

# Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Global Mission



**COMPANION SYNOD HANDBOOK**

*For ELCA Synods and Congregations*

# Table of Contents

<b>Preface</b> .....	4
<b>Foreword</b> .....	5
<b>PART I: Companion Synod Basics</b> .....	6
The Lutheran World Federation: a global communion.....	6
ELCA Global Mission.....	6
Companion synod relationships in our Lutheran communion.....	6
Benefits of companion relationships.....	7
Participants in the program.....	7
Glossary of terms.....	7
Accompaniment.....	8
Receiving: a key part of accompaniment.....	8
A bicycle parable.....	8
Guiding principles.....	8
Best practices for successful companion synod relationships.....	9
Cross-cultural issues that can influence your relationship.....	10
Language.....	10
Time.....	10
Money.....	10
Global stewardship principles.....	11
Give ELCA Global Gifts.....	12
What about material gifts?.....	12
An ice cream parable.....	13
<b>PART II: For ELCA Synods</b> .....	14
Within the ELCA synod, the bishop sets the tone.....	14
Organize and orient your committee.....	14
The committee’s duties and activities.....	15
Relations between the companion and the committee.....	15
Missionaries and regional representatives can be good resources.....	15
ELCA Global Mission can help.....	16
Do you have a covenant?.....	16
Building your relationship.....	17
First, get to know your companion.....	17
Communicate regularly.....	17
Pray for one another.....	18
Worship can deepen the relationship.....	18
Visit one another.....	18
Consider cross-companion synod activities.....	18
Involve youth.....	19
Companion Synod Profile.....	19
Advocate for your companion.....	19
Projects and volunteers.....	21
Exchange people.....	21
Tanzania and Nebraska: pastor exchange.....	21
Short-term service trips.....	22
Combine service and building relationships in one trip.....	22
Global Mission Volunteer opportunities.....	22
Project assessment.....	23
Establishing a congregation-to-congregation program.....	24
The synod’s role in congregational relationships.....	24
Examples of congregation-to-parish relationships.....	25

Tanzania and Nebraska .....	25
Malawi and Northwest Wisconsin.....	25
Congregations involved in another synod’s companion relationship.....	26
Assessing your current relationship .....	27
Companion synod assessment .....	28
Beginning an additional relationship .....	29
Determining feasibility.....	29
Discerning a decision.....	29
Formalizing the new relationship .....	30
Getting started .....	30
Share the good news with your synod .....	30
Make your first visit.....	30
Invite your new companion to visit .....	30
Give the people-to-people relationship time to grow .....	30
<b>PART III: For ELCA Congregations.....</b>	<b>31</b>
Building interest .....	31
Learn about your companion.....	31
Remember your companion in worship.....	31
Taste and see! .....	31
Creating personal relationships .....	31
Visit your companion .....	31
Invite visitors .....	31
Communicate ... in other languages!.....	32
Sister congregation program.....	32
Missionary sponsorship .....	32
<b>PART IV: Planning Trips .....</b>	<b>33</b>
Why are you going? .....	33
Have you been invited? .....	34
Joint agreements .....	34
Don’t overburden your companion.....	34
Choosing participants .....	35
Commissioning the delegation.....	35
In case of evacuation .....	35
Sample planning timeline.....	35
Orientations ensure a smooth, positive experience.....	36
Assemble an important document file.....	37
<i>Welcome Forward</i> book and Web site help delegations prepare for international travel ..	37
Words from a fan of <i>Welcome Forward</i> .....	37
Orientation One: Initial Information Session .....	39
Orientation Two: First Cross-cultural Session.....	43
Orientation Three: Second Cross-cultural Session.....	46
Orientation Four: Companion Church Session .....	51
Orientation Five: Pre-trip Planning Session .....	53
Daily reflections on the journey .....	57
Debriefing your journey .....	57
<b>PART V: Hosting International Guests .....</b>	<b>59</b>
The gift of cultural exchange.....	59
Helpful resources on hosting international guests .....	59
Set the vision and purpose .....	59
Keep both bishops in the loop! .....	60
Who should visit? .....	60
Send the invitation .....	60
Agree on mutual responsibilities.....	60
Sample planning timeline.....	61
Plan the visit.....	62

Help guests secure visas .....	63
Detailed itineraries can help.....	63
Practicing ahead of time is a good idea.....	64
Start early.....	64
Arrange tours and visits .....	64
Plan on rest, spontaneity and family visits.....	64
Address financial issues early .....	64
Arrange for housing .....	65
Arrange local transportation.....	65
Provide insurance for medical care .....	65
Enable guests to share .....	65
Orient your visitors .....	66
During the visit .....	66
When the visit ends.....	67

**Appendices**

Appendix 1: Protocol agreement.....	68
Appendix 2: Some thoughts about being companions.....	73
Appendix 3: Sample companion synod covenant .....	74
Appendix 4: Sample application .....	75
Appendix 5: Sample trip evaluation.....	80
Appendix 6: Sample letter of invitation to guest.....	81
Appendix 7: Sample official invitation addressed to consulate .....	82
Appendix 8: Visas.....	83
Appendix 9: Accompanying your companion’s scholarship students .....	87

**Orientation Handouts**

Handout A: Vocabulary Worksheet .....	88
Handout B: Accompaniment Kyrie .....	89
Handout C: Cross-cultural Relationships .....	90
Handout D: Cultural Norms Worksheet.....	91
Handout E: A Code of Ethics for Tourists .....	92
Handout F: Team Member Roles .....	93
Handout G: Journaling Worksheet .....	94
Handout H: Receiving International Visitors .....	96

# Preface

This handbook is for ELCA members involved in companion synod relationships with international companions.

This handbook outlines the rich possibilities for global involvement through companion synod relationships. Its contents will help congregations, synods and others better understand and participate in the Companion Synod Program. Use it to:

- understand the accompaniment model for mission that shapes the program;
- assess and strengthen a companion synod relationship;
- plan successful companion visits and exchanges;
- clarify financial relationships; and
- start an additional relationship.

This edition of the handbook has updated information, including international funds transmittals (p. 12), companion synod profiles (p. 19), advocating for your companion (p. 20), projects and volunteers (p. 21), combining service trips with building relationships (p. 22), establishing a congregation-to-congregation program (p. 24), congregations involved in another synod's companion relationship (p. 26), missionary sponsorship (p. 32), in case of evacuation (p. 35), the protocol agreement on companion synod relationships adopted by the ELCA Conference of Bishops (Appendix 1), and international scholars (Appendix 9).

You can download a copy of this handbook, along with many other companion synod and global mission resources, at [www.elca.org/globalmission](http://www.elca.org/globalmission).

*Connection is everything. Relationship to God and to each other is life itself.*

—Heidi B. Neumark, *Breathing Space*

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# Foreword



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

Dear companions in Christ,

Life and faith both depend on exchange. Oxygen refreshes our bodies and then becomes carbon dioxide that nourishes plants and trees. And encounters between God's people around the world enrich our faith and strengthen our ability to engage in God's mission.

The ELCA Companion Synod Program recognizes that we are all gifted by God to do God's work. Through companionship in the global Lutheran community, we exchange gifts of time, hospitality, patience and understanding that are vital for God's mission. As we practice discerning and appreciating one another's gifts, we come to understand our mutuality and interdependence. All of our gifts are necessary to build our mutual capacity to engage in God's mission!

Conducted in the spirit of mutuality and giftedness, companion synod relationships at their best recognize that we are one body, gathered, called and sent to proclaim God's creative, redeeming and sanctifying activity in the world. They are a strong vehicle for the ELCA's engagement in global mission, because global mission is the responsibility of the whole church.

My prayer is that this handbook will equip you to live out your companion relationships in the spirit of abundance, and rejoice in the exchange of gifts that builds our capacity to engage in mission together.

Soli Deo Gloria,

Rev. Rafael Malpica-Padilla  
Executive Director, ELCA Global Mission

# PART I: Companion Synod Basics

## The Lutheran World Federation: a global communion

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is a global communion of Christian churches in the Lutheran tradition. Founded in 1947 in Lund, Sweden, the LWF now has 140 member churches in 79 countries representing 68 million of the nearly 70 million Lutherans worldwide.

LWF member churches confess the triune God, agree in the proclamation of the Word of God and are united in altar and pulpit fellowship. These churches consider their communion within the LWF as an expression of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.

The LWF acts on behalf of its member churches in such areas of common interest as communication, ecumenical relations, human rights, humanitarian assistance, theology and the various aspects of mission and development.

→ See [www.lutheranworld.org](http://www.lutheranworld.org) or [www.elca.org/lwf](http://www.elca.org/lwf) for the North American regional expression.

*The communio is God's gift through which all Christians and all churches are called to live in God's mission and fellowship together. We do not choose these relationships nor may we determine to share with some and neglect others. All members are God's gift to us. As a church we are not only a human-made structure and organization. We are the body of Christ, a communio in which we live out our callings in God's mission, bear one another's burdens and receive one another's gifts.*

—ELCA Global Mission,  
*Global Mission in the 21st Century*

## ELCA Global Mission

Global Mission is the ELCA churchwide program unit responsible for the ELCA's mission outside the United States and serves as the channel through which churches in other countries engage in mission to our church. ELCA Global Mission's overall goal is to increase the capacity of both the ELCA and its companions in other countries to participate in God's reconciling mission through proclamation and service. On behalf of the ELCA, the Global Mission unit:

- engages in church-to-church relations with national Lutheran church bodies;
- calls and prepares missionaries for service;
- supports evangelism and ministries of other companion Lutheran church bodies;
- provides scholarships for international post-graduate study to global church leaders;
- works to alleviate poverty and meets human needs by funding long-term sustainable development projects using ELCA World Hunger funds;
- responds to international disasters through and with international church organizations and relief agencies on the ground using ELCA Disaster Response funds; and
- connects ELCA members in North America to the global church through relationships and events.

→ See [www.elca.org/globalmission](http://www.elca.org/globalmission) for more information about ELCA Global Mission.

## Companion synod relationships in our Lutheran communion

ELCA Global Mission established the Companion Synod Program to deepen relationships with church bodies around the world. These relationships reflect the new reality of mission. Thanks to the work of European and North American missionaries, Lutheran churches have been established throughout the world. Today, 140 independent, autonomous churches—some of them former “mission fields”—are full

members of The Lutheran World Federation, a communion of churches.

Companion synod relationships are a concrete expression of this communion. For this reason, ELCA Global Mission continues to support, nurture and strengthen relationships between ELCA synods and international companions, using the accompaniment model for mission.

*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.*  
*Ephesians 4:4-6*

## Benefits of companion relationships

As Christians, we do not fully understand the one holy and catholic church without a global perspective. A companion relationship enlarges our world view. Global connections help us see the world's challenges in a new way and examine our own problems and joys through new eyes. These connections also strengthen God's mission in the world.

