

Old Friends and New: The Diocese of Missouri and Its Companions  
Deacon Deb Goldfeder, Chair of the Companion Diocese Committee  
October 14, 2021

The Companion Diocese Committee (CDC) is delighted to bring you news of our activities in the past year. Despite COVID 19, we have met virtually to assess all the ways our diocese has benefited by the close relationship we developed with the people of Lui Diocese in South Sudan since 2004. Some of us have been able to travel there to see how we have helped the Moru people firsthand. When we returned, we spoke to numerous coffee hours and church groups to help people within the diocese to feel connected, too, despite their inability to visit Lui or the people of Lui to visit us. This was, perhaps our biggest disappointment throughout the more than sixteen years we have been in a formal relationship. They could not get visas to visit the US.

These companion relationships are not intended to continue ad infinitum and, indeed, our relationship with Lui Diocese continued long past an ordinary time would have been, but no time seemed to be the right time to dissolve the relationship. We are comforted by the knowledge that we will continue to hear from them from time to time, we will continue to keep them in our prayers, and we know they will continue to pray for us. We know that the political situation is not stable but there have been reports of rhinoceros and elephant sightings in eastern Mundri county meaning that peace is, in fact returning to Moru lands! We rejoice with them and will always do so.

I am delighted to report that we have great news to share about our new partners in mission: we will be companions with the Diocese of Puerto Rico! Bishop Rafael Morales and Bishop Deon Sanders have met both in person and via Zoom and both are eager for this new relationship to begin. There are many advantages for the people of Missouri. The first advantage is the cost of travel to Puerto Rico compared to travel to South Sudan. Younger people will be able to go there, we plan for lay and clergy exchanges between Puerto Rico and Missouri, and we hope we have a lively relationship that benefits both dioceses giving us all a greater understanding of the mission of the church in the world—not just Missouri to Puerto Rico but what Puerto Rico can bring to us as we seek to serve our Latinx neighbors and friends here at home.

The Companion Diocese Committee has begun meeting with our contacts in Puerto Rico and I can tell you, they are as excited as we are to formalize this relationship and begin working together. We are working with Bishop Rafael Morales, the bishop of the Diocese of Puerto Rico and the Rev. Canon Rafael Zorrilla, OP, who is coordinating the relationship there. We have some exciting ideas for the future such as offering prayers in Spanish for the diocese with the assistance of the people of Puerto Rico. Exchange trips between our two dioceses are a priority, also. We will be seeking your input for more ideas about this mission at our workshop at the Diocesan Convention workshop on Friday, November 19 from 5:30-6:30 PM. We hope to see you then!

In Peace, En Paz,

Deacon Deb Goldfeder  
Chair, Companion Diocese Committee

