

KENYA EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH - KELC

Year Started and Brief History

The name of the church is Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church which currently covers the area from Kitale to Mombasa which is west to east and then Taveta/Loitokitok to Kirinyaga/Embu that is south to North on the central part of the country and then Lungalunga to Hola which is also south to north on the coastal part of the country. Many congregations from Nairobi westwards are served by our sister church the ELCK while we serve all other Lutheran congregations from Nairobi eastwards. The farthest congregation from the Nairobi church headquarters is about 900kms away. The church has continued to have partnership with ELCB, ELCNG(former Northelbian), ELCA, Niederberg district, and ELCT. We also have associate partnership with LWR. The church is the member of the LWF, WCC, AACC, and the local NCKK. The church has partnership policy which is guided by five major pillars namely understanding each other in all areas relating to partnership, listening to one another in the areas of realities that offers challenges, comfort and sense of development, sharing of resources without building co-dependency syndrome among the partners, advocacy which calls all partners to advocate for each others positive identity with reference to historical Lutheran identity which aims at empowering all people for the salvation ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ and networking among all partners to enable practical touch with one another in the areas of reporting, informing and opening an obvious channel of communication for each other and encouraging observation of partnership Sunday shared in all congregations which are connected with KELC partnership.

The Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church started in 1968 as a mission field of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. The Church became an independent entity in February 16th 1992 and we hope to celebrate the silver jubilee in 2017. The Church as continued to have a memorandum of understanding with the ELCT which aims at strengthening the partnership and accompaniment of the two churches. The memorandum allows our church to use and even change the content of the service and hymnal book, gives us chance to participate in the ELCT meetings and send our students in their learning institutions and we also invite them to participate in some of our major meetings and consultations.

Church Leader

The Church leader is the bishop with an assistant to the bishop both assisted with departmental heads. The current bishop is Bishop Zacharia Kahuthu.

Membership

The current membership is more than 44,000 congregants and we hope to have the accurate number after the results of the censuses which is ongoing at the Congregational level. The vision of the Church is to have more Kenyans converted to Lutheran through well planned programmes of five years of evangelism and development. With the strategic plan which is being made, the church aims at having more committed Lutheran members who will engage themselves into the daily work of the Church as they support the entity financially and morally with the purpose of making this Church self-reliant.

Organisational Structure

The organizational structure of our Church is based on the following:- The deciding body of the Church is the general assembly which meet every two years and the resolutions and the agenda of the general are implemented by the executive council which meets twice a year and the executive board implements the resolutions of the executive council through the arms of the Church departments which are Christian education, finance, women, youth, Diaconia, health and the legal office. The departments implement the activities through committees which are staged at national, district and Congregational levels. The Church is currently divided into four districts, two at the coastal area, one at the vicinity of Mount Kilimanjaro and one in Central Kenya. The Central district is the largest and there is a plan to divide it into three districts.

Main Areas of Work

Mission and evangelism, preparing and educating our church workers, diaconic works which includes HIV/AIDS and Malaria and street children project and concern on widows and orphans. The church also assists the needy students in paying their school fees. In times of drought the church also assists in providing food relief. We have a long time programme for providing bore holes in our areas of influence for provision of food security.

Countries of Missionary Activities

Currently the Church has internal mission areas and not countries of missionary activities. We have 15 mission areas and we plan to have more as the current once become parishes.

Special Challenges

The special challenges which faces the Church are:- the gap between the rich and the poor which has widened so much to the level where 60% of the population live under object poverty. The Church is mainly challenged to serve the poor who are too many beyond her capacity. The HIV/AIDS department has tried to address the issue with little assistance from the Government which is more powerful on the same. However, people flock in the Church for the little help which they always get. The Church is also challenged by the distance from the head office to her congregations and end up spending a lot of money on travel rather than reducing financial problems in our areas. The infrastructure is another challenge where bad roads to the areas of our work is not conducive to the plan and strategy of the Church. Another special challenge is the overwhelmed need of professionals to work in the Church which is unable to pay the required scale of salary and this results in having few Church workers with big work load. The Church is also challenged by the presence of the mushrooming of the so called 'religious groups' which aggressively spread the commercial gospel with empty promises of get quick rich through prayers and miracles in the midst of poverty and depression. In this area the Church is challenged to manifest her identity connected with the gospel of the cross accompanied by life discipline and the realities taught in the Bible with the emphases of the values and culture of the Kingdom of God.

Involvement in Networks or International Operations

The Church continues to involve and accompany with other partners in the ministry of the Gospel of Christ as stated in No. 1 so as to fulfil her mission and vision purpose as stated in her constitution.