

# ***COMPANION SYNOD PROGRAM***

## **READY?**

*"Our mission is to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with people in Canada and around the world through the proclamation of the Word, the celebration of the Sacraments, and through service in Christ's name." (Evangelical Declaration<sup>1</sup>)*

## **SET?**

*"We believe, teach and confess that the crucified Christ calls us into a life of discipleship in which we are to be persons for others." (Evangelical Declaration)*

## **GO!**

*"We commit ourselves as a church, through prayer, study and conversation, to discern what it is for us to live faithfully under the cross in this time and place, seeing the world through the event of the cross. We will enter into the lives of people in our local, national and global communities." (Evangelical Declaration)*

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<sup>1</sup> The Evangelical declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada was embraced by the ELCIC at its National Convention in July 1997.

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*The Division for Global Mission of the ELCA, and especially David Dennison, Associate Director for Global Relationships, was incredibly supportive during this process. They talked with us on the telephone, they answered our endless email inquiries and they met with us in person. They shared their expertise and experience with us. They even let us "borrow" some of the materials that they have produced for their own Companion Synod Program. The ELCA devoted a great deal of time and care to us, their sister church. Thank you!*
- The Presbyterian Church in Canada  
*The Division for International Ministries of the Presbyterian Church in Canada was helpful in initial discussions about the possibilities for this type of program. They shared their ideas with us and encouraged us. Thank you!*
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- The Canadian Churches' Forum for Global Ministries  
*The Canadian Churches' Forum for Global Ministries, and especially their Coordinator, Bob Faris, provide insight and vision of what global ministry and mission is all about. They believe! They provided us with back copies of all of their "Forum Focus" and "Forum in-Focus" publications and allowed us to use a number of articles which have appeared in these publications. Thank you!*
- Those who will be our companions  
*The Companion Synod Program wouldn't exist without the interest and willingness to participate - the willingness to take the risk of getting involved with us - of our friends in overseas partner churches. Thank you!*

- Those in the ELCIC who are interested in the mission of the church  
*There are many in the ELCIC - individuals, pastors, and bishops, congregations - who have continually supported the mission of the church in a variety of different ways. They work tirelessly for the good of the church - our church and the global church - and they never get discouraged by the rest of us. Thank you!*

*"God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us." (1John 4:9-12 NRSV)*

**This Companion Synod Handbook was written for ELCIC Mission by Bonnie Wepler in 1999.** Prior to working for the ELCIC Mission office, Bonnie served as a Volunteer in Mission for 18 months in Papua New Guinea, In the fall of 1999, Bonnie returned to serve as a missionary in Papua New Guinea under a two-year contract as an English teacher; a joint placement between ELCIC Mission and the Division for Global Mission of the ELCA

## *A Reflection*

*It helps now and then to step back and take the long view.*

*The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.*

*We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.*

*Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.*

*No statement says all that could be said.*

*No prayer fully expresses our faith.*

*No confession brings perfection.*

*No pastoral visit brings wholeness.*

*No program accomplishes the Church's mission.*

*No set of goals and objectives includes everything.*

*This is what we are about.*

*We plant the seeds that will one day grow.*

*We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development.*

*We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.*

*We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and do it very well.*

*It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning,*

*a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.*

*We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.*

*We are workers, not master builders,*

*ministers, not messiahs.*

*We are prophets of a future not our own.*

**AMEN.**

*Archbishop Oscar Romero<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> This reflection is taken, with permission, from the "Resource Book for Twinning" of the United Church of Canada.

# ***COMPANION SYNOD PROGRAM***

## ***SECTION I: THE QUESTIONS ...***

### ***What is the purpose of the Companion Synod Program?***

The Companion Synod Program was established in order

*to strengthen us and our overseas partners for life and mission together,  
within the body of Christ.*

We need each other. Together we will be renewed and regenerated by Christian faith and witness.

This will be accomplished by:

- creating person-to-person contact between our synod and our chosen companion church;
- deepening our understanding of and opening our eyes to our companions' daily lives, realities and contexts;
- verbalizing the needs, weaknesses and vulnerabilities that we have, as individuals, as congregations, as synods, as a national church, and acknowledging how a companion relationship will fulfill those needs, accept those weaknesses and vulnerabilities and ultimately strengthen us, our faith and our lives;
- offering us the opportunity to participate more fully in the worship communities of our overseas partners through prayer, study, communication, and the possible exchange of people;
- bringing our faith to life by having individuals, congregations and synods more involved in the global church, more involved in areas of global justice and social concern;
- challenging us to become more intention about our commitment to Christ, our discipleship and our relationship with others;
- providing us with another road for making the words of the Evangelical Declaration come alive - we are a people of mission; and
- giving us a vision of what mission might look like today!

Historically, we have entered into partnership relationships with the intent of giving, helping or providing. We do have skills, expertise, knowledge and resources to offer to others. But the Companion Synod Program affirms our need to also receive, to be helped, to be provided and cared for and to be nurtured. Companion relationships involve two companions, two equal partners. By sharing with each other, we become equal in the riches of Christ!

*Mission to Us: Are We Serious?*<sup>3</sup>  
by Bob Faris

*For some time now, and especially since the theme of the World Mission Conference in Mexico in 1963 proclaimed "Mission in Six Continents," we have known in North America that we are one of the fields of God's mission in the world. As the face of the global church has changed, we have been challenged to understand that we are not only "sending" churches but also "receiving" churches; we need the gifts and insights of sisters and brothers from around the world to deepen our discernment of where it is we are being called in a changing global context. Visitors to Canada are often surprised and shocked by the large church buildings and empty pews, vestiges of another time when what we still call the mainline churches played a very different role. The persistent images of a Christian society left by late nineteenth and early twentieth century missionaries to Asia, Africa and Latin America, collide with our temples of consumerism and the morality of a secular and individualistic society.*

*In September, I had the unique opportunity, along with Patti Talbot and Jim Marshall of the United Church of Canada, to be a part of a consultation sponsored by the Working Group on Mission to North America of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA) in Chicago. Paul and Joyce Bwalya from Zambia, participants in the Mutuality in Mission Program of the United Church who have been living and ministering in Powassan, Ontario for over two years, were among those sharing their experiences of being in mission "to" North America.*

*One of the first things that struck me about the group which had gathered was the diversity of ways in which they had come to see us. Some, like the Bwalya's, had come through well-defined programs reflecting relationships between North American churches and their global partners. Others had arrived decades ago as part of what they defined as the "brain drain" from their country of origin. One was a recent refugee to the United States from the war in Liberia. One was involved in an evangelical mission to Chinese students at Columbia University in New York. One had been and left and come back again. Just as European and North American missionaries of a previous generation reflected the global migration patterns of their day, our group was in some way a microcosm of the migration patterns which are reshaping our world, and particularly our North American context.*

*As we listened, we were challenged by stories of personal and communal joy as well as sorrow; of cultural gaffs and cultural insensitivity; of hospitality offered and great generosity as well as experiences of racism; of an openness to learn as well as a continuing blindness and isolation from the rest of the world; of recognition of poverty in the midst of our immense affluence as well as a deepened critique of the role of our countries in perpetuating the growing gap between the wealthy and the poor on the planet. There was the beginning of a real dialogue on issues about which we disagreed but a lingering suspicion of an imbalance of power among what can be seen as "senior" and "junior" partners.*

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<sup>3</sup> Taken, with permission, from the Fall 1998 issue of "Forum Focus", the publication of the Canadian Churches' Forum for Global Ministries. Bob Faris is the Coordinator at the Forum.

*One of the most important challenges which was raised during the consultation was "are you serious?" and, if so, "what are you going to do with this?" What will we do with the insights and gifts of those who are in mission among us? For us who are members of churches which are more and more frequently being called churches "in exile", what will we do with the insights of those who sojourn among us from places where the church plays a very different role? How can we, who have spoken for so long, become more effective listeners, not only as we engage in mission in other parts of the world, but here in our own home as well? These questions are good starting points for all of us in our engagement and continuing journey together. Are we serious?*

### **How does the Companion Synod Program work?**

Our five ELCIC synods

- British Columbia,
- Alberta and the Territories,
- Saskatchewan,
- Manitoba and Northern Ontario,
- and the East

have the opportunity to be "twinning" with our overseas partner churches. Depending upon the arrangement of the partner church, our synods might be linked to a synod or district within the partner church or with the partner church as a whole. For example, the British Columbia Synod might express a desire in becoming a companion with the IELU, the Lutheran Church in Argentina. Or, the Eastern Synod might be interested in getting to know about life in a specific district within the ELC-PNG, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea.

### **Who will be our companions?**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada has formal partnership agreements with overseas churches in five countries: Papua New Guinea, Cameroon, El Salvador, Peru and Argentina. New partnerships are now being forged in places such as Guyana. In addition, historic relationships unite us with churches in Colombia, India, Liberia and Uruguay. It is in churches in these countries where we will find our companions.

When considering who you would like to have as your companion, remember that, because of different political, economic and social situations in different countries, each relationship will take on a different character. Relationships with churches in countries such as Colombia and Liberia, where people have endured intense political upheaval, guerilla warfare and civil strife, will be vastly different from relationships established with churches in Peru or Guyana, for example. Companion relationships in some countries may never get further than regular correspondence between the two companions. But still, these churches are worthy of being engaged in companion relationships. Indeed, "walking together" will be extremely important to the people who live in the midst of these difficult conditions. They will know that someone cares.

### **What kind of time commitment is involved?**

Relationships take time and effort to develop; they don't usually have "start", "finish" or "best before" dates. Cross-cultural relationships and relationships with those in other countries take even more time and effort. The relationships that we will enter into through the Companion Synod Program are serious and deserve our care, attention and full commitment.

