

## **Purpose of a Companion Synod Program**

The purpose of the Companion Synod Program is to establish, nurture and strengthen communion relationships in mission within the body of Christ. The ELCA provides general guidelines (which you can access by going to their web site) <http://www.elca.org/companionsynod/index.html> but each synod and their companion are free to develop their relationships in whatever ways they believe will be mutually beneficial.

The Northeastern Iowa Synod has several congregations linked with companion congregations in Namibia. By engaging in life-long relationships, opportunities are provided to participate in the life and ministry of the companion congregations through prayer, study, communication, exchange of visitors, and sharing of resources. Companion relationships open our eyes to the many challenges of the global context and call us to deepen our commitment to be true disciples of Christ as individuals and as a community of faith.

## **Mission Work as Accompaniment**

The ELCA Companion Synod Program uses the accompaniment model for mission. Accompaniment literally is walking together in service in God's mission. Each church has primary responsibility for mission in its own area. West Africans have their own expression for accompaniment: Muna Taraya Kafa Da Kafa, which means "hand in hand."

The biblical roots of accompaniment are found in the incarnation of Jesus when God walks with us. One of the stories that unfold this presence is in Luke 24:13-35, the Easter story of the friends walking on the road to Emmaus. The disciples on the road, the accompanying stranger, the dialogue and examination of scripture, the extending of hospitality and a meal, and finally, the revelation of the risen Christ in the breaking of bread, all provide images of our journey together in God's mission. We walk with one another in a journey where the presence of God is revealed in us. God in Christ accompanies us in the fellowship of word and table.

The accompaniment model rose out of the changing paradigm of mission. A few generations ago, European and North American churches were the churches with resources, which sent missionaries to preach the gospel in places where it had not been heard. Today, churches throughout the world are now made up of people who have been Christians for generations. Instead of taking the lead on mission in their countries, we interact with one another as colleagues, fellow workers in the vineyard of Christ. Mature churches, each with their own strengths and characteristics, learn from one another in mutual respect. In places where there is no Christian presence, we partner with neighboring churches and ecumenical partners.

## **Elements of Companionship**

### **Prayer**

Prayer connects us in mission through God's power, strength, and presence. Pray regularly for our brothers and sisters in Namibia as well as publicly for all our companion congregations, for the success of one another's lives and mission.

### **Communication**

Develop a plan for regular communication through letters and/or email and consider sending newsletters, pictorial directories, Sunday school artwork and personal letters to help build and strengthen good communication. This is a wonderful way to discover what both partners have in common.

### **Worship**

Companion churches can enliven worship services by sharing hymns, decorations, liturgical items, phrases, traditions, and – when visitors are on hand – worship leaders and guest speakers.

### **Advocacy**

As we grow in relationship, companions may confront issues challenging each other, such as racism, governmental corruption, economic uncertainty, poverty, hunger, and lack of education. We may move from understanding to advocacy as we come to recognize our roles as global citizens.

## Travel

Through visits to each other's country and region, companions experience each other's mission and faith. We return enriched, transformed, and empowered, ready to share what we have seen and heard.

## Exchanges

Exchanging pastors, youth leaders, teachers, and lay people is a powerful way for companions to support and learn from one another.

## Visits

Plan a trip to understand the culture, faith and life of our friends in Namibia

## Stewardship Support

While companion synods primarily support each other through prayer, worship, and study, financial support may also be given. But people and relationships always come before projects. Only when companions know each other and their respective gifts is it appropriate to consider offering financial support – and only with the involvement of the Synod.

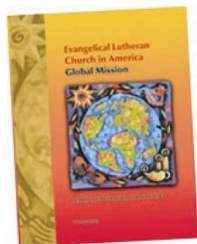
## Walking Together

The Companion Synod Newsletter for the Northeastern Iowa Synod is "Walking Together."

## Other Resources



ELCA Global Mission Web site <http://www.elca.org/companionsynod/index.html>



Companion Synod Handbook

<http://www.elca.org/companionsynod/csresources.html>



Country Packet Namibia

<http://www.elca.org/countrypackets/namibia/desc.html>

## Videos

*Companions in Christ - Namibia and New Jersey Lutherans* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJlswO3htBc>

*One in Christ – Namibia and New Jersey Lutherans*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ZGry-8QS-4>

*Walking Together – Namibia and New Jersey Lutherans*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szix1Ja7jDE>

*Educating Namibia: A Dream Come True*

(An ELCA Mosaic Video), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVBBkEypJKg>