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Partnership in the Gospel

Companion Synods
Eastern and Coastal Diocese of Tanzania
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT)

A Guide for Congregations

February 2007



Companions in Christ!

Northern Great Lakes Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Eastern and Coastal Diocese
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania



INTRODUCTION

One of the blessings of a companion synod relationship is matching a congregation in the Northern Great Lakes Synod (NGLS) with a congregation in our companion synod, the Eastern and Coastal Diocese (ECD) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT).

HOW DOES THIS HAPPEN?

When a congregation from the NGLS determines that a companion congregation relationship is viable for them the parish informs the Companion Synod Committee of their interest in such a match. The Companion contact person in the NGLS then seeks to find a mutual partner in the ECD. The congregation must dedicate itself to the energy, patience, financial resources and time needed to develop a partnership with an ECD congregation.

WHY COMPANION CONGREGATION PARTNERSHIPS?

Companion congregation relationships grapple with our oneness in Christ as we grow in relationship and share the Gospel. Congregations experience being "receivers" as well as "givers" in this global mission program. Friendships are formed and opportunities for experiencing another culture are enhanced.

REFLECTIONS ON COMPANIONSHIP

- * Pray, pray, pray about a potential relationship.
- * The priority is companionship and friendship in the Gospel, NOT financial gift giving.
- * The congregation should seek to learn about the culture and language of its partner.
- * Recognize the limitations in communication---Email may not be available.
- * It is important to recognize the "Accompaniment" model outlined by the ELCA. We walk together as colleagues in the Gospel and learn from one another in an attitude of mutual respect.

BEGINNING THE RELATIONSHIP

1. Create a Companion Congregation Committee in your church. Make sure you have enough people to "own" the relationship. Lay leadership is important, pastors don't always have time to nurture the companionship, and they move on to other churches. The relationship is between Congregations, not between pastors, but full support of the pastor is very important to the success of the program.
2. Write a Mission Statement. (See Sample on page 4 and 5).
3. Contact your partner in the ECD for input into the Mission Statement, and create a joint statement.
4. Appoint a contact person who will communicate on behalf of the congregation. Suggest that your companion in the ECD also have one contact person with reliable e-mail.
5. Educate your congregation about your companion, pray for them regularly.
6. Take your time. Lasting relationships take time. Be patient!

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

1. Share e-mail correspondence with the congregation.
2. Create bulletin board displays.
3. Conduct joint Bible studies, pastors preach from same text and exchange sermons.
4. Pray for the specific needs of each other.
5. Sing African style hymns.
6. Hold a Companionship Sunday service with an African theme.
7. Learn some phrases in Swahili (www.yale.edu/swahili).
8. Make a banner that represents both congregations.
9. Exchange photos of church activities.
10. Invite a college student from Tanzania to your congregation to share with you about their home country.
11. Share tapes of choir music.
12. Send gifts representative of your congregation.
13. Exchange children's Sunday School projects.
14. Make personal visits. It is the best way to cement a relationship.

GIFTS AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Money represents power. That makes money matters serious and complicated.

We ask you to not to complicate your companion relationship with your potential for financial and material aid. Of course, there are appropriate times for giving. Let the giving flow out of an established relationship so that it doesn't control and distort that relationship.

Any monetary gifts to your companion congregation should be for previously agreed-upon projects *requested by the companion in Tanzania*. When you give a gift to your companion, be sure to notify both the NGLS Companion Congregation Coordinator *and* the Eastern and Coastal Diocese.

Remember: Although you relate with one congregation in the Eastern and Coastal Diocese, you are relating to the whole Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, as well, and its many dioceses. We want all of our relationships at all levels to remain healthy. Following existing channels in gift giving will help us be good companions. We ask for your support in this matter. Thank you.

Another important note: The Synod and its Companion Subcommittee recognize that individual Synod members may want to provide monetary gifts to individuals of the Eastern and Coastal Diocese. The Synod cannot honor a request to channel money through the Synod and ELCA to an individual Eastern and Coastal Diocese member. The NGLS will only send funds for specific projects agreed upon by the companion congregations, NGLS, and ELCA. This does not preclude individuals from sponsoring students or projects of their own. If they do, however, it would be appreciated if they notify the Northern Great Lakes Synod office.

A FINAL WORD

The above list is only the beginning. As you brainstorm with each other and as you *listen* to your partners, other unique creative ideas will spring forth.

Paul said in Philippians: "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, thankful for your 'partnership in the gospel' from the first day until now." (Philippians 1 :3-5)

Many obstacles exist to good relationships. In the USA, we find divisions among Christians based on such things as race and cultural differences. We must continue to claim the power of God to break through these barriers.