ELCIC synods should be prepared to be actively involved with their companions for a minimum of seven years. This will allow the companion relationship to develop and grow and for both companions to gain a better understanding of and appreciation for the other.

**How much will it cost?**

No specific budget amount is being suggested. Each synod will have to make its own decision about whether or not a budget line for the Companion Synod Program is necessary and if it is, how much money should be allocated to that budget line.

Certain expenses (postage, photocopying, etc.) should be anticipated and these expenses may well be greater in the first two years of the companion relationship, as it is being established and developed. Many of the other activities that might involve expenses, including the exchange of people, should be covered by special fundraising events and initiatives within each synod.

**How do we become a companion?**

Once an ELCIC synod has indicated its interest in becoming a companion, the Companion Synod Program Coordinator will suggest two or three possible companions. These companions come from churches where the ELCIC already has established relationships, either through formal agreements or from historical links. The companions offered for consideration have already confirmed their interest to becoming a companion to an ELCIC synod. They are ready, willing and able to enter into a relationship with us!

## ***SECTION II: SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND ...***

Each of our Canadian provinces and territories is different and each has things that make it distinct from the others - the flatness of the prairies - the great white north -the Rocky Mountains. And yet, it's all Canada. Different, but the same.

There are differences within Canada. And, when we look outside of our own borders, differences start to become even more pronounced. Our brothers and sisters in other lands are not the same as we are. They may look different. They may speak a different language - or the same language with a different accent! Their houses may be built from different materials. They may eat different foods. Their congregations and churches may not be the same as ours. And yet, there are some similarities too. The most important similarity? Regardless of where we live, of which country we call home, of which national church we belong to, *"in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body"* (1 Corinthians 12:13 NRSV). These differences and similarities, and our interest in learning about and experiencing them, are what fuel the Companion Synod Program. By learning from each other, by caring for each other, by sharing with each other, by breaking bread together, we will recognize Jesus in the other!

*"For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us ... So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near ... So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God"* (Ephesians 2:14, 17, 19 NRSV)

*"During a Vacation Bible School session two summers ago at St. James United in Simcoe, Ontario, I introduced my Caribbean friend, Rev. Oliver Daley, to the children. Oliver thought that he would have a little fun.*

*He started talking to them about God's creation. He had found a maple leaf on his way to the church that morning and he told them that there were no maple leaves where he lived in Kingston, Jamaica.*

*Then he asked the children what differences there were between himself and me.*

*'You're taller than Mr. Chambers,' said one discerning child.*

*'You're bigger,' said another with some politeness.*

*'Mr. Chambers wears glasses.' 'You have a white shirt on.' 'You're holding a maple leaf.'*

*On and on it went until we all had the giggles.*

*Finally, one quiet voice from the back corner of the floor said, 'You're black and he's white.'*

*Anything else?*

*'You've got a squashed nose.' (Oliver loved that one!) Honesty. Finally.*

*When Oliver and I talked about the experience later we wondered why it took these children so long to get to the obvious. Was it really that they didn't notice? Or was it politeness, not wanting to draw attention to the one who was different? Or was it something else?*

*Whatever it was, it made a marked impression on us all. A few days later when Oliver was in a local shopping mall, he was astounded at the sight of a little girl dragging her mother over to introduce the man who had been at Vacation Bible School.*

*Relationships, however brief, can make a world of difference. Maybe even a different world.”<sup>4</sup>*

All the same, it might be helpful to keep certain things in mind when considering the possibility of entering into a companion relationship, the possibility of making a commitment to a companion, and the possible activities and encounters engaged in with our companion.

- We need to remember that ELCIC synods will be establishing relationships with churches in countries where the daily realities - political, economic and social - of the people may be very much different from ours.
- We need to remember that our companion church may be struggling to define its future - as we are! And we need to remember that they have the right to do so according to their own time/agenda/priorities.
- We should not take anything for granted.
- We should be careful with our assumptions.
- We need to remember to be understanding, patient and caring, to have faith and humility when dealing with our companions. Oh, and a sense of humour goes a long way too!
- Our companions need friends, not dominating and controlling relatives!

Some other things to keep in mind follow.

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<sup>4</sup>“Twin Brother, Twin Sister” by Steven Chambers. Taken, with permission, from the United Church of Canada’s *Mandate* magazine, October 1988.

### **Language**

Language is a significant factor in cross-cultural relationships. We need to explore ways of responding and communicating in the language of our companion. Former missionaries/volunteers, international students and residents, immigrants, travel seminar participants as well as the embassy of the country of the companion church may be helpful resources!

### **Distance**

Our companions are likely to be a considerable physical distance away from us. This has implications. Our letters will take longer to get to them and their responses will take longer to reach us. We will need to be aware of the difference between our time zone and theirs. Traveling - either going to meet our companions or bringing them to meet us - will involve expenses and time. The farther away our companions are, the larger the traveling expense and the longer the time it will take to get to their home or to bring them to ours.

### **Time**

Time is measured differently in different places. And the value of time can be quite different between cultures. Our concept of punctuality and our desire for quick responses to requests and communications may not be understood by our companion. As well, there may simply be real-life difficulties that prevent our companion from sharing our concept of the value of time; for example, our companion might lack access to communication equipment, including postage. A word of advice: start to think in terms of months rather than weeks!

### **Cultural Comparisons**

Culture is what makes up a society: language, tradition, history, myth, dress, manners, music, body language, customs, etc. Culture is neither good nor bad, superior or inferior. One culture is equal in value to another.

Instead of making comparisons between our culture and our companion's culture, we need to focus on the fact that we are all "God-created, God-blessed and God-gifted"<sup>5</sup>. We need to accept our companion and to recognize and respect the image and presence of God in their lives.

We should also avoid comparisons of economic, political, social, and class systems. Too often such comparisons are negative and result in hurtful stereotyping and generalizations. Instead, emphasize similarities. We share a mutual belief in Jesus Christ. We share in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. These similarities allow us to overcome our differences, to transcend national barriers, economics, politics and culture! And these similarities remind us that the church of Jesus is more than just us, our local congregations, synods and national church.

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<sup>5</sup> "Why Crosscultural Connections?", a paper of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

### *The World in 100 People<sup>6</sup>*

*If we could shrink the Earth's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all existing human ratios remaining the same, it would look like this:*

- *There would be 57 Asians, 21 Europeans, 14 from the Western Hemisphere (North and South) and 8 Africans*
- *51 would be female; 49 would be male*
- *70 would be non-white; 30 white*
- *70 would be non-Christian; 30 Christian*
- *50% of the entire world's wealth would be in the hands of only six people and all six would be citizens of the United States*
- *80 would live in substandard housing*
- *70 would be unable to read*
- *50 would suffer from malnutrition*
- *One would be near death, one would be near birth*
- *Only one would have a college education*
- *No one would own a computer.*

*Author Unknown*

### **Lifestyle**

We have busy lives. We are busy running here and there. We are busy keeping up with our schedules and plans. Our "busy-ness" is a part of the way that our society functions. In fact, we may not even truly realize how busy we are and how greatly our lives are ruled by the ticking of the clock. But others will. Our companions will notice. They may even comment that we are slaves to the clock - often at the expense of hospitality and respect for others! It's true! In other parts of the world, people often come from communities and cultures where much greater value is placed on human community. The importance of being with others, talking, living together, etc., cannot be underestimated. Our companions will understand that every human interaction is "quality time". Be sensitive to this!

### **Gender Roles**

The roles of men and women in society vary from country to country. The roles of men in women in your companion's country might be vastly different to those in Canada. Be aware of these differences and be tolerant of them.

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<sup>6</sup> Taken, with permission, from the Fall 1998 issue of "Forum Focus", the publication of the Canadian Churches' forum for Global Ministries.

### **Financial and Material Gifts**

Financial and material exchanges should normally not be part of the Companion Synod Program. *An overseas companion is not to expect to gain financial resources from agreeing to a companion relationship. And ELCIC synods are not to take on former roles that include paternalistic ideas of "taking care of" or "looking after" or "helping them" financially; we need to move on from the "donor-recipient" model of relating to others.* Both companions need to understand this and agree to it. The Companion Synod Program is not an adoption or sponsorship project. The Companion Synod Program focuses instead on relationship, trust and understanding, and not on financial obligations. Because this issue is so complex a separate appendix at the back of this handbook provides further guidance.

## **SECTION III: TO GET STARTED**

### **... A MARRIAGE ANALOGY**

#### **Step 1: Are you ready?**

The ELCIC Mission office has already approached each ELCIC synod to determine its interest in participating in the Companion Synod Program and to gauge if it is ready now to make a commitment to a companion.

Some synods are ready to establish a companion relationship with an overseas partner church; others are not. Each synod will make its own decision about when the time is right to make such a commitment. As well, a synod should not be overly concerned about the preparations being undertaken by another synod as it engages in the Companion Synod Program. Each synod will make its own decision about how to best proceed with the Companion Synod Program, decisions such as the necessity of setting up a committee with sole responsibility for the Companion Synod Program, the necessity of establishing a budget line for the Companion Synod Program in the synod's budget, etc. Just because something is being done in one synod, doesn't mean that another synod is obliged to attempt the same thing. On the other hand, a synod may want to copy some of the preparations that seem to be working well in another synod.

Finally, remember that the Companion Synod Program is only one of numerous ways of encouraging and supporting mission work. If a synod chooses not to participate at this time, it does not mean that the synod is not interested or involved in mission - it may well be very active in this area through other means and opportunities. A separate appendix at the back of this handbook outlines the mission programs and opportunities that are available in the ELCIC.

