

GUIDELINES FOR COMPANION CONGREGATIONS

We believe that the blessings we will experience as a synod and as congregations as we form congregation-to-congregation relationships are:

that we will all be renewed and strengthened in our witness to our Lord Jesus.
that we will both give and receive encouragement in our work, our congregations[practices, and in our prayer life.
that we will be strengthened and inspired by each other in our callings as a "sent people in daily life. that each congregation will learn more about how the Church lives and works outside our own countries.

****STEPS TO TAKE TO LINK UP WITH A CONGREGATION IN THE PARE DIOCESE**

STEP 1.

Develop enough support in the congregation for entering into this relationship so that some understanding of what would be involved is available to stimulate interest and commitment; perhaps calling people together who are interested and enthusiastic to take ownership of the idea is a place to begin, or another of these suggestions:

If your congregation doesn't already have a global mission committee, you may want to form one to continue the work of building support and handling the "nuts and bolts" of the project. Embracing God's World is a comprehensive 100+ page workbook with ideas for forming such a committee and/or increasing global awareness in a congregation. Contact Augsburg Fortress at 11800-328-4648, the code number is 6000056834.

Your congregation received a "Too[Kit' box from the Division for Global Mission in the fall of 1999 entitled "Walking Together Into the Next Century," containing many excellent resources on ELCA global mission work. An update was sent in 2000. Locate and use the resource (a brightly colored large box - yellow, purple, contains a video, etc.)

Locate and view Imani Moja, a video resource produced in the spring of 2000, which documents the visit of Bishop Hougen's delegation to the Pare Diocese in the fall of 1999, You'll meet Bishop Stefano Msangi, General Secretary Mr, Mark Leven and others from the Diocese. You'll see schools, churches, choirs, people of the Maasai tribe and much more. Don't miss the music either - it's an awesome experience. (Its in a bright green jacket, and was accompanied by a study guide. Call the synod office if you can't find yours.)

Considering encouraging and sponsoring attendance by members of your congregation at a churchwide Global Mission Event (visit www.elca.org/dgm). The Global Mission Team of our synod provides scholarship assistance when requested also.

STEP 2.

Approach your Pastor(s), existing committees and Congregation Council to seek the needed authorization to enter into a Companion Congregation relationship for at least the following three years. The synod Global Mission Team representative may describe for you possible congregations with which you may be linked. Notify Pastor Gerking (in the synod office) of your decision. A congregation assignment will be solidified via correspondence from the Synod with the Diocese offices after your congregation has decided to go forward.

STEP 3.

Continue to learn about your companion congregation's country and the way of life for its people while you wait to receive your assignment.

Additional Resources: International students at our seminaries and colleges (Grand View, Waldorf, Wartburg, Luther Colleges and Wartburg Seminary in particular). You will find a "country packet" of information about Tanzania available @ www.elca.org/dgm (or call 800/NET ELCA).

STEP 4.

When you have received the name and address of your companion congregation, correspond directly through the pastor of that congregation. At this stage, pastor to pastor communication would be a good policy in terms of proper procedures. Have your pastor include a provisional statement of purpose for your relationship as companion congregations (such as the "blessings at the beginning of this paper).

A draft of this initial letter is available, as well as a potential "Covenant" to consider. Sending a courtesy copy of all correspondence to our synod office and the Pare Diocese office is always appreciated.

STEP 5.

Continue in correspondence with your companion. Write some initial goals emphasizing a mutual relationship - and also ask the companion congregation its vision of the relationship. Keep the conversation open, and build upon what emerges.

As the relationship develops, keep in mind the following:

The key is "mutuality" - that is, keeping a sense of equality between the two congregations - the key to that is to refrain from giving gifts which our companions cannot match, and to be willing to share about life, work, concerns, prayer needs, and ways of mutual encouragement in Christ.

In corresponding, keep the language simple - English is not the primary language of most Tanzanians, any more than Swahili or the local language of the Pare Diocese is your first language. Learn a few phrases of greeting to write in your letters as an expression of your interest.

Be aware that not all cultures emphasize prompt replies to letters - please be patient about this. In writing letters, share your own life and culture (without overwhelming emphasis on material possessions) and ask to understand their ways. One way some researchers gather material about culture is to say, "in our country, we do this and this about our subject --- how do you and the people of your village handle it?"

