

Making **a** **D**IFFERENCE  
NORTHEASTERN IOWA SYNOD, EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

NAMIBIA

## Companion Synod: Walking Together

In the early 1990's, the ELCA established the companion synod program to help individual synods develop direct connections with Lutheran church bodies throughout the world, putting a face to global missions.



The Northeastern Iowa Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia have been in a formal

companion relationship since 1990. We have welcomed many brothers and sisters from Namibia; we have had many who have traveled to



Namibia; and we continue to build relationships grounded in faith, with mutual respect and deepening trust. This relationship is now expanding to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia and the German Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Namibia is a young nation—winning its independence from South Africa in 1990. Namibia is also an ancient place—home to what scientists believe to be the world’s oldest desert.



The Lutheran Church in Namibia has a long history of missionary movements from Germany and Finland, among others; the Lutheran presence dates back more than 150 years. A country now estimated to be 90% Christian and 60% Lutheran, Namibia can teach us much about evangelism and church growth. Since achieving independence, Namibia has made strides in economic development, expansion of its education system and resource management. Yet, it still faces significant

challenges with a 40% unemployment rate, the HIV/Aids pandemic, malaria and TB among the toughest. In spite of these issues the people of Namibia remain hopeful as they continue “marching in the light of God.”

In 2005, the Northeastern Iowa Synod received an invitation to send a delegation of two to an official consultation in Windhoek, Namibia, our Companion Synod. We are one of four synods with a Companion Synod relationship with the three Lutheran Church bodies in Namibia. In June of 2005, 70 people gathered together from across the United States and across Namibia for four days of intentional and intense conversation. We began each day with Bible Study and prayer. We listened to each others stories and we brought our relationships to new levels of trust. We learned much about one another in those few days and we came away with a covenant to guide the future of our relationships and how we will work with one another.



In 2007, we came together once again in Namibia. The circle widened even further now to include the many other international partners that have been a part of Namibian Lutheran Church history. So, we gathered from the United States and Namibia as well as Finland, the Netherlands, Germany, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. This time we were gathering to celebrate with our Namibian brothers and sisters as they embarked on the next leg of the journey toward unity and common mission.

Grounded in the covenant of 2005, the three Namibian Lutheran Church Bodies have begun the painful and challenging process of putting history behind and healing the wounds of the past.

On April 22, 2007 they formally took the next step as they inducted the United Church Council—Namibia Evangelical Lutheran Churches. All partners were invited to come and share in the historic celebration and then meet to consider the future.



Our Namibian friends trusted the rest of us to hear their words by asking for patience, time and space so they could sort out for themselves how they needed to proceed. They boldly claimed this new United Church Council as a sign of their commitment to unity. Bishop Sindano of the Eastern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia used the analogy of an engaged couple with many things to be worked out before the wedding can be celebrated. What an honour to be invited to the engagement party and how exciting to be asked to walk with these dear friends as they chart their course! Our prayers and encouragement are requested along the way.

These two official trips to Namibia have moved our relationship forward in unexpected ways. In the fall of 2006, we welcomed Pastor John Guidaob into the synod where he spent a week each in Emmanuel, Strawberry Point; St. Peter, Denver; Zion, West Union; and Zion, Waterloo. In November of 2007, we received Pastor Ernestus Karuyeva who was welcomed by Trinity, Mason City; Our Saviour's, Osage; Immanuel, Independence; and First and Vernon, Dows.

In previous years there have been a number of Pastors from Namibia who have studied at Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque, college students who have studied at Luther and Wartburg colleges, as well as Pastors and lay people who have spent a summer at Ewalu Bible Camp. Our

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connections continue to expand and our relationships deepen. We are working to build up our Namibian Scholarship fund.

We have a number of congregations that have developed ties to congregations in Namibia. These ties take shape in a wide range of ways. Our goal is to foster healthy, respectful relationships with our brothers and sisters in Namibia from whom we can learn much, and who we can encourage in a true partnership of Christian love.

## Northeastern Iowa Synod Companion Relationship Partners

### In Northeastern Iowa:

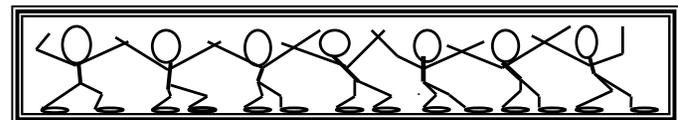
Camp Ewalu, Strawberry Point  
Luther College, Decorah  
Wartburg College, Waverly  
Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque

### Companion Congregations:

Deer Creek, Carpenter	Elk Creek, Kensett
St. John American, Cedar Falls	Zion, La Porte City
St. Paul's, Cedar Falls	Bethany, McCallsburg
Zion, Clear Lake	Our Savior, Osage
Decorah, Decorah	St. John, Osage
First, Decorah	(Rock Township)
Good Shepherd, Decorah	Bethel, Parkersburg
St. Peter, Denver	Salem, Roland
Holy Trinity, Dubuque	Emanuel, Strawberry Point
St. Peter, Greene	Redeemer, Washburn
St. Paul's, Hampton	First, Waterloo
Zion, Hudson	Zion, West Union
Bethany, Kensett	

### In the ELCA:

Metro Washington D.C. Synod  
New Jersey Synod  
Southwest Washington Synod



*We are called to walk with our companions...  
not ahead, telling them what to do;  
not behind, pushing them at our pace;  
rather,  
we walk beside them, to hear their stories  
and share our own.*

*We share our joys and sorrows,  
our frustrations and challenges,  
As we work to support one another in  
the ministry of Jesus Christ.*



*The ELCA recognizes the gifts of global companions  
and it is in our sharing that we can,  
together, make Christ known to the world.*