*Celebrating the Unfamiliar- Cross Cultural Ministry<sup>7</sup>*  
*by Kevin Anderson*

*Preparing for ministry of any kind, in particular cross cultural ministry, can be a daunting experience. Perhaps our greatest challenge comes in the way we handle meeting the unfamiliar.*

*Dealing with diversity and realizing that we always come to any new enterprise with our own history of experiences, rooted in our own cultural and religious beliefs and biases, means that it is a huge challenge to minister with and to others who are different. It is difficult to truly meet and come to know others in the gospel sense of communion and community for the simple reason that they are not what we expect.*

*Expecting the unexpected is crucial for cross cultural ministry. Yet this is something easier said than done. When any two individuals come together, two worlds come together, sometimes with different orbits and completely different spheres of understanding. These worlds collide or they can meet in mutual respect and comprehension. When there is a meeting of minds and hearts, wonderful things can happen; in terms of ministry this coming together is the force of unity which Jesus proclaims most eloquently in John's Gospel, when he hopes that "all may be one". This too is the vision that guides our ecumenical endeavors.*

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<sup>7</sup> Taken, with permission, from the Spring 1994 issue of "Forum Focus", the publication of the Canadian Churches' Forum for Global Ministries. Kevin Anderson was formerly the Coordinator of Education and Training at the Forum.

*One of the first steps toward authentic and effective communion has to do with how we prepare ourselves to understand and open our hearts to the unfamiliar. This means first coming to understand ourselves, recognizing who we are, what we stand for, where we come from and what we are about. How can we face the unfamiliar if we are not first familiar with ourselves? What kind of missionaries do we hope to be? Do we want to effect change in social terms? Is what we do fundamentally rooted in faith? How much of what we do is inspired by secular concerns and culture? What motivates us? Do we go overseas to learn, to teach, to lead, to accompany, to assist? What is our role? Do we seek to be prophet, priest, witness, friend, saviour, or something else? Do we work toward solidarity, redemption, evangelization, cooperation, respect for differences, or something else?*

*In terms of mission, these are hotly debated questions. In the face of so many approaches, methods, programs and perspectives, it is more important than ever before that we have a clear idea of who we are. Self reflection and analysis can be easily neglected as we prepare for ministry; yet it is precisely this reflection which may help us sort out our own motivations. More than ever, what is needed for those preparing for cross cultural ministry is focus, vision and a search for clarity about what our real reasons are for mission and ministry.*

*The irony of this process is that the more we explore these issues and questions, the more we realize that answers are not clear or conclusive; we recognize that we can never know all the answers. There are always nuances, complexities and ramifications that make it difficult to get at the truth about ourselves, let alone get at the truth of an alien culture and world. We realize we are not only strangers to others, we are strangers to ourselves. If we take the time to explore our own motivations, we may begin to realize that we are not nearly as "together" as we first presumed; we are unclear and muddled about what impels us; we have mixed motives. Our structures often do not match our theology or ideology; our old definitions do not fit present realities; there are contradictions in what we profess and practice. In searching for clarity we realize that our vision is unfocused and disoriented. As we begin to get closer to what is most familiar about ourselves, we become more aware of what is unfamiliar. Questions always lead to more questions. It is then that we can embrace our own ambiguity and mystery as part of the human condition. This is a crucial factor in preparing for ministry of any kind. Only with a sense of humor and a sense of the paradox of our quest, can we really embrace cross cultural ministry. Our challenge is not so much to become comfortable with who we are and what we do, but to allow ourselves to be uncomfortable with who we are, and to ask hard questions about what we do. To be focused in our ministry we must embrace our own ambivalence. In accepting ourselves as unsolved mysteries, it is all the more natural to accept others in their uniqueness and diversity.*

*It is when we embrace the unfamiliar in ourselves that we are able to embrace the unfamiliar, unanticipated and foreign world of others. In this way, we live in a universe where the unexpected is expected. Our God is a God of surprises, able to speak to us from new and extraordinary places. And so we expect to encounter others in new ways, surprising ways, unsettling ways. We know our world will clash and meet others, and that we will be challenged to grow because of this. Something really wonderful can happen in cross cultural ministry because we know that God will speak to us through those who are strangers. We can begin to really embrace one another as brothers and sisters because we are pilgrims on the same path toward self-discovery, mutual understanding and authentic community.*

### **Step 2: Are they ready?**

The ELCIC Mission office has already approached its partner churches to invite their participation in the Companion Synod Program. The program, its goals and objectives, its hopes and dreams and possibilities, have been explained to the overseas partners.

The overseas churches have also received notice of what this program is not: a financial obligation, a funding agency, and an official sponsorship. Again, this is an extremely important notion for both of the companions to understand and agree to. *An overseas companion is not to expect to gain financial resources from agreeing to a companion relationship. And ELCIC synods are not to take on former roles that include paternalistic ideas of "taking care of" or "looking after" or "helping them" financially; we need to move on from the "donor-recipient" model of relating to others.*

The overseas church is given time to consider and evaluate the program and to indicate its willingness to participate, its willingness to become a companion to one of the ELCIC synods.

### **Step 3: Popping the question**

Once a synod confirms that it is ready to enter into a companion relationship, the ELCIC Mission office will present a short list of possible companions.

*Note: ELCIC synods should always use the Mission office as the intermediary when setting out to find a companion. Please do not attempt this on your own! The ELCIC works hard to establish formal agreements with our partner churches and there already exist numerous understandings and agreed-upon protocol. As well, we don't want to overburden our partners with requests from various groups within the ELCIC or to duplicate things that are already being done. In fact, if there are any questions at all about the Companion Synod Program or the ELCIC's formal partners, please do not hesitate to contact either the Companion Synod Program Coordinator or the Mission office.*

The synod considers the suggested possible companions. Consideration could include numerous factors including the synod's current or historical involvement with the partner church (for example, the sponsorship of missionaries in the partner's country); an awareness of the problems of the partner's country and a desire to accompany the people as they struggle with their daily realities; or simply the desire to learn about one of the partner churches, its people and country. Then the final selection of the companion from the list of possibilities is made. The selection of the companion can be done by the Bishop's office, by the synodical World Mission committee, by input received from various groups within the synod or by a variety of other ways. However, the selection of a synod's companion is entirely the choice and responsibility of that synod, not the ELCIC Mission office.

### **Step 4: Getting engaged**

The ELCIC Mission office contacts the selected overseas partner church to confirm its interest in being twinned with the specific ELCIC synod. Once interest has been ascertained, the two companions are brought into direct contact with each other through the facilitation of the Companion Synod Program Coordinator and the Mission Office.

### **Step 5: Marriage preparation sessions with the pastor**

A day-long orientation program is planned for the synod by the Companion Synod Program Coordinator. The orientation will focus on the specific companion that has been chosen by that synod. Information will be given about the companion church and the country where it is located.

- How big is the church?
- How many congregations? How many pastors? · What is a worship service like? How big is the country?
- How many people live there?
- What is the "normal" day like for the majority of people in the country?
- How do they make their living?
- What are the joys of living in that country? What are the hardships?

The Companion Synod Program Coordinator will try to arrange for guest speakers to attend the orientation in order to enhance your orientation experience and to deepen your understanding of your companion. There are visiting university students who are from your companion's country. Or a missionary on home leave might be able to come and explain their work with the people in your companion's country. Orientation will also provide further ideas about what to do with your companion: what kind of communication could be attempted, what kind of participation might be possible for the Sunday School children or the youth, how it might be possible to bring some guests from the companion to visit your synod, etc.

### **Step 6: A Sign of love and faithfulness**

During the initial stages of the companion relationship both companions will work together to create a Covenant Agreement. The Covenant Agreement is a pledge, a vow, and one to the other. Congratulations! (A separate appendix at the back of this handbook provides samples of Covenant Agreements.)

When you and your companion have prepared the Covenant Agreement and it is ready to be signed, you might want to plan a special worship service of recognition and celebration. In fact, this might be the time to invite some of your companions to visit - so that the Agreement can be signed at once by both of you. This is something to thank God for!

In addition, at the end of each year, the Companion Synod Program Coordinator will assist both companions in completing a formal evaluation of the relationship.

- What has worked well? Number your accomplishments.
- What has not worked so well? Plan your improvements.
- Has everyone shared in the discussions, in organizing activities, in being a part of the relationship?
- What are the continued hopes and dreams for this relationship?

*A Spirituality of Global Mission<sup>8</sup>*  
*by Kevin Anderson*

*Our spirituality is nothing less than the foundation of our sacred relationships with God, creation, others and ourselves. The way we approach this mystery and wonder of our faith, which is so integral to our ministry, will shape what we do and what we become in "global mission". It is my firm belief that our spirituality always calls us to wholeness, to healing, to reconciliation and solidarity with others. This is what Jesus came to announce as good news. It is the goal of our ministry and the heart of our mission as disciples of Jesus. A spirituality of global mission links us to the many concerns and issues that are daily faced and fought by our brothers and sisters the world over. We look to see the face of Jesus in others, and when we really see Jesus there, we begin to really care about their welfare; their struggles become our struggles. Through compassion and solidarity we become united in mind, heart and purpose. It is the Spirit who teaches us, and it is the Spirit that reveals to us more and more of what it is to be one with God. The closer we are to God, the closer we are to others, and vice versa. This is in practical terms how we become a people of God; this is how we build up the body that is Christ. In this way, our spirituality draws us closer to one another, makes us one; and the more this happens in us, the more we become part of that body; we become eucharist to one another.*

*The face of poverty reveals to us a face of Jesus that many in our day would prefer not to look at. Yet our mission is to see Jesus especially in the crucified of our world, the victims of injustice, the stranger, the foreigner, the outcast, the demoralized and abused. If the Spirit is with us, we will move towards others in compassion and love, with a passion for justice and a desire to build authentic community. Those who the world rejects will be our friends. Our fellowship is with the lowly and those who hunger for God and the reign of justice: with women who fight patriarchy, blacks who battle discrimination, children who need to be heard and respected, gay and lesbian men and women who struggle for human rights, victims of violence and torture, the poor, and so many others. Perhaps we cannot be friends to all - but we are part of a much larger body that can reach further than we might imagine or hope. If we do our part for the body, we are accomplishing our mission and building up the health of the whole.*

*This to me is a meaningful and practical approach to global mission. And I would add that this spirituality is able to work particularly well when we realize that it is the power of God within us that makes this possible. We are not sufficient within ourselves to bring about the revolutionary realization of the "kingdom" that Jesus described in the scriptures as God's own plan for all creation.*

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<sup>8</sup> Taken, with permission, from the Fall 1994 issue of "Forum Focus", the publication of the Canadian Churches' Forum for Global Ministries. Kevin Anderson was formerly the Coordinator of Education and Training at the Forum.

