

History of the Synod – Diocese Partnership

By Elias Kitoi Nasari

The Greater Milwaukee/Meru partnership is indeed the work of the Holy Spirit. It was started by an idea by Bishop Paulo Akyoo who asked me to look for a possibility of finding and establishing a global partner, especially with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America while I was studying at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa (1993-1996). By this time, the Diocese of Meru, had just been born (June 1992) and already had partnership with Bamberg Dekanat (an Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany's small district in Bavaria)- which was started while the Diocese of Meru was by then, Meru District in the Northern Diocese, Moshi. Also by this time, many of the ELCT (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania) diocese, were starting to establish a Christian partnership with the ELCA Synods.

To implement Bishop Akyoo's request, I tried asking a couple of congregations of a possibility of starting a partnership between them and the Diocese of Meru, but didn't sound workable unless started and initiated by the Bishop of the Synod. I didn't know any bishops by this time. Thanks be to Reverend Weiskotten- who was an ELCA, Region V Coordinator, with his office at Wartburg Seminary; (he and his wife – Gloria), welcomed us to stay with them for about two weeks upon our arrival at Wartburg Seminary, freshly coming from Tanzania, generously helping us settle in.

Even when we had moved into the seminary apartments/houses, we continued our connections and friendship; where one day, I asked Reverend Edward whether he knew any bishop who could connect me with his/her respective Synod. Apparently, that became kind of an easy task for him to introduce me to Bishop Rogness- the Bishop of the Greater Milwaukee Synod by then. When I presented Bishop Akyoo's request to him, (in a Theological Conference which was held in Cincinnati Mounds (Roman Catholic Retreat Center) in fall of 1995, he was kind of not sure about starting that partnership, because he was hesitant of starting two global partnerships in the same Synod. It should be remembered that the El Salvador's partnership with the Greater Milwaukee Synod had just begun, but Bishop Rogness allowed me to approach individual congregations, to see whether they were interested; something which I did from Fall of 1995 until 1996. So, Reverend Edward helped me a great deal in connecting myself to congregations which wanted to invite an international student from Wartburg Seminary to come preach and speak, and to many of those congregations, the pastors were willing to ask their members whether they were interested in pursuing a partnership with the Diocese of Meru- of which many did; and therefore, Rev. Edward and myself, were then ready to engage on the Meru/Greater Milwaukee Synod partnership; which was officially accepted in the Synod's Assembly - 1996; and we had the first delegation to the Diocese of Meru, led by Bishop Peter Rogness and Reverend Edward Weiskotten (the 1st Chair of the Meru Committee) visit the Diocese of Meru in January, 1997 – just after I had return home from my studies at Wartburg Theological Seminary.

Bwana Asifiwe!

Mchungaji Elias Kitoi Nasari