

Churches Seeking an ELCA Companion

Southern / East Africa

Mozambique – ELC Mozambique

A church of over 12,000 members, the ELCMozambique is a young and growing church. In the wake of the long colonial and turbulent civil war history in Mozambique, the ELCMozambique is trying to help rebuild the lives of its members across this vast country of 20 million people. Many communities lack adequate health care services and primary education programs. In partnership with the ELCMozambique and the LWF the ELCA World Hunger program has helped build and equip clinics at Moma in Nampula province and Munene near Chimoio in the center of the country.

While Portuguese is the official language and spoken as a second language by 27% of the population, tribal languages include: Emakhuwa (26%), Xichangana (11%), Elomwe (8%), and Cisená (7%) and other tribal languages.

Asia and the Pacific

India – ELC Madhya Pradesh

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Madhya Pradesh is located in the central region of India; this predominately rural church was founded by a Swedish mission some 90 years ago. This relationship with the ELCA marks the first church-to-church relationship for the ELCMP. Thus it gives us the opportunity to seek ways of engaging together in the way accompaniment was intended, starting a relationship for relationship's sake.

The church of over 20,000 members is made up largely of tribal peoples (i.e. indigenous peoples, who often fall under the same category as Dalit, i.e., oppressed), though it is Hindi-speaking. ELC Madhya Pradesh has more than 27 schools (elementary to high school levels) and five hospitals among its diakonia work. Homes for orphans have also abounded. Madhya Pradesh itself is a state currently governed by the BJP party (Hindu) so there are serious religious freedom and conversion law challenges imposed on the church.

Latin American and the Caribbean

Mexico – Iglesia Luterana Mexicana

The Iglesia Luterana Mexicana, Mexican Lutheran Church started its work in 1946 with a church in the city of Tapachula, Chiapas. The church grew and spread little by little to the whole country until 1973 when the last church was constructed in the city of Ahualulco de Mercado, Jalisco. At this time, the ILM has 11 congregations spread across Mexico, three of which have ordained women as pastors. Women have been ordained in this church for the last five years and all serve in congregations in the Federal District.

The ILM is a Church in which its youth and women have a yearly theme for Bible study and reflection on societal needs. This year the theme of 'Constructing Identity' is helping these groups with biblical reflections on gender issues. One of the most important ministries is being carried out by the Lutheran Church in Guadalajara, working with women in jail and prison. This program has been operating for the last 25 years and the congregation itself is sustaining it. Today the ILM is looking to develop other ministries that will be seen in coming years.