

**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Companion Synods Program**

**Congregation-to-Parish  
Partnership Resource**

**Upper Susquehanna Synod of the ELCA  
and  
Lutheran Church in Liberia**

**June, 2010**

## ELCA Companion Synods Program

The Companion Synods Program came to be with the birth of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 1988. Over time, ELCA synods have developed covenantal relationships with Lutheran synods and church bodies around the world to work together as partners in doing God's work, giving to and receiving from each other. Since 1988, the Companion Synods Program has linked all 65 ELCA synods with over 100 international Lutheran church bodies or districts. Many relationships between individual congregations in companion synods have also been established. Through these rich relationships, ELCA synods and congregations are experiencing the gifts and witness of churches in Africa, Latin America, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. As they participate in each other's lives through prayer, study, communication and exchange of persons and resources, they strengthen one another for life and witness within the global body of Christ.

The Upper Susquehanna Synod has established companion synod relationships with two global partners: the **Lutheran Church in Liberia**, and the **Ansbach-Würzburg Kirchenkreis** of Bavaria, Germany. By participating in the Companion Synod Program, your congregation can together walk with men, women and children of a congregation thousands of miles away. This *Congregation-to-Parish Partnerships Resource* has been developed primarily for developing partner relationships between congregations of the Upper Susquehanna Synod and parishes of the Lutheran Church in Liberia, recognizing the challenge to building mutual relationships between "First World" and "Two-Thirds World" communities.

### Guiding Principles

#### ACCOMPANYING

The guiding principle for a Congregation-to-Parish relationship is contained in the word "accompaniment." Accompaniment—literally, *walking together* side by side—is a mutual relationship between partners who walk together in service in God's mission. Each church has primary responsibility for mission in its own area. Central Africans have their own expression for accompaniment: *maboko na maboko*, which means "hand in hand".

A companion congregation exercises the same care as a companion synod. To be "companions" means to walk together as equals. Companions may not be the same size, shape, color, culture or wealth, but they are equal because of their baptism into Christ. Thus, companions share their joys and sorrows, their successes and failures, their commendations and admonitions, and in general give each other spiritual support. At no time does a companion make the other feel inferior, patronized or dependent.

The accompaniment model for mission, on which the vision for ELCA Global Mission is based, rose out of the changing paradigm of mission. A few generations ago, European and North American churches were the churches with resources, who 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 another country, we interact with each other 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.

### **RECEIVING**

To be a companion also means to be humble toward each other. The relationship is always a two-way street as reflected in asking the following questions:

- What can we learn from each other?
- How does this relationship help each companion grow spiritually?
- What can we give to each other? What might we receive?

*Being open to and appreciative of the gifts of companions is a hallmark of accompaniment and the Companion Synods Program.*

In the accompaniment model, “receiving” is as important as “sending”. The act of receiving acknowledges the wide variety of gifts and talents present in the global Christian family. Companions who walk together in accompaniment emphasize recognizing and embracing one another’s gifts. Each partner in the relationship is equal. Each brings to the relationship a willingness to learn and grow as members of the faith we all share in Christ Jesus.

### **PRAYING**

To be a companion means to pray for each other. Companions carry on a three-way, on-going dialogue, with God as the third partner. Prayer is never to be taken for granted, but becomes explicit in liturgy and in private prayer. To be a companion means to listen and learn and to hear the voice of God in each other.

### **CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING**

Companion congregations seek to become aware of one another as thoroughly and profoundly as possible, to learn each other’s situation in life and to understand each other’s challenges and problems. If there is injustice and oppression, every effort will be made to uncover the root causes. Each companion congregation seeks to form bonds with the other, to walk forward arm in arm and hand in hand, becoming one another’s advocate.

### **A FOUNDATION OF TRUST**

Accompaniment is two or more churches in companionship and in service in God’s mission, walking together in Jesus Christ. Companions who walk together in accompaniment:

- Honor one another’s integrity
- Make decisions mutually
- Value their independence
- Respect one another’s context, situation, and practical limitations
- Respect one another as interpreters of their own experience
- Are open to new experiences, new information, and in some cases, conflicting values

- Emphasize relationship over resources
- Acknowledge one another's gifts
- Practice transparency in all matters
- Confirm that each church has the primary responsibility for mission in its area

Adhering to these principles in all matters will help build a foundation of trust that is essential to an honest, open relationship. Relationship difficulties may occur when there is not a firm commitment to the principles of accompaniment.

