

The People

Nearly 15.4 million people live in Chile. Spanish is the official language. Ethnically, Chileans are mostly white and white-Amerindian (95%) with Amerindians (3%) and various other minorities. Chilean religious practices are overwhelmingly Roman Catholic (89%) with some Protestant (11%) and Jewish groups as well.

The Land

Chile is located along the west coast of southern South America. It covers an area almost twice the size of Montana. The climate is temperate with a desert in the North and cool, damp conditions in the South. The terrain is mostly low coastal mountains with a fertile central valley and rugged Andes Mountains in the East. Natural resources include copper, timber, iron ore, nitrates, precious metals and molybdenum.

Chile



ELCA Global Missions

Indiana – Kentucky Synod

Chile



We are walking together with our fellow Lutherans in Chile in South America

The Indiana-Kentucky Synod has been in relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELCH) for several years. IELCH is the governing church body in Chile that is part of the Lutheran World Federation. It currently has about 3,000 members, cared for by twelve pastors. Congregations are located in the central part of Chile in the areas of Santiago and Concepción and in the southern part of the country at Punta Arenas. **Pastora Presidente Gloria Rojas** is the head of the Lutheran Church in Chile.

The IELCH Church body is a large entity involved in all areas of life.



Facilities and ministries:

The IELCH is engaged in **solidarity work** and considers itself called to minister among society's poor and oppressed. The IELCH continues to be very active in the defense of human rights and serving the basic needs of people who are the "residual" product of the present economic system. These ministries are carried out mainly through the participation in FASIC (for human rights), the *Oficina de Diaconia*, and the work done by *Education Popular de Salud* (EPES).

The mission of EPES is to promote **health education**. It is based on the participation of people in local communities and understands that health is not a privilege but a right. It uses methods that are open, engaging ordinary people so that they claim their own rights and work cooperatively for their own good and the good of the community.

EPES has trained **Health Promoters** who have become community developers. Health is not understood only from a medical or clinical perspective, but also in the context of social, political and economic conditions. Health promoters have been very active in the movement for justice for landless people who form the many poblaciones (shanty towns) in the city of Santiago. Most of the health promoters are women, and the program has empowered them to take control of their own lives, often including becoming better educated.

Another outreach program of the IELCH is in the community of San Bernardino. A center provides before school and after school **educational programs** and a **nutritional program** for poor children in the community. The program has been supported by Bread for the World and other sponsors.

Connections:

- IK Synod delegation visits to the IELCH
- IELCH leadership received at IK Synod assemblies.
- 1,000 Spanish language hymnals and 500 Bibles donated to the IELCH
- Women's Self-Help Projects supported with \$18,000.
- Buen Samaritano Preschool Project for 2006

Concerns:

Air pollution and water pollution (from raw sewage) are the nation's largest environmental concerns.

Unemployment (at 8.8%, 2004 est.) remains a stubborn economic problem.

Congregations of the IELCH are in an environment of poverty

What can we do in our companion relationship?

- Pray regularly for and with our partners
- Learn about the culture
- Support synod mission projects.

For a presentation in your congregation, contact the Indiana-Kentucky Synod Global Mission Committee.

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