at its Annual General Meeting elects an executive. Eleven regular LAMP members meet once a month (except in July and August). Four other members are "distance members" who cannot attend, but receive Minutes and other documentation. The Bishop is Ex Officio member. The meetings consist of : Gospel or papal document reflection; an agenda involving concerns from the Dominican Republic and/or on the domestic front; planning for presentations on social justice issues, and organizing events. Decisions are generally made by consensus.

Challenges and Hope

There is a core group of volunteers who are committed to the Mission. Difficulty getting new people involved is related to the economic stress that the local population is suffering. Many can make a living only by holding down two jobs. Others spend their time and energy trying to find a source of economic security. Youth are coming out of colleges and universities with unbearable debts. Forty percent of the local population are living in poverty or are on the edge. This economic reality affects LAMP organizationally and it restricts people's availability to participate in the missionary experience in the Global South. As well the capacity for Church people to financially support LAMP and other church programs is diminishing due to the economic times and the older low-income demographic in the pews.

LAMP members are convinced that its mission is an essential aspect of the Church and therefore they will discover new possibilities to fulfill the vision and goals. LAMP is in the process of developing a five-year plan taking into consideration the challenges alongside new hope and opportunities.