## **Characteristics of a Congregation-to-Parish Partnership**

### **A Companion Congregation strives to...**

- Grow in faith and understanding of the unity which is shared in Jesus Christ
- Have an interest and desire to experience ministry in another culture
- Be open to all people
- Deepen understanding of another's reality
- Share in mutual ministry
- Share resources: spiritual, personal, material, financial (where appropriate)
- Communicate regularly with "family members" in another part of God's world
- Pray regularly for those "family members"
- Plan and share in a "companion congregation Sunday service," observed at the same time by both congregations
- Seek to become part of a network advocating for companion congregations as they attempt to deal with challenges and problems
- Be a "grace oriented" companion congregation

## **Where to Begin**

1. Read this resource carefully to learn about Congregation-to-Parish Partnerships with our Liberian brothers and sisters. If desired, invite a member of the synod's Liberia Companion Synod Committee to come and speak about this possible ministry for your congregation.
2. Present the idea of a Congregation-to-Parish Partnership to leaders in your congregation and engage them in a process of education and discernment defining your commitment. Decide as a congregation whether or not you want to become a companion congregation. Have your church council vote to enter into partnership and then encourage your congregation to affirm the partnership at a congregational meeting.
3. Contact the Liberia Companion Synod Committee through our synod office about your decision to enter into a Congregation-to-Parish Partnership. A member of our synod's Liberia Companion Synod Committee will work with a partner in the Lutheran Church in

Liberia to discern an appropriate LCL Parish to become your partner in this new relationship.

4. Establish a companion congregation committee to oversee the relationship, in order to make the most of this experience of growing in faith together.
5. After you receive word from the Liberia Companion Synod Committee of our synod regarding your new Liberian partner (and their contact information), write a formal letter of introduction to initiate the relationship (see Sample Letter #1 in Appendices). Include a description and photos of your congregation. Email is the most convenient and effective way to communicate with your partner in Liberia.
6. Send copies of your introduction letter (step #4) to the Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Liberia and the Upper Susquehanna Synod Bishop (by email). Await the response of your Liberian partner, affirming the start of your Congregation-to-Parish Partnership.

## Building a Congregation-to-Parish Partnership

In a relationship characterized by accompaniment, “Hello” is a universal place to start. Greetings can launch a relationship, but then what? There are many activities you can choose from. Be sure in all of these to consult your companion, so your activities are mutual, not just your agenda!

### EDUCATION

**First, get to know your companion synod country.** Can you find your companion synod on a map? Do you know the name of the president of the country? Typical foods in the country? Chances are, your companion partner can answer all of these questions about the United States. Make getting to know your companion a priority.

- Learn from ELCA Global Mission country packets ([www.elca.org/countrypackets](http://www.elca.org/countrypackets)), LWF resources, local libraries, or former missionaries, international students, and others who have traveled to, lived in, or know Liberia.
- Invite a former synod work team member who has traveled to Liberia to come and share with your congregation about their experience. Contact the synod’s Liberia Companion Synod Committee to learn the names of such people who may live in your own backyard!
- Borrow any of several audio-visual resources from the synod’s Liberia Companion Synod Committee that depict Liberia’s significant political history, the women’s peace movement, and work team projects in Liberia sponsored by our synod.
- Knowing the climate, food staples, form of government, and economy of a place will help you get to know the people. Can the children of your congregation even imagine a place without easy access to a fast-food chain, a grocery store, or even a consistent supply of electricity? What can they learn from the children of your companion parish?

*A basic knowledge of your companion’s country, church, and culture is an important sign of respect, as is openness to learning from your companion—a key component of accompaniment.*

## COMMUNICATION

You and your LCL Parish partner will want to find ways to share your experiences, such as growth, new members, baptisms, celebrations, learning, etc. with each other. Your partner might tell you about the disasters they face, such as floods, droughts, HIV/AIDS and political dangers. You could tell them about difficulties YOU face, as well. Exchange letters, photos, videos, CDs, DVDs, biblical reflections, pictorial directories, personal letters and testimonies. Be sure your partner parish has your email address as well as your mailing address. Set a goal of a minimum of three such communications a year. Young people of your congregation could send letters, drawings, pictures of themselves, and/or establish pen-pal relationships that may last a lifetime.

*You and your LCL Parish partner will want to find ways to share your experiences, joys and sorrows, celebrations and struggles.*

Letter writing is one way to help grow the relationships between congregations in the Upper Susquehanna Synod and parishes in the LCL. Some congregations appoint a designated letter writer. Here's how it works. There are several groups within the congregation and parish that have natural connections to each other. For instance, youth groups, women's groups, church councils, Sunday School, Bible study groups and choirs all have a similar purpose in both countries. Or do they? Letter writing is one way to find out! How is Sunday school done in your companion parish? What songs are your choirs singing and how does choir work here? They'd like to know. Each group designates one person to be responsible for writing a letter on behalf of the group. This responsibility can be shared; the designated person just needs to make sure that letters are being written. The group can determine the frequency of the letter writing. Letters from pastors are also very important in the relationship, but the responsibility for all communication should be shared.