The Companion Synod Program is a further expression of this relationship among global Lutherans. Through this program, companions nurture and strengthen one another for life and mission within the body of Christ. Companions participate in one another's life and ministry through prayer, study, communication, exchange of visitors and sharing of resources. Companion relationships open our eyes to the many challenges of the global context, and call us to deepen our commitment to be true disciples of Christ as individuals and together as a Lutheran communion of faith.

## Participants in the program

All 65 ELCA synods participate in at least one companion synod relationship. Because many synods have more than one

relationship, more than 120 companion synod relationships exist. Some ELCA synods relate to an entire church body, such as the South Carolina Synod and the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, while others relate to a diocese, district or synod of a church body, such as the Lower Susquehanna Synod and the Konde Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.

## Glossary of terms

**LWF:** The Lutheran World Federation.  
→ See the first paragraph on the previous page or [www.elca.org/lwf](http://www.elca.org/lwf).

**ELCA:** the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, an LWF church in the United States, Puerto Rico, the Bahamas and the Virgin Islands.

**Companion church:** an LWF church in another country, which has a bilateral church-to-church relationship with the ELCA.

**Companion Synod Program:** the Global Mission program of official relationships between ELCA synods and international companions.

**International companion:** a companion church, or a synod, diocese or district of a companion church in a companion synod relationship with an ELCA synod.

**Companion synod relationship:** the connection between an ELCA synod and an international companion; for example, the ELCA Sierra Pacific Synod has a companion synod relationship with the Taiwan Lutheran Church.

**Companion synod committee:** a group of ELCA synod members who have been elected, appointed or have volunteered to work with the synod's companion relationship.

**Companions:** refers to both the ELCA synod and their international Lutheran partners; for example, the Taiwan Lutheran Church and the ELCA Sierra Pacific Synod are companions.

# Accompaniment

→ See [www.elca.org/globalmission](http://www.elca.org/globalmission) and click How We Work for a discussion of accompaniment.

→ See [www.elca.org/globalmission/resources](http://www.elca.org/globalmission/resources) to find resources on accompaniment.

**C**ompanion synod relationships express the accompaniment model for mission, the missiological vision of ELCA Global Mission.

Accompaniment—literally, *walking together* side by side—is a mutual relationship between companion churches who walk together in service in God’s mission. Each church has primary responsibility for mission in its own area.

Central Africans have their own expression for accompaniment: *maboko na maboko*, which means “hand in hand.”

The biblical roots of accompaniment are found in the incarnation of Jesus when God walks with us. One of the stories that unfolds this presence is in Luke 24:13–35, the Easter story of the friends walking on the road to Emmaus. The disciples on the road, the accompanying stranger, the dialogue and examination of scripture, the extending of hospitality and a meal, and finally, the revelation of the risen Christ in the breaking of bread, all provide images of our journey together in God’s mission. We walk with one another in a journey where the presence of God is revealed to us. God in Christ accompanies us in the fellowship of word and table.

The accompaniment model rose out of the changing paradigm of mission. A few generations ago, European and North American churches were the churches with resources, who sent missionaries to preach the gospel in places where it had not been heard. Today, churches throughout the world are now made up of people who have been Christians for generations. Instead of taking the lead on mission in their countries, we interact with one another as colleagues, fellow workers in the vineyard of Christ.

Mature churches, each with their own strengths and characteristics, learn from one another in mutual respect. In places where there is no Christian presence, we partner with neighboring churches and ecumenical partners.

## Receiving: a key part of accompaniment

In the accompaniment model, “receiving” is as important as “sending.” The act of receiving acknowledges the wide variety of gifts and talents present in the global Christian family. Companions who walk together in accompaniment emphasize recognizing and embracing one another’s gifts. Being open to and appreciative of the gifts of companions is a hallmark of accompaniment and the Companion Synod Program.

## A bicycle parable

*Some time ago there was a dialogue between the church in Sudan and the mission society in England. Apparently it started with the church’s request for bicycles for pastors. The mission society was glad to provide them.*

*“What can we do in return for our brothers and sisters in England?” asked the Sudanese church leader. The question was asked three times but the answer was always the same: “Nothing.” So the final message from Sudan came. “If there is nothing we can do for you, then there is nothing you can do for us. We do not want your bicycles.”*

—World Encounter

## Guiding principles

Accompaniment is more than an exclusive contract between two or more companion churches. It is walking together in Jesus Christ of two or more churches in companionship and in service in God’s mission. Companions who walk together in accompaniment:

- honor one another's integrity;
- make decisions mutually;
- value their interdependence;
- respect one another's context, situation, and practical limitations;
- respect one another as interpreters of their own experience;
- are open to new experiences, new information, and in some cases, conflicting values;
- emphasize relationship over resources;
- acknowledge one another's gifts;
- practice transparency in all matters; and
- confirm that each church has the primary responsibility for mission in its area.

Adhering to these principles in all matters will help build a foundation of trust that is essential to an honest, open relationship. Relational difficulties may occur when there is not a firm commitment to the principles of accompaniment.

Companions are ambassadors for Christ and for one another, and ought to:

- conduct themselves in ways that show deep respect and the ability to interpret differences in cultures and traditions;
- remember that larger church structures and relationships exist among the churches. Consult with ELCA Global Mission regarding projects, partner relationships and written agreements that may be in place with your companion; and
- develop skills for setting boundaries and offering dignity in response to inappropriate requests or offers by companions and synodical members.

## **Best practices for successful companion synod relationships**

### **Intensive personal involvement**

- Synodical leaders work closely with companion leaders.

### **Commitment to mutuality**

- A mutual planning process with multiple partners
- Make mutuality of mission a priority.
- With your companion, develop a protocol for relating to each other and for working in conjunction with ELCA Global Mission staff.

### **Communication**

- Maintain a channel of regular communication and prayer requests.

### **Frequent visits**

- In conjunction with your companion, fund trips or host visitations regularly, perhaps once or twice a year.

### **Diverse representation and involvement**

- Women, youth and individuals with multicultural backgrounds are involved in leadership, visits and decision-making.

### **Work with identified ministry priorities**

- Work with your companion on evangelism and outreach, health programs, primary education and development programs.

### **Leadership development**

- Respond to leadership development needs, including scholarships and exchange programs between lay and ordained leaders.

## Cross-cultural issues that can influence your relationship

Cross-cultural relationships between companions can be exciting *and* challenging. When companions are in two different countries, cultural understandings of language, time and money will influence the relationship.

### Language

English may be the second, third, or fourth language of the members and leaders of your companion. Some leaders will need translation and interpretation assistance from colleagues or missionaries in order to understand and respond to your synod's communications. Explore ways of responding and communicating in the language of your companion.

→ See *Part III, Creating personal relationships: Communicate ... in other languages!* for how to seek translation help.

No matter which language you use to communicate, make sure that the words you choose convey mutuality and respect.

- Avoid “up and down” talk—by saying travel “*down* to Brazil” instead of “*to* Brazil”—that may unintentionally introduce a hierarchy.
- Avoid the term “mission field,” which may tell a self-governing, independent companion that we still see it as dependent.
- Refer to the particular country, culture or people of your companion—not an entire continent. “Africa” is not a homogenous country, but a continent of many nations, peoples and ecosystems!

Avoid economic, political, social and class comparisons and judgments. In Jesus Christ, these differences are transcended in the fellowship and *koininia* of the Holy Spirit. All temptations to compare should lead us to examine our own assumptions and values.

### Time

Visitors from other countries regularly remind us that North Americans are slaves to the clock, often at the expense of hospitality and respect for others. Be sensitive to the differing values of time. Punctuality or quick responses to requests and communications may not be possible because of differing concepts of time and because of practical realities and limitations in certain situations.

### Money

Money represents power, and when it becomes part of the relationship, it disrupts the mutuality and equality of the partnership. Strive to live out accompaniment by always emphasizing relationships over resources. Use the global stewardship principles in the following section as a guide in considering financial arrangements.

→ See *Part IV*. You'll find a series of orientation sessions to prepare visitors to and from your companion, including cross-cultural exercises that will benefit everyone who participates in your companion relationship. Consider using these in committee meetings to increase the cross-cultural awareness of all your committee members.

# Global stewardship principles

**A**ccompaniment emphasizes relationships before resources. Money can represent power, and when it becomes part of the relationship, it may disrupt the mutuality and equality of the partnership. Development of programs and allocation of resources flow from how companions relate, rather than vice versa. Accompaniment means mutuality in the sharing of gifts for ministry. Use the following principles to guide financial decisions.

- **Learn what your gifts already do.**  
There are many ways you already support the global church, such as through your offerings to your congregation and its ELCA Mission Support, or through your gifts to ELCA World Hunger, Missionary Sponsorship and International Disaster Response. Be generous with your gifts to and through the church. These gifts make ministry happen around the world, including the existence and support of your companion synod relationship, and often provide direct or indirect benefits to your international companion. Learn what your gifts already do before funding new projects.
- **Establish the relationship first, and then consider sharing financial gifts.**  
Share financial assistance and gifts only *after* the relationship has been well established through mutual visits, ministries, communication and spiritual fellowship. Prematurely sharing financial assistance will put the ELCA synod in the dominant and controlling role in the relationship and destroy mutuality in mission. The bishop's leadership is critical in this quest to avoid inequitable power dynamics.
- **Follow their agenda, not yours.**  
Projects and plans for spending monetary gifts should originate in your companion. Your synod should not

decide what your companion needs, or tell it what to do with a financial gift.

- **Benefit the community rather than individuals.**  
Gifts given to your companion should work for the greater good of the community or the whole church—not benefit one family, individual or congregation. When you visit your companion or host visitors in your synod, do not distribute money and gifts to individuals you encounter.
- **Support development rather than dependency.**  
Financial gifts should empower or help develop self-sufficiency. Gifts that underwrite a pastor's salary or administrative costs of a synodical budget will only make your companion dependent on ELCA support. Development gifts, such as helping build a school, investing in a guesthouse or starting a coffee-growing project, can help your companion achieve or sustain self-sufficiency.
- **Research the context to determine a project's longevity.**  
Gifts should be for projects that make sense in the cultural context of your companion. Machinery that is obsolete or cannot be maintained or repaired does not serve its purpose very long.
- **Understand the context and preserve the balance of power.**  
Sometimes a development project can unwittingly upset the balance of power within a community. Digging a well may seem like a good community project now, but who will maintain the well afterwards? Who owns the land surrounding the well? Who will control access to the well? Who will profit from the well? Who will lose? Similarly, consider how a project might affect the balance of power within your companion. Will a congregation become so self-sufficient that it no longer relates to the larger church body?