*So much is being written and shared these days about creation centered spirituality, so much that is rich and meaningful. It seems to me that 'there is a logical extension to this, and it is something we might call a Cosmic Spirituality of Mission. This is to say that our mission is indeed global, but it is also more. It reaches beyond what is familiar to us, into realms yet uncharted; it is cosmic. It is bigger than we can know or understand. The Spirit is working in every corner to make all come together, to create harmony. And so our challenge is to do what is possible within the parameters of our circle, and acknowledge that God is working in wonderful ways in other circles, in other cultures, in other realms that are totally foreign to us. As we reach out to others in solidarity we recognize this more and more; we are able to celebrate the power of the Spirit to do more than we could ever imagine, the Spirit that works in nature, in other religions, in other lands.*

*I think this is one of the gifts that missionaries bring home with them to their own culture and world: an appreciation of the various ways that God works throughout our globe and a recognition that we have much to learn. Those who have been fortunate to have a mission experience in another culture are often among the first to argue for the rights and autonomy of other peoples and lands. Those engaged in a global mission of friendship and solidarity do not have a spirit of superiority or isolation; it is spirituality that recognizes that we become whole only through our interconnectedness and our respect for the differences that make up the richness of God's creation.*

*There are elements that we will never understand about another's world or culture because it is distinctly their own. This is not surprising, or even problematic, for those committed to the kind of global mission we are discussing here. There is always more to learn and more to do. Those we love most, those we call friends, those we try to serve in our ministry, these are the ones who invariably teach us the most. Mission is an ongoing process of reaching out and receiving, of meeting God in others in new and surprising ways.*

*For this to take place, we must recognize our own limitations while at the same time making the leap of faith that all is possible through and with the Spirit. Our spirituality is the life blood of our faith; it nourishes and sustains us in ministry and helps us to understand the meaning of our daily struggles within a rooted context, a context that is one of the many contexts throughout the globe. It is Spirit that builds the bridges between these contexts. It is the Spirit active within us that shows us the way to others, that prompts us to reach out in compassion and love. It is the Spirit active in others that causes us to change our perceptions and attitudes, that leads us to new ways of feeling, thinking and acting. And finally it is Spirit that teaches us, that reveals we are connected to all that is in the universe.*

## ***SECTION IV: IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES***

The Companion Synod Program will have different results, responses and effects in each of the synods. The congregations and individuals within each of the ELCIC synods are different, they have different interests, and their companions will be different and so the activities engaged in will also be different. Just because something is being done one way in one synod, doesn't mean that another synod is obliged to attempt the same thing. On the other hand, a synod may want to copy some of the ideas and activities that are working well in another synod!

Below are some suggested ideas and activities to do with your companion. Be creative! Develop activities appropriate to the gifts and needs of your synod and those of your companion. Involve a wide variety of people in the activities; although congregations will be the main participants for many activities, specific groups and ministries within the synod and congregations should also intentionally be included - the youth, the ELW, the Sunday School, etc. Contact members of multicultural communities to act as resource people.

As you plan your activities, you might want to reflect on the following questions and implications, to further your understanding of the potential! effects of the activity.<sup>9</sup>

- Interdependence
  - Does this activity further mutuality and interdependence?
  - Who are the givers and receivers, the learners and teachers in this activity?
  - How does this activity open us to receive the gifts and witness of others?
- Attitudes
  - What attitudes underlie this activity?
  - Will this activity instill paternalism in those who participate?
  - Will this activity reinforce old stereotypes or create new ones?
  - Does this activity create an attitude of openness?
- Values
  - Does this activity reflect or perpetuate materialistic values?
  - Is there a balance between the value of individuals and the value of community?
  - What values of our society are reflected in this activity?
  - Are there Christian and/or moral values at stake in this activity?
- Christian Witness
  - What does this activity communicate about the Gospel? The church?
  - How is this activity "good" news?
  - How does this activity further Christian discipleship in those who participate?
  - How does this activity call forth commitment and response?
  - What is the change or growth in people that is being called forth by this activity?
- Commitments
  - Are there long-range commitments or implications to this activity?
  - Who needs to be informed about this activity?
- Limitations
  - What are the limitations to this activity? Cost? Language? Other?

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<sup>9</sup> The following questions have been adapted from an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America paper entitled "Implications of Plans: Questions to Ask."

### **Educational Events**

Once you have entered into a relationship, one of the first things you will want to do is to plan educational events about the companion: the church, the country and related issues.

Investigate information and study resources that might be available from:

- the ELCIC Mission office, the Companion Synod Program Coordinator or other church agencies such as Canadian Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran World Federation, and World Council of Churches;
- ELCIC seminaries and church colleges;
- libraries and other sources such as public media, internet and newspapers;
- missionaries;
- resource persons such as former missionaries/volunteers, international
- students and residents, and immigrants;
- the embassy of the country in which your companion church is located.

Educational events could be synod-wide, at individual conference meetings or within congregations. Or they might be targeted to specific groups, such as the ELW with an emphasis on women's issues. Are there similar issues for women in both places? Or workshops might involve our youth, showing how our companion's young people live, their responsibilities and social activities - shopping centres and video arcades likely aren't a part of their lives! And marriage at age 16 might be! Try to find a guest speaker - someone originally from your companion's country or someone who has lived there or visited it. If you're lucky, a missionary from that area might be available. Guest speakers who are knowledgeable about your companion's country will make your educational event come to life!

Communication for awareness and education is crucial. As your relationship grows, you will want to educate others about your companion and your relationship with them. Remember to publicize special aspects of your relationship and various activities that you engage in together in synodical newsletters, mission bulletins and the ELCIC's national magazine, *Canada Lutheran*. And don't keep it just amongst us Lutherans - other churches in your area might be interested in your relationship and companion. Invite them to special events and activities! Investigate other modes of publicizing your relationship including community newspapers, ecumenical coalitions, special interest groups and cultural groups. Share your good news!

### **Written Correspondence with your Companion**

You may like to share the following with your companion:

- official correspondence between bishops/presidents;
- official information between churches and synods (documents, annual reports, etc.);
- correspondence including:
  - exchange of prayer requests
  - exchange of photographs
  - exchange of newsletters
  - stories of human interest or news articles
  - exchange of music and worship materials
  - questions about church life, areas of concern
  - greetings and expressions of encouragement, support, and pastoral concern

- sharing of letters between congregations, Sunday schools, members of various networks/ministries.

The possibilities for written correspondence and the kinds of information that we would like to have from our companion are endless. It's exciting to get to know them! But too, we should realize that, in some cases, our companion may simply not have the resources or facilities to provide us with all of the information, letters, pictures, etc. that we might request.

The synodical committee responsible for overseeing the companion relationship should be charged with the task of collecting all correspondence to be sent to the companion. This will help to ensure that duplication of requests does not become a burden to the companion. *(This is for the companion synod relationship only; if congregations within the ELCIC synod develop and are involved in congregation-to-congregation relationships within the companion church, then a variety of people within the congregations will want to be involved in correspondence to their companion congregation. See the separate section on companion congregations.)*

### **Electronic Media**

There might be the potential for communication by electronic media including telephone, fax and even email. However, don't embarrass yourself by assuming that your companion has access to such things! An overseas missionary might be a good source of information as to what is and is not available in your companion's country.

If electronic media are readily available, another dimension for the relationship can be embraced including:

- telephone conversations or formal worship greetings can be shared and, in some cases, amplified to a large audience;
- audio recordings can be exchanged for sharing a wide variety of purposes: greetings, conversations, messages, music, etc.;
- contact by telex and telefax equipment;
- communication via computer networks - email!;
- interviews, greetings, or other presentations can be videotaped and then shared; however, note that tapes produced on equipment from other countries will need to be transferred for display on North American equipment and vice versa.

Again, the synodical committee responsible for overseeing the companion relationship should be charged with the task of arranging for all communication that will be done via electronic media to the companion in order to avoid duplicated requests to the companion.

### **Program Activities**

Various program activities can be planned including:

- Partnership in prayer
  - petitions as a weekly part of the Prayer of the Church in every congregation;
  - sharing of prayer requests for members' daily prayer life;
  - prayer covenants between the companions;
  - common prayers for both companions, translated and used regularly or on specified occasions;
  - prayer partnerships between congregations or other groups;
  - days of prayer with certain groups or for certain emphases/occasions.

When we remember others in prayer, we do not simply hand them over to God's care and forget them. We enter into the heart of their suffering and rejoicing and become changed by what we give and receive. *"I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for ail of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now."* (Philippians 1:3-5 NRSV)

- Worship settings and other gatherings
  - hymns, choruses and songs can be exchanged and used in the language of the companion church or translated;
  - prayers, invocations, benedictions, or complete worship services can be shared;
  - customs, rituals, and other symbolic actions can be shared;
  - banners and other worship articles can be designed and shared;
  - same theme and sermon texts can be used on agreed-upon occasions;
  - sermons or brief greetings can be exchanged;
  - seasons/festivals are ideal occasions to exchange and share - at Easter, learn to say "Christ has risen!" in your companion's language, or observe other customs or rituals of your companion.