We know that mail delivery to many areas in Liberia can be challenging. There isn't necessarily door-to-door service as we are accustomed. While there are various carriers who deliver mail/packages to Liberia (UPS and FedEx among them), ELCA Global Mission personnel have reported the greatest success with DHL. DHL drop-off locations may be found in Harrisburg, Allentown, and other points just outside our synod territory. When possible, email is by far the most cost-effective and efficient way to communicate with our Liberian partners. Even children's artwork might be "scanned" and attached to email electronically as a PDF file.

Many Liberians also now have access to cell phones. Before giving out personal phone numbers, however, we advise you to first spend time communicating with your partner in other ways, developing your relationship as an entire community of faith.

Even using electronic means for communication, a reply can be slow in coming. Don't lose patience. In many parishes, especially during the rainy season, travel can be difficult, and people are dealing with serious issues that need their full attention. But they consistently need your prayers and reassurance through your letters that you continue to hold them in prayer.

## **PRAYER**

Prayer connects us in mission through God's power, strength and presence. This is the most important element of a partnership and must be taken very seriously. Pray regularly (each Sunday during worship) for your brothers and sisters in Liberia as well as publicly for all of our companion congregations, knowing that your partner is also praying for your congregation during their worship service. Be specific in your prayers (e.g. health needs, people needs) and be sure to include the needs of the LCL leadership and country as well.

## **COVENANT**

A covenant between companion parishes is a mutual document that states the vision, mission and purpose of a relationship, and it outlines specific goals or pathways the relationship will take. It can help focus your relationship and help both congregations better understand it. Develop a covenant in cooperation with your companion church. If your relationship has been underway for some time, it is recommended that your congregation revisit your covenant every two to five years to ensure it reflects the ways in which your relationship has grown. For samples of congregational covenants, as well as the "Guidelines and Policy" agreement between the USS and LCL for Congregation-to-Parish Partnerships, see the appendices. Should there be a disruption in your partnership, or if you experience difficulties of any kind, you are encouraged to contact the CSC for assistance and guidance.

## **LEARNING ABOUT ONE ANOTHER**

Hold an educational event in your church focused on your Liberian companion parish. Learn about their culture and the country in which they live. Explore the issues faced by your companion congregation. Become acquainted with the history and the role of the church in that place. Involve all ages in your religious education program through prayers, letters and drawings.

Hold a companion congregation festival meal for all ages, which might bring in an outside resource person for a presentation while at the same time celebrating the life and culture of your companion congregation through music, food and drama.

Advocacy: As you grow in relationship, companions confront the issues challenging each other, such as racism, bureaucracy, economic uncertainty, poverty, hunger and lack of education. Often companions move from understanding to advocacy as they come to recognize their roles as global citizens.

## **WORSHIP**

Companion churches enliven their worship services by sharing hymns, decorations, liturgical items, phrases, traditions and, when companion visitors are on hand, worship leaders and guest speakers. Incorporate your companion parish into the worship life of your congregation:

- Lift them up in your congregation prayers every week.
- Put announcements about them in your weekly bulletins.
- Sing hymns suggested by them.

- Hold an annual “companion parish Sunday service” that lifts up your commitment to your companion parish by singing in your companion’s language and incorporating ways in which they worship into your worship experience.

## **EXCHANGE OF GIFTS**

Carvings, poetry and artwork are things that could be given by people in Liberia to a companion congregation in our synod. Your congregation could send such things, as well. Make a banner to be given and hung in your companion parish as a constant reminder of your connection and bond.

Make an album – letters, pictures (including activities and building) and other creative stuff, then send a disposable camera and ask them to take photos of their ministry sites and members. Send an extra album for them to fill (with instructions). If you have one, send your pictorial directory, as well as other brochures and leaflets that describe your church and programs. Be creative. The monetary value of the gift is not as important as the thoughtfulness behind the gift.

## **FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL AID**

Companion relationships value people over money. The differences between your congregation’s financial resources and your companion parish’s financial resources may be hard for us to fully appreciate, short of an on-site visit to Liberia. Liberia is considered one of the world’s poorest countries, with 85% unemployment, and about 85% of the population living on less than \$1.25 a day. The country is rebuilding its infrastructure and society after years of devastating civil war. Liberians view American culture as portrayed in popular media and may have a distorted picture of their companion congregation’s financial resources. This is a reality of which to be conscious, but not to fear.

The “guidelines and policy” document for USS/LCL Congregation-to-Parish Relationships explicitly addresses this issue in the following expectation: *“The basis for the relationship shall be companionship and partnership, and not paternalism. Thus, there shall be no personal solicitations between partner congregations and parishes nor their members.”* This is the expectation. However, the historical relationship between Liberia and the United States, the influence of media images, the realities of poverty, injustice, and sin, and Christ’s calling to “love our neighbors as ourselves” make the question of whether to consider sharing financial resources a complicated one to answer. These things also provide context for understanding a possible request from your companion parish for financial assistance, despite the expectation detailed above.

