

# ELCIR Visions for the Future

## Where the Northeastern Minnesota Synod ELCA Can Accompany the ELCIR in Ministry in Russia

From the Northeastern Minnesota Synod ELCA/ELCIR Companion Synod Task Force

### Some attributes as a basis for long-range goals:

- The ELCIR identity is increasingly viewed as a Russian church.
- An objective of the church is to be active in social ministry as a mandate of the Gospel, a result being good connections and relationships with secular authorities and a welcoming image for nonmembers.
- The focus of the ELCIR now is supporting and strengthening existing churches, emphasizing discipleship, encouraging members to invite new members (missions), growth in understanding of stewardship, and understanding that a Christian (both lay and clergy) provides leadership with the attitude of being a servant to others.

### Visions for the future, goals or plans—priorities for accompaniment opportunities:

- 1) The ELCIR has a vision to open “**Educational Centers/Bible Schools**” for church leaders (lay people, church workers, and pastors) in each of the 7 Dioceses (initially in Karelia, Ural, Moscow areas), with courses that deal with practical aspects of theology, i.e., stewardship, discipleship, and servant leadership (motivating lay people, emphasizing relationship of the church being one body, using members’ spiritual gifts to further the work of the church, understanding that all are ministers). For example, there could be a 2-year course, meet 2-4 times/year (3- or 4-day weekend) with a “teacher” (plus a translator if needed) who provides materials for homework in between meetings; some of this could possibly be web-based. The ELCIR needs initial help in 3 areas: people (“teachers”), ideas (curriculum/program), funding. Opportunity exists here for working together to develop and implement a long-range plan (see note about ELCIR Endowment Fund below).
- 2) Many smaller churches are struggling and it would be good to establish a **friendship-congregation relationship**, the purposes including exchange visits, funding help, interaction (communication). Luga was mentioned as one; Bishop Kuggapi will provide additional names of churches.
- 3) Increase in pastoral and church worker salaries is an urgent need, including youth ministry support. The ELCIR needs initial support, one objective being to significantly increase the new ELCIR Endowment Fund (for support of salaries and/or support of the *Educational Centers/Bible Schools*). Immediate special projects for accompaniment include:
  - ✓ Youth ministry work of Nadia and Alex Krongolm by the Companion Synod Task Force is an important ELCIR priority for the near future.
- 4) Continued relational interactions such as the current Friendship English Language Camps in partnership with East European Mission Network and mission trips to the Ural Deanery

### Operating Principle:

With the leading of God’s Spirit, the role of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod will be to prayerfully accompany the ELCIR in its efforts to strengthen and deepen the faith of its members, especially in the areas of stewardship, discipleship, servant leadership, and mission. The “Educational Centers/Bible Schools” will serve as the foundation for this deepening of faith.

See Synod web page for more detailed information: [www.nemnsynod.org](http://www.nemnsynod.org) (Mission/Russia)