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

Pray for your companion congregation. Make it a regular event; each week or each month. Pray for particular people in particular ministries as you become acquainted.

Make a bulletin board display. Show the map/area of Tanzania and the Pare Mountains. Share letters and other items. Spread the excitement.

Have your choir(s) record special music on audiocassette and send it to your companions.

Enter into a simultaneous Bible Study. Exchange information, Or have the pastors preach from the same text and exchange sermons, Study the different approaches or insights.

Teach your congregation a hymn in KiSwahilli (WOV 687, 712, etc.).

Learn some phrases in KiSwahilli for a liturgical response during worship; e.g., "Christ is risen," "Go in peace, serve the Lord."

Arrange a series of forums about your companion's church/country. Find a resource person in your community.

Prepare a series of articles (maybe written by someone from your companion congregation) for

your newsletter about your companion. Publish letters written back and forth.

If there are colleges or universities in your area, ask if there might be a student from Tanzania. Invite them to your church and to your home. Help them share formally or informally with you about their home country.

Make a banner that represents both congregations. Have it up for six months in your place of worship; send it to your partner. Or have them send you a symbol of your relationship leaving the choice up to your friends.

Read about relationships between our country and Tanzania. Is there some advocacy you could work on? Keep a file of related newspaper and magazine articles. Try keeping a bulletin board for current events in Tanzania.

Encourage a photo exchange. Ask if your new friends have video possibilities or access. Share histories and pictures of your houses of worship and communities of faith.

Write letters using a translator. Be sure to write legibly (preferably typewritten). Encourage groups, such as youth, women and men, to write. Remember, it could take weeks or months to receive responses.

Exchange recipes. Food communicates much about people. Have a potluck with food, music, etc., from your companion's culture.

Exchange children's artwork and crafts that can be sent back and forth to one another. These handmade gifts will communicate love and solidify relationship more than most gifts.

Consider supporting a special Global Mission project that will benefit people throughout the Diocese or the country. Contact the Synod Global Mission Team.

Consider sponsoring a missionary through the Missionary Sponsorship program. Contact the Division for Global Mission (DGM).

Check with the Global Mission Team or Area Program Director of DGM to see what Missionaries or Volunteers are currently in our companion synod or serving from our synod in Tanzania. Perhaps you can make contact with your companion through them, or simply learn from their experience and pray for them.

Send gifts from local craftspeople knitting, quilts, embroidery, etc,

Of course the best cement to a relationship is a personal visit. Remember to be invited first. Plan in advance. Study as much as you can to be well informed. Plans need to be made in consultation with the synod Bishop's office. Pre-trip training is a must. Maybe you have a member in your congregation who naturally in the course of his/her job travels to Africa. Why not pitch in to help them go the extra miles to represent your congregation? Or set up an official visit of a few members. Don't forget youth ambassadors. Remember also you are representing not only your congregation, but also the Southeastern Iowa Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Also your relationship extends beyond your partner congregation to their national church. Make plans to announce your visit to the appropriate people in your companion church (bishop, executive secretary, president).

Invite and help fund a visit from someone or several people from your companion congregation. Go together with other congregations to share cost, hosting and time with your visitor(s).

Send Christmas and/or Easter greetings or at other days and seasons of the Church Year. Descriptions of how these events are observed could be shared with the congregation.

Have a craftsperson in the congregation work on a special gift - for instance, an altar cloth.

If there are nearby students or other persons from Tanzania (especially the Pare area) invite them to stay in your homes during school breaks and celebrate together any church events that may occur during that time.

Covenant with your partner congregation that each will do some things to promote the causes of peace and justice in the world, the nation, and the local areas.

Select portions of scripture and ask the members of each congregation to write brief devotional comments. Compile and exchange these for a sharing of devotional insights. (This will require translation efforts.)

Make use of Lutheran World Relief's Equal Exchange Coffee project. Try the *Tanzanian Blend*! Collect and send medical supplies to Global Health Ministries (www.qhm.org) for use in many places in Tanzania.

These are only ideas -we hope you will create spin-offs and better adaptations as you study them and grow in the relationship.

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