If a need is made known by your companion parish, or if your congregation desires to offer a gift to them of financial or material aid, please think carefully about how to proceed. First, remember that yours is part of a larger relationship between the synod and the LCL, the ELCA and the LCL, and even the United States and Liberia. Your decision may have implications for others that you cannot foresee. Please contact the Liberia Companion Synod Committee about your possible gift/project before suggesting a commitment on your congregation’s part. And make sure that any gifts you do send come through the synod rather than your congregation.

When evaluating a possible financial gift, consider these questions:

- Can you send money and maintain an even relationship?
- Does it send the message that we give, and they receive?
- Is the money for general expenses, or a specific project? Remember, we are not there to do the work of the LCL or your partner parish. Rather, we are there to walk alongside them while they do the work themselves. Always emphasize relationship before resources, and then consider these points as explained in the ELCA Companion Synod Handbook on pages 11-12:
  - Establish the relationship first, and then consider sharing financial gifts;
  - Follow their agenda, not yours;
  - Make sure your gifts benefit the community rather than individuals;
  - Support development rather than dependency;
  - Research the context to determine a project's longevity;
  - Understand the context and preserve the balance of power;
  - Work toward cross-cultural transparency;
  - If you begin a project, make sure you can complete it;
  - Use synodical oversight; and
  - Make sure the money gets there.

Hence, always listen carefully to your partner before deciding together if a gift/project is appropriate for your congregation to support financially.

Before sending clothes, crayons, paper, or books to your companion parish, consider:

- How much will it cost to ship the items?
- Are shipping methods reliable? Will the supplies actually reach the destination?
- Would it be easier and/or more effective for your companions to buy the items in their own country, with money from the congregation/synod, and in so doing also contribute to their own community's economic growth?
- If the books you want to send are written for school children in the United States, with an American context, will they be appropriate for your companion's context? It may be better for your companion to purchase books in their own country.

## VISITS

Our Liberian brothers and sisters are known for their warm hospitality toward visitors, and for their heartfelt desire for visits from their American partners. Visiting your companion parish in Liberia is a wonderful way to enrich your Congregation-to-Parish partnership, as is hosting visitors from Liberia in your community. Financial realities on both sides may prevent such an event from ever taking place. But if a visit may be possible for some of your members, please consult the Liberian Companion Synod Committee and the ELCA Companion Synod Handbook for assistance and advice. Remember, a journey to your companion is **not** a vacation. It is one step in the long term process of building a relationship.

Should your congregation desire to host visitors from your companion parish, please keep in mind that you may be asked to bear a large part of their expenses in doing so. Frequently there are Liberian students in the United States studying at one of our ELCA seminaries. Your

congregation might also desire to host one of these students during a semester/holiday break, providing for their transportation to and from the seminary. Please contact the Liberia Companion Synod Committee to get connected with Liberian students studying in the States.

## **Keep the Synod Informed**

USS congregations are requested to keep the Upper Susquehanna Synod office informed of what they are doing, especially in regard to planned visits, financial support of projects, etc. Pastor Beth Ann L. Stone, assistant to Bishop Driesen, serves as the synod staff liaison to the Liberian Companion Synod Committee. Her email address is [bethann@uss-elca.org](mailto:bethann@uss-elca.org); the synod office phone number is (570) 524-9778.

“Official” emails, especially those establishing new Congregation-to-Parish Partnerships, may be copied to USS Bishop Robert Driesen at [bishop@uss-elca.org](mailto:bishop@uss-elca.org), and LCL Bishop Sumoward Harris at [lutheranchurchinliberia@yahoo.com](mailto:lutheranchurchinliberia@yahoo.com). Written materials may be sent to the Upper Susquehanna Synod, ELCA, ATTN: Beth Ann Stone, PO Box 36, Lewisburg, PA 17837.

Dr. Robert Bradford, co-chair of the Liberia Companion Synod Committee, is this synod’s resident “expert” on the Lutheran Church in Liberia. Contact Dr. Bradford by phone at (570) 473-9505, or by email at [bradford@evenlink.com](mailto:bradford@evenlink.com).

## **Acknowledgement**

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## **GUIDELINES AND POLICY for partnerships between congregations of the Upper Susquehanna Synod (USS) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and parishes of the Lutheran Church in Liberia (LCL)**

In the 17th chapter of John's gospel, Jesus prays this prayer for his disciples and for all believers ...

