

Companion Synod Updates

Nigeria

The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria has 1.9 million members in over 2400 congregations organized into eight dioceses. The Minneapolis Area Synod formalized its companion synod relationship with LCCN in 1990, and we have enjoyed many leadership exchanges – welcoming LCCN leaders to Minnesota and enjoying the hospitality of LCCN when our synod’s leaders visited there.



In 2013, the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN), observed its 100th anniversary – celebrating “100 years of God’s Faithfulness” and renewing the church’s commitment to “holistic mission amid difficult times.” In celebration of LCCN’s centennial anniversary, the Minneapolis Area Synod raised \$450,000 to support health care in Nigeria.

While travel to Nigeria has been difficult in recent years because of civil unrest, Bishop Ann Svennungsen attended the consecration of newly elected Archbishop Musa Filibus in January 2017. She has been invited to return in the fall of 2017 to discuss ways to renew our partnership in the future.

Over the past year and a half, we have also been blessed by the ministry of Dr. Ibrahim Bitrus as the synod’s Nigerian Theologian in Residence. Dr. Bitrus was “in residence” in congregations for a month at a time, teaching and preaching and sharing about life as a Christian in Nigeria.

For more information on our companion synod relationships, please visit our [synod web site](#).

Leipzig

The Leipzig Connection for the Minneapolis Area Synod began in the 1980s, primarily as an outgrowth of Herb Brokering’s pilgrimages to the Lutheran communities of Eastern Europe. In those years, when Communist rule kept many of the churches isolated from outside contact, the Leipzig-Minneapolis relationship consisted mainly of visits to Leipzig by groups from the synod.

After the fall of the government of the German Democratic Republic in 1989, the two church districts in Leipzig and their congregations were struggling with new political, economic and social realities. Visits to Leipzig decreased, and the partnership went dormant.



In 1998, negotiations were initiated by the Minneapolis Area Synod to renew the connection, based on shared ministry. In both Leipzig and Minneapolis, the Lutheran church faces challenges for evangelism in a secular world, a tradition of liturgical worship in an entertainment culture, and increasing social needs at a time of reduced governmental roles. It was agreed that ministry at all levels—synod, congregations, and agencies—would benefit from mutual contact with corresponding partners in Leipzig.

Beginning in 2002, a variety of groups have visited Leipzig, and they have come to us. This has included areas of education, social ministry, congregational ministry, and especially youth. A Companion Covenant was signed by the two parties in 2006, with renewals occurring every five years.

In 2015-16 a wonderful result of the Covenant was the pastoral exchange of Rev. Morris Wee, who served in a Leipzig parish for a full year, and Rev. Helge Voigt, who served at Christ Church Lutheran in Minneapolis for seven months.

Later this month, Bishop Svennungsen will travel with a synod delegation of 16 pastors to Leipzig to celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, as well as to renew the Companion Covenant. Please pray for their travels and for their experience as ambassadors of our synod.

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