Patience is essential. It takes time to develop a relationship - especially from afar. Mail is slow, sometimes unreliable. Language, cultural, and political barriers are present. One may lose energy. *But persist. Learn to listen carefully for God in this relationship.* We have much to learn. Normally, we have seen ourselves as the sending and giving church. It is time for us to receive and hear the word of God from others and allow this word to renew us.

Reference: The ELCA Global Mission Companion Synods Handbook, Spring 2006

EXPECTATIONS OF CONGREGATIONS

1. Pray for your companion and their pastor. Incorporate your companionship in the worship of the congregation. Pray for your companion congregation by name every Sunday.
2. Communicate at least once a quarter year with your partner congregation.
3. Establish a goal of a personal visit every 3 years. This could mean sending a representative of a NGLS congregation to Tanzania, inviting your companions here, or asking someone from the NGLS going over on other business to make a visit to your companion on your behalf.
4. The congregation should be prepared to set aside funds in its budget for the expenses of the companionship. Five hundred dollars per year is a suggested amount.
5. Stay in touch with the contact person from the Companion Synod Committee concerning the status of the relationship.
6. Attend workshops on Companion Congregation ministries as offered by the Synod.
7. Notify the synod office when sending financial gifts to your companion congregation.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM THE NORTHERN GREAT LAKES SYNOD

1. The Companion Synod Subcommittee will appoint a coordinator of Companion Congregation relationships who will make regular contact with congregations who have companions.
2. The Committee will offer an annual workshop on Companion Congregation ministries.
3. The NGLS will provide for the electronic transfer of funds to Tanzania on behalf of special congregation projects.
4. The Committee will provide information on the synod's website concerning the Companion Synod/Companion Congregation program. (www.nglsynod.org)

Sample

MISSION STATEMENT

Companionship between Kijitonyama and Our Saviour's Lutheran Churches

"Kijitonyama and Our Saviour's Lutheran Churches: Christ's Servants Together, Sowing and Sharing God's Love"

The purpose of our companionship is to bear fruit in God's kingdom through mutual sharing of the gospel in ministries such as:

- * Pray For Each Other
- * Sermon Exchanges
- * Music
- * Education/Sunday School Activities
- * Youth Activities
- * Bible Studies
- * Visits and other mutual relationships which may develop.

**GUIDELINES ON THE
COMPANIONSHIP BETWEEN THE
CONGREGATIONS OF
KIJITONYAMA LUTHERAN
CHURCH AND OUR SAVIOUR'S
LUTHERAN CHURCH**

We, the congregations of Kijitonyama Lutheran Church and Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Christ's servants sowing and sharing God's love together, agree that the following principles guide our companionship:

1 **Communicate** frequently using all the lines of communication between our two congregations, including postal, courier, telephone, fax, e-mail and other media.

2 **Exchange** annual programs, reports and other information relating to our two congregations ministry.

3 **Match** our council committees to deepen the sharing of experiences in specialized areas of our common ministry.

4 **Share group concerns**- particularly among the Youths, Women and Children.

5 **Deepen** our two congregations' mutual Understanding of the cultures of our Respective nations through exchange visits involving both lay and clergy members.

We will develop and implement action plans in each of these and other areas of companionship to bear fruit in God's kingdom.

**MWONGOZO WA USHIRIKIANO
KATI YA USHARIKA WA KILUTERI
WA KIJITONYAMA NA USHARIKA
WA KILUTERI WA OUR SAVIOUR**

Sisi sharika za Kiluteri za Kijitonyama na Our Saviour, watumishi wa Kristo tunaopanda na kushiriki upendo wa Mungu kwa pamoja, tunakubaliana kwamba ushirikiano wetu uongozwe na misingi ifuatayo:

1 **Kuwasiliana** kwa karibu kati ya sharika zetu mbili kwa njia ya posta, simu, faksi, barua pepe na nyinginezo.

2 **Kubadilishana** mipango yetu ya maendeleo, taarifa za utendaji za kila mwaka na nyinginezo zinazohusu huduma za sharika zetu.

3 **Kuwianisha** kamati za mabaraza yetu ya wazee kwa madhumuni ya kubadilishana uzoefu katika huduma Maalum za pamoja zinazotolewa na kamati husika.

4 **Kushirikishana** matatizo ya vikundi - hususan vya Vijana, Wanawake na Watoto.

5 **Kupanua** elimu ya sharika zetu mbili kuhusu tamaduni za mataifa yetu kwa njia ya kutembeleana miongoni mwa washarika wa kawaida na viongozi wa kanisa.

Tutaandaa na kutekeleza mipango ya ushirikiano katika kila mojawapo ya maeneo haya na mengine ili kuzaa matunda katika ufalme wa Mungu.