*I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those you gave me, for they belong to you. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine; and my glory is shown through them. And now I am coming to you; I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world. Holy Father! Keep them safe by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one, just as you and I are one. (John 17-9-11) (TEV)*

Both as the USS and the LCL and their members, we will intentionally strive towards this unity.

As members of congregations in the Upper Susquehanna Synod and as members of the parishes of the Lutheran Church in Liberia, we acknowledge that we are children of the one God and equal in his sight. In this respect, we are the same. However, we also acknowledge that, because of geography and culture, we are different. With the help of the Triune God, we will work through and with our differences to lift up our membership in the One Christian Family.

We are sisters and brothers who are called to walk in the footsteps of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are bound together because both communities worship in the name of the same Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Together we will work to reflect the reconciled community of the Trinity, and to be the signs of God's love to the world.

We will intentionally strive towards a formal relationship between the USS and the LCL so our partnership may grow in a spirit of equality and oneness in Christ. To that end we now share our respective history and backgrounds, set forth some basic guidance for this relationship, and list some possible projects in which we may share.

### **THE UPPER SUSQUEHANNA SYNOD of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

#### **History and Background -- USS**

Lutheranism came to America with immigrants from Germany and the Scandinavian countries, sometimes accompanied by their pastors. More often, however, the schoolmasters assumed preaching duties on Sundays. Then came ordained Lutheran pastors who were sent

to America as missionaries to assure that the Gospel was being “taught purely” and the Sacraments “rightly administered.”

Here in the eastern part of the United States a missionary named Henry Melchior Muhlenberg arrived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1742 to begin a 45-year ministry that had far-reaching influence. One of his early endeavors was to encourage young men from the families of the colonists to study for the ministry; however, it wasn't until 1826 that the first Lutheran Seminary was established at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. This was followed by the establishment of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina, in 1830 and The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia in 1864. The ELCA now has eight Seminaries and 28 Colleges and Universities.

Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, is situated on the territory of the Upper Susquehanna Synod. It was established in 1858 as the Missionary Institute of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. It was as a graduate of this institution that The Rev. Dr. David A. Day and his wife, Emily, went to Liberia in 1874 to take up missionary work there.

Over the years there have been successive mergers of Lutheran church groups as immigrant churches—primarily with German, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Finnish roots—found that the language barriers between them no longer existed and that cooperation was much better than competition. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is the largest Lutheran church in the United States and has its headquarters in Chicago, Illinois. The ELCA is comprised of 65 synods, divided among nine Regions. Each synod has its own Bishop; the ELCA has a Presiding Bishop who is a teacher of faith in this church, a leader in its life and mission, and presides over the biennial Churchwide Assembly, the Church's highest legislative authority.

The Upper Susquehanna Synod is one of the 65 ELCA synods. It is located in a ten-county area of north-central Pennsylvania. The Susquehanna River (West Branch, North Branch and Main Branch)--from which the synod receives its name--touches many of these counties as it flows in a southerly direction and eventually empties into the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean.

The synod numbers 137 congregations, many of which are in multiple church parishes. The oldest congregation--St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Freeburg--was organized in 1770. Most congregations were organized in the 1800's when Lutherans migrated to the area as land became available. Churches were built. German was the language of choice for most of these early settlers until gradually replaced by English-language worship services. Now all the congregations within the synod use the English language; however, there are, at this writing, seven pastors who have come here from Germany.

Official statistics from December 31, 2008, show that the synod has 137 congregations, 140 ordained ministers, 7 lay leaders, and 39,831 baptized members.

Structurally, there is a Bishop and a Synod Council; there are six Conferences, each with a Dean and Secretary to provide cohesion for these units. The highest legislative body is the Synod Assembly which meets annually. The voting body is comprised of all rostered clergy and lay leaders and voting members from all of the congregations. Bishop A. Donald Main was the synod's first bishop, elected at the Constituting Assembly in 1987. He served until his retirement in 2007. Bishop Robert L. Driesen was elected at the 2007 Synod Assembly.

## **ELCA Companion Synods Program -- USS**

In 1989 the ELCA began a program which has proved to be exciting and challenging—*the Companion Synods program*—in which each of the 65 synods in the ELCA was asked to establish relationships with an overseas church body. The Upper Susquehanna Synod quickly chose to be partnered with the Lutheran Church in Liberia, primarily because of long-standing ties, and the LCL accepted the relationship.

The ensuing years were times of great turmoil in Liberia as warring factions decimated much of the country and people fled to escape the bloodshed. How would we--in the USS--participate in a meaningful relationship with our Liberian brothers and sisters in such a time of crisis?

We prayed for the people of Liberia and for a cessation of hostilities.

We welcomed church leaders from Liberia who came to the United States and shared both their grief and their hope.

