

## Rafael Malpica Padilla

Global Mission • Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
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The Rev. Rafael Malpica Padilla serves as Executive Director of the Global Mission program unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). In this capacity, he oversees the ELCA's worldwide program, which gives expression to the accompaniment model for mission through the deepening of relationships and cooperation with Lutheran churches in approximately 90 countries. ELCA Global Mission expends about \$35 million annually, including grants to companions, international scholarships, and financial and programmatic support for the work of over 166 missionaries, including Young Adults in Global Mission and volunteers in other countries and 35 Chicago-based staff (two staff members working in the Lutheran Office for World Community located in New York).

Prior to becoming ELCA Global Mission's Executive Director in 2003, Pastor Malpica Padilla served the Division for Global Mission in several positions from 1993 to 2003. Before being called to churchwide service in the ELCA, Pastor Malpica Padilla served as bishop of the ELCA's Caribbean Synod from 1987-1993 and as a parish pastor in Puerto Rico following his ordination in 1981. Pastor Malpica Padilla holds a B.A. in Philosophy from the University of Puerto Rico (1977 Cum Laude) and a Master of Divinity degree from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (1981). He has been awarded honorary Doctor of Divinity degrees by Newberry College in South Carolina in 1989, the Academy of Ecumenical Indian Theology and Church Administration in India in 2006, Trinity Lutheran Seminary in 2010, and The Serampore College (University) in India in 2019. In 2013, the Caribbean Synod Council awarded him the title Bishop Emeritus of the ELCA Caribbean Synod.

Pastor Malpica Padilla's extensive international and ecumenical experience includes serving as an election observer with the US Congregational Delegation in Haiti and El Salvador, member of the executive committee of Church World Service, member of the board of directors of Lutheran World Relief, advisor to the Council of Lutheran World Federation, and member of the Lutheran World Federation team that negotiated with the State of Israel for the tax case of Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem.

Working with companion churches in Latin America and the Caribbean Pr. Malpica Padilla developed *Accompaniment* as the theology for mission guiding the work with churches in the region. This theological approach was adopted by the Division for Global Mission in 1998, and subsequently became the preferred mode for missional engagement in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Pastor Malpica Padilla is married to Luz D. Malpica, an occupational therapist who works with children with learning disabilities. They are members of Bethany Lutheran Church, in Crystal Lake, Illinois. Together they have three children – Rafael, Felix Javier (an ELCA pastor), Karla Marie, and two grandchildren, Amaya and Javier.