Companion Relationship

The following information will explain:

Companion Relationships

What is a “companion”?

Benefits of companion relationships

12 Key Questions to Ask Before Starting a Companion Project

ELCA Companion Synod Program

Celebrating the Global Body of Christ

Resources for your relationship on [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org)

Contacts and monthly information that you can receive

How does our congregation begin a Companion relationship?

Your Conference, Synod, & ELCA Global Mission will work with you:

Where we learn about the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa?

What is necessary so our relationship follows the “accompaniment” model?

Consider a “relationship” Trip
Companion Relationship

Your congregation has a “companion”!

1. The Church has long sought to do good and we continue to do so as individuals and congregations through “missionaries”, “mission trips”, “sponsoring” a child, and acts of “charity”. However, in all those we are the actor and someone else is the recipient. Plus we also choose who will receive, when we will give/do it, and how, why, and what we will give/do. “Companion relationship” begins when we do not choose, and we are as much recipient and learner as giver.

2. Each of our 65 ELCA Synods is matched with one of the 140 international member churches of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Some synods have several matches so that every international church body that desires has a match, and that every Synod has at least one companion church body.

3. Our “Companion Synod” match in the East Central Synod of Wisconsin is with the Western Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA). ELCSA has a membership of about 700,000 with seven bishops leading the church’s seven dioceses in South Africa, Botswana, and Swaziland.

4. The Western Diocese of ELCSA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa) covers the area of the Northwest Province of South Africa and is divided into seven circuits, just like our East Central Synod of Wisconsin of the ELCA has six Conferences. Each circuit is matched with a conference. The Borwa I and Borwa II Circuits are both matched with the Oshkosh Conference:

   - APPLETON CONFERENCE
   - GREEN BAY CONFERENCE
   - OSHKOSH CONFERENCE
   - SHAWANO CONFERENCE
   - TOMORROW RIVER CONFERENCE
   - WISCONSIN RIVER CONFERENCE

   - TLHABANE CIRCUIT
   - ODI CIRCUIT
   - BORWA I CIRCUIT and BORWA II CIRCUIT
   - MORETELE CIRCUIT
   - KGETLENG CIRCUIT
   - MADIKWE CIRCUIT

5. The geographic size of each Circuit is roughly similar in size to the area of any of our Conferences. In addition the Moretele, Kgetleng, and Madikwe Circuits are more rural and many of their villages have similar populations as those of the cities and villages in the Shawano, Tomorrow River and Wisconsin River Conferences respectively. In the same way the Tlhabane, Odi and Borwa I and Borwa II Circuits have larger cities similar to the Appleton, Green Bay and Oshkosh Conferences.

6. Several congregations are often grouped into parishes. A parish is usually served by one pastor. The pastor leads worship at only one congregation on a Sunday since worship usually lasts two-five hours. Baptism and Communion are celebrated whenever the pastor is present, with “elders” leading the worship, liturgy and preaching, on all the Sundays the pastor cannot be present.

7. Companion relationships and the “accompaniment model” are a challenge! It is being the Body of Christ in an equal, mutual relationship. It is learning to ask, slow down, and be patient. It means rethinking what makes one “rich”, what is “Good News”, and what are church, worship, ministry, faith, and love. It is about relating rather than doing.
What is a “companion”?

ELCA Global Mission established the Companion Synod Program to deepen relationships with church bodies around the world. These relationships reflect the new reality of mission. Thanks to the work of European and North American missionaries, Lutheran churches have been established throughout the world. Today, 140 independent, autonomous churches—some of them former “mission fields”—are full members of The Lutheran World Federation, a communion of churches. Companion synod relationships are a concrete expression of this communion. For this reason, ELCA Global Mission continues to support, nurture and strengthen relationships between ELCA synods and international companions, using the accompaniment model for mission.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:4-6

Benefits of companion relationships

As Christians, we do not fully understand the one holy and catholic church without a global perspective. A companion relationship enlarges our world view. Global connections help us see the world’s challenges in a new way and examine our own problems and joys through new eyes. These connections also strengthen God’s mission in the world. Through this program, companions nurture and strengthen one another for life and mission within the body of Christ. Companions participate in one another’s life and ministry 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 together as a Lutheran communion of faith.

