



Northern Great Lakes Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)
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Partnership in the Gospel

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

A Guide for Congregations
2016



A Guide for Companion Congregations

INTRODUCTION

There are many blessings of a companion synod relationship when congregations of the Northern Great Lakes Synod (NGLS) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are matched with congregations of our companion synod, the Eastern and Coastal Diocese (ECD) in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT).

HOW DOES THIS HAPPEN?

When a congregation from the NGLS determines through personal relationships in Tanzania or via an inquiry from within their congregation that a companion congregation relationship is viable for them, they should inform the Companion Synod Committee of their interest in such a match. The synod office will be able to give the companion congregation coordinator's contact information to you. The companion contact person in the NGLS in collaboration with their counterpart in the ECD seeks to find a mutual partner congregation. The congregation must dedicate itself to the energy, patience, financial resources, and time needed to develop a partnership with the ECD congregation.

WHY COMPANION CONGREGATION PARTNERSHIPS?

Romans 1:9b-12: *...without ceasing I remember you always in my prayers, asking that by God's will I may somehow at last succeed in coming to you. For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you – or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.*

Congregations will experience being “receivers” as well as “givers” in this global mission program. Friendships are formed and opportunities for experiences in another culture are enhanced.

REFLECTIONS ON COMPANIONSHIP

- Pray, pray, pray about a potential relationship.
- The priority is companion ship and friendship in the Gospel, NOT financial gift giving.
- The congregation should seek to learn about the culture and language of its partner.
- Recognize limitations in communication, both culturally and due to lack of access to technology.
- It is important to recognize the “Accompaniment” model outlined by the ELCA. We walk together, shoulder to shoulder, 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 the 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. Develop companionship guidelines (see sample on page 6) along with your partner in the ECD.
3. Appoint a contact person who will communicate on behalf of the congregation. Suggest that your companion in the ECD also have a contact person with reliable email.
4. Educate your congregation about your companion, mention your companion in all of your congregation’s communications (newsletters, bulletins, website, Facebook), and pray for them regularly.
5. Take your time. Lasting relationships take time. Be patient!

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

1. Share email correspondence with your congregation
2. Create bulletin board displays.
3. Conduct joint Bible studies, pastors preach from the same text and exchange sermons.
4. Sing African style hymns. Share choir music.
5. Hold a Companionship Sunday service with an African theme.
6. Learn some phrases in Swahili (www.yale.edu/swahili)
7. Make a banner that represents both congregations.
8. Exchange photos of church activities.
9. Send gifts representative of your congregation (quilts, pictures, wooden crosses).
10. Exchange Sunday School and youth projects and ideas.
11. Make personal visits. It is the best way to strengthen a relationship.

EXPECTATIONS

1. Pray for your companion, their pastor, and for the specific needs of each other’s congregations. 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 three years. This could mean sending a representative of your congregation to Tanzania or inviting your companions here. Ask someone from the NGLS going to Tanzania on other business to make a visit to your companion on your behalf, perhaps to bring gifts from your congregation.

4. Notify the Synod office when traveling to or hosting members from Tanzania.
5. The NGLS congregation should fund companion congregation work the same as they budget other congregation committees.
6. Stay in touch with the contact person from the NGLS Companion Synod Committee concerning the status of the relationship especially when pastoral changes occur.
7. Attend workshops and other companion ministry opportunities offered by the NGLS (presentations, concerts, guest pastors, other ECD visitors).

GIFTS AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

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

We ask you to not 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 would be for previously agreed-upon projects requested by the companion in Tanzania. When you give a gift to your companion, be sure to notify the Synod office.

The NGLS quarterly transfers funds electronically (wires) to the ECD and will safely remit your financial gifts. Along with this wire a letter is sent detailing the amounts and the recipients of the funds to the ECD. Be sure to notify your companion congregation when the funds are sent from the NGLS so they know to expect the gift.

Another important note: The NGLS and its Companion Subcommittee recognize that individual synod members may want to provide monetary gifts to individuals of the Eastern and Coastal Diocese. The NGLS cannot honor a request to channel money through the synod to an individual. 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 NGLS office.

SAMPLE COMPANION CONGREGATION GUIDELINES

Renewing Lives in Christ

Through the Holy Spirit

Sisi sharika za Kiluteri sa

We, the congregations of _____ na

Lutheran Church in the NGLS and _____ :

_____ Lutheran Church in the

ECD agree that the following principles guide

our companionship:

(Insert Congregational mission statement here)

1. Communicate frequently.
2. Exchange resources such as annual reports, sermons, devotional aids, Bible studies, educational materials, music, and youth programming.
3. Share congregational concerns in order to support one another in prayer.
4. Deepen the congregations mutual understanding of cultures through exchange visits.
5. We will develop and implement action plans in each of these and other areas of companionship to bear fruit in God's kingdom.

Pastor

Date

Mchungaji

Date