- **Work toward cross-cultural transparency.**  
Make sure both companions understand what is being given, where it is going and what it is for. Understand the cultural concepts of money before giving. What does transparency mean, for example, in places wary of bank accounts? You and your companion should agree on how gifts designated for particular projects will be accounted for. In the case of undesignated money, it is up to the companion to decide how to distribute and spend it. (If it's undesignated, let go.)
- **If you start a project, make sure you can complete it.**  
Starting a school but running out of money before the roof is on is simply a waste of money. Do not get halfway through a project and abandon it. Instead, hold fundraising events and secure the money prior to beginning the project.
- **Use synodical oversight.**  
All financial gifts to your international companion—including pass-through gifts that come from congregations and individuals—should be given through your synod office.
- **Global Mission can help you comply with the Patriot Act.**  
Your synod office is encouraged to send pass-through gifts through the Global Mission unit. This service is provided by ELCA Global Mission to assist ELCA synods, congregations and Institutions to comply with the U.S. Patriot Act, which seeks to minimize the possibility that U.S. citizens will fund terrorist activities.
- **Remember the role of the international companions.**  
Send financial gifts to the church office of your international companion, not to parishes or individuals. This will increase financial transparency and minimize the resentments that can build if one parish has a generous U.S. benefactor, and a parish down the road doesn't. It also strengthens the ability of

your companion to coordinate ministry within its territory.

- **Make sure the money gets there.**  
It can be difficult to send funds by yourself. Checks can get lost in the mail, and the bank may hold them for 30–40 days before your companion can withdraw the money. Taking large sums of money with you on a visit to your companion can expose you to risk. Wire transfers can be expensive. If you send a wire transfer, send a confirmation of the transfer to your companion that they can show the bank. Pay all transfer fees, and make sure your gift covers any additional fees the companion may incur for receiving the money. To minimize money transfer problems, consider sending an annual or quarterly gift through your synod office and then through Global Mission, rather than small gifts whenever a congregation takes up a special collection.

## Give ELCA Global Gifts

Numerous ELCA Global Mission projects are supported through donations from individuals, groups and congregations. These projects, called “Global Gifts,” are not covered through the ELCA budget, but are above-and-beyond contributions. The projects have been approved by and are considered priorities for companion churches. For information about companion projects contact:

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Chicago, IL 60631  
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*Andrew.steele@elca.org*

## What about material gifts?

Before sending clothing, blankets, school supplies, books or medical supplies to your companion, consider several things:

- Is what you are sending needed?
- Is clothing appropriate to the climate and conditions?

- How much will it cost to ship?
- Will books you send be culturally appropriate in your companion's context? Are they in the language of the people?
- Who will receive, store and distribute items?
- Will the packages actually reach the intended recipient? Are shipping methods reliable?
- Who will pay the customs costs to bring the items into the country?
- Would it be easier and more culturally appropriate to provide the funds for your companions to buy the items in their own country?

Consider sending in-kind gifts through such established organizations as Lutheran World Relief or Global Health Ministries. Organizations such as Heifer International use monetary donations to purchase animals from the country for families in need to develop self-sufficiency.

In some circumstances, material gifts are appropriate. Churches have asked for bicycles to help pastors get from one congregation to the next (be sure to send bicycle pump and tire repair kit). Some synods have shipped containers of relief supplies to their companion in times of crisis. Use the principles listed above to determine whether sending a material gift is appropriate, and remember the words of Ken Grosch, former director of Global Health Ministries: "If you send junk in the name of Jesus, it still remains junk."

## An ice cream parable

*A delegation from a companion church in East Africa visited their companion synod in the Midwest. In a show of hospitality, several congregations joined together to host an old-fashioned ice cream social. The visitors from Africa absolutely loved the ice cream, and talked of how it was the most delicious thing they had ever tasted. Even in correspondence after the visit, they recalled how much they had enjoyed the ice cream social, and wished everyone in their congregations could have experienced it.*

*So the Midwest congregations decided that they would send ice cream makers to Africa! How thrilled our companions will be to make their own ice cream, they thought. Money was raised to purchase and ship a half-dozen electric ice cream makers to the villages in East Africa.*

*When the ice cream makers arrived, the people eagerly opened the boxes. They made arrangements to borrow a generator in order to plug in the ice cream makers, and debated whether goat's milk would work, and then realized that they needed ice to make ice cream. Where would they get ice? And even if they traveled to the city for it, how would they get it home without it melting? And the well-intentioned ice cream makers served no purpose at all, until someone discovered that if the motor and lid were taken off, the bottom worked fine as a water bucket for the goats.*

*This parable reminds us that it takes more than good intentions to be helpful. Can your gift be used, maintained and repaired? Has your companion asked for it? Who will benefit?*

# PART II: For ELCA Synods

**T**his section examines the roles of the many participants in companion synod relationships.

## **Within the ELCA synod, the bishop sets the tone**

As leaders, role models and representatives of the ELCA, bishops set the tone and the scope of companion relationships. The constitution for synods outlines the job of bishop, in part, as being the chief ecumenical officer (S8.12.h.3) and fostering “awareness of other churches throughout the Lutheran world communion and, where appropriate, engag[ing] in contact with leaders of those churches” (S8.12.h.5).

In companion synod relationships, it is critical that bishops connect with their companion’s leaders at a very personal level. In addition, bishops can:

- provide spiritual leadership to the relationship;
- give ritual leadership to the inauguration of a covenant by presiding at the service and signing the covenant, and paying attention to matters of protocol that can impact cross-cultural relationships;
- give special attention to the situation of women and youth in their companion and show public respect for them by including them in delegations and seeking their input; and
- carry a bishop’s travel kit with items that express the bishop’s public office, such as a bishop’s purple shirt (where expected), bishop’s cross, Bible and gifts that symbolize the spiritual nature of the companion relationship.

Newly elected bishops are encouraged to establish a personal relationship with their companion’s leaders in a timely manner.

→ See *Appendix 2, Some thoughts about being companions*, for more on the role of the bishop.

While the bishop plays an important role, the relationship should not become dependent upon the person of the bishop. Bishops come and go, and a well-grounded relationship will endure through many changes. The companion synod committee is a key component to this continuity.

## **Organize your committee**

A companion synod or global mission committee will nurture the relationship by linking ELCA leaders, members, congregations and related organizations to the international companion and to ELCA Global Mission.

Synodical bylaws may specify the number of committee members and their method of selection. For example, a typical committee may have five or more members, elected by the synod assembly or appointed by the bishop or Synod Council.

Bylaws may also specify the purpose of the committee and the committee’s relationship to the bishop, synodical staff, Synod Council and synod assembly, synodical planning and budgeting process, and such other committees as Outreach and Communication.

Seek committee members who:

- are committed to global mission and the accompaniment model for mission;
- have excellent organizational skills;
- are creative, patient, flexible, open and hospitable; and
- are of different ages, ethnic backgrounds and interests.

Create a committee that is big enough to accomplish its purpose and achieve some momentum for the coming years.

- Seek representation from different groups, including people with a natural interest in your companion.
- If there is a language barrier, seek members who can serve as translators.

Including representatives from stewardship, youth ministry, Women of the ELCA,

outreach and other synodical ministries offers two benefits. First, it will be easier to communicate the work of your synod to your companion. Second, when visitors come, they will have ready access to ministries they may be interested in learning about.

Membership terms will help keep the committee fresh and creative. Stagger terms to maintain continuity and a mix of newcomers and veterans. Look for opportunities for broad-based participation in the relationship. Take advantage of former committee members when difficulties arise!

Take a look at how you can be involved in synodical events and activities, like the annual synod assembly, that can help you lift up companions and attract participants.

#### **The committee's duties and activities**

- Communicating with your companion:
  - finding translators; and
  - sending correspondence, newsletters, prayer requests.
- Cooperating with the synod office:
  - coordinating official correspondence between bishops/presidents;
  - sharing official documents, covenants, and the like;
  - establishing and maintaining the covenant; and
  - planning bishop's visits and hosting bishop's visitors.
- Facilitating synodical relationship and projects:
  - looking for ways to receive gifts of companions;
  - planning visits and projects;
  - hosting visitors;
  - administering synodical projects; and
  - arranging exchanges.
- Communicating to the synod as a whole, including congregations, leaders, members, other committees and related institutions:
  - educating about the relationship;
  - inviting active participation;
  - sharing resources and breaking news; and
  - guiding sister congregation relationships.
- Planning the program:
  - establishing specific goals and objectives of the companion synod relationship;

- envisioning and creating activities and strategies for implementing the goals;
- outlining budgets, timelines and individuals responsible for activities and strategies;
- publicizing and communicating each activity; and
- growing in understanding of accompaniment.

### **Relations between the companion and the committee**

The companion synod committee is an ELCA institution that works well in our own context, where bishops have assistants and a synod's specific ministries are supported by a committee of laypeople and clergy.

You will probably not encounter a similar committee when you relate to your companion. Typically, your main contact—at least at the beginning of a relationship, before visits take place—will be the bishop, president or other church leader, who may be too busy to respond to correspondence from your committee. Be patient. Don't use a local missionary as a go-between. Ask your companion's leader to identify the best person for your committee to contact regularly. As visits and exchanges help companions get to know one another better, communicating will be easier.

### **Missionaries and regional representatives can be good resources**

ELCA missionaries and regional representatives serving within your companion are an excellent source of information, especially about your companion's country, culture and church. They may also be eager to meet your delegation when visiting your companion. However, unless making arrangements for visiting delegations is part of their job description, please do not ask them to arrange programs or accommodations for when you visit. And please don't make them the focus of your correspondence. Remember, the goal of the companion synod relationship is to relate to members of another church, not to ELCA missionaries.

## ELCA Global Mission can help

ELCA Global Mission staff in the churchwide office can assist your committee by:

- consulting or troubleshooting on projects, partner relationships and written agreements that may be in place with your companion;
- providing orientations for new committees or new relationships;
- advising your committee on how it can arrange travel, visas, insurance and orientations;
- helping committees do an assessment of their relationship;
- providing educational materials on accompaniment; and
- informing you about important information relative to your companion and the content of the relationship with ELCA.

→ See the *Preface* for a list of Global Mission contacts or [www.elca.org/global\\_mission](http://www.elca.org/global_mission).

## Do you have a covenant?

A covenant between companions is a mutual document that states the vision, mission and purpose of a relationship, and outlines specific goals or pathways the relationship will take. Creating a covenant together will deepen your understanding of each other's expectations. A covenant can help focus your relationship and build

understanding and support among your synod members.