### **Advocacy and Action for Justice and Peace**

A number of overseas churches live under political oppression and danger. These churches request our prayers and also ask that we speak on behalf of their liberation to the governments and international agencies of the world.

Some churches live within societies suffering extreme poverty, economic oppression and massive debt. Sometimes we are to blame for this: sometimes our "development" has come at the expense of others' "underdevelopment". These churches request that we study the root causes of their situation, the systems, structures, policies and practices that keep some people comfortable while the majority remains poor. You will also want to examine long-held assumptions and personal lifestyles and commitments. Then follow up with appropriate responses.

Read about relationships between Canada and your companion's country. Research your companion and its country to find out if someone or something is oppressing it. If you are engaged in a relationship with a companion who is in an oppressive situation, you may want to contact members of parliament, External Affairs, ambassadors, and heads of foreign states on behalf of our Christian sisters and brothers around the world. Be careful, though, to not further endanger your companion.

### *A Parable<sup>10</sup>*

*Once upon a time there was a small village on the edge of a river. The people there were good and the life in the village was good. One day a villager noticed a baby floating down the river. The villager quickly jumped into the river and swam out to save the baby from drowning.*

*The next day, this same villager was walking along the riverbank and noticed two babies in the river. He called for help, and both babies were rescued from the swift waters. The following day four were seen caught in the turbulent current. And then eight, then more, and still more.*

*The villagers organized themselves quickly, setting up Watch towers and training teams of swimmers who could resist the swift waters and rescue the babies. Rescue squads were soon working 24 hours a day. And each day the number of helpless babies increased.*

*The villagers organized themselves efficiently. The rescue squads were now snatching many children each day. Groups were trained to give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Others prepared formula and provided clothing for the chilled babies. Many, particularly elderly women, provided foster homes and placement.*

*One day, however, someone raised the question, 'But where are all these babies coming from? Who is throwing them in the river? Why? Let's organize a team to go upstream and see who's doing it.' The seeming logic of the elders countered: 'And if we go upstream, who will operate the rescue operations? We need every concerned person here.'*

*'Bud don't you see,' cried the one lone voice, 'if we find out who is throwing them in, we can stop the problem and no babies will drown. By going upstream we can eliminate the cause of the problem.'*

*'It's too risky.'*

*And so the numbers of the babies in the river increased daily. Those saved increased, but those who drowned increased even more.*

### **Special Events**

Plan a special event in order to learn more about your companion, to reflect on their situation. Special events could include:

- occasions with special speakers, educators, resource persons;
- events to study/discuss certain topics, issues;
- retreats for prayer, reflection, and/or study;
- synod events: assemblies, professional leaders' gatherings;
- synod-wide celebrations in congregations, such as a specific mission Sunday;
- cross-cultural visits to places including temples, synagogues, cultural centres, etc., within your synod.

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<sup>10</sup> Taken, with permission, from the "Resource Book for Twinning" of the United Church of Canada.

### **International Exchanges and Encounters**

Soon after establishing the companion relationship, the companions may want to begin considering exchange visits and other face-to-face encounters. Because the considerations and arrangements for international exchanges and encounters can be extremely complicated, a separate appendix deals further with this topic. However, there are certain general guidelines to keep in mind, and they are reviewed here.

Inform the Mission office of the planned exchange and keep them informed. The Mission office's involvement could help to ensure a successful encounter; after all, they have experience in arranging international exchanges, both the sending and bringing of people, and are knowledgeable about such considerations as travel arrangements, visa requirements, inoculations, itineraries, sites to visit, people to meet, etc. Use them!

There are two types of exchanges to be considered: bringing our companions to visit us and going to visit our companions. Planning for each of these exchanges will, obviously, be quite different. All the same, certain questions should be asked in order to identify the purpose and expectations of the encounter.

- Why are you/they visiting?
- What will be the focus during your/their visit?
- Who is visiting? The youth? The women's group? Or anyone who is interested?

Various types of visits can be planned. Some may be focused on congregations and their members. Others will focus on exchange of leaders or persons of specific groups/ministries such as women, youth, men, pastors, educators, evangelists, or health workers. Perhaps you could work in conjunction with one of the ELCIC camps in order to extend an invitation to some of your companion youth to assist as camp counselors for the summer. Other visits may be organized around specific study topics or issues. Events such as festivals, anniversaries, or assemblies may be the occasion for a visit. For longer periods of exchange, the Missionary Exchange Program may be considered (contact the Mission office for more information on this possibility).

The limitations and anticipated difficulties for a successful encounter should also be noted so that they can be dealt with in advance.

- Will a translator be necessary?
- Will your visit cause any financial difficulties to your companion?
- Will your companion have special requirements or needs when visiting you?

*"We had many fears going into the relationship, and some still exist. One of my fears when I accompanied the group from St. James to Jamaica was totally personal. Would I find myself in a situation so different from what I knew that I would be left totally helpless? I feared that my North American assumptions, upbringing and education would put up barriers. Since I was invited to preach, I knew that the barriers would have to come down. My fears were relieved when I sensed that I was accepted for who I was. I wasn't asked to be anyone different. I was understood as someone who was ready to listen and ready to explore common concerns. I was able to be myself because my fears weren't unlike the fears of those people from Webster Church.*

*One of the participants from Webster who came to Simcoe in the summer told me of her fear. Her story came on our last night together. She said that she almost didn't come on the trip. Right up to the last minute, she was almost too frightened to come to Simcoe.*

*'You see,' she said, 'I am black. And you are white.'*

*I knew, at that point exactly, that our fears were the same.*

*'I've lived all my life with other black people. I don't know anything different. So I was afraid. But I'm not afraid now.'*

*It's one thing for each of us to have known that in the head; now we can know it in the heart."<sup>11</sup>*

### **Volunteer Program**

The ELCIC Mission office is responsible for the Volunteers in Mission (VIM) Program which arranges for volunteers to spend time (six months to two years) in settings where their vocation, work experience or particular skills and expertise are needed. Partner churches regularly request such volunteers. The Mission office receives applications from individuals who are interested in this type of volunteer commitment and then seeks to match them with the positions that are available.

There are a number of ways that synods involved in the Companion Synod Program can be involved in the Volunteer in Mission Program:

- synods should be aware of requests for volunteers from their companion church (as well as other churches);
- synods should publicize these requests;
- synods should help with the placement of volunteers from the synod to the companion church.

By being aware of and involved in the Volunteer in Mission Program, synods can deepen their own companion relationship by:

- assisting their companion by fulfilling urgent and real personnel needs;
- providing educational opportunities within the synod through the promotion of the Volunteer in Mission Program and the sharing of the volunteer's experience during and after his/her placement;
- involving members and congregations of the synod in the support of the volunteer, in ways such as prayer, encouragement through correspondence, and financial support for those volunteers who need such assistance.

Further information on the Volunteers in Mission Program is available from the Mission office.

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<sup>11</sup> "Twin Brother, Twin Sister" by Steven Chambers. Taken, with permission, from the United Church of Canada's *Mandate* magazine, October 1988.

### Companion Congregations

Once a synod has committed to a companion relationship, some congregations within that synod may find that they are interested in developing an even more intimate relationship with the overseas partner. They may request to become "twinned" with a specific congregation in their synod's companion church.

Engaging in a companion congregation relationship will be a rewarding experience and some truly joyous situations will occur. It will also be a frustrating experience and some truly annoying situations will occur. When unhappy feelings arise, simply keep in mind why you are doing this, why you are involved with your companion. Keep the big picture in view!

Patience will be very important; probably the most common reason why congregation-to-congregation relationships fail involves our lack of patience with our companion congregation.

Oh - and there will be risk too: the risk attached to opening yourself up completely to someone else!

Make sure that your congregation is:

- ready for this commitment;
- understands that this is a long-term commitment and not simply a year-long
- special focus activity;
- interested and involved (you might want to identify people from each of the
- specific ministries within your congregation - youth, women, etc. - to be active in the initial stages of the relationship and to ensure that it continues to develop over time);
- focused on a mutual relationship, an interaction of people rather than on a donor-recipient role;
- prepared to enjoy and weather the normal steps of any relationship: fascination, irritation, accommodation and appreciation.

A separate appendix provides further information about the process of establishing companion congregation relationships.

## **APPENDIX A: FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL GIFTS**

Financial issues, including such things as donations for specific projects, gifts of material belongings, etc., are a difficult topic. We know that, in almost every case, we simply have more financial resources available to us, individually, as a congregation and as a national church, than our companion does. It's natural that we would want to share these resources with our companion. And there are programs in the ELCIC and even the Lutheran World Federation that have financial aid and development as a focus - Global Hunger and Development, Missionary Sponsorship and Directed Giving are examples. Contact the Mission office for more information about these possibilities.

But remember that the Companion Synod Program has a different focus, a focus on relationship, trust and understanding. Often, money represents power. Once financial issues are brought into that companion relationship, the relationship may change dramatically: it may become much more an "us and them" relationship, much more a "parent and child" relationship. We may want to have final approval of how and where our monetary gifts are used and we may not be so open to our companions' suggestions of how and where these gifts could really be helpful. It's much more rewarding (to us) to build a school or an orphanage than to fund something less obvious. Be very careful!

The overseas churches with whom we will enter into companion relationships have already been advised that they are not to expect to gain financial resources from agreeing to a companion relationship. Each of the ELCIC synods has also been advised that it is not to take on the kind of former relationship roles that include such paternalistic ideas as "taking care of" or "looking after" or "helping them" financially, when entering into a companion relationship through the Companion Synod Program.

Having said that, of course, there are appropriate times for giving and for the sharing of financial resources. But let them flow out of an established relationship so that giving doesn't control and distort that relationship. And make sure that the decision of how to best use the financial resources is made by both companions; no project should be dictated or imposed by only one of the companions.

