

Companion Diocese Committee
Report to Diocesan Convention 2024

It may seem that the Companion Diocese Committee (CDC) has been quieter than in years past when we were working to help the people in South Sudan by building water wells, obtaining grinding mills, building a chapel at the school, gathering supplies for teaching the students at the Lui Primary school, and who could possibly forget the shoes, soap and salves we collected for our friends when they evacuated to the Kiryandongo Refugee Camp in Uganda. Over the course of those some fifteen years, we made wonderful friends through our visits to South Sudan, but governmental restrictions prevented all but four or five of our friends visiting the Diocese of Missouri despite their and our best efforts. It was with very heavy hearts that we had to end the formal relationship with the Diocese of Lui, but that did not end our familial ties that we developed and that continue to this day.

Our hearts were deeply touched, and we were forever changed through our experience of mission, but the committee recognized that these experiences should not be limited to folks who could raise \$10,000, take three weeks off work, be fully able to withstand the rigors of the travel not only to and from Lui, but also around their diocese when we were there. We couldn't take children of school age nor could people who were challenged by being differently abled. Health care and medications were scarce and evacuation out of the country was extremely difficult. Tribal conflicts broke out and continue to do so. The political situation is perilous even today. Many Moru people who left Lui for other countries decided they would not return. We continue to pray for them and beg you to do so, too.

We were excited to enter into a companion relationship with the Diocese of Puerto Rico. A small group of us traveled there just after Christmas in 2022. We had not been able to go sooner because of the COVID pandemic. As it was, some of our visitors returned COVID positive despite all our best practices. Many expected we would find areas still devastated by Hurricane Maria from some five years earlier, but we found that the island of Puerto Rico was beautiful, thriving, growing new ministries, educating deacons and priests in good numbers and so on. Oddly (or maybe not), when people found out that we did not come back with pictures of devastation and destruction, they were less interested in what we had learned. The people on the trip came home excited and full of new ways that the Diocese of Puerto Rico could help *us* more than the other way around. We are still happy to share this with you anytime.

A small group came to the Diocese of Missouri to visit ministries that we were growing here. They were as impressed by our St. Luke's Hospital as we were of their San Lucas Hospital. They met with people from around the diocese, worshiped with the folks of St. Timothy's during the bishop's visitation, and visited many of the attractions in Missouri.

The thing they liked the best, bar none, was the Trinity Food Ministry and the idea of the Just Food truck. At first, they were reluctant to accept lunch there until we convinced them that table fellowship with the clients who come was at least as important if not more so than providing a meal for our guests.

Our goal for 2024 was to bring a group of age-appropriate young people to join with the Diocese of Missouri at (what was then) Camp Phoenix. There were some complications—their own week-long youth activity was scheduled for the same week. We haven't given up hope for this to happen at the newly energized Camp Firebird. We will continue to work toward goal.

The people from Puerto Rico expressed a deep desire to get beyond the Metro St. Louis area that we could cover in four days they were with us. They want to go to see the Journey Church and are interested in how Calvary, Columbia supports their food ministry. They would like to worship with this congregation after hearing about this new approach to ministry. How might Journey help the people of Puerto Rico develop a new ministry that serves folks not presently being served? They want to know.

They also want to get to tiny churches with new models of doing ministry as they, too, are having deacons as well as lay folks leading congregations. They want to go to the churches in the southern part of the diocese, too. We need to find ways to invite them rather than waiting for them to ask to come again. Their diocese is in relationship with both Cuba and Ecuador Literal where needs are greater. We have been exploring the possibility of companioning *with* PR to assist with their outreach, too. One example is that they are supporting a school in Ecuador Literal. For \$2,000, two teachers could be funded for one whole year. We think this is within our reach, don't you?

In the meantime, we meet monthly on the first Thursday of each month at 6:00 PM via Zoom to pray Compline/Completas together. We do it in both Spanish and English depending on the relative fluency of the group gathered. It is a good way to polish one's liturgical Spanish in a friendly environment. We meet monthly with the CDC of the Diocese of Puerto Rico to discuss what we need to achieve to continue to move the relationship ahead. The key word here is "relationship."

One of the opportunities they have for us is their Spanish language program for priests and deacons usually held in June. This program can be adjusted to your individual needs so you can study for one week or six weeks or whatever in-between. We have the contact information for you.

If you are intrigued by this relationship and want to participate, contact a member of the CDC and we can give you more information. The bishop makes the appointments though. Our members currently are:

The Rev. Deacon Susan Naylor
Br. Sam Kincade
Cynthia Rapp
The Rev. Erin Pickersgill (Youth Ministries)

The Rev. Dr. Valori Mulvey Sherer
The Rev. Dr. Maria Evans
The Rev. Chris Cobb
Earl Naylor

Faithfully submitted,
The Rev. Dr. Deborah Goldfeder, Chair