Once you and your companion are better acquainted, consider hosting a mutual planning event. Hosting the event in your companion's country will help invite more companion participants into the relationship. This would be a good time to invite your ELCA Global Mission companion synod staff to participate or even lead this event. Take care to include equal numbers from both your synod and your companion, and include a variety of leaders.

Use the meeting to address projects, visits, communication and other issues, and to draft a covenant that captures your common understanding of the relationship. Together you can develop joint expectations for your relationship over the next three to five years, form a covenant to guide it, and make a commitment to review and revise the covenant by a future date.

If your relationship has been underway for some time, take a look at your covenant. Should it be renewed or rewritten to reflect the ways in which your relationship has grown?

When the covenant is ready, the group can plan events in each country to publicly sign and affirm the covenant. Celebrate a new or revised covenant by inviting both bishops (or bishop and president) to sign it in a worship service during a delegation's visit.

→ See *Appendix 3* for a sample covenant.

# Building your relationship

In a relationship characterized by accompaniment, “Hello” is a universal place to start. Greetings can launch a relationship, but then what? There are many activities you can choose from. All activities will shape your relationship. Be sure in all of these to consult your companion, so your activities are mutual, not just your agenda!

→ See *Part II, Project assessment*, which can help you plan activities consistent with your goal: to walk together with your companion in service to God’s mission.

## First, get to know your companion

Can you find your companion’s location on a map? Do you know the name of the president of the country? Typical foods in the country? Chances are, your companion can answer all of these questions about the United States. Do you know how many congregations your companion has? Make getting to know your companion a priority.

- Gather useful information about the history of the country, its culture and current issues.
- Invite someone from the country or who has lived there to meet with the committee and suggest additional resources.
- Consult your companion for more suggestions.
- Read ELCA Global Mission companion profiles.  
→ See *www.elca.org companion profiles*.
- Check out information provided by The Lutheran World Federation about its member churches, including your companion.  
→ See *Part I, The Lutheran World Federation: a global communion*, including the Web links.
- Consult with former missionaries who may know your international companion.  
→ See the *Preface* to find a Global Mission staff person to contact for a list of former missionaries.

- There may be a student from your companion studying in this country who could help deepen your relationship.  
→ See *Appendix 9*.
- Knowing the climate, food staples, form of government and economy of a place will help you get to know the people. Can the children of your synod even imagine a place without easy access to a fast-food chain or a grocery store? What can they learn from the children of your companion?
- Implement a synod-wide strategy to teach congregations about your companion, its country and related issues. Start with your committee and then move into the synod.

A basic knowledge of your companion’s country, church and culture is an important sign of respect, as is openness to learning from your companion—a key component of accompaniment.

## Communicate regularly

Reaching out through letters and telephone conversations is another good way to build your relationship. Decide who from your synod will be responsible for communicating, how frequently and by what means. Will you communicate with a bishop, a president or a committee? Most synods rely on e-mail and communicate with companions monthly or quarterly.

- Encourage regular correspondence between your bishop and companion leaders. After a visit in which people have gotten acquainted, exchange letters with those you have met. Use conventional mail, e-mail, text messages and fax as appropriate.
- Exchange prayer requests, worship material, songs, newsletters and stories of interest.
- Send greetings and encouragement in times of celebration or sorrow.
- Hold amplified telephone conversations during committee meetings, worship services or synod assemblies, so that more people can participate in companion communications.

- Exchange audio recordings with greetings, conversations, messages or music.
- If technology permits, establish a Web site specifically for the companion relationship. For a model, visit the Greater Milwaukee Synod's El Salvador Web page, [www.partnerswithelsalvador.org/whoweare/index.html](http://www.partnerswithelsalvador.org/whoweare/index.html)
- Videotape interviews, greetings and others presentations. DVDs have universal usage, but tapes produced on equipment from other countries may need to be transferred for display on North American equipment and vice versa.

### Pray for one another

Partnership in prayer is fundamental to the companion synod relationship. What are the concerns of your synod? Your companion? Share needs with one another for mutual prayer support. Prayer activities could include:

- weekly petitions used in every congregation;
- prayer requests for members' daily prayer life;
- prayer covenants that commit you to pray for one another regularly;
- common prayers for both companions, translated and used regularly or on specified occasions;
- prayer partnerships between congregations or other groups;
- days of prayer with certain emphases or for specific occasion; and
- "Prayer Around the Cross," a setting available from ELCA Global Mission, which can be adapted to include news and issues from your companion's country.

### Worship can deepen the relationship

Worship and other gatherings provide another way for companions to learn about one another. Consider exchanging or sharing:

- songs and hymns (use the language of your companion, or translate);
- prayers, invocations, benedictions or complete worship services;

- customs, rituals, and other symbolic actions designed with your companion;
- banners, paraments and other worship articles;
- themes and sermon texts;
- sermons or brief greetings; and
- seasonal greetings (learn to say, "Christ has risen!" in your companion's language at Easter; observe customs or rituals of the companion).

### Visit one another

Visits allow companions to understand one another better than any letter, video or slide show ever will. They also invite more people into the companion relationship.

- Identify specific purposes and expectations for visits between companions, for example: congregations and their members; exchange of leaders; specific groups, such as women, youth or educators; specific study topics or issues; specific events, such as a festival, an anniversary or an assembly.
- Frequent visits to your companion can become a burden to a church with limited resources. Always plan visits in conjunction with—and by invitation of—your companion.  
→ See *Part IV*.
- When you host guests, focus on listening more than "showing." Create occasions where synodical members can listen to the witness and testimony of guests. Listening is receiving; and receiving is allowing yourself to be changed by someone else.  
→ See *Part V*.

### Consider cross-companion synod activities

*An ELCA visitor worshiping in El Salvador heard that the Greater Milwaukee Synod was asking for prayers for Tanzania, another of its companions. The Salvadoran congregation prayed for the brothers and sisters in Tanzania.*

*The Nebraska Synod is a companion both to the Northern Diocese of Tanzania and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Argentina. The synodical women's*

*organization brought four women from each companion to Nebraska at the same time, to build a triangle of relationships. Possibilities for the future include delegations of Nebraskans and Argentineans to Tanzania, or Tanzanians and Nebraskans to Argentina!*

Companion synod relationships often link multiple participants. Seek ways to link your two companions directly, or cultivate relationships with ELCA synods that also relate to your companions. Here are some ideas.

- Share expenses when inviting companions to the U.S.
- Coordinate visitors and delegations to your companion.
- Collaborate in a large development project.
- Add a contact person from the other ELCA synod to your mailing list so that they are automatically informed of your plans, and request that you be added to their mailing list.

## **Involve youth**

Currently, most participants in companion synod relationships are over 50 years old. Involving more youth in the program satisfies companions who long to meet the ELCA's younger members. And it exposes young people to another culture, church and way of life, affecting them for their entire lives.

One way to involve youth is to work in conjunction with your companion to find a mutually beneficial program, as the La Crosse Area Synod has done. Of course, such a trip requires extensive group building and orientation beforehand to ensure its success.

*When leaders in the La Crosse Area Synod wanted to send a youth delegation to their companion, the Central Synod of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY-CS), they thought they should do something tangible with the youth, to give them something to accomplish. They asked EECMY-CS President Wakseyoum whether they could send youth to build a*

## **Advocate for your companion**

*health center. "No," he said. "We have the personnel and means to build a building. We would like your youth to come and talk about their faith."*

*Since even Lutheran adults have trouble speaking spontaneously about their faith, the group decided to set up a program for the youth. Each of the six young people would choose a favorite Bible verse or passage, memorize a story or statement to explain what the verse meant to them, then the group would sing a song that related to the Bible verse. They also prepared prayers that related to their companion and the verses.*

*Ethiopia is the third-poorest nation in the world. The people have very little material wealth. Though life is not easy, the people of the EECMY are happy in their faith. For the young people from La Crosse, the trip was an opportunity to experience the community of faith in a way they never had before. Though they went to evangelize, they came back from the trip having been spiritually fed. Even within the course of their weeks in Ethiopia, their faith stories moved from the presentation they had memorized to a more spontaneous sharing of their faith.*

*As EECMY President Iteffa told a later youth group that went to Ethiopia, "You could go anywhere on your spring break. You come from a wealthy country, but you chose to come to a poor country that is rich in faith."*

—Janet Williams  
La Crosse Area Synod

## **Companion Synod Profile**

You can now share what you are doing with both Global Mission staff and the whole ELCA through a digital Companion Synod Profile. You can complete it on-line. Then it will be sent to the Global Mission companion synod staff, and eventually it will be posted on the ELCA Web site, with links to your synod's information and to your companion's profile.

→ See [www.elca.org/companionsynods](http://www.elca.org/companionsynods)

As your relationship develops, your companions may ask you to speak out or advocate on a particular issue facing them or other people in that country. For example, companion Lutheran churches in Guatemala, Liberia, Jordan and Palestine, living under political oppression or danger, request both your prayers for their liberation and your public voice on their behalf to the governments and international agencies of the world.

If that happens to you, prepare yourself with these steps:

- Ask your companion about the best way to help. For example, in some situations, they may request you to speak publicly and openly about their situation, whereas in other cases such measures may expose them to unwanted risk, so they may request another course of action.
- Learn all you can about the situation and its root causes, both from your companion and from other groups dealing with the same issue.
- Study the Scriptures. It's full of stories of people who spoke on behalf of their neighbors for justice and against unfair treatment.
- Study our Lutheran beliefs, such as Martin Luther's explanations in the Catechisms of the seventh commandment or the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer.
- Discover what our church says about the issue. Read the applicable social statements adopted by ELCA Churchwide Assemblies.  
→ See [www.elca.org/socialstatements](http://www.elca.org/socialstatements)
- Inform ELCA leaders of your companions' request and your preparations for action. Tell your bishop, synod council, Global Mission staff, and the ELCA advocacy staff. In the process, you may discover that others are already working on this issue, and you may gain potential collaborators.
- Be aware of your own attitudes regarding an issue, and be open to change. While recognizing that people in relationship speak out for each other, engaging in advocacy may

nevertheless cause you to examine long-held assumptions, personal lifestyles and commitments. You may experience this as unsettling, transformative – or both.

- Your companions' request may include assistance with visas.  
→ See Appendix 9.
- Learn how your World Hunger gifts support advocacy in our church.  
→ See [www.elca.org/hunger](http://www.elca.org/hunger) click *advocacy*
- Discover advocacy resources and learn advocacy skills, through the advocacy Web site or at the Ecumenical Advocacy Days, held annually in March.  
→ See <http://advocacydays.org> or [www.elca.org/advocacy/resources](http://www.elca.org/advocacy/resources)

When you feel prepared, you can:

- Raise awareness about the issue in your synod. Share stories of your companion's difficulty with your synod members.
- When you are ready to contact members of the U.S. Congress, ambassadors, the President and heads of foreign states, contact the ELCA advocacy staff who will assist you in achieving your intention in the most effective way.
- Encourage others to advocate with you. Ask your bishop, synod council, and synod members to speak on behalf of your companions.

#### **ELCA Advocacy Staff**

- See [www.elca.org/advocacy](http://www.elca.org/advocacy)
- For issues involving the government of the U.S. or another country, contact the ELCA Washington Office, 202/783-7507, [Stacy.Martin@elca.org](mailto:Stacy.Martin@elca.org)
- For issues involving the United Nations or The Lutheran World Federation, contact the Lutheran Office for World Community (in New York), 212/808-5360, [dennis.frado@elca.org](mailto:dennis.frado@elca.org)
- For issues involving businesses, contact the Corporate Social Responsibility office, 412/367-7575, [patricia.zerega@elca.org](mailto:patricia.zerega@elca.org)
- For issues involving state government, contact the State Public Policy Offices, [www.elca.org/advocacy/stateoffices](http://www.elca.org/advocacy/stateoffices)

# Projects and volunteers

Your companion may request you to organize a project or program, or to send volunteers on a short service trip or for longer-term service. If that happens, here are the steps to take:

1. Review the section on *How to Develop New Initiatives of the Agreement between the Conference of Bishops and the Global Mission unit on companion synod relationships in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.  
→ See *Appendix 1, Section III*.
2. If your companion's request includes volunteers, look at the resource for shared personnel placements between your synod and Global Mission.  
→ See [www.elca.org/companionsynods](http://www.elca.org/companionsynods) and click the link at the bottom.
3. Inform ELCA Global Mission staff of service projects being considered. Staff can help with useful resources and guidance and can help resolve problems that may arise later.  
→ See the *Preface* for a staff listing.
4. Review the material in this section, and do the *Project assessment* in Part II.
5. Share what you are doing, if you go ahead with this project, on your Companion Synod Profile.  
→ See *Part II, Building your relationship: Companion Synod Profile*.

## Exchange people

Exchanges of longer duration can be arranged for people who have particular expertise or ministry to offer within your companion's setting. Think outside the box! Bible camps, colleges, clusters, synodical conferences or offices, medical facilities, social agencies and institutions, and rural programs can all set up exchange programs. Other exchange options:

- parish pastors;
- youth workers or education staff;
- Bible camp staff;
- men's and women's organization members;

- youth (remembering that different cultures have different definitions of youth);
- specialists in outreach, evangelism or stewardship;
- communicators;
- social workers;
- doctors or health workers;
- agriculturalists; and
- musicians, dramatists or other artists.

## Tanzania and Nebraska: pastor exchange

*I was taken aback by the beauty of Tanzania—the beauty of the country and the beauty of the people—when I first went to Tanzania as part of a pastor exchange. I was blessed to live and serve among the people of two small rural villages on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro. My days were filled with the pastoral responsibilities of visitation, preaching, leading worship, and officiating at funerals and baptisms. Daily I experienced joy centered in the incredible hospitality showered upon me. These experiences pushed me to ask the important question: What is it about the Tanzanian experience of God that I cannot live without?*

*Their hospitality goes further than a friendly smile—greetings of “ambo abari” and “aribu sana” and handshakes are genuine extensions of warmth and hospitality from the youngest child to the eldest senior. This depth of hospitality is rooted in African culture and is given profound meaning and expression in their Christian faith: As Christians we never look eyes with someone who doesn't matter to God, therefore, each person ought to matter to us. The Tanzanian Christian witness gave me deeper understanding to this Christian truth.*

*While Tanzanian hospitality made me feel unconditionally welcomed, my comfort in Tanzania did not dull my awareness of the political and economic histories and of the current realities that distinguish my life from that of the people I met. Those realities came through in visits to homes, schools, hospitals and businesses, in conversations about HIV/AIDS, the work of the church and the current economic conditions in the nation. It struck me as very grace-filled that I*

*was never made to feel apologetic for the conditions of my life, my race, my culture, my country or my language. I was received with trust and invited to share, to question and to learn. My own experience counted as people inquired about my life and work.*

*A final thought... there is an increasingly common use of the term "global village" in the United States. Yet, there can only truly be a global village if people of the village know one another . . .and I am so thankful for the great joy that comes from knowing my Tanzanian brothers and sisters in Christ.*

—The Rev. Martin Russell

The Rev. Martin Russell was a parish pastor at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Wayne, Nebraska, when he spent nearly two months in the Northern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania on a clergy exchange. Two pastors from the Nebraska Synod went to Tanzania, while two pastors from the Northern Diocese came to the Nebraska Synod to serve their parishes.

The pastors applied for the exchange and were selected by the synod's global mission committee. The congregation and individual pastor each contributed \$1000 toward the cost, and the global mission committee put in another \$2000. While Swahili is the national language of Tanzania, English is also widely spoken. The pastors from the Northern Diocese spoke English. Church members in Tanzania were able to serve as translators for the U.S. pastors, whose English sermons were translated into Swahili.

Russell has led many "Vision Trips" to Tanzania since then. Unlike trips that center on service projects, such as building a school or house, Russell's trips focus on building friendships, meeting and experiencing life with the people of Tanzania.

Though both Russell and the pastor who came to his congregation have moved on to other ministries, the congregations involved in the exchange remain connected.

## Short-term service trips

These trips can be profound and life-changing for all involved. Be sure to use the materials in this handbook on planning trips. → See *Part IV*.

## Combine service trips and relationship building

Here's one example of how to integrate a servant component into a companion synod trip.

The experience of coupling a companion synod visit with a Habitat for Humanity experience combines the strengths of two ministries of the church. With pre-communication and support of Lutheran church leaders in the global church, a group of 8–10 people can spend 5–6 days (out of perhaps a 12-day visit) working with partners to complete decent, safe and affordable housing for a family. This experience, planned and guided locally, will engage a group of people in orientation, advocacy and practical ministry. Habitat for Humanity, International, has a Web site that will furnish information, from "Where We Build" to "How to Get Started." Further referral information can be received from Pastor Gary L. Hansen at [gary.hansen@elca.org](mailto:gary.hansen@elca.org).

## Global Mission Volunteer opportunities

Consider participating in one of these programs:

- Young Adults in Global Mission gives ELCA members, ages 19–29, an opportunity to serve for a year in such places as Argentina, Jerusalem and South Africa.  
→ See [www.elca.org/yagm](http://www.elca.org/yagm).
- Global mission volunteers are needed for short-term assignments of 3–12 months that range from optometrist in Cameroon to librarian in Romania to Web page designer in El Salvador. The positions change with the needs of companion churches.  
→ See [www.elca.org/globalserve](http://www.elca.org/globalserve) or contact [globalserve@elca.org](mailto:globalserve@elca.org).

## Project assessment

Take care while planning these volunteer programs. Avoid projects that perpetuate attitudes and behaviors of “doing for them” instead of accompanying and meeting with mutuality. Despite their good intention and generosity, these projects can diminish grassroots initiative and participation, and may not be healthy in the long term. Use the questions below to evaluate the impact of possible projects and activities before you commit to them.

### Accompaniment

- Does this activity further mutuality and accompaniment?
- Who are the givers and receivers, the learners and teachers in this project?
- How does this project open us to receive the gifts and witness of others?

### Attitudes

- What attitudes underlie this activity?
- Is it paternalistic, or will it help to overcome paternalism?
- Will it reinforce old stereotypes or create new ones?
- What message is being communicated to the people of our synod about our companion?
- Does it create an attitude of openness?

### Values

- Does this project reflect or perpetuate materialistic values?
- Is there a balance between the value of individuals and the value of the group?
- What values of our society are reflected in these plans?
- Are there Christian and/or moral values at stake in this project?

### Christian witness

- What does this program communicate about the gospel? The church?
- How is it “good news”?
- How does it further Christian discipleship in those who participate?
- How does it call forth commitment and response?
- What is the change or growth in people that is being called forth?

### Commitments

- Are there long-range commitments or implications?
- Who needs to be informed about it?

### Limitations

- What are the limitations in cost? In language? Other?

### Approach

- Is there a balance between experiential and cognitive learning?
- Is the method in harmony with accompaniment, with the purpose of the activity, and with the Companion Synod Program?

# Establishing a congregation-to-congregation program

Once a companion synod relationship is firmly established and has a well-functioning committee, your synod and companion may agree to establish and oversee a program for congregation-to-congregation relationships. (These relationships may also be known as “sister congregations” or “companion congregations.”)

Sister congregation relationships can help establish more personal relationships with a larger number of synodical members. The goals of such relationships are to:

- increase global awareness in the congregation;
- build support for global mission;
- pray faithfully for global sisters and brothers;
- bring home the dynamic witness of Christians in other countries; and
- personalize global mission for members of the congregation.

If congregations are interested in building such relationships, ask your companion whether they would be interested in establishing a sister congregation relationship. The synod may use the following steps to establish congregation-to-congregation relationships.

1. A ELCA congregation requests its synod office for a relationship and furnishes a short description of its ministry.
2. The synod office forwards the request and ministry description to the international companion.
3. The executive committee reviews the request and description, and looks for a good match within the international companion. When a match is found, the congregation is consulted to see whether it wants to participate.
4. After a commitment from the congregation in the international companion, the match is made. The synodical congregation receives

information about the companion congregation.

5. When both congregations make a commitment to the relationship, it is considered an official relationship.
6. Correspondence, sharing photos and possibly a visit secure the commitment and relationship.

## The synod’s role in congregational relationships

Congregations need guidance in establishing and maintaining their relationships. Synodical staff or companion synod committee members can:

- gather leaders from each congregation for training;
- encourage mutuality and walking together;
- monitor service projects and visits to and from companions. Service projects need to fit the overall goals of your companion. Three or four congregations deciding to send visitors in the same year could strain the resources of the companion;
- monitor financial activities. Sending money directly to a sister congregation, bypassing their church office, could create resentment and difficulties within your companion if one congregation suddenly receives much more than others; and
- consider whether your companion synod committee should request or require a congregation to send a representative participant to your committee.

Just as the body has many parts but is one body, so the ELCA has many congregations but is one church. The synod’s role is to see that the congregations work within the mission goals of the ELCA and its companion churches, not as congregations following their own agendas.