All monetary gifts should go through the synod office to be forwarded to the ELCIC Mission office; in this way, your gifts will be used to assist your companion church in ways that have already been prioritized by both churches. This procedure will also assist the partner church in avoiding unnecessary jealousy and ill-will between its synods and congregations. And it will ensure that the relationships that have been carefully developed between the ELCIC and other national churches will remain healthy.

*Note: Numerous projects and causes are studied annually by the Mission office in order to determine which ones should be formally approved by the ELCIC. Although certain projects might seem to be extremely important and a high priority, upon further study and in conjunction with the partner church, the opposite could be found to be true. Please follow the Directed Giving list of approved opportunities. Any additional projects that you would like to see on the list should be proposed to the Mission office for study and prioritization. Remember that the wrong kind of help from outsiders may undermine the authority of the partner church.*

To review: Direct financial and material exchanges should not be part of the Companion Synod Program. Why not?

- Requests and exchanges by individual persons or groups may violate the policies and processes insisted upon by the national churches.
- Tensions and inequities may be created within the receiving church when some members/groups receive resources from overseas and others do not.
- Accountability for the transfer and utilization of the gift may be uncertain.
- The mutuality and interdependence of the companion relationship may be threatened.
- ELCIC synods and congregations have already committed themselves to working together through the Mission office to carry out global mission work.

But of course, for every rule, there are exceptions. In such cases, it is expected that:

- ELCIC synods and their companions will follow the funding procedures and financial relationships established by the ELCIC Mission office and the companion's national church;
- synods will conduct education and information-sharing regarding the specific projects and ministries supported for the companion church through the Mission office (Directed Giving opportunities);
- requests for the funding of new projects (anything not currently supported by the Directed Giving opportunities) will be discussed with the synod's Mission Committee and then referred to the Mission office before proceeding with the adoption of a specific project and subsequently engaging in fundraising for it;
- any funds generated in the ELCIC as a result of the companion relationship will be channeled through the Mission office;
- synod fundraising will be designated for support of the companion relationship including such expenses as:
  - educational activities, workshops, materials;
  - exchanges (travel, food, lodging, incidentals);
  - administrative costs (committee expenses, printing, postage, telephone).

Please contact the Mission office for further information or guidance and advice about the issue of financial gifts between you and your companion.

## **APPENDIX B: COVENANT AGREEMENTS**

Copies of Covenant Agreements follow. These Covenants were made by synods in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and their companions, and dioceses in the Anglican Church of Canada and their companions.

Feel free to use these Covenant Agreements as the starting point for creating your own Covenant with your companion.

**COVENANT BETWEEN  
THE DIOCESE OF SUL OCIDENTAL, BRAZIL  
AND  
THE DIOCESE OF MONTREAL**

I John 4:9-12 (NRSV) God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

In affirmation of our fellowship in the Gospel within the Anglican Communion, the Diocese of Sul Ocidental of the Episcopal Church of Brazil and the Diocese of Montreal of the Anglican Church of Canada covenant together in a Companion Diocese relationship for an initial period of five years beginning the FIRST DAY OF JUNE IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD, ONE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY-TWO.

After an evaluation of the relationship during the fifth year, the two dioceses in mutual agreement may extend the partnership.

We agree to involve our people in the offering of mutual encouragement and prayer, the sharing of information to help us gain a better understanding of each other, and the giving and receiving of concerns, insights and experience to strengthen our common mission so that we may better fulfil our communion in the Gospel.

Clergy and parishioners in each diocese will pray regularly for members of the Companion Diocese. Prayer requests and prayers of thanksgiving will be exchanged.

Regular communications between companions at various levels in the diocese will be ongoing. Exchange visits between clergy and laity will take place. Information about the life and work of the Church and members will be exchanged and studied by the appropriate organizations within both dioceses.

The following specific hopes and definitions are agreed between us.

**HOPES FOR THE RELATIONSHIP**

We will acquire and share knowledge related to:

- People: building bridges with other groups
- Economic and Social Geography: relationship to the rest of the country
- Environment & Public Health
- Literacy and Education
- Family Life
- Role of Women
- Attitudes to Politics
- Reflection and Theological Dialogue
- Retirement Planning for clergy and paid lay workers
- Liturgical Life
- Decade of Evangelism

We should like to

- Exchange sacred and secular music, liturgy and prayers, photographs, newspapers, art from Sunday Schools and crafts from interest groups
  - Exchange visits among seminarians, youth groups, etc.
  - Share pastoral work and experiences in diakonia
  - Lead missions and study groups in one another's diocese
  - Produce educational material for and about each other
  - Hold a yearly consultation to make sure that the work is advancing
- Exchange experiences and resources regarding training and empowerment for leadership.

#### FINANCIAL RELATIONSHIP

The financial implications of the partnership will be determined through mutual discussions. Financial involvement should be clarified and decided before particular projects are organized.

#### TRANSLATION

Translation will be the responsibility of the recipient.

Through our hopes and in other ways yet to be determined we promise to share with you our commitment to Jesus Christ and our common mission in his name for the work He calls us to do, to discover together what it means to be Christians in our cultures and what interdependence in the world and in the Body of Christ signifies for our Dioceses today.

Signed this TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF MAY IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD ONE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY-TWO.

**A PROPOSED COMPANION DIOCESE COVENANT  
BETWEEN  
THE DIOCESE OF CENTRAL NEWFOUNDLAND  
AND THE DIOCESE OF ANGLICANA SAO PAULO**

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this companionship is to celebrate together the faith we share in our Lord Jesus Christ; to affirm our fellowship of the Gospel within the Anglican Communion; and to support each other in our mission as Christians within our societies.

**PERIOD OF COVENANT:** We enter into this companionship for a period of five years. A review of our progress as companions will take place at the end of the third year. A full and complete evaluation of our companionship will take place at the end of the five year period at which time we will mutually decide whether or not we will renew our covenant.

**Program:** We undertake to share our companionship in the following ways; (with the possibility of revising, expanding or reducing as we may see fit within our covenant period.):

- An exchange of video(s) depicting the life and customs of our church (people, worship, pastoral concerns, etc.) within our dioceses.
- Regular exchange of information regarding events and activities occurring in our dioceses - which would include special prayer lists and prayer requests.
- A 'Companionship Prayer', common to both dioceses which would be in regular use throughout our dioceses as we pray for our program.
- An exchange of pictures, crafts, and other items which would help us better understand and appreciate each other's cultures.
- A 'twinning' of parishes between our two dioceses.
- Develop a contact program between such parish groups as Sunday schools, Women's groups, Men's groups, and possibly between individuals who may have the same interests or hobbies.
- A possible exchange of visits of persons as bishops, clergy, lay people, students.
- Gain new ideas of ministry and worship from each other; e.g. Sao Paulo's idea of "house churches".

We enter into this COVENANT:

Signed

**Companion Diocese Covenant  
between  
The Diocese of Central Buganda (Uganda)  
and  
The Diocese of Rupert's Land (Canada)**

As churches who live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and as members of the Anglican Communion<sup>n</sup>, we hereby covenant together to be **Companion Dioceses**.

We agree to begin our work together as Companion Dioceses for a period of five years beginning January 1, 1996 and ending December 31, 2001.

- We agree to communicate with one another about our plans and hopes for the Companion Diocese Program, working through our respective Partners in Mission Task Forces.
- We agree to share knowledge about one another throughout our Dioceses, using prayer cycles, information packages including video tapes, school and Sunday school materials, and links between women's, men's and youth groups.
- We agree to continue to encourage companion parish relationships and seek ways to enrich them.
- We agree to visit one another at mutually agreeable times through our representatives: bishops, clergy and lay people.
- We agree to build our Companion Diocese program not upon money, but upon what we can share with one another in our common mission to spread the good news about Jesus Christ to the world.
- We agree to evaluate our Companion Diocese program after two or three years, in order to strengthen it; and we agree to consider an extension at the end of the five years.

**Prayer for Companion Dioceses**

Eternal God, you have made us members of one body with your Son Jesus Christ as our head, that the world may see our unity and glorify you. Show us, the people of the Dioceses of Central Buganda and Rupert's land, the true meaning of Companionship; of standing before you and before each other as equals in our gifts and in our needs. Bind us together in mutual trust, as we seek to support one another in ministry. We commit ourselves to one another as fellow Christians asking you to help us overcome the barriers of race, culture and distance, so that our love may be like yours which cherishes all of us, your children. May your Holy Spirit enable us to be loyal and steadfast partners in your service. Together we offer you all that we have, and all that we are, to be used for your purposes; Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## COMPANION COVENANT

between  
**ROCKY MOUNTAIN SYNOD**      **AND**      **ANTSIRANANA SYNOD**  
**ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church)**      **FLM (Malagasy Lutheran Church)**

**Christ himself is the chief cornerstone. Ephesians 2:20**

### **MISSION**

"As members of the Body of Christ living in a multitude of settings around the world, we are a GLOBAL COMMUNITY OF FAITH. We are interdependent in understanding of our identity, in experiencing the love of God in Jesus Christ, and in carrying out our individual and mutual callings to God's mission."

### **OBJECTIVE**

The Companion Church Program seeks to enable members of companion synods/churches to:

- be renewed and regenerated by the faith witness of Christians of another land and culture;
- deepen their experience of being both givers and receivers of encouragement, witness and prayer support;
- be strengthened and challenged in their mission callings;
- be informed of the life and mission of the church outside their own country;
- be united in God's Mission, each sharing its gifts as the Spirit has bestowed.

### **PATHWAYS TO PARTNERSHIP**

- We will encourage regular corporate and individual prayer support and share our prayer concerns.
- We will share information about our ongoing activities and current events through written correspondence, publications, photographs and/or tapes.
- We will encourage participation with synodical exchange of pastors, lay persons and others with talents in areas of specific need.
- We will observe the annual Companion Sunday (normally mid-November) with prayer and thanksgiving.