As early as 1991, we began to send cargo containers filled with supplies and then, beginning in 2001, work teams were sent to aid our brothers and sisters in Liberia.

Now, both the LCL and USS envision possibilities for a deeper relationship that might involve congregations of both the USS and LCL in a mutuality of sharing. Our challenge is to find ways to implement programs of partnership that cross the ocean in both directions. This "Guidelines and Policy" document suggests some responses to the challenge--the hope and dream of the "oneness" that Christ envisioned for his believers.

## **THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN LIBERIA**

### **History -- LCL**

The Lutheran Church in Liberia (LCL) was established in 1860 by American Missionaries who at the time came to Africa to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ and help Liberian Christians to spread the Good News of the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ among their own people. The LCL has since strived to carry out this task in the various settings of the Liberian society. Among the freed slave settlers, the LCL was not very active, but it was active among the tribes along the St. Paul River and by the 1900's throughout the central and western provinces of the country, where active Lutheran stations were established.

In the last decade, the LCL has extended to the north and southeastern regions of the country. The LCL had as a target area the rural dwellers of the country and not the urban population. Perhaps between the many mainline churches (evangelicals) it was understood that if one group worked in an area, the other tried to take on another area. Of late, the LCL has undertaken a new mission field among urban dwellers whose demand for the Gospel of Jesus Christ helps to change lives and improve the already deteriorating municipal society. As such, six new parishes were established in the urban area with additional growing demand for evangelism.

The LCL became a member of the Lutheran World Federation in 1966.

The LCL has 72 national pastors who preach, teach and administer the Word and Holy Sacraments to its members. In 2009, the Lutheran Church in Liberia had 71,196 members scattered in 14 of the 15 political subdivisions of Liberia. These members are shepherded by 69 pastors. (There is no missionary in the preaching ministry at the moment). There are 46 parishes and one mission field with over 385 congregations and 399 preaching points. There are 115 ordained deacons, deaconesses, licentiates and 285 evangelists. As a result of the growing need for ministry to the urban people, by 1984 the LCL set up an urban ministry to help provide an urban approach to the ministries of the church. In 2009, there were 6 parishes in Monrovia.

Overseas partners mostly provide funds for specific projects in education and health, while evangelism has become the sole responsibility of the national Church that depends on the local resources to generate the needed funds for this area.

The impoverished members are not able to rehabilitate the institutions and rebuild the destroyed ones. More importantly, pastors are the most affected ones as their members are not able to upkeep themselves due to poverty.

### **Main Priorities and Activities -- LCL**

The main priorities and activities of the LCL continue to be medical work, education and evangelism. The Lutheran Church in Liberia presently runs two hospitals (Phebe and Curran) that have been fully rehabilitated after being damaged several times. Both are major referral hospitals in central and northern Liberia. They are all renovated and rendering services to the people in those regions.

The LCL has also established a clinic in the southeast in Grand Kru County called Newaken Lutheran Clinic with the hope of expanding it into a health center; also a clinic and a school in Pallipo, River Gee County in the southeast, but these are not presently in operation due to lack of funding and also needing rehabilitation.

The Lutheran Training Institute in Salayea, Lofa County, which was the only high school operated by the LCL was looted and vandalized after being rebuilt several times. It is also being renovated gradually and is being used as a vocational training center for former fighters and war-affected youths. Courses are given in agriculture, auto mechanics, carpentry, masonry, plumbing, and tailoring; however, major rehabilitation work is still required on buildings as well as restoring the water facilities there.

Emphasizing evangelism and church planting, the LCL has one training center for evangelists and lay leaders. From this center, young men and women are trained to be evangelists, deacons, licentiates and effective lay leaders.

As a faith-based institution, the LCL has joined the international community in the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS in Liberia. In fact, the LCL HIV/AIDS project is the leading project with a vast reservoir of trained personnel that other organizations refer to for training

and other services. This project achieved both local and international recognition in the sub-region.

Similarly, the traumatic effect of the war created hatred and a desire for revenge in the hearts of the victimized. The need to create a peaceful community and society became another challenge for the country after the war. The LCL, recognizing the troubling situation, again established the Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Project to deal with traumatic effects, such as conflict management and resolution, trauma and its negative effect, how to cope with trauma, etc., in the communities, work places and the security sector.

Two new departments were recently established. The Department for Mission and Evangelism's goal is to evangelize new areas where the LCL is not present and to reactivate those areas that are declining in the mission work of the Church. The Christian Education Department was established to work with Sunday School and its related activities, including training of Sunday School teachers.