## Examples of congregation-to-parish relationships

### Tanzania and Nebraska

*In 2001, Southwood Lutheran Church in Lincoln, Nebraska, was partnered with Uswaa Parish in the Northern Diocese of Tanzania. Uswaa Parish is a geographical area with several congregations within it. Two groups from Southwood have traveled to Tanzania to visit the parish, and the second group really worked on defining what their mission would be.*

*“The people of the Uswaa Parish don’t lack faith. We’re not there as missionaries. They have the gospel and they feed us,” says Faye Koehn, director of education at Southwood. “They rely on faith to get through every day. But they lack funds. They don’t have the creature comforts of medical care, food, shelter. We bring doctor teams, or teacher teams to work with them.”*

*Southwood members were so excited about their trips to Tanzania that they wanted to bring people from Uswaa to Nebraska. In consultation with Uswaa Parish, the parish felt that spending so much money on travel would not be the best use of funds when so many needs exist there. The congregation still plans sometime to bring smaller groups or individuals to Nebraska, so that the faith of the people can be shared with the congregation.*

*Southwood is working with Uswaa Parish to develop a vision and mission statement. The mission will be three pronged: funding for ministry (building another church, teacher training, and a motorcycle for the associate pastor); sharing expertise resources (sending doctors and teachers); and continuing the faith-based relationship.*

*On the first Sunday of each month, Southwood and Uswaa Parish pray for one another. On Mission Sunday each year, Southwood members don the African clothing given to them, show PowerPoint® presentations of mission trips during worship (the congregation also sends members on Hearts to Honduras, a servant trip), and share other aspects of their relationship.*

### Malawi and Northwest Wisconsin

*The Northwest Synod of Wisconsin congregation-to-parish relationships got started during Bishop Bvumbwe of Malawi’s two-year study stay in the United States. During this time, he visited many of the synod’s congregations and spoke at synod assemblies. The impetus to connect ELCA congregations with Malawi parishes resulted from congregations wanting a more personal relationship with the church in Malawi.*

*Bishop Robert Berg and Bishop Bvumbwe established ground rules and a framework for making matches. Congregations interested in being matched attended an all-day workshop, with both bishops present. The agenda focused on the history of the companion relationship, the history and structure of the Lutheran Church in Malawi, hopes and dreams of the congregations being matched, and guidelines for the relationship. A primary guideline is that the matches are to be built on “walking together” mutually, not a financial relationship.*

*If financial gifts are given, they are sent via the synod office where they are held until the church in Malawi requests the funds. The funds are wired directly to the church headquarters in Malawi, so that accountability exists throughout the system.*

*Congregations may send correspondence or visitors in order to develop relationships. A Web site has been established to allow communication between the synod’s congregations for sharing ideas about relation-building and for posting photos, links and files for congregations to use. A few people in Malawi who have access to the Web are also part of the group*

*The congregations and parishes are asked to pray for one another each Sunday. Sunday school children have written letters or had learning projects in their classes. The Women of the ELCA developed a “Sewing for Sustenance” project that raised money to buy treadle sewing machines, fabric, thread, and training expenses for women in Malawi. It was a huge success because the U.S. women understood what sewing and access*

*to equipment would mean to the women in Malawi*

*Following the 2003 Lutheran World Federation Assembly in Canada, the synod hosted a Mission Fest. Bishop Bvumbwe and Mrs. Mable Madinga, head of the Diakonia Ministry in Malawi, attended. Matched congregations flocked to the Fest, because one of the workshops was exclusively for them to get updates on their parish match and to talk about ways to further develop the relationships.*

*One of the major difficulties in building relationships is communication. In Malawi, e-mail is only available at the church headquarters. Mail is slow and unreliable, which is difficult for those in the United States who are accustomed to instant communication.*

*Since the first training workshop, two additional workshops have been held for new congregation matches. The first two workshops were videotaped and edited into one-hour highlights so that Sunday schools, committees and future training groups can benefit from them. Congregations need to attend a workshop before being matched.*

*Bishop Bvumbwe holds similar workshops with the parishes in Malawi. It is interesting to compare the hopes and dreams of the relationship completed by workshop participants in Wisconsin and in Malawi. While congregations in Wisconsin and parishes in Malawi have different things to share, they both have a common desire to strengthen their faith by connecting with Christians in another place.*

*—Diane Kaufmann, Companion Synod  
Coordinator, ELCA Northwest  
Synod of Wisconsin*

### **Congregations involved in another synod's companion relationship**

ELCA congregations sometimes wish to be part of companion synod relationships other than their own synod's. This may result from a desire to develop further an existing international connection through individual members of their congregations. For example, congregation A may wish to work through synod XYZ's companion synod relationship rather than through its own synod ABC. In that case, a congregation should contact both its own synodical bishop and also ELCA Global Mission to determine the feasibility and appropriateness of this possibility. ELCA Global Mission will then consult with both synodical bishops and inform the congregation of the decision.

## Assessing your current relationship

**E**very companion relationship will benefit from regular review. Assessing your relationship often will guide you in maintaining, strengthening or refocusing it as needed.

Begin by determining whether you are meeting the objectives of the Companion Synod Program.

- Are you nurturing and strengthening one another within the body of Christ through prayer, study and communication?

- Are you using the accompaniment model for mission to walk together in Christ, relate to your companion as an equal partner, and focus on mutual sharing, not on what you can give?
- Are as many people involved as possible? Do the majority of the congregations in your synod pray for and know about your companion?

Next, use the *Companion synod assessment* to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of your participation in the Companion Synod Program.

→ See next page.

# Companion synod assessment

**T**he purpose of the Companion Synod Program is to nurture and strengthen the body of Christ by providing opportunities to participate in the ministry of the companion church through prayer, study, communication, exchange of visitors and sharing of resources. Use the following questions to envision the realities and possibilities of your companion synod relationship.

## Vision

- What is your companion's vision for the relationship?
- What is your synod's vision for the relationship?
- What are the fruits of the relationship so far?
- How have your synod and companion been affected by the relationship?
- What are your synod's and companion's short-term goals and hopes for the relationship?
- What are your synod's and companion's long-term goals for the relationship?
- What have been your synod's and companion's most positive experiences?
- What have been your synod's and companion's greatest frustrations?
- How has the global perspective of your synod's members been changed as a result of the relationship?

## Companion synod committee

- What does each member bring to the committee?
- What does the synod expect from the committee?

## Publicity/promotion

- How is your companion placed before the eyes and ears of your synodical members?
- What events have encouraged participation in the relationship?
- How has your companion been highlighted at synodical gatherings?

- How are correspondence, prayer requests and advocacy issues from your companion passed on to the people of your synod?
- Are children and youth included through appropriate activities?

## Accompaniment

- What steps have been taken to introduce synodical leaders to the accompaniment model for mission?
- How are adults and children being introduced to the accompaniment model for mission?
- Is cross-cultural awareness promoted among committee and synodical members?
- What role has advocacy taken in your relationship?

## Visits between companions

- How has your synod's ministry been influenced or changed by visits to and from your companion?
- How do visitors to and from your companion share their experiences in your synod?

## Congregation-to-congregation relationships

- Are congregation-to-congregation relationships promoted?
- How are the relationships arranged and maintained?
- What successes and benefits have come to congregations with relationships?
- What problems or challenges have arisen as a result of the congregational relationships?
- If you send financial gifts to your companion, do you send them through your synod and ELCA Global Mission? Are you following the guidelines of the U.S. Patriot Act?

# Beginning an additional relationship

**A**ll ELCA synods began with one companion relationship, and many have entered into additional relationships.

The process for establishing new companion synod relationships involves three parties: the international companion, the ELCA synod, and the Global Mission unit. Every relationship is established through the mutual consent of an ELCA synod and the international companion. ELCA Global Mission coordinates new relationships in order to ensure that relationships are distributed evenly, and to prevent duplication of efforts, especially in places like Tanzania that have many companion relationships.

There are four steps involved in beginning an additional relationship:

1. determining feasibility;
2. discerning a decision;
3. formalizing the new relationship; and
4. getting started.

## Determining feasibility

To determine whether an additional relationship is feasible for your synod, begin by assessing the state of your current relationship. (If you have more than one, evaluate all.)

→ See the *Companion synod assessment* on the previous page.

Consider the following questions as well.

- Why does your synod want a new relationship?
- Is there broad-based support for the new relationship? A large support network is needed to nurture a companion synod relationship, especially through a change in synodical leadership. If the relationship is driven by one person, it will flounder when that person is no longer involved.

- Does your current committee have enough members? How well does it nurture the relationship?
- If you start a new committee, who will serve on it?
- How will it relate to the existing committee? Will there be one committee with a sub-committee for each relationship, or a separate committee?
- How will the committees share information, exist in harmony, and avoid competing for attention?
- Look at the resources your synod invests in the committee. Will an additional relationship drain resources from the existing committee, or from other synodical ministries?
- Are you prepared for a relationship that is very different from the current one?
- Is everyone clear that the new relationship is an additional connection to the world, and will not replace the current relationship?

Once you have answered these questions, talk to ELCA Global Mission about potential companions who are looking for an additional relationship. ELCA Global Mission will give you information about prospective companions.

## Discerning a decision

When you have determined that an additional relationship is feasible and you have the name of a possible companion:

- gather a small group to discern whether to move ahead with the process;
- select someone to be the main contact with ELCA Global Mission during this step;
- encourage both potential companions to pray, reflect and learn about one another to discern whether they might be compatible; and
- work with the ELCA Global Mission companion synod staff to keep the discernment process in motion for both potential companions.

*Having more than one international companion can help your synodical members grasp the wide diversity of the world's Christians.*

## **Formalizing the new relationship**

When both companions agree to move ahead, the relationship is formalized through an exchange of letters between the bishops/presidents of each companion. Your new or expanded companion synod committee will need to formalize the relationship—perhaps by presenting a motion to the Synod Council, or a resolution to the synod assembly. Send copies of your letters and resolutions to ELCA Global Mission.

## **Getting started**

First review the information in the first two parts of this handbook. In particular:

- See *Part II, Organize your committee.*
- See *Part II, Building your relationship: First, get to know your companion and Communicate regularly.*
- See *Part II, Learning about your companion.*

## **Share the good news with your synod**

Share the news of your new relationship with the people of your synod.

- Inform pastors and lay leaders with a long article in the synodical newsletter that offers details about your new companion and clarifies who is responsible for maintaining contact. Be sure to include information about future plans, and solicit the participation of synodical leaders and members.

- Reach most synodical members with a Sunday bulletin insert (or series of inserts) that includes basic information on the country and the church, and offers ways to get involved in the relationship.

## **Make your first visit**

The best way to get people interested in participating in the new relationship is to offer an opportunity to visit. Begin planning a group visit that will introduce participants to your companion and its ministries. Your companions will feel honored by your presence. It will be tempting to carry large gifts or do a mission project, but you will honor your hosts more if your group can just be present, share their lives and willingly visit what hosts feel is important for you to see. The first visit may or may not involve your bishop or synodical staff.

→ See *Part IV* and use the orientation outlines to prepare travelers.

