

Working for Health and Dignity in Chile: Educación Popular en Salud–EPES/Popular Education for Health

January 1, 2018



Health is a Right Not a Privilege | Mural at the EPES center in Santiago

Dear Friends,

For the past decade or so, I have been sending EPES Updates twice a year to all my supporting congregations. As many of you know, I came to Chile during the military dictatorship in the early 1980s and founded EPES as a health education program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELCH). Over these 35 years, EPES has grown from a small emergency-response team to a leader of community mobilization for health services, awareness, and empowerment. We have shaped national health policy, designed and implemented programs for the Chilean Ministry of Health to train health promoters throughout Chile and, in our International Training Program on Popular Education and Participatory approaches to Health, we have trained 150 participants from 18 countries (and 10 Lutheran churches). Today, our training methodologies are being used as far away as Kenya by the Hope Foundation for African Women (HFAW).

In the biannual EPES Updates, we try to give you an overview of all that is going on at EPES –the nutritional justice project; addressing violence against women; the smoke-free Chile initiative; mobilizing for justice and dignity in health program; the International Training Program; community health promoters' activities and a wide variety of other trainings, visitors and events.

ELCA Global Church Sponsorship has recently asked all global mission personnel to write six updates a year – January 1st, March 1st, May 1st, July 1st, September 1st and November 1st. My proposal is to continue sending you the EPES Updates in May and November and during the other months send a shorter, slightly more informal update. I will include some brief highlights from our work, sometimes a story or reflection and writings that have been meaningful to me in this long journey working for health, hope and healing. This is the first of the shorter version! *I look forward to your feedback and suggestions about what is interesting, important and hopefully inspiring to know about our ministry in Chile.*



Blessings for the New Year!

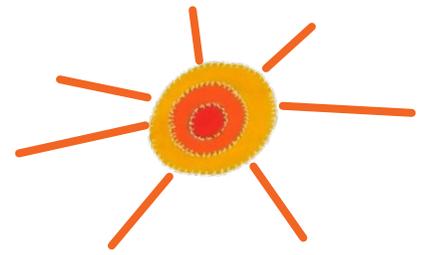
Karen

ELCA Global Mission Personnel in Chile
EPES Foundation

P.S. **GRACIAS!**

Thank you for your ongoing love and support for our ministry!

RECENT HIGHLIGHT: Minnesota Lutherans Visit EPES



Ten people from Trinity Lutheran Church (Owatonna, MN) and ten more from Christ the King (Mankato, MN) formed a diverse, multigenerational group that spent November 18-26, 2017 in the Chilean capital Santiago and Concepcion in the south, in an Accompaniment Trip to learn first-hand about EPES' health ministry.

A few of the activities included:



- **Opening worship service** with the Good Samaritan Congregation, along with the delegation from the Western Iowa Synod, led by Bishop Prois.



- **Visiting Villa Grimaldi Peace Park**, built on the grounds of what once was one of the Chilean dictatorship's most notorious secret prison camps. The Peace Park is now a place to honor the memory of those who suffered there and to strengthen the commitment to human rights protection today.



- The Minnesota visitors **participated in a workshop on nutrition and justice**, which allowed them to reflect on the approaches and methodology EPES uses for the promotion and recovery of nutritional health at the community level.



- The group **ainted a mural** together with community health teams about violence against women.



- In Concepcion, the delegation **met with community groups in Penco** that are working with EPES on a program to prevent fires following the uncontrollable forest fires last summer. The actions carried out by the Minnesota guests included planting quillay, a native tree, at a local kindergarten, together with the boys and girls of the school.



- Back in Santiago, the group **marched with thousands of Chileans**, the Western Iowa Synod, leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELCH) and EPES to end violence against women.



- Group leader Dr. Paul Floy said, "The EPES approach is an interesting one. **They work with people to take ownership of their situation and arrive at their own conclusions. That's really powerful for building an organization.** We will bring that concept home to whatever we do."

Online giving: <https://community.elca.org/chile>

What is EPES?

EPES was created in 1982 to promote health with dignity for the poor through empowerment, mobilization and collective action. It began as a program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELCH) and maintains close ties nationally and internationally with the Lutheran church and is an ELCA Global Mission supported ministry. EPES became an independent, non-profit Chilean foundation in 2002.