

Companion Relationships

Companion Synod relationships were one of the first actions of the ELCA when formed in 1987. This action marked a major transition in our relations with international church bodies. The “missionary era” had left us with vestiges of superiority and our having more important resources. Companion Synod relationships seek to instill in us that we are God’s people walking together in God’s mission.

Every synod has one or more formal Companion Synod relations with an international Lutheran church body. In the early 1990s our synod was matched with the Western Diocese. Six ELCA synods are matched with six Diocese of ELCSA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa).

In the late 1990s the “accompaniment” model and emphasis developed as an important way to guide our relationships. In the 2010’s synods relating with various judicatories in the same country began connecting and learning with each other. Now “facilitation” is arising as an important guide for us.

“Facilitation”

This is the latest reality that our ELCA is learning in global mission. God’s Spirit is stirring in many ways. Direct relationships and involvement are stirring congregations and individuals deeply. The Internet, immigration, and frequent travel provide opportunities for direct engagement.

Rather than “control and command” or one-size-fits-all the ELCA Global Mission is developing “facilitation” as its role with congregations and synods. ELCA Global Mission and the synod’s Global Mission Team are there to assist you wherever and however you participate in God’s mission in the world.

This will be Bishop Mansholt’s role on this trip along with Jake Czarnick-Niemeyer, Director of Crossway’s Camping Ministries. They will be led by Bishop Ubane to experience an overall view and vision of the Western Diocese.

Be daring in listening to the other and following the stirring of the Spirit! And walk together with the synod and ELCA to facilitate the overall effectiveness and collaboration.

What if a congregation or parish is not interested in this relationship?

As with all ministries of the ELCA the “Companion Synod” ministry of the ELCA is an opportunity and NOT a requirement. You do not need to engage in this.

All congregations are at different places with different ministries, needs, interests, and realities. Hosting, visiting, traveling and communication with your companion parish and doing this well does require at least a few people with Interest, resources, readiness, and time.

How much interest do we need?

One to four willing and interested people can be enough. This experience is so unusual most will never understand even the interest until they see and hear the excitement of someone telling the story of visiting or hosting your companion.

The pastor(s) involvement is important. Listening and encouraging others can be enough. But a pastor visiting and/or hosting is especially significant.

The congregation’s Council is necessary to be informed and does need to sign applications.

How do we respond when our congregation is not prepared to host?

Contact your Conference Dean and/or the Dean of the Circuit with which your Conference is matched.

Every ECSW Conference and every Western Diocese Circuit is likely to have a congregation that is willing to host.

Changes to the matches are best handled on the conference-circuit level. Our Bishops increasing involvement in this relationship, the growing number of visits back and forth, and our synod’s Global Mission Team will guide Deans in making adjustments to the matches.

2018 Synod Trip

East Central Synod of Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA)

companions with

Western Diocese Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA)



Diocesan Centre

Why host or visit?

*Time in each other's homes,
engaging in faith conversations,
participating in each other's congregation,
and going for walks together through the
village or country-side will deeply form and
shape us to be Christ's body in new ways.*

Five “*accompaniment*” values are learned in this experience that enriches our lives ever after. These values help and support us as we celebrate, reflect, act, and examine our call into God's mission:

Mutuality is building up each other's capacities to proclaim and live out the Gospel of Christ. We recognize that all of us have gifts to offer to God's mission, while caring for one another's needs. Mutuality is built upon giving and receiving trust as we grow together.

Inclusivity is based on God's call to include everyone in the mission of reconciliation knowing that all communities exclude someone. We look to see who is excluded, and why, and commit to change community structures and habits that can exclude people without any deliberate intention.

Vulnerability often seems to be weakness, but Jesus shows us that vulnerability – openness to relationship, giving up power – is God's way of redemption. We enter God's mission through vulnerability, just as Jesus became vulnerable to us and with us.

Empowerment is a struggle to recognize and name power as it affects our relationships. When we recognize that relationships have asymmetries of power, and struggle to balance and correct those asymmetries, we are working to empower ourselves and one another.

Sustainability recognizes relationships are complex, are connected to other relationships and commitments, and require much attention over time to sustain. This relationship will require an intentional commitment of attention and time and embedding it in the community as a whole, so that it doesn't depend only on one or two people, and can continue over time.

2018 Itinerary

as of Nov. 15, 2017

Departure: Wednesday, July 4

Arrival: Thursday, July 5

Tour Apartheid Museum: July 6

Greeting & Orientation at Diocese Centre: July 7

Week in matched Parishes: July 8-15

Debrief with Parish: Sunday, July 15

Debrief with Circuit: Monday, July 16

Debrief with Diocese: Tuesday, July 17

Safari Option: July 17-19

Depart: Tuesday, July 17 or Thursday, July 19

Notes on Itinerary

Departure on July 4 is earliest possible for Bishop and others attending the ELCA Youth Gathering

The length specifically chosen to keep it short and yet provide two Sundays in the Parish

Applications are very important for three reasons:

1. Explore each person's motivation for going and understanding of accompaniment.
2. Gain your congregation's support.
3. Name your health and dietary concerns for those hosting.

Apartheid Museum is a very helpful way to begin

Bus from Johannesburg airport to Diocesan Centre in Rustenburg is two hours

Bishop Ubane will greet and orient us at the Diocesan Centre and from there we will disburse to six different circuits where the Circuit Deans will greet us and our congregations pick us up.

The week and two Sundays in your matched Parish is the most important experience in this visit.

Debriefing at the end is necessary on all three levels to determine what was learned and the next steps to be taken.

Safari at the end provides time to synthesize our learning, transformations, and implications from this experience.

Companion Synod Handbook

This is the most helpful guide for you and your congregation.

Download it at www.elca.org

Enter *companion synod handbook* in the query.

You can also view the matches for every synod by searching for “companion synod”.

Cost for 2018

as of Nov. 15, 2017

Departing on July 4, 2018;

Departure through Atlanta & return via Paris:

- 10 seats fr Appleton \$1,793.72 return 7/17

- 25 seats fr Milwaukee

\$1,916.72 if return 7/17

\$2,006.54 if return 7/19

Through Atlanta both ways:

- 20 fr Milwaukee \$1,819.49 return 7/19

- 20 fr Wausau \$1,740.99 return July 19

Additional costs:

- Apartheid Museum
- Chartered bus in South Africa
- Overnights on July 5 & 6 and 16
- Safari Option for July 17-19

Food, lodging and transportation is provided by our companion Parish the week with them

Questions

Contact the planning team:

Liaisons with the Western Diocese:

Terry Nellis: 715-258-0417

Rev. Mark Ziemer: 715-453-4066

Rev. Rich Block *Conference Deans*

Rev. Ben Haring *applications*

Rev. Peter Manoja *value of this experience*

Sue Stetzer *travel agency*

Grace Van Eyck *safari*