## **Invite your new companions to visit**

Early in your relationship, invite your companion to send a small delegation to visit, possibly during a synod assembly or some other significant event. Reciprocity is important. Your companion needs to get to know your synod and its people. The visit will help make the companion relationship come alive for them, and inspire more people to get involved.

→ See *Part V* to prepare for hosting guests.

## **Give the people-to-people relationship time to grow**

As North Americans, our first response to poverty is to offer money and materials. We think we know what needs to be done and want to jump right in with our own ideas and resources. Be patient. Listen. Your companions will be more likely to tell you what they need once they get to know and trust you.

# PART III: For ELCA Congregations

**C**ongregations play an important part in creating support among ELCA members for a companion synod relationship. The more members that embrace the relationship, the more successful it will be.

Begin creating a strong congregational program by reviewing the information in Parts 1 and 2.

## Building interest

1. Contact the chair or coordinator of your companion synod committee to discover how your congregation can get involved, or to see if there are opportunities for individuals to participate in the companion synod committee. Ask about information or educational materials you can use, and upcoming events or trips you can participate in.
2. Form a congregational task force or committee to focus on the relationship. To keep its work fresh and energized, stagger terms to mix new and experienced members. Your participation will be stronger when a wide range of people has served on the task force.

### Learn about your companion

- Find out as much as you can about the country of your companion, using resources from local libraries.
- Ask the confirmation class to research the country and church and present the information to younger classes.
- Hold an adult forum on the companion, perhaps focusing on the political issues and concerns in that country.
- Invite younger children to make crafts from the region using instructions in the ELCA Global Mission companion

profiles or craft books from local libraries.

- Incorporate crafts and what you have learned into a bulletin board and a shelf or table that displays photos and fabrics from your companion, includes the name of the bishop, and highlights country information as well as your companion's ministries.

### Remember your companion in worship

- Lift up the bishop and church leaders in prayer.
- Pray for needs specific to that region of the world.
- Pray for women and children.
- Use prayers from your companion.
- Sing hymns from that region of the world. Use the instruments that they might use.
- Use "Prayer Ventures" online at [www.elca.org/prayerventures](http://www.elca.org/prayerventures).

### Taste and see!

- Host a coffee hour highlighting regional food of your companion.  
→ See ELCA Global Mission companion profiles or international cookbooks for recipes.
- Is your companion in a coffee-growing region? Contact Lutheran World Relief or another agency that sells fair-trade coffee to serve.

## Creating personal relationships

### Visit your companion

Contact your companion synod chairperson to see what trips are being planned. If a group from your congregation wishes to visit, be sure to talk to the companion synod chairperson about what other groups might be going, whether there is an invitation from your companion, and whether your companion is able to support your visit. Make sure that any visit has a purpose and goal.  
→ See *Part IV* for detailed orientation and trip planning.

### Invite visitors

Personal encounters move us beyond stereotypes to discover the humanity and soul of individuals from another culture. Inviting someone to share in an anniversary

celebration or vacation Bible school, or to witness and contribute to the ministry of your congregation can be a life-changing experience for all involved.

Consult with your companion synod chairperson before making plans to coordinate a visit with a delegation visiting the synod. Expect to pay airfare, airport taxes, room, board, insurance and a stipend if your visitor is coming from a country with a low per-capita income.

→ See *Part V* for details on hosting visitors.

### **Communicate ... in other languages!**

If you need assistance translating a letter from or composing a letter in another language, you can probably find assistance locally.

- Try the foreign language department in your local high school, college, or university.
- Find out whether there are foreign students at a university or seminary who could translate.
- A private language school or immigrant or ethnic societies may also be able to assist.
- Contact ELCA Global Mission to ask about former missionaries who may be able to help.

In all cases, ask about translation fees.

## **Sister congregation program**

Some ELCA synods establish a program that matches congregations in that synod with congregations in their international companion. Contact your companion synod chairperson to learn if your synod has a process for establishing and maintaining a sister congregation relationship.

→ See *Part II, Establishing a congregation-to-congregation program*.

## **ELCA Missionary sponsorship**

Missionary Sponsorship makes it possible for our 225+ ELCA international personal to teach, preach, heal, nurture, grow and build in almost 50 countries. Covenant sponsors make a commitment to support a specific missionary prayerfully, financially, and with regular communication.

Congregations report being renewed and invigorated by the relationships, global awareness and evangelical spirit that result from their missionary sponsorship. ELCA Missionary Sponsorship makes a *global* world of difference.

One hundred percent of the gifts offered for ELCA Missionary Sponsorship—either for a specific missionary or for "where needed most"—are used as designated. Almost all of our missionaries are in need of additional sponsorship.

Find stories, devotions and bulletin inserts at [www.elca.org/handinhand](http://www.elca.org/handinhand). Learn more at [www.elca.org/missionarysponsorship](http://www.elca.org/missionarysponsorship).

Contact the Global Mission Support team (Andrew Steele and Nathan Berkas) by calling 800-638-3522, ext. 2657, or e-mailing [globalmissionsupport@elca.org](mailto:globalmissionsupport@elca.org).

# PART IV:

## Planning Trips

Use this section to plan a mutually beneficial and life-changing trip to your companion.

In Philippians 1:3-5, Paul writes, “I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now.”

Paul’s partnership with the Philippian Christians could be considered an early companion church relationship. Putting faces and people in personal relationships can help nurture this kind of prayerful, joyful relationship—depending on what kind of trip you plan. Let’s examine two hypothetical trips planned by ELCA synods.

One group decides to build houses for its companion. It sends a mission team to build houses. Each day, the participants travel in air-conditioned buses to the work site, returning to a fancy hotel along the coast each night. They have virtually no contact with their companion and experience neither their lifestyle nor their hospitality. But the participants come home with a feeling of having done something good for people who have nothing.

Another group plans its visit in consultation with its companion. These participants spend some time learning about the companion and meeting its members. Then they work on a school building side by side with members whose children will attend the school. They stay in people’s homes, experiencing life as it is lived there. When they participate in worship, they are overwhelmed by the full church building, the enthusiasm for worship and the sense of hospitality given to them. They come home knowing that they have received much from people with much to give.

Which trip better nurtures the companion relationship? Let’s hope your answer is: the second one!

A journey to your companion is *not* a vacation. It is one step in the long-term process of building a relationship. Multiple visits and exchanges, including visits by your companion to your synod, can deepen and transform your relationship.

→ See *Part V*.

Travel to your companion will immerse your participants in a culture with values and lifestyles very different from those they experience as North American Lutherans. Partaking in the life of your companions will also build and stretch cross-cultural skills necessary for an authentic relationship.

### Why are you going?

All companion visits should be considered prayerfully. Long before it’s time to pack, buy tickets or obtain passports, consider how the visit will strengthen the ministry and mission of *both* churches.

#### Reasons to visit may include to:

- develop *koininia* (fellowship) among both churches’ members;
- see the world from a different point of view;
- live the gospel with others;
- experience daily life of companion church members;
- gain a deeper understanding of the companion’s context;
- learn about issues facing your companion where your advocacy might be helpful;
- participate in a mutually planned service project;
- respond to an invitation to celebrate an ordination, anniversary or other special event;
- renew home congregations by sharing the experience with others;
- grow from the witness of the gospel given to you;
- experience the global nature of Christ’s mission;
- partner with your companion in new ways; and
- be a presence in times of difficulty.

## Have you been invited?

*Before you decide to visit, you should be invited—or at least make the decision to visit in conjunction with your companion. Once the invitation is clear, the two companions, through their leaders or committee, should determine:*

- the purpose of the trip;
- the goals or objectives you hope to meet;
- the objective or goals your companion hopes to meet;
- how those goals will be achieved; and
- how the trip will influence your ministry and the companion's ministry.

→ Use the *Project assessment* in Part II to evaluate your plans as they develop, and to keep in mind the accompaniment model for mission.

### Be sure to ask:

- How long a visit is welcome?
- When is a good time of year to visit?
- What accommodations would your host recommend?
- Is it possible for the delegation to visit your companion's leaders, including the bishop or president?
- How many people can participate, keeping in mind limitations imposed by conditions and circumstances?

## Joint agreements

Before you and your companion begin to move ahead with specific plans, take time to:

- arrive at a consensus about the trip's goals, objectives and anticipated outcomes.
- clarify financial arrangements and discuss any "hidden costs" the host church might encounter—for example, what congregations spend to prepare special meals for your delegation, or when the synod arranges to bring a large group to the airport to meet you.
- clarify what each of you will be responsible to arrange (international travel, on-the-ground housing and

transportation, the local itinerary and the like).

- inform both bishops about your plans and itinerary. Copy them on all correspondence. Even if you won't be spending time with your companion's bishop or president, as host, he or she needs to know where you will be.

Delegations of between 8 and 20 people, including leaders, are the most manageable. Larger delegations require more complex logistics and may adversely affect the experience of participants. Recruit a leader for every 8–10 people, so that leaders can share responsibility during the trip.

## Don't overburden your companion

As your hosts, your companions will go to great lengths to welcome, feed and house your delegation and make sure your stay is safe and educational. As you make arrangements, be respectful of your companion's personnel and resources. Avoid making requests, such as asking the companion to provide in-country transportation, that may be a financial strain or overtax church leadership—unless the companion prefers to arrange your transportation. Ask and clarify!

*The global education study seminar I participated in to Central America involved the coordination of so many details: housing, food and transportation for 26 women, traveling in both urban and remote areas of two countries, visiting churches, meeting with representatives from a number of different organizations, and experiencing directly the lives of the people in this region. None of this would have been possible without the careful planning and oversight of the staff of the Lutheran churches in Nicaragua and Costa Rica.*

*Tired and a bit anxious at the start of our trip, we were warmly greeted at the airport in Managua. During the first few days we met church leaders, toured the headquarters, learned the history of the church and heard about the areas of ministry focus. On the move daily and with a full schedule, we appreciated the detailed itinerary provided.*

*Translators were always available. Our hosts even exchanged our money and provided phone and Internet access so we could communicate with family back home. Having all these details taken care of meant we, as seminar participants, could focus on the real reason we had come to Central America.*

—Lenore Franzen  
ELCA Saint Paul Area Synod

## Choosing participants

Once you know when and why your visit is taking place, establish a process to select participants. Determine and explain the criteria and expectations ahead of time to everyone who is interested, so that you can mutually discern who should participate. For example:

- What orientation and follow-up activities are planned?
- How are visitors expected to share their experience upon returning home?
- Will expenses for speaking assignments be reimbursed?
- What qualities are desired in travelers? Some might be:
  - Openness to listening and learning in a cross-cultural experience
  - Ability to communicate and witness in cross-cultural setting
  - Ability and time to communicate experience upon return home
  - Ability to be gracious and flexible in new and different situations
  - Openness to other political/economic/social ideas and situations
  - Good physical and emotional health (the church and country you are visiting may not have the resources to accommodate special needs)
  - Willingness to participate in three to five orientation sessions
  - Representation of a variety of synodical ministries, congregations, or task forces
  - Youth: Companion churches want to meet younger ELCA members. “You only send us your gray heads!” one Latin American companion has commented.

