



**COMPANION SYNOD COMMITTEE**  
**SASK SYNOD - ELCIC**  
**IGLESIA EVANGÉLICA LUTERANA UNIDA**

**WHY COMPANION SYNODS?**

Why does Saskatchewan have a companion synod relationship with Iglesia Evangelica Luterana Unida (IELU), the Lutheran Church serving Argentina and Uruguay?

The relationship traces its roots to the early 1990s when Canadian missionaries Ray and Bev Niebergall and their family moved to Esquel in the Patagonia region of southern Argentina. The Niebergalls helped to establish the Lutheran congregation in the city of Esquel and a mission point in the rural community of Cushamen. The Niebergalls returned to Canada in 1999 and were succeeded as missionaries by Greg and Marla Kiel and their family.

Having our own missionaries serving these communities created a bond between us even though we are located at almost opposite ends of the world. When the Saskatchewan Synod decided to start a companion synod relationship in 2001, Argentina was the natural choice.

Our relationship entered a new phase in 2002 when the Kiel family returned home to Saskatchewan. Now instead of supporting a Canadian missionary, our church is sponsoring two Argentine pastors. Pastor Sergio Utz serves Esquel and Cushamen, while Pastor Gustavo Gomez serves the coastal city of Comodoro Rivadavia, also located in the Patagonia region. Pastors Sergio and Gustavo were called jointly by IELU and our own Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, so in a very real way they continue to serve as our missionaries in Argentina, maintaining the long-standing bond between our two churches.

Our companion synod relationship is an equal partnership in which we pray for each other, learn about each other, and support each other with our God-given resources. Even though we are separated by a vast geographic distance, we are one in Christ.

**May is Companion Synod Month**



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