



2018 Report of the SW MN Companion Synod Committee

“Siyabonga”, Hello to all in the Southwestern Minnesota Synod of the ELCA! In this the 28th year of our walking together with the Southeastern diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa we rejoice in our continued growth sharing ministry and walking together with our fellow Lutherans in the Kwa Zulu Natal province.

As we continue our partnership arrangements between our 10 conferences and the 10 circuits of the Southeastern Diocese, we’re happy that we gain in friendship and knowledge of people and cultures as we grow together in shared ministry. Our support of the diocesan Health and Wellness Committee helps us to learn and understand the relationship between physical health and development. The Wellness Committee has organized committees in all ten circuits and has workshops in the circuits and together as a diocese. The circuits gain strength in serving people contending with many diseases including HIV/AIDS and help people learn healthy practices and nutrition as communities. Congregations also reach out to their neighbors to provide education and care.

Visits have continued between several conferences and circuits in 2017 and other plans are being made for more visit exchanges in 2018 including between some who have not had many visits yet. With the help of grants from our Synod Funding Initiative we are helping young adults have the opportunity to travel to their conference’s companion circuit.

There is unsettlement due to criticism of the government’s lack of caring for infrastructure. This has led to strikes and protests that complicate travel within the diocese but training and education has continued and leadership changes on the national level is bringing new optimism for reform of government structure and programs

Strife over mismanagement of funds by the churchwide office has brought divisiveness and problems with the election of the new bishop for the Southeastern Diocese. Election proceedings for Deans, leaders of Diocesan committees and parish officers does seem to be going on as laid down in recent constitutional changes. As our brothers and sisters in the congregations and leadership of the diocese look for a peaceful path forward. We in Southwestern Minnesota continue to encourage them to build bridges and work together for the strongest ministry they and we can do together. Our prayers together and individually are needed as this journey is taken.

We encourage everyone to seek information about their conference/circuit partnership. All the conferences in our synod are working to find ways to share friendships with more in their circuits. Please visit our Companion Synod table in the exhibit area to find out what your conference is doing with its circuit relationship.

For the Companion Synod Committee, Marie Nelson Chair