*This Covenant is signed in agreement on November 23, 1996, by:*

Signed

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **INTRODUCTION**

With joy and thanksgiving to God, this covenant relationship is established between the Konde Diocese, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, and the Lower Susquehanna Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As companions in Christ, we participate in each other's life and mission through communication, learning, and prayer. The relationship is mutual; we both give and receive as brothers and sisters in one holy, catholic, and apostolic church.

## **PURPOSE**

By the grace of God, we are establishing this partnership in order to share our common humanity and life of faith. While we recognize and affirm our cultural differences, we seek to manifest the unity in life and mission we have through our crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ.

## **COMMITMENT**

Our companionship is one of mutual trust in which we accept one another as equal partners. We respect the institutional church structures and policies of each body and their liturgical and theological expressions of our common Lutheran Christian faith. In addition, we strive to be open to the leading of God's Holy Spirit as we are enriched by new understandings and insights.

## **EXPRESSIONS OF OUR COVENANT RELATIONSHIP**

In establishing this covenant relationship, we intend to do the following:

6. Pray at synod/diocese worship services for our companion and its mission and ministry, and encourage congregations and individuals to include such prayers regularly in their worship life.
7. Learn about the other's history, geography, culture, and current affairs. Such information shall be shared widely throughout the diocese/synod through preaching and teaching, written materials, personal conversations, and other appropriate methods. Special emphasis shall be placed on correcting misconceptions held by individuals or disseminated through public opinion or the press.
8. Exchange communications, i.e., letters; cultural, educational, and devotional materials; sermons for festivals; and diocesan/synodical mailings.
9. Exchange visits, including both clergy and lay members of the diocese and synod in these visits.
10. Establish additional congregation-to-congregation (mission area/institution/agency) relationships.
11. Support projects mutually agreed upon by the diocese and synod.

12. Share our God-given resources with our partner church.

13. Observe an annual Partnership Prayer Day (Companion Synod Sunday) for which we shall exchange, on an alternate year basis, prayer petitions and suggested project to be supported through designated offerings.

As companions in Christ, we, the Lower Susquehanna Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Konde Diocese, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, affirm this covenant. Together we pray that our mission and ministry as partners will be both faithful and fruitful. To God be the glory!

Signed.

**Companion Covenant  
between**

**Canton-Massillon Conference  
Northeastern Ohio Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

**and**

**Mphome Circuit  
Northern Diocese  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in  
South Africa**

**Mission**

We are partners in this Companion Covenant to give one another opportunities to share our commitment to Christ in the community of faith and to give expression to our Oneness in Christ.

**Purpose**

Our relationship as companions exists:

- to be part of the dreams, life, and mission goals of one another;
- to learn of and become involved with one another's challenges, problems, and possibilities;
- to become aware of our own abilities and resources, as well as our own needs, in order to share in one another's mission in Christ;
- to encourage one another to participate in each other's ministries through prayer, communication, and exchange of resources and persons; and
- to provide strength to one another for life and mission within the body of Christ.

**Pathways to Partnership**

1. We will encourage regular corporate and individual prayer support and share our prayer concerns.
2. We will share information about our ongoing activities and current events through written correspondence, publications, photographs, and/or tapes.
3. We will encourage participation with Synodical/Diocesan exchange of Pastors, Lay Persons and Others with talents in areas of specific need.
4. We will observe the annual Companion Sunday agreed upon by the Northeastern Ohio Synod and the Northern Diocese.

*This Covenant is signed in agreement by:*

Signed.

## APPENDIX C: INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGES AND ENCOUNTERS

When exchanges are being planned, please inform the Mission office of your plans as they proceed. Remember - the Mission office has experience in arranging international exchanges, both the sending and bringing of people, and can be extremely helpful in such areas as travel arrangements, visa requirements, inoculations, itineraries, sites to visit, people to meet, etc.

As mentioned, there are two types of exchanges to be considered: bringing our companions to visit us and going to visit our companions. Planning for each of these exchanges will, obviously, be quite different. Each situation is explored in further depth below.

### **Our Companions are Coming!**

We need to invite our companions to come and visit us! But before we send the official invitation, we need to consider the purpose and expectations of such a visit.

- Why are we asking our companions to visit?
- What will be the focus during their visit?
- Who is visiting? The youth? The women's group? Or anyone who is interested?
- How can we help to fund our companions' travel expenses? Special fundraising projects? Donations from congregations?

Once these questions have been asked and answered, dates for the encounter should be negotiated with the companion church. An official invitation which outlines the purpose and overall expectations should be sent. Copies of this and correspondence with other pertinent information should be shared with the Mission office.

When preparing to host our companions, it is vital that consideration be given to the following questions:

- How do we prepare ourselves in attitude to receive our guests?
- How can we be open to listen to the witness and observations of our guests?
- How can we accept that their beliefs, values and experiences are as valuable as ours?
- How can we acknowledge that they have spiritual gifts, insight and vision, faithfulness and a humility in lifestyle that we do not have? And further, how can we admit that we need them to share their gifts, insight and vision, faithfulness and humility with us? And that we need their help to strengthen our own faith?
- How can we be prepared to be changed by their visit?

When your companions arrive, remember to greet them properly. It sounds obvious but a warm and sincere welcome will mean a lot to your guests. Learn their names, and the pronunciation of them, in advance if possible. Take time for small talk; inquire about their trip and how they are. And listen to their responses! People from other places are often shocked by our standard greeting - "Hi! How are you?" -because, although we ask the question, we aren't usually interested in the answer! Be as well-informed as you can be about your companions' country and their life there so that you can ask intelligent questions. Speak clearly and directly to your companion, avoid slang and expressions that they may not be familiar with, but don't treat them like children and don't finish their sentences. Welcome them!

Carefully plan occasions when your companions will speak publicly. The temptation is to give more attention to what we will "show them". Your companions will want to share with you individually but also with us, as a group, as a church[ ELCIC hosts should give considerable attention to the particular gifts, wisdom and contribution of our visitors:

- understanding the work of the Holy Spirit;
- the meaning of life lived in settings of poverty, oppression or just a simpler way;
- the meaning of community and family in contrast to a focus on the individual's fulfillment, needs, and desires;
- theological insights from another cultural context;
- the interpretation and understanding of scripture by persons living in another cultural context.

Considerable thought and planning should be given to how the message of our guests can be shared with other members of the synod family who are not able to participate in the face-to-face encounters.

In addition, the limitations and anticipated difficulties for a successful encounter should also be noted so that they can be dealt with in advance.

- Will a translator be necessary?
- Will your guests have special requirements or needs when visiting you -housing arrangements, warm clothing, etc.?

The itinerary of the visit needs to include:

- time for rest immediately after arrival;
- a balance of public speaking occasions and interaction with small groups;
- interaction with persons outside the denomination/Christian community;
- opportunities for sightseeing.

And don't forget to ask your companions if there are particular contacts or interests that they would like to fulfill so that these can also be incorporated into the itinerary.

Finally:

- our food and beverages might be unfamiliar to your guests;
  - ask if there is anything special that you could offer them
  - take them grocery shopping and have them prepare a meal typical to their country for you!
- help guests to buy stamps and postcards to send to their friends and family;
- make sure that you tell your guests ahead of time what is planned and where they are expected to be at what time so that they can be prepared;
- make your guests feel at home!

A resource book for bringing visitors to Canada is now being created. This resource will draw from information from the book "Reaching Out to You: An Orientation Guide for Visitors to the United States" by the Ecumenical Working Group for Mission to the USA and Canada but it will have a Canadian focus and perspective. Contact the Canadian Churches' Forum for Global

Ministries<sup>12</sup> for further information.

### **We're Going to Visit our Companions!**

Upon receipt of an official invitation from our companion church, we can begin to make plans to visit our companions. Make sure to wait for an official invitation though - it's rude to invite ourselves!

If it's not specifically outlined in the official letter of invitation, find out the purpose and expectations of the proposed visit from your companion.

- Why are our companions asking us to visit? For general interest, to meet them and better understand their daily lives? Or to participate in a special event -congregational or national?
- What will be the focus during our visit? General interest? A specific study, ministry or issue?
- Who have they asked to visit? The youth? The women's group? Or anyone who is interested?

Early planning for an overseas visit should include:

- immediate contact with the Mission office for particular information regarding the visit;
- determining exact dates and travel itinerary to and from our companion's country;
- determining the number of people who will be travelling and any specific representation that is called for;
- estimating the costs of the visit and planning for their payment;
- contacting an international travel agency regarding travel, visas, required inoculations, etc.

Once the purpose and expectations have been established, it should be clear who should represent the synod on the visit. Sometimes, all who are interested will be able to travel. At other times, a committee or the bishop must select the individuals who will participate. If so, criteria and expectations should be established for the selection and they need to be clearly communicated to all persons involved. The following concerns should be considered when selecting individuals to participate:

- openness to listen and learn in a cross-cultural experience;
- ability to communicate and witness in cross-cultural settings;
- ability and time to share the experience with others at home;
- flexibility to adapt quickly to new and different situations;
- personal and physical good health;
- openness to other political/economic/social ideas and situations.

In addition, those who are traveling should be prepared to:

- offer encouragement to their companion, keeping negative thoughts to themselves;
- bring greetings from their pastor, congregation, special ministry group, etc.;
- be open to listen and learn;
- follow the plans of the companion church - remember, it's not your vacation, a holiday in the sun!

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<sup>12</sup> Canadian Churches Forum for Global Ministries, 230 St. Clair Avenue West, Toronto, Ontario M4V 1R5; Phone (416)924-9351; fax (416) 924-5356; E-mail ccforum@web.net

Steps should not be taken to "insulate" those traveling from the culture or from less comfortable settings - some of the best learning experiences take place when people are plunged into an unfamiliar situation!

