

COMPANION SYNOD/COMPANION CONGREGATION RELATIONSHIPS

1. WHAT IS A COMPANION SYNOD?

Each synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is paired up with a synod or diocese of the Lutheran Church somewhere else in the world. We in the Western Iowa Synod (WIS) are blessed to have as our companion synod the Southern Diocese (SD) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) which is in east Africa.

We have thus far been involved with them in a variety of ways. We strive to know each other through communication and mutual visits to each other's synods. We uplift each other's ministries and visions. We pray for each other and the challenges we each face. We celebrate our relationship annually and jointly in each other's synod. And we partner with them in vital projects such as the drilling of wells to ensure clean and safe water, the provision of a girls' secondary school (grades 7-12) to those unable to participate otherwise, the provision of medical supply and guidance to improve the overall health care of many, and the development of sustainable agriculture.

2. WHAT IS A COMPANION CONGREGATION?

A companion congregation relationship is very similar to a companion synod relationship. However, it creates a deeper, more personal relationship by pairing up your congregation with a congregation in the Southern Diocese of Tanzania.

3. WHAT IS EXPECTED OF A COMPANION CONGREGATION?

- that you adhere to the values of **ACCOMPANIMENT** (whereby you walk together in your relationship with no one party making decisions or dictating to the other), **SUSTAINABILITY** (whereby, if you enter into any projects or financial support, you strive to “teach to fish” rather than to “give a fish”, and **TRANSPARENCY** (whereby you are openly accountable to one another in terms of activities, uses of funds, etc.).
- that you **COMMUNICATE** with and come to know one another. This can be done through letters (grades 7-12 in Tanzania are taught in English, so they can read and write English if you want to have a Tanzanian Pen Pal). You can also send pictures and tell them about your life, community, church, school, work, etc. In a few instances you can even send e-mails or a video to help you know each other. The main goal is **TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS** between the congregations and the individuals within them.
- Now that you know each other, that you **PRAY FOR AND CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER**. You cannot care for others without knowing them and you cannot pray for others without caring for them.
- that, **IF POSSIBLE**, one or more people from your congregation **VISIT** your companion congregation in Tanzania. This is optional but encouraged. There may even come a time when your Tanzanian brothers and sisters can visit you!
- that you lift up and **CELEBRATE** the Companion Synod and Companion Congregation relationships on one Sunday a year. The agreed upon Companion Synod Sunday is the first

Sunday of each June. If, however, that is not conducive to you, any mutually agreed upon Sunday is acceptable.

- that you complete/sign a Companion Congregation **COVENANT** and send it to the WIS office.
- that you generate an annual **ACTION PLAN** with your companion congregation to keep the relationship alive and flowing.

4. WHAT DOES IT COST TO BE A COMPANION CONGREGATION?

RELATIONALLY, THERE IS NO COST. The preferred emphasis and true value is on the relationship, not on money or things. However, Tanzania is a very poor country materially, and you may desire to find ways to share your blessings to assist in making their lives better. Congregations may add any related expenses to their budget or may choose to fund the relationship through special projects or fundraising activities. Another possibility is to secure funding through a special offering on the Sunday the Companion Synod/ Congregation relationship is lifted up in their congregation.

PROGRAMMATICALLY, that a companion congregation fee of **AT LEAST \$75 ANNUALLY** be paid to the WIS Companion Congregation Program to assist with the associated expenses to develop and maintain these relationships (especially in Tanzania where every kilometer, cell phone minute, internet access minute, photocopy, etc., has an expense fee tied to it). This basically entails the expenses of the Tanzanian Resident Companion Synod Coordinator that the Western Iowa Synod employs to sustain these relationships and projects. This individual is instrumental to ensuring proper understanding, communications, fund transfers, etc. for your relationship as need be.

5. HOW DO YOU BECOME A COMPANION CONGREGATION?

- Share your interest with your pastor/congregation.
- Your Pastor may discuss this with the Church Council. If they approve becoming a Companion Congregation, a companion congregation advocate should be selected for your congregation who, along with the pastor, signs the lower left portion of TWO Companion Congregation Covenants (one for each congregation/parish). Please send both signed copies of the covenant to the WIS office.
- Prepare a short profile of you congregation for use by the Southern Diocese in matching your congregation to one in its diocese. We suggest that you send them your most recent annual report, a pictorial directory (without member names/addresses/phone numbers), and any other pertinent information you feel is helpful to assist your companion congregation know you better.
- Arrangements will then be made to complete the companion congregation relationship with the Southern Diocese and the Companion Congregation in Tanzania.

6. HOW DO I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMPANION CONGREGATION PROGRAM?

Please call or e-mail Cindy Wells, Western Iowa Synod Global Programs Coordinator, (712-732-4968; wiscw@wisynod.org).