

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC CHURCH ROOF PROJECT

HISTORY

Our church's work in the Central African Republic dates back to the 1930's when predecessor bodies of the ELCA first began to send missionaries to that part of Africa. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic (EELRCA) has always been a growing church; and, to further encourage that growth, about 30 years ago, the ALC offered to provide a roof for any EELRCA congregation which would build the walls for their new church building. Even though the CAR is a financially impoverished country, Lutheran congregations began to erect church walls with a zeal that is reminiscent of the Lutheran settlers in North Dakota a century ago. The ALC soon found that it could not meet its commitment to provide roofs for the many churches which were being built in the CAR. When the ALC became part of the ELCA, that commitment to provide those promised roofs was passed on to us. And when EELRCA became the Eastern North Dakota Synod's Companion Synod, we voluntarily took upon ourselves the task of fulfilling a promise which we did not make - but which we believe should be met.

PRESENT SITUATION

There are presently about ten Lutheran church buildings in the CAR on a list to receive roofs, with a waiting list of many more who want to get on the first list. The leadership of the EELRCA for a time had said that no more walls could be erected because little progress was being made in placing roofs on existing walls. Thankfully, sufficient progress in the Roof Project has now been made so that congregations are building once again. We know, from past experience in our own synod, how

crucial it is for a congregation to have a church building if that congregation is to survive and grow. Our synod's Church Roof Project is a way for us to become directly involved in the mission work of the church. Hopefully, it will be a project which will never be completed as the Lutheran Church in the Central African Republic continues to grow and build.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

The crucial present need is to provide roofs for the churches on the short list since some of these structures have been standing roofless for some time. At the present time it costs approximately \$4,000 to put a roof on one of these church buildings. United Lutheran Church in Grand Perks has made it possible to extend your donations through a matching fund challenge of up to \$5000 from their mission endowment fund.

Congregations and individuals of the Eastern North Dakota Synod are asked to contribute what they can to this project. Special offerings, fund-raising efforts, mission festivals, and other means might be employed to raise funds for this synod-wide effort.

Several people from our synod have visited the Central African Republic under our Mission Visitors program and several missionary families are now living in the Fargo area. They are willing to come and speak to your congregation to share first-hand experiences of life in the CAR. To schedule a speaker, please contact the Synod Office (701-232-3381). The Synod Resource-Center also has videos and other information about CAR. which are available free of charge (address and phone number are the same as the Synod Office).

Donations should be sent to the Synod Office (1703 32nd Ave S, Fargo, ND 58103) and clearly marked CAR. Roof Project. We know, from past experience in our own synod, how crucial it is for a congregation to have a church building if that congregation is to

survive and flourish.