Page 6-7, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Global Mission, Companion Synod Handbook for ELCA Synods and Congregations, Spring, 2010

12 Key Questions to Ask Before Starting a Companion Project

1. Whose agenda is it?
2. Is it focusing on a needs- or asset-based approach?
3. Have you spoken to the local Bishop and Council?
4. Have you spoken to the ELCA Global Mission Area Program Director or Regional Program Assistant and your Bishop and Companion Synod Committee?
5. Is this project a priority for the local and national church? Are there other more urgent needs that need to be addressed first?
6. Who will benefit? Who will not? Will the “project” create jealousy, inequality, dependency?
7. Is the project self-sustainable or does it perpetuate the donor/recipient model?
8. Is there complete transparency and mutual accountability from all sides?
9. What about other overseas partners’ involvement in the area? Will there be duplication or competition?
10. Does this project address the root causes or cover over a deeper issue or problem? Do you know the background history, leadership structures, personalities and power dynamics of the people involved including your own?
11. How is mutual conversion and transformation enabled by this project or is it mainly one-way traffic?
12. How does this project/involvement/relationship build mutual capacity for participating in God’s Mission locally and globally?

www.southernafricaconnections.org by Rev. Dr. Phil Knutson
ELCA Companion Synod Program

Celebrating the Global Body of Christ
Sixty-five ELCA synods and five ELCIC synods participate in over 120 international companionships. These extend the bilateral relationships between our churches and Lutheran church bodies in other countries, called companions. The Companion Synod Program is a concrete expression of the communion fellowship among the 140 member churches of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and an exciting way ELCA members can engage in global mission!

Find your companion synod relationship
- Download a list of companions by ELCA and ELCIC synod (or country)

Share what you are doing
- Inform ELCA Global Mission how you are involved in global mission aside from your companion synod relationship by completing this online Global Engagement Survey.

Learn from Others
- Read about each synod's relationship (East-Central Synod of Wisconsin is 51)

RESOURCES FOR YOUR RELATIONSHIP

Companion Synod Handbook
A valuable resource for beginning and strengthening companion synod relationships, including the complex issues involved in cross-cultural relationships and mission:

- Table of Contents and Introduction
- Part 1: Companion Synod Basics
- Part 2: For Synods
- Part 3: For Congregations
- Part 4: Planning Trips
- Part 5: Hosting International Guests
- Appendices (including the Protocol Agreement plus sample letters and info on Visas)
- Orientation Handouts (eight invaluable handouts)

Download full PDF copies in English, Spanish, German, or French.

Contacts and monthly information

Contacts
For more information about your companion synod relationship, contact your synod office.
For more information about relationships in a specific country, contact your companionship director:
- Barbara Berry-Bailey - for companions in Africa
- Lanny Westphal - Director of Global Formation for Relationships.

Global Links E-Newsletter
Stay informed, be inspired, and get involved through Global Links, a brief monthly e-newsletter from ELCA Global Mission. Subscribe or view a current issue at www.elca.org/global-links.
How does our congregation begin a Companion relationship?

You are not alone! Your Conference, Synod, & ELCA Global Mission will work with you:

1. **Resources**: With 65 ELCA Synods and 5 ELCIC Synods participating in 120+ companionship relationships, the ELCA has developed great resources. Make the **ELCA Companion Handbook Spring 2010** your ever present guide in developing your relationship. Especially helpful are:
   a. **Part I: Companion Synod Basics** (pages 5-13) explains the new reality of mission
   b. **Part II: For Congregations** (pages 31-32) sums up where and how to begin
   c. **Appendices** (pages 68-87) basic information including samples to guide you in the areas that need the most attention

2. **Guidance**: Our East Central Synod of Wisconsin has a Task Force experienced and eager to help.
   a. Attend “Companion Synod/Global Mission Task Force” meetings – contact the Synod Office to learn when they are meeting. **Phone or e-mail**: (920) 734-5381| ecsw@ecsw.org
   b. The Wisconsin River Valley Conference has an active and developed “companion relationship” with the Madikwe Circuit. Invite them to your congregation:
      - Claudette Harring, Chair of the WRV Companion Synod relationship, cbh5956@charter.net
      - Pastor LaDonna Ekern, Dean of the WRV Conference, jleekern@charter.net
      - Pastor Mark Ziemer, Liaison to the Western Diocese, pastorziemer@gracetomahawk.org

