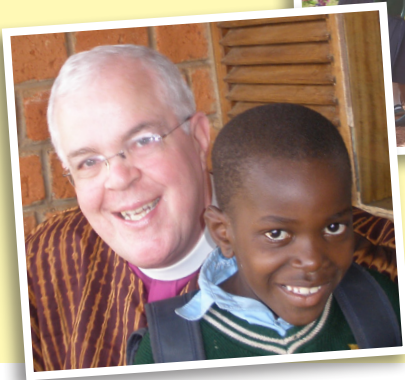


Partnership in the Gospel

*A relationship guide for
congregational partnerships
with our companionship synod*



One of the opportunities of a companion synod relationship is forming partnerships between congregations in the Metropolitan New York Synod (MNYS) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the congregations in the North Western Diocese (NWD) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) for the purpose of building up the body of Christ.

Why companion congregations?

Companion congregations creatively explore our oneness in Christ as we grow in our relationship with one another and share the Gospel. Congregations experience the joy of both giving and receiving. Friendships are formed and opportunities for experiencing another culture are offered.

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How does this happen in the NWD?

1. A congregation in the NWD requests a companion congregation.
2. The requesting congregation speaks with the Secretary of Education in the bishop's office.
3. The secretary of Education contacts the Assistant to the Bishop for Global and Multicultural mission/MNYS.
4. A decision is made as to whether or not the NWD Congregation can be considered to partner with a MNYS congregation
5. If approved, the Secretary of Education asks the requesting congregation to submit an application, a congregational profile, and if possible a photographic presentation of its mission and ministry.
6. All information from the requesting congregation is sent to the Secretary of Education along with a letter of recommendation from the Bishop, who will then forward it to the MNYS Assistant to the Bishop for Global and Multicultural Mission in the MNYS.



How does this happen in the MNYS?

1. The Tanzania Companionship Committee will select participating congregations in the MNYS or requesting congregations may apply.
2. The MNYS congregation will discuss with the Assistant to the Bishop for Global and Multicultural Mission whether they are a viable candidate.
3. If selected, the MNYS congregation will submit an application, a congregational profile, and if possible a photographic presentation on its mission and ministry.
4. The Assistant to the Bishop for Global and Multicultural Mission will then determine which congregation it will be paired up with.



Reflections on companionship:

- Pray about a possible relationship.
- Remember that the purpose is companionship in the Gospel, not financial gift giving.
- Seek to learn about the culture and language(s) of your partner.
- Your companion congregation may show you a new way to approach a problem that your congregation faces.
- Recognize the limitations in communication - electronic means of communication may not always be possible.
- We walk together as colleagues in the Gospel and learn from one another in an attitude of mutual respect.
- Study and follow the accompaniment model outlined by the ELCA. (This can be found at www.elca.org. Choose "Global Mission" from the list of ELCA offices and program units at the bottom of the home page. Under "interested in..." click on "companion synod relationships" and then on "accompaniment.")

Building the relationship

- Create a Companion Relationship Committee in your congregation. Lay leaders in the congregation will commit to nurturing the relationship for a term of three years. The relationship is between congregations - not between pastors - but full support of the pastor is very important to the success of the ministry.
- Develop a congregation-to-congregation

agreement.

- Appoint a contact person who will be responsible for communication on behalf of the congregation. Suggest that your companion in the NWD also have one contact person.
- Pray for your companion regularly - at least at every worship service.
- Lasting relationships take time. Be patient.

Possible activities

1. Educate your congregation about your companion through photos, brief newsletter and/or bulletin articles and periodic announcements about what is happening in the life of the companion congregation.
2. Share correspondence with the congregation.
3. Create bulletin board displays.
4. Conduct joint Bible studies, have pastors preach from the same text and exchange sermons.
5. Pray for the specific needs of each other.
6. Sing favorite hymns from the NWD at your worship service.
7. Have an annual worship service jointly planned including elements of each tradition; this could be in conjunction with the regular Udugu Sunday event.
8. Have a Companion Sunday with a Tanzanian theme.
9. Learn some phrases in Swahili.
10. Make a banner that represents both congregations.
11. Exchange photos of church activities.
12. Invite college students or immigrant adults from Tanzania to share with you about their home country and Tanzanian culture.
13. Share tapes and videos of choir music.
14. Exchange Sunday School projects.
15. Send gifts representative of your congregation.
16. Make personal visits. Face-to-face is the best way to cement a relationship.
17. If possible, use Skype to virtually meet some of your companions.
18. Use the resources of the synod office, such as the speakers' bureau, the website, the Eletters, the Tanzanian Update, etc. The synod office may be able to help you find information, provide advice about travel and support communication options.