### **Challenges -- LCL**

The LCL is faced with multiple challenges today as a result of the gruesome civil war. Among the many challenges we face today are poverty, hatred, trauma, rebuilding of relationships and morale, rebuilding of value systems, rebuilding our lives and destroyed facilities and institutions, reorganizing parishes and institutions, developing and maintaining leaderships in the school systems, program and activities for present and future support of God's mission entrusted to the LCL expressed in Word and Sacraments, evangelism, teaching and diaconal work as well as nurturing the new Lutheran Church in the Republic of Guinea and responding to calls from new areas.

We also face the challenge of maintaining and supporting clergy, especially those in the rural areas and villages whose members are not able to support them financially and materially. This is one of the major challenges we face as a church today. Other challenges are how the Church can rehabilitate its damaged facilities and how it can sustain itself locally in the future.

### **Opportunities -- LCL**

Of course the success stories are blended with the opportunities we have as LCL. Our greatest success is the human resources, both laity and clergy. Our 1997 statistics show that we have 71,196 members including women, men and children. We will do new statistics in 2008 as the 1997 one was done both in and outside of Liberia.

The LCL has 46 parishes and five mission fields spread throughout fourteen of the fifteen political subdivisions of Liberia. The parishes and mission fields are in eight districts within the LCL. They are shepherded by 69 pastors and 115 ordained deacons/deaconesses. Some of the 69 pastors are serving as chaplains at hospitals, some as coordinators of projects and institutions. Most of the pastors and ordained deacons/deaconesses have been trained during and after the war.

Prior to the war the LCL had four centers: the Lay Training Center, the Kpelle Literacy and Bible Translation Center, the Loma Literacy and Bible Translation Center, and the Urban

Ministry Center. As of 2009, the LCL had two main centers: the Lay Leaders' and Ministers' Training Center; and the Language, Literature, Literacy and Bible Translation Center.

We have trained personnel among the human resources we have as a church. We also have had opportunity to provide leadership training and staff development mostly for ministers on short and long term bases through local and international scholarships provided by our partner churches. One of the challenges is how to maintain the trained persons financially within the employ of the LCL due to inadequate financial support.

Schools, clinics, health centers and hospitals are also our assets including church structures and parsonages. We have 43 schools (7 senior high schools, 12 junior high schools and 22 primary schools) and two vocational schools. We have two hospitals--Curran and Phebe--and five clinics in Bong, Nimba, Lofa, River Gee and Grand Kru Counties. We also have properties (land) across the country that can be developed for many purposes.

### **BASIC EXPECTATIONS OF CONGREGATION-PARISH PARTNERSHIPS**

Out of the desire to deepen the relationships between the people of our churches in the LCL and USS, partnerships between congregations in the USS and parishes in the LCL are encouraged. These guidelines are intended to assist those congregations and parishes as they seek to enter into partnerships.

(1) Congregation and parish partnerships are established between the congregations of the USS and the parishes of the LCL. Only USS congregations and LCL parishes will be recognized as official partners.

(2) The basis for the relationship shall be companionship and partnership, and not paternalism. Thus, there shall be no personal solicitations between partner congregations and parishes nor their members.

(3) The Bishops' offices of the USS and LCL shall have full knowledge of all agreements between partners.

(4) There will be an official document which outlines the objectives, goals, and theme of each partnership. Approval for this document shall be given by the LCL's Board of Ministry and by the USS Synod Council, who will give oversight responsibility to the Liberia sub-committee.

### **Some Possible Expressions of the Congregation-to-Parish Partnerships**

- (1) Share prayer requests for specific church leaders, ministries, church-related institutions, significant dates, etc.
- (2) Learn about each other's culture, location, basic language and liturgical practices.
- (3) Share information, photographs, videos, and/or audio tapes of regular and special congregational events, worship, music or education programs.

- (4) Share a common Bible study program/theme/text. If possible, exchange audio or video tapes of these sessions.
- (5) Exchange children's artwork for display, perhaps focusing on a particular theme or season of the church year.
- (6) Create and exchange traditional liturgical vestments and/or altar linens.
- (7) Create and exchange banners focused on the companion relationship.
- (8) Share recipes or cookbooks.
- (9) Strive to exchange visits, but only by invitation. Be prepared to share expenses for such travel.

## **CONCLUSION**

**Through our partnership the USS and LCL will seek to understand, appreciate, and celebrate the gifts each has to share, for it is in the sharing of our diverse gifts that we hope to manifest the unity we have been given through Christ Jesus our Lord.**

## Appendix B

### **Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, Bille and St. Philip's Lutheran Church, Fridley, Minnesota, USA**

In order to give shape and direction to our journey as partners in the mission of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, we agree to the following covenants:

1. We covenant to learn more about our partner congregation and the city, state, and country in which our partner lives and serves. We will particularly focus on cultural, historical, and current social issues, and any issues that affect the growth of our faith.
2. We covenant to help each other in this endeavor by exchanging information and suggestions for learning via letters, photographs, newspaper clippings, tapes, e-mail communications, etc. This may include sharing music, Sunday school materials, and pastoral aids.
3. Individual-to-individual relationships must be the foundation of our mutual learning. We will explore every possibility to foster such relationships between church leaders, pastors, Sunday school children, church boards and committees, youth, choirs, and other church groups.
4. We covenant to pray for each other and our ministries regularly, particularly as a part of our worship services.
5. We covenant to explore ways in which we can enrich each others' worship experiences through exchange of music, liturgical settings, worship materials, testimonials, etc.
6. We covenant to share information about current and planned projects/ministries and invite mutual participation in each others' missions. We will explore opportunities to participate in or support each others' missions, and will seek new projects in which we can share.
7. We covenant to exchange visits by members and staff of our congregations as often as possible.

#### **THE GLORY OF GOD!**

_____	_____	_____
For LCCN, Bille	Title	Date

_____	_____	_____
For LCCN, Bille	Title	Date

_____	_____	_____
For St. Philip's Lutheran Church	Title	Date

_____	_____	_____
For St. Philip's Lutheran Church	Title	Date

### **Covenant between First Lutheran Church of Crystal and Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria #1, Mubi**

**Mission Statement:** We proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Nigeria and the United States of America by working and walking together in faith and in service to others (added December 4, 2006).

In order to give some shape and direction to our journey as partners in the mission of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, we accept the following covenantal obligations under the heading of Study, Worship, and Action, which have already served the Global Mission Task Force of First Lutheran Church of Crystal (FLCC) well and have been inspirational also to the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN) #1, Mubi.

#### **Study**

1. We covenant to learn more about the congregation, city, state, and country in which our partner congregation lives and serves. We will focus especially on cultural patterns, historical roots, and current issues.
2. We covenant to help each other in this endeavor by exchanging information and suggestions for learning via letters, newspaper clippings, photographs, tapes, and so forth. We hope eventually to establish direct e-mail correspondence. We look to such possibilities as Sunday School material and pastoral aids.
3. Individual-to-individual relationships must be the foundation of our mutual learning. We will explore every possibility to foster such relationships between pastors, church leaders, church councils and committees, church groups such as First Lutheran Church Women and Mubi women's groups, Sunday School children, choir directors and members, and so forth.
4. We will seek to strengthen the developing relationship between our mission committees, currently the Global Mission Task Force of FLCC and the Committee for Mission of LCCN #1 Mubi, especially by studying ongoing and proposed mission endeavors on behalf of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### **Worship**

1. We covenant to pray for each other at every opportunity, but especially as a part of our regularly scheduled worship services. We covenant to explore every opportunity to enrich each other's worship through the exchange of music and liturgical settings, materials, testimonials, and through other means.
2. FLCC will invite LCCN Nigerian pastors, and LCCN #1 Mubi will invite ELCA pastors to fill its pulpit when possible and appropriate.

## **Action**

1. In addition to informing each other of projects currently underway and envisioned, we covenant to invite mutual participation in our mission. Mubi congregation has already been moved to act in missionary trips to the Visik Hills. FLCC takes up the challenge to explore ways in which we can participate in these missions. In turn, Mubi will explore ways in which it can participate in FLCC programs.
2. We covenant to exchange visits by members of our congregations on as regular a basis as possible.

**Sample Introductory Letter  
to Your New LCL Partner**

Date

The Rev.  
Parish name  
Address  
LIBERIA

Dear Pastor \_\_\_\_ and Members of [*Parish name*],

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord, Jesus the Christ!

We write to you with joy and anticipation. We have learned just recently that Bishop Sumoward Harris has recommended that we become companions in ministry through the Companion Synods Program of our Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Lutheran Church of Liberia. Thanks be to God!

Please let us know how you think we might begin to grow in friendship and fellowship as children of God, together in ministry here in \_\_\_\_\_ and in \_\_\_\_\_, Liberia.

***(Tell a little bit about your church):*** *Our church is located in \_\_\_\_\_ of the State of Pennsylvania in the United States of America. We are a church that was organized over 127 years ago by German immigrants to the USA in 1882. We have about 75 worshippers each Sunday morning at 8:30 and 11:00 AM. Our congregational leaders include: \_\_\_\_\_, our Council President, \_\_\_\_\_, our choir/music director, \_\_\_\_\_, our Sunday School superintendent, \_\_\_\_\_, our sexton, \_\_\_\_\_, our youth minister, and a host of other volunteers, teachers, worship assistants, and Council members. I have been privileged to serve as the pastor of this congregation for the past three years.*

We are looking forward to learning more about you and how God is at work in your midst. Until we hear from you, may God's peace dwell within you richly.

In Christ,

Pastor \_\_\_\_\_

CC: Bishop Harris, Bishop Driesen