3. **Connect with others in your Conference**:
   a. Look up the “Companion Synod matches” to find if another congregation in your Conference is matched with the same Parish or neighboring Parishes with which you are matched.
   b. Meet together as a Conference – use the Wisconsin River Valley Conference model

4. **Contact and connect with your matched parish**:
   a. With the above resources, guidance, and cooperation: write a letter, make an email or FaceBook connection with your matched Parish, pray for each other, visit each other.
   b. Some Parishes or Pastors may not be interested or responsive. It may be necessary to change your match. Our Synod’s “Companion Synod/Global Mission Task Force” can assist you.

Where do we learn about the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa?

1. [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org) enter “South Africa” in the search box
2. use the Synod Resource Center, [www.ecsw.org/resourcecenter/global.html](http://www.ecsw.org/resourcecenter/global.html)

What is necessary so our relationship follows the “accompaniment” model?

1. **Commitment to relationship** is essential:
   a. A relationship must be established before any discussion of a service trip
   b. Establishing a relationship requires work and patience and much time
   c. When done with care, the work in establishing a relationship can be as attractive and exciting as a “mission trip”, and establishing a relationship will lead to more awareness and change in us

2. **Communication** – this may well take the most work and patience
   a. English is the second language for most South Africans under age 30
   b. High-speed internet access is limited and their accent can be hard to understand over a phone
   c. They may never have had a “mutual” relationship with Whites

3. **Commitment to mutuality** – this takes constant attention and work to neither dictate nor serve them, but to both receive from them and to work with them
Consider a “relationship” Trip

1. Trips are important, easy, and quite affordable
   a. However, the first trip needs to focus on listening, asking, and developing trust and a relationship
   b. Visits are also likely to include their coming here – mutuality
   c. An essential part of developing mutuality is asking hard questions which can only be done when we there is mutual trust and some understanding of the other’s culture

2. Follow the ELCA Companion Handbook Spring 2010 – absolutely necessary and very helpful when you are ready to travel or host visitors, especially:
   a. ELCA Companion Handbook includes trips under Best practices for successful companion synod relationships (page 9)
   b. For planning a “Relationship Trip” see Part IV: Planning Trips pages 33-57 in the ELCA Companion Handbook
   c. Remember to invite and expect them to visit, see Part V: Hosting International Guests pages 59-67 in the ELCA Companion Handbook
   d. Orientation Handouts (pages 88-96) puts the needed information right in your hands

3. Consider the Wisconsin River Valley Conference’s experience:
   a. In 2010 twelve people representing six congregations visited the six parishes with which their congregations are matched in the Madikwe Circuit of the Western Diocese.
   b. Contact: Claudette Harring, Chair of the WRV Companion Synod relationship, cbh5956@charter.net or Pastor LaDonna Ekern, Dean of the WRV Conference, jilekern@charter.net

4. Use our Synod’s “Companion Synod/Global Mission Task Force”:
   a. Attend our ECSW Synod’s “Companion Synod/Global Mission Task Force” meetings
   b. use the Synod Resource Center, www.ecsw.org/resourcecenter/global.html
   c. Invite one of the South African serving as summer staff at Crossways

5. Use the ELCA pastors who live in South Africa and are eager to assist and even meet you:
   ❖ Pastor Brian Konkol, bekonkol@yahoo.com from our ECSW
   ❖ Pastor Phil Knutson, knutson@iafrica.com placed in South Africa by ELCA Global Missions, www.southernafricaconnections.org
   ❖ Dr. Peter Kjeseth, peterlarskj@yahoo.com retired Wartburg Seminary professor

6. Consider visiting the Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTI), the seminary of ELCSA
   ❖ Located in Pietermaritzburg near Durban. LTI, http://lti.ukzn.ac.za/Homepage.aspx is part of the School of the School of Religion and Theology (SORAT), http://sorat.ukzn.ac.za/Homepage.aspx
   ❖ The Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research is part of SORAT and is an interface between socially engaged biblical and theological scholars and local communities of the poor, working-class, and marginalized, http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Homepage.aspx.
   ❖ LTI students are taught Contextual Bible Study, one of the resources developed at the Ujamaa Centre through the leadership of Dr. Gerald West: http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/resources.aspx.