Gifts and financial assistance

Money represents power. That makes money matters serious and complicated. Most Sub-Saharan African cultures consider gift giving and receiving to be an elemental part of expressing care and concern within any relationship. This even extends to honoring the other by asking for particular needs with which the other might be able to help. With the extension of our companion synods to a parish-to-parish level as called for in the congregation agreement, it is understood you will receive requests for help. We offer the following advice from previous experience with other synod companion relationships.

- Prayer and mutual encouragement in mission is the primary focus of the relationship. These are important gifts to both give and receive.
- You will receive requests for money or other material aid. You are not expected to agree to every request, but it is courteous and faithful to respond to every request with encouragement for the endeavor and with reassurance of continuing prayers. Major gift giving is discouraged.
- You should not agree to support major projects without making sure they fit into the ELCT mission plan. The two Bishops' Offices will be the clearing houses for these things so that relative priorities and balance may be maintained among the churches.
- This is a church mission program, not an avenue to help individuals achieve personal goals. Please avoid helping individuals unless helping them is a project of the parish in Tanzania.
- Another item of caution: People often want to come to the United States to study or for other reasons. In addition to this fitting the category above, we find that some do not return to their country of origin. This does not help our partner church and may, inadvertently, end up helping our country at their expense.
- The shipping of material overseas can be very expensive and it is often difficult to assure delivery to the intended recipients. Even wiring money is problematic if the receiver does not have an international financial account. Metropolitan New York Synod has experience with both kinds of transfers and will assist you in the process should you need it.
- A very important aspect of our partnership is to find ways to honor our partners by asking things of them.

What you can expect?

The Tanzania Companion Committee will:

- Provide a contact person for your congregation; this person will contact your congregation's contact person periodically to see how things are going.
- Invite you to participate annually in a local companion synod consultation process.
- Provide information on the synod's website concerning the Companion Synod/Companion Congregation ministry.

Expectations of Congregations

- Pray for your companion and their pastor(s) every Sunday. Incorporate your companionship in the worship life of your congregation.
- Communicate every month with your partner congregation.
- Pray about the possibility of an exchange of personal visits. This could mean sending a representative or representatives of your congregation to Tanzania, inviting your companions here, or asking someone from the Metropolitan New York Synod going to Tanzania on other business to make a visit to your companion on your behalf. This would be a good way to send small, lightweight gifts.
- The congregation should be prepared to set aside funds in its budget for the expenses of companionship. The amount should be determined through committee conversation and your expectations about the annual cost of the relationship.
- Stay in touch with the contact person from the Tanzanian Companion committee concerning the status of the relationship.
- Attend workshops on Companion Congregation ministries as offered by the synod or in partnership with the Global Mission Unit of the ELCA.

Final word

The above list is only the beginning. As you brainstorm with each other and as you listen to your partners in Tanzania, other unique and creative ideas will spring forth. As Paul writes to the Philippians: "I thank my God in all my remembrances of you, always in every prayer of mine for you 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 developing our companion-to-companion relationships we will encounter cultural differences and barriers. We must continue to claim the power of God to break through those 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 to God in this relationship. We have much to learn. Normally, we have seen ourselves as the sending and giving church. It is perhaps time for us to receive and hear the Word of God from others and allow this Word to renew us. The NWD leaders have experience dealing with their situation, strong faith and wisdom.

Ready to get started?

- Learn more at www.mnys.org
- Contact Pastor Perucy Butiku, Assistant to the Bishop for Global and Multicultural Mission, at pbutiku@mnys.org.

Sample Congregation-to-Congregation Agreement

Companion Covenant

Companionship between
Kashura Lutheran Parish
and
St. John's Lutheran Church

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

- Praying for each other
- Sermon exchanges
- Music
- Education and Sunday School Activities and letter exchanges
- Youth activities
- Bible Studies
- Visits and mutual relationships which may develop

Guidelines for the Companionship

We, Christ's servants sowing and sharing God's love together, agree that the following principles will guide our companionship:

1. COMMUNICATE frequently, using all the lines of communication between our two congregations including postal, courier, telephone, fax, email, texting, Skype and other social media.
2. EXCHANGE annual programs, reports and other information relating to our two congregations' ministries.
3. MATCH our church committees to deepen the sharing of experiences in specialized areas of our common ministries.
4. SHARE group concerns, particularly among our youth, children and women's ministries.
5. DEEPEN our two congregations' mutual understanding of the cultures of our respective nations through exchange visits from both lay and clergy.

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