Start to anticipate any limitations and potential difficulties for a successful encounter so that they can be dealt with in advance.

- Will a translator be necessary?
- Will your visit cause any financial difficulties to your companion?
- Do you have any special requirements or needs?

Preparation and orientation for those traveling should be provided. If several people are traveling, a leader of the delegation/group should be identified. "People, Places and Partnerships: A Workbook for Your Mission Trip Abroad", produced by the Ecumenical Working Group for Mission to the USA and Canada<sup>13</sup>, is a helpful resource and guide to preparing for your overseas visit. To order copies, contact the Canadian Churches Forum for Global Ministries.

Plans for taking gifts should be made. The synod or certain groups within the synod may wish to send gifts. The gifts should not be large or expensive; in fact, handmade gifts which are symbolic of the synod and its members, or the particular part of the country where the synod is located, are appropriate and will be greatly appreciated. Banners and handwritten or handsewn messages should be considered, as should books, music, and recordings.

In addition, all those who will be traveling should be briefed in how to react and what to do if they are suddenly asked for financial help by someone during the visit.

- Do not be surprised or offended.
- Respond courteously without making any commitment at the time. Make sure that you don't promise anything that you cannot deliver!
- Consult with the ELCIC Mission office about the specific giving opportunities that exist in your companion's country.
- Graciously receive gifts that are given to you - remember that you have also brought gifts for your companion on behalf of your synod and congregation.

Follow-up activities, reporting, and expectations of the visitors once they have returned home should be made clear when people are being selected to travel. Traveling to other cultures and seeing how others live their faith will profoundly change those who participate. They will want to share this experience and tell their stories. Make sure that they have the opportunity to do so! Policies and procedures for payment of expenses for speaking assignments should be established. A time frame can be agreed upon for follow-up tasks.

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<sup>13</sup> Canadian Churches Forum for Global Ministries, 230 St Clair Avenue West, Toronto, Ontario M4V 1R5: Phone (204) 924-9351; fax (416) 924-5356; E-mail ccforum@web.net

## **APPENDIX D: COMPANION CONGREGATIONS**

So you're ready to commit to a congregation-to-congregation relationship! Guidelines for establishing a companion congregation relationship are provided below. In these guidelines, "synod" refers to your synodical bishop's office and/or the committee that has the responsibility for overseeing the companion synod relationship in your synod.

### **Step One:**

Your congregation will express to your synod its desire to enter into a companion congregation relationship. Your synod will be responsible for receiving, reviewing and endorsing your congregation's desire for a companion congregation.

### **Step Two:**

Your synod will approach its companion church to determine if there are individual congregations within it that are interested and able to enter into a companion congregation relationship. Goals and objectives, hopes and dreams and possibilities can be shared. Relationship aspects should be stressed and financial expectations and funding sources should be given a very low priority. This is an extremely important notion for both of the companion congregations to understand and agree to.

An overseas companion, whether it is a national church body or an individual congregation, is not to expect to gain financial resources from agreeing to a companion relationship. ELCIC synods and congregations are not to take on former roles that include paternalistic ideas of "taking care of" or "looking after" or "helping financially". We need to move on from the "donor-recipient" model of relating to others. Companion relationships are not adoption or sponsorship projects.

See also: APPENDIX A: FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL GIFTS

### **Step Three:**

You will be informed once your synod and its companion church have identified a congregation that is interested and able to engage in a companion relationship with your congregation. At this point, your congregation will be asked to affirm its desire to enter into a companion congregation relationship with the proposed overseas congregation.

### **Step Four:**

The two congregations will be brought into direct contact with each other with the facilitation of your synod. Your synod will also provide the ELCIC Mission in the World office with a list of companion congregations as these relationships become established.

### **Step Five:**

Although formal orientations are not planned, please note that your synod is available to help and will consider providing some form of orientation, particularly if congregations have problems keeping their members focused on the relationship. Members should be focused on communication and activities with their companion and not on funding projects!

**Step Six:**

The two companion congregations may decide to work together to create a Covenant Agreement to affirm their relationship with each other. This agreement could be modeled after the Covenant Agreement that your Synod has with its companion church. The samples in APPENDIX B: COVENANT AGREEMENTS may also provide some helpful ideas.

A number of the activities used for companion synod relationships can be adapted for use between the two companion congregations. Here are some suggestions to consider:

- make a banner that represents both congregations, display it in your congregation for six months and then send it to your companion;
- exchange recipes - have a potluck featuring foods typically found in your companion's country;
- teach your congregation a song in your companion's language - if you are daring, record it and send the tape to your companion for their enjoyment (and amusement!);
- link up pen pals between the Sunday schools and youth groups;
- set up a joint web site;
- exchange visitors.

The reality is that a companion congregation in a country much less-developed than Canada would probably not be able to send visitors to Canada with its own resources. Since there will be members of the Canadian congregation who want to help their companion with donations and fund raising, it would be appropriate to channel these financial resources to make visits to Canada from the companion congregation possible.

See also: APPENDIX C: INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGES AND ENCOUNTERS

You can be creative in planning your activities and contact with your companion!  
Again, be creative in planning your activities and contact with your companion!

## **APPENDIX E: ELCIC MISSION PROGRAMS AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES**

By embracing the *Evangelical Declaration*, the ELCIC has a focus on mission: "Our mission is to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with people in Canada and around the world through the proclamation of the Word, the celebration of the Sacraments, and through service in Christ's name."

In addition to the Companion Synod Program, a wide variety of mission programs and opportunities exist in the ELCIC. They are listed below. Further information on any of these programs is available from the Mission office.

### **Campus Ministry**

The university campus is very much a place of mission! The ELCIC has a number of campus chaplains on various university campuses; most of the chaplains are part-time and many are a part of ecumenical placements. In addition, the Campus Ministry Coordinator helps to address needs and opportunities in this mission field. A Campus Ministry Endowment Fund has been established to ensure that all of the existing campus ministries are maintained and new ones can be established.

### **Canadian Mission**

Once a year, staff and committee chairpersons from the five synods meet at the "Canadian Mission Consultation". This time together is used to discuss common concerns and opportunities related to a wide variety of ministries such as ecumenical, inner city, rural, aboriginal, Asian, struggling congregations and new mission starts within Canada.

### **Companion Synod Program**

Through the Companion Synod Program, ELCIC synods will enter into companion relationships with synods or churches around the world for the purpose of strengthening one another for life and mission. The Companion Synod Program opens the door to the sharing of faith, worship resources, understandings and prayer and it encourages the exchange of visitors. We have the opportunity to learn about and from our Christian sisters and brothers around the world.

### **Directed Gifts**

Directed Gifts provide an opportunity to support a specific project. Most of the support required is for one-time needs or seed money for new initiatives that would otherwise not be funded. Congregations or individuals can choose to honour a special occasion - birthdays, anniversaries or memorials, for example - by making a Directed Gift. The Mission office can provide an up-to-date listing of the Directed Gift opportunities currently available.

### **Global Hunger and Development Appeal/Canadian Lutheran World Relief**

World relief and development are important aspects of the work of the ELCIC. Through Global Hunger offerings, augmented by CIDA funding from the Canadian government, our efforts are united in Canadian Lutheran World Relief projects throughout the world.

### **Global Mission Event**

Every two years, the ELCIC synods, with help from the Mission office, host Global Mission Events as a way of continuing the process of mission education. The Gems provides a place where people interested in global mission can meet each other, as well as long-term missionaries, volunteers in mission and resource guests. In recent years, Global Mission Events have also focused on mission in Canada and have included workshops on refugees and the church, homeless shelters, LAMP, campus ministry, prison ministry, amongst others. Together we swap faith stories, discuss mission issues, search the Scriptures and celebrate faith.

### **Long-Term Missionaries**

Long-term missionaries from the ELCIC serve in response to needs identified by partner churches. There are currently long-term missionaries stationed in El Salvador, Peru, Argentina and Cameroon. The missionaries usually begin by learning the local language and their work may take many years. The objective is to prepare local people to continue after they leave.

### **Mission Partners Program**

The Mission Partners Program is based on the ideal of building links between partners in mission at all levels, with special attention to links between ELCIC congregations - a mission congregation-to-established congregation companion relationship within the ELCIC. While this program is only at the concept stage, the ELCIC intends to develop a more specific program approach and identify resources which will bring it to reality.

### **Missionary Exchange Program**

The Missionary Exchange program is a "role reversal": it provides opportunities for the ELCIC to receive missionaries for periods of three to six months from churches in other countries. The missionaries are invited by the Mission office and hosted by a synod. While in the synod, these missionaries endeavor to share their sense of the vitality of Christian life by participating in congregational and conference events as well as other special activities. Through mutual sharing, these missionaries take the knowledge gained from this experience back to their home countries - and leave us with new understandings!

### **Missionary- Sponsorship Program**

Over two hundred congregations and many individuals participate in the Missionary Sponsorship program. Sponsors help maintain full financial support for missionaries and develop closer ties with them - the sponsors provide a vital link between the missionary and the people back home.

### **Volunteers in Mission**

Volunteers in Mission are short-term missionaries with assignments of six months to two years in other countries as well as in Canada. The volunteers come from all walks of life - some are ordained, some are lay - but have one thing in common: they are each willing to share their particular skills, expertise and faith in new settings. An integral part of the VIM program is the local support group which provides prayer support, raises the funds required and shares in the mission of the volunteer.

*A Reflection*

*Our first task in approaching  
another people  
another culture  
another religion  
is to take off our shoes  
for the place we are approaching is holy  
else we may find ourselves  
treading on another's dream.  
More serious still  
we may forget  
that God was there  
before our arrival.*

*Author unknown*