



“Ubuntu! I am because we are!”

ELCA member Valerie Rivas serves as an ELCA Young Adult in Global Mission in Umphumulu, South Africa, where she makes rounds with physicians at a local hospital. Valerie reflects on the word *ubuntu*, which means “I am because we are.” “Being present here is so important,” reflects Valerie. “The electricity may be down. The water supply may be down. But, I am here with you.”

Pastor Brian Konkol, missionary coordinator for the young adult program, observes about Valerie’s ministry of presence, “She is here, walking up and down the hills with everyone else.”

A local church leader lovingly teases Valerie about her ministry of presence. “Valerie, you are worth 33 cows! You are a nice person and a good cook. You have an American family. And, now you have an African family!”

ELCA missionary Brian Konkol mentors Valerie Rivas, a Young Adult in Global Mission serving in South Africa.



Michael Lengel, an ELCA Young Adult in Global Mission, serves in Durban, South Africa. Reflecting on his experience working with refugee children, Michael says, “I had no experience with kids before. I know that I am making a difference. And, these little children teach me so much about myself. My faith needs to inform who I am on a daily basis.”

ELCA Young Adult missionary Michael Lengel teaches the creation story to refugee children in Durban, South Africa.



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