

## **GLOBAL MISSION OF THE ELCA COMPANION SYNOD PROGRAM<sup>1</sup>**

### **1.1. General**

*Eph 4:4-6*

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is a member of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), which was found in Lund, Sweden in 1947. The LWF is a communion of currently one hundred and thirty three (133) churches in seventy-three (73) countries. "The Lutheran churches of the world consider their communion as an expression of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church."<sup>2</sup>

### **1.2. Introduction**

*1.Cor.12:12ff, 1.Cor.10:16-17*

The companion synod program is an expression of the communion fellowship of the ELCA with its companion churches in the LWF. The sixty-five (65) synods of the ELCA participate in these relationships through the companion synod program. The Division for Global Mission (DGM) through its area program directors is the steward of these relationships. The associate director for global relationships assists the ELCA synods in their understanding and interpretation of global companionship in the model of accompaniment.

#### **1.2.1. Vision and Implication**

The dawn of the Twenty-first century requires the ELCA to review its global mission approach. Accompaniment is the ELCA new model for mission. It is the manner of ELCA's global mission relationships. The concept of accompaniment calls for a fundamental change in the implementation of global mission. A primary reality of accompaniment is the mutual respect of the companions with whom mission is shared. "Each church has the primary responsibility for mission in its area"<sup>3</sup> while walking together in mutual support as each carries out its mission responsibilities. Accompaniment "insists that old assumptions be challenged and that we listen to companions' interpretation of their vision of mission and reality."<sup>4</sup> Accompaniment challenges us to overcome the donor-receiver model whereby the Northern partner assumes the role of the donor and the Southern companion that of the receiver.

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from revised Companion Synod Handbook, ELCA-DGM, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Eugene I. Brand, *Toward a Lutheran Communion: Pulpit and Altar Fellowship*, Geneva: LWF Report 26, 1988, 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Global Mission in the Twenty-first Century*, Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Division for Global Mission, 1999, 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

### 1.2.2. Accompaniment

*Luke 24:13-53*

Accompaniment is characterized by “walking together in solidarity that practices interdependence”<sup>5</sup>, honoring of each other's integrity and wholeness, participatory decision-making, and mutuality. “Accompaniment is more than an exclusive contract between two or more companion churches. It is walking together in Jesus Christ of two or more churches in companionship and in service in God’s mission. . . . Accompaniment emphasizes relationship before resources. . . . A primary reality of accompaniment is the mutual respect of the companions. . . . Each church has the primary responsibility for mission in its area.”<sup>6</sup>

### 1.2.3. *Communio – Koinonia (κοινωνία)*

*1.Cor.10:9*

"The basis for this accompaniment or what the New Testament calls *koinonia* (κοινωνία) is found in the God human relationship in which God accompanies us in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit."<sup>7</sup> "*Koinonia* is furthermore a proclamation of unity among churches and believers which must be expressed in tangible spiritual and economic ways."<sup>8</sup> Just as Jesus’ radically inclusive fellowship embraced even the outcast, the sick, and the poor, so too the church is called into *koinonia* with all those excluded from society."<sup>9</sup> *Koinonia* “is a communion in holy baptism and in the eucharistic meal, a communion in which the ministries exercised are recognized by all its expressions of the ministry instituted by Christ in his church. It is a communion where diversities contribute to fullness and are no longer barriers to unity. . . . This communion lives out its unity in confessing the one apostolic faith. It assembles in worship and in intercession for all people. It is active in common witness to Jesus Christ; in advocacy for the weak, poor, and oppressed; and in striving for peace, justice, and freedom.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid, 5.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. 6.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>LWF Documentation, *The Church as Communion*, Geneva: LWF,

<sup>9</sup>Eugen Brand, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Eugene I. Brand, *Toward a Lutheran Communion: Pulpit and Altar Fellowship*, Geneva: LWF Report 26, 1988, 10f.

#### **1.2.4. Purpose / Goals**

The purpose of the companion synod program is to establish, nurture, and strengthen communion relationships of two or more companion churches in mission within the body of Christ. It provides opportunities to participate in the life and ministry of the companion church through prayer, study, communication, exchange of visitors and sharing of resources. Companion relationships open our eyes to the many challenges of the global context. They call us to deepen our commitment to be true disciples of Christ as individuals and as a community of faith.

#### **1.2.5. Principles / Methodology**

The spirit of accompaniment is the guiding principle for the companion relationship.

- Connect with companions at the level of our common faith, honoring the companion's leadership and history as well as the ELCA's history and relationship(s) in mission with this church.
- Consult with DGM's Area Program Director for critical information in ELCA's relationships with the companion church, its structures, and other partner relationships.
- Become acquainted with any written agreements the ELCA (and other mission partners) have with the companion church.
- Encourage members of the synod's companion/global mission committee(s) to develop a covenant with the companion church that gives vision and direction for the relationship.