Background to our Relationship with Cameroon

MNO Synod has a long-standing relationship with the Église Évangélique Luthérienne du Cameroun (EELC) – the national Lutheran church in Cameroon. The formal relationship known “Global Mission Partnership” (formerly the “Companion Synod Program”) has been in place since 2003, when MNO Synod Bishop Richard Smith and EELC President Thomas Niewye met while at the Lutheran World Federation Assembly in Winnipeg. This partnership emerged as a natural follow-up to the Good News Partner Ministry run by the ELCIC (2000 to 2003) in which Rev. Étienne and Jeanne Fomgbami and family resided in Canada and provided training for evangelism training and outreach.

This mission partnership is an accompaniment style relationship in which the focus is not only on the sharing and providing of resources, but also on creating and strengthening relationships between the EELC and the MNO Synod.

With this in mind, a number of significant trips to Cameroon, beginning in 2007, have been undertaken by the Synod bishops (Elaine, and now Jason), Synod staff, and a number of Synod clergy and laypeople. These journeys have involved meeting with the EELC leadership, visiting the church schools, hospitals and women’s centres, attending conferences and gatherings, worshipping and sometimes preaching at various congregations, leading workshops and training sessions, and even assisting in the purchase of church roofs and motorcycles for the clergy. In return, we were also privilege to host EELC Bishop Ngozo in 2014, and have him address our Synod convention. The essential aspect of this has been to build relationships, support one another, share resources, enjoy hospitality and engage conversations in order to build up the relationship between us.

In addition to these more broad-based encounters and activities, MNO has been supportive of a number of very specific ministries in Cameroon:

- We support “Kids in Cameroon” (formerly known as “Kids Helping Kids”) – a program to help orphaned and underprivileged children receive an education, and some basic food. This ministry predates our partnership with the EELC, and was initially established through the work of Rev. Jack and Val Fredrick and Madame Fanta Gaknone – the Social worker who still coordinates and administers the program in Cameroon. Funds contribute to scholarships; programing (food supplement, school supplement, emergency health care); and also temporary housing for post-secondary education.
We encourage women in ministry in the Lutheran church. The first ordination of the EELC’s Women clergy took place in 2012, with Bishop Elaine and Pastor Carol Janke privileged to attend and take part. Now we are engaged in continuing to offer support and guidance to these women, in part by providing funding for retreats and workshops geared to address their challenges and needs. Funds raised provide support for a ministry and study retreat so that ordained women in the EELC may gather.

Along the way, we have also given support to some to the schools that are run by the EELC. Specifically, we plan to provide material support to catechists and theological students receiving training at the Lutheran School for Biblical and Theological Training in Garoua-Boulai. These Catechists are educated in order to provide on the ground leadership and catechetical education in the congregations of the church. Funds raised help students undergoing Catechists training.

We also aim to provide financial support to the Lutheran School of Garoua-Boulai, to support the educational needs of teachers and students. Funds raised assist in providing salaries for teachers and also supplies for the students.

In these, and other ways, this year’s Appeal will support our Global Companion Synod relationship with the EELC.

This year, four members of our Synod, including Bishop Jason Zinko, Bishop’s Assistant Tyler Gingrich, Melissa Colquhoun (member of Grace, Winnipeg) and Kyle Kempe-Collins (member of First, Winnipeg) traveled to Cameroon in March to continue to build the ministry relationship we have and they brought back further learnings and insights into the church and the ministry we share.

These four, and other individuals, are available to share experiences, presentations and information so we might all to learn more and engage in this vital part of our MNO Synod Ministry.

We invite your participation in our appeal to raise $50,000 in 2019 for our work with our Global Companion Synod, Cameroon!