

Companions in Christ



The global church is a reality, not just an abstract concept, for the thousands of Lutherans engaged in ELCA companion-synod relationships.

“Companion synods nurture a church that is global, not only the parochial enclave of being together,” said Rafael Malpica Padilla, executive director of ELCA Global Mission.

Sixty-four ELCA synods have at least one

global-church companion. Because many synods relate to multiple companion churches, more than 120 companion-synod relationships exist. Most participating churches, including the ELCA, are members of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). *Mission Support funding enhances the ministry of the LWF and the companion-synod program.*

For Martin Malley of Ralston, Neb., participating in the Nebraska Synod’s relationship with the Northern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania “enlarges my worldview and lets me see outside my box.”

Visiting Tanzania during a synod trip was Malley’s first peek beyond his “box.” “By the end of the weekend, I was so taken with the people and the beauty of the place that I was on fire!” he said.

Now Malley serves as the synod’s volunteer coordinator of Tanzania ministries, weaving myriad Nebraska-Tanzania connections into the fabric of the synod and diocese. Scores, if not hundreds, of Lutherans have traveled between Nebraska and

Tanzania and built long-standing personal relationships over time, said Brian Maas, bishop of the Nebraska Synod.

Nebraskans and Tanzanians swap pulpits, visit each other’s schools and congregations, and keep in touch via Facebook. Nebraskans have donated generously to the Northern Diocese, funding scholarships, purchasing textbooks, equipping evangelists with motorcycles and more. But “this is not about us doing projects,” Malley said. “It’s about us having Christian friends on the other side of the world.”

In companion-synod relationships, care and support flow both ways. Visitors from the Nkuu Kati Lutheran parish took note when Malley and other members of Messiah Lutheran in Ralston showed how they were retrofitting the church’s bathrooms to accommodate people of all abilities. “Three months later [Nkuu Kati] sent a check for \$300 to support our project,” Malley said. “We knew then that this was a partnership.”



“This is not about us doing projects,” said ELCA member Martin Malley of the ELCA Nebraska Synod’s relationship with the Northern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. “It’s about us having Christian friends on the other side of the world.” Your Mission Support gifts enhance the ELCA companion-synod program.

