



Companion Congregation Communication—Best Practices

- 1. Make a commitment** to communicate on a regular basis, at least once a month. Feel free to grow your personal and congregational familiarity with one another. When in a relationship of prayer and care, the sharing of life stories, challenges, lifestyles, communities, celebrations, etc. are priceless.
- 2. Don't give up** after sending just one email. If you don't receive a response, try not to take it personally. There are lots of reasons that emails don't get answered right away. Try sending another message. Often internet access is limited, requiring travel of considerable distance to a site with access. Such travel may only be possible at limited intervals. Travel and the use of the internet both cost money which may not be readily available. Tower signals may not always be available and bad weather may disrupt signals.
3. If you continue to have problems with communication, **contact Cindy Wells**, the WIS Director for Global Mission (cindy.wells@wisynod.org; 712-732-4968 Ext. 441). She can check with her counterparts in Tanzania or Chile to see what might be impeding communications, or can attempt to get your communication transmitted via other means such as mobile phone or in person.
- 4. Consider other forms** of communications such as phone calls, text messages, and social media such as Facebook. If someone can actually visit your companion, connecting faces with the places, that can do a lot to strengthen the relationship. On the other hand, snail mail is often unpredictable and time consuming and also it might also be at risk of theft as people seek valuable or interesting items from abroad. For bigger, more valuable items, you can always check with Cindy Wells about the possibility of future travelers carrying your item(s) to your companions on your behalf.
5. Try to **have more than one contact** for your congregation, including laypersons as well as pastors. It is often best if a layperson is the primary contact with a companion congregation. That way there is someone that can handle communication if a pastor leaves.
- 6. Include your plans and goals for communication in an annual plan** that you create in cooperation with your Companion Congregation. Since communication is fundamental to the development of healthy a relationship, finding ways to ensure effective communications may be one of the first and most important priorities.

7. **Language can be a communication challenge.** It is important to make use of resources that will help bridge the gap between English and Swahili or Spanish.

- a. In Tanzania, most persons who have received secondary education or above have learned English. Like people everywhere, some are more adept with foreign language than others. Nevertheless, some rural congregations don't have (m)any people who can understand, speak or write in English. Even pastors or evangelists may not be comfortable communicating in English.
- b. When the companion congregation relationship is with a congregation in Chile, few persons in the Chilean congregation may know English and few in the WIS congregation may know Spanish. It is important to try to involve bilingual speakers in the congregation or community who can help bridge the communication difficulties. Church leaders in Chile have recently expressed an interest in ESL instruction for key leaders of their church. Perhaps some here could also consider learning some Spanish to help address the communication challenges.

8. Be sure to take advantage of the internet resources such as Google Translate and other sites that will take English words and sentences and render them in Spanish or Swahili or vice versa when receiving communications in a foreign language that you want to translate to English. While these translation websites aren't perfect, they can be very helpful when you are send or receive an email, letter or other written communication to a counterpart.

9. Beware of hacked email accounts. In the past, individuals here have received requests for money that purported to be from someone familiar overseas, but which proved to be false. If in doubt, contact the person by phone or consult with Cindy Wells (cindy.wells@wisynod.org; 712-732-4968 Ext. 441).

10. Consider ways to deepen your relationship and knowledge of one another via live internet communications where feasible. Joint online times of meetings, worship, celebrations, etc. can be arranged with significant impact for all involved.

Communication Is The Key To Success!