

Sharing the Good News

from the pen of the Mission Interpreter



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YAGM (Young Adults in Global Mission)

Most residents of the Western Hemisphere aren't familiar with the Roma, but this population (also known as gypsies) migrated from Northern India to Europe centuries ago and is the largest ethnic minority group there. Throughout history they have been subjected to persecution, oppression and (especially under Nazism) genocide. Today they continue to face discrimination from the dominant cultures in Europe.

For several years the ELCA has been working alongside the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary to break down barriers between Roma and non-Roma. Young leaders from the ELCA **Young Adults in Global Mission** program help carry out this work. The young adult leaders connect with Roma people in a variety of ways. Through their placements, YAGM's work with community projects, including education, after-school activities, youth work and church-based programs. Thad Titze served in the program several years ago and assisted with childhood education ministry in the Roma village of Gorogszailias. This ministry took place in the Children's House, connected to Filidelfia Lutheran Church in Nyirtelek. Serving pre-schoolers and their parents, the Children's House offered toys and activities to kick-start early childhood development and a warm meal each weekday. Titze developed special relationships with his Roma host family and his supervisor Mihaly Gyorfi, who became both friend and spiritual advisor. Since returning home to the U.S., he has kept in touch with his host family although new volunteers have come to serve in the village. The relationships ELCA young adults are building with both Roma and non-Roma Hungarians continue beyond their year of service. They are a presence in Hungary who care about connecting in whatever way they can across all the language and cultural barriers.

The ELCA **Young Adults in Global Mission** program invites ELCA young adults, ages 21-29 into a transformative, year-long journey in international service. As they offer themselves in service, these young people are shaped by the witness of our global neighbors. They share in the journeys of companion churches in one of ten countries/regions around the world. These include Argentina, Australia, Cambodia, Central Europe, Middle East (Jerusalem), Madagascar, Mexico, Senegal, Southern Africa, and United Kingdom.

Young adults serve in the spirit of accompaniment, walking alongside global companions in a manner that practices mutuality, interdependence, and solidarity. Areas of service include, but are not limited to, health and development, congregational ministry, human rights, education, homelessness, addiction recovery, women's issues and children and youth. All site placements provide opportunities for young adults to confront issues of wealth and poverty, racial privilege, economic disparity, and globalization, all through the lens of faith.

At the end of the day, the **Young Adults in Global Mission** program is about building relationships. That's part of what our church is saying: There is something to be had in building relationships and finding a way to come together, and we do that in and through Christ. We find communion across all these differences that could keep us separate.

For more information about the **YAGM** program, go to [ELCA.org/YAGM](https://www.elca.org/YAGM).