A formal application is a good way to convey trip requirements and learn more about why travelers want to be part of a delegation.

→ See *Appendix 4* for a sample application.  
→ See <http://archive.elca.org/globalmission/welcomeforward/forms.html> to download medical information forms and waivers.

## Commissioning the delegation

Celebrate the departure of your delegation with a commissioning service—during an orientation or synod assembly, or on the Sunday prior to departure. While the group will be commissioned at one church, ask that churches throughout the synod pray for the group.

## In case of evacuation

While an ELCA-related group is traveling in another country, conditions may develop which are deemed to require evacuation in the judgment of either the companion host, the Global Mission office in Chicago, or Global Mission personnel in proximity to the group. In that case, as soon as the travel group is made aware of this request to evacuate, Global Mission expects that the travel group will comply with this request and will be responsible for their evacuation costs.

## Sample planning timeline

For best results, begin planning your trip 18–24 months ahead—certainly no less than a year ahead.

### **16–18 months ahead**

With your companion, discuss and discern:

- the purpose of the trip;
- mutual hopes for the visit;
- possible target group;
- logistics such as transportation and housing; and
- companion liaisons and contacts who can work together to develop plans.

Once your invitation to visit has been confirmed:

- form a planning committee or leadership team and name a chairperson;
- define responsibilities of trip leaders;
- determine number of participants and criteria for selection; and
- begin to gather cost estimates from travel experts.

### **12–15 months ahead**

- Begin to discuss itinerary with your companion.
- Establish budget and per-participant cost.
- Develop publicity.
- Identify funding sources for scholarships or fund-raising activities.

### **11 months ahead**

- Prepare application forms.
- Prepare medical information, release and waivers (download from <http://archive.elca.org/globalmission/welcomeforward/forms.html>).
- Research visa requirements.
- Review and select pre-trip reading materials.
- Plan and develop the five orientation sessions.

### **6–10 months ahead**

- Recruit and select participants.
- Mail or give (at the initial information session) first packet of materials to participants, including country and companion information; estimated costs; passport, visa, and health information, including inoculations or medications.
- Distribute medical information form to participants.
- Hold an initial information session for potential participants.

### **4–6 months ahead**

- Request copies of passports from participants (must be valid for 6 months beyond return date).
- Ensure visa applications are made.
- Conduct the first cross-cultural orientation session.
- Ask your companion to conduct a local orientation that will introduce your group to church history, ministries and staff at the beginning of the visit.
- Hire an interpreter, with help from your companion. Do not rely on missionaries for translation needs.

### **3 months ahead**

- Send list of participants to travel agent with deposits for tickets.
- Prepare participant address, phone and e-mail lists for participants, family, travel agents and staff.
- Conduct the second cross-cultural orientation session.

### **1–2 months ahead**

- Agree on final itinerary with your companion.
- Confirm specific appointments with your companion.
- Prepare list of destination addresses, phone numbers and e-mail for participants and their families.
- Prepare telephone and/or e-mail tree for contacting families in case of emergency.
- Gather participants for orientation to companion, its context, ministries and culture.
- Contact participants about final details and potential roles.
- Plan a commissioning service for the delegation.

### **1 month ahead**

- Collect medical information forms and prepare an emergency information file.
- Host the final pre-trip orientation.
- Hold final leadership team meeting to review plans and handle last-minute details.
- Confirm your companion's plans for the onsite orientation.
- Schedule and plan post-trip debriefing.

### **1 month after**

- Hold post-trip debriefing.
- Write thank you letters to hosts, translators, and others.
- Encourage participants to share trip experience with others; help prepare presentations.

## **Orientations ensure a smooth, positive experience**

*Everyone* who participates in an international visit can benefit from thoughtful, well-designed orientations. Travelers are happier when they know what to expect, and exploring the cultural norms

that we carry within us—often without recognizing them!—makes it possible to approach a new culture with an open mind.

In-depth preparation will equip participants to get the most out of the experience, to represent your synod and the ELCA in a responsible manner, and to share positive memories when they return. Through preparation, they will also get to know one another, form a community, and develop smooth interpersonal dynamics that can withstand long, challenging hours of cross-cultural travel.

For best results, plan and offer five orientation sessions for trip participants. This handbook includes outlines for these sessions:

1. an introductory information session on the Companion Synod Program, the companion country, and likely traveling conditions, to help potential participants discern whether they want to commit;
2. a cross-cultural orientation that equips participants to identify and set aside “typical” American values that may color their encounter;
3. a second cross-cultural orientation helps participants begin learning how to “cross” cultures;
4. an orientation to the companion, its ministries, members and context, including its history, current situation and country conditions; and
5. a pre-departure orientation focusing on trip details.

When you arrive, a local orientation given by your host in the destination country will prepare participants for what they will experience. Work with your hosts to ensure that this orientation introduces your companion’s ministry and leaders, offers basic country information and gives an overview of the destination schedule. This orientation will establish your companion as the host of the visit.

### **Assemble an important document file**

Prepare two copies. Leave one with your emergency contact person in the U.S. and

take the other with you on the trip. Each file should include a copy of:

- emergency medical information forms for each participant;
- passport photo page for each participant;
- visa page of participant passports;
- complete itinerary;
- airline tickets and travel agency contact information;
- insurance coverage information; and
- waivers and releases.

### **Welcome Forward book and Web site help delegations prepare for international travel**

Consider purchasing a copy of *Welcome Forward: A Field Guide for Global Travelers* for each participant. This 144-page paperback will help participants experience travel that will forever change their ways of seeing, eating, “helping” and conversing. It provides individual and group process for travel preparation, engagement and follow-up; guides and tips for the journey; and re-entry assistance. Copies are \$8 each and are available from Augsburg Fortress at 800-328-4648 or [www.augsburgfortress.com](http://www.augsburgfortress.com). Ask for ISBN 6-0002-0186-9.

The Web site [http://archive.elca.org/global\\_mission/welcomeforward](http://archive.elca.org/global_mission/welcomeforward) contains a leader’s guide for the book as well as many useful forms you can download for free to use in the orientation sessions that follow. The site also offers links to the Center for Disease Control, travel agencies, vendors of travel insurance, information on passports and visas, providers of group study tours, and much more.

### **Words from a fan of Welcome Forward**

*I’ve traveled internationally, and found some pages where I thought, “Yes! that’s a great thing to include! and others where I said, “Wow, that’s something I hadn’t thought about before!”*

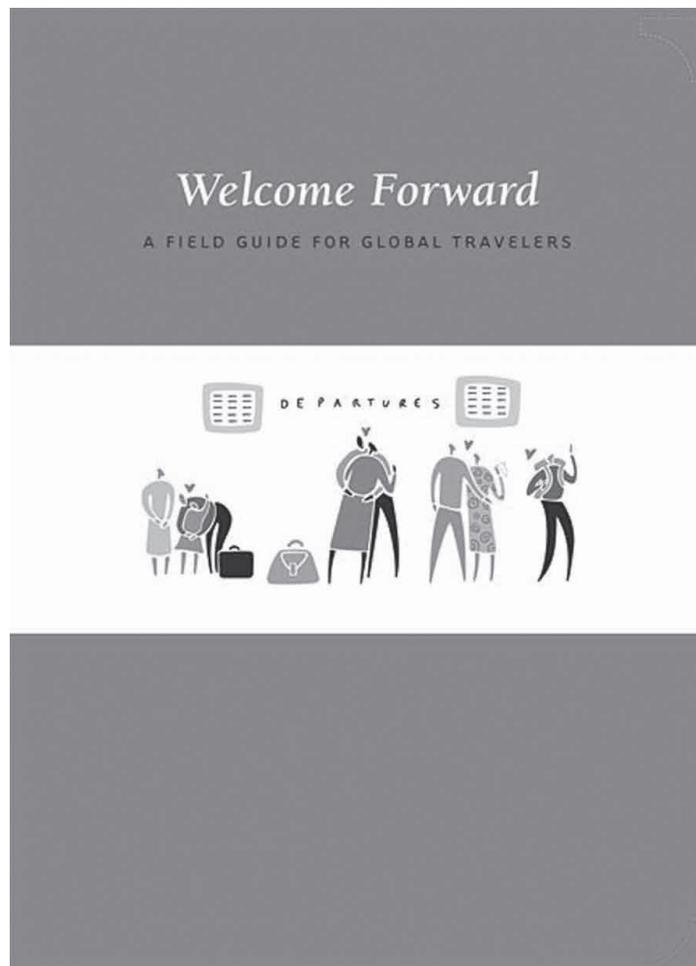
*I liked how the book was laid out, with a pre-trip section, an on-the-road section, and a re-entry-to-the-zany-U.S.-culture section.*

Recently, a friend who'd been on a global trip called somewhat distressed by her melancholy upon return and her seeming inability to communicate what she'd experienced and how it had so profoundly changed her. I was able to reassure and encourage her and to welcome her to the re-entry club, but I also realized that Welcome Forward could have prepared and guided her through this phase of global travel.

If I were a group leader, I'd use this small volume for pre-travel discussion, for devotions during the trip (particularly Bible passages, which could be easily translated into any languages spoken by fellow

travelers or host country speakers); and for reflective moments on the trip or to guide travelers as they wrestle with hard things while traveling. I think it's really helpful for seasoned travelers as well as for first-timers to always have the theological-gospel-spiritual reasons for the trip constantly and easily at hand. Welcome Forward does that! My recommendation to our global mission committee was to make Welcome Forward available to at least the leaders—and preferably all participants—of any future global trips!

—Ann Kleman  
Southeast Michigan Synod



# Orientation One: Initial Information Session

Held six to ten months before departure, an initial information session gives potential participants a clear idea of the trip's purpose and destination, as well as the realities of traveling in the country. This session should help potential travelers discern whether they are ready and able to participate in the trip. Some may decide not to.

## Objectives

- To provide an overview of the trip and its challenges;
- To introduce potential travelers to one another;
- To introduce the Companion Synod Program and your relationship;
- To introduce the accompaniment model of mission; and
- To give you a taste of the country and church you will visit.

## Materials

- A basic packet of information about the country you will be visiting.  
→ See more information on the following subjects and links to the sites mentioned below on the *Welcome Forward* Web page, <http://archive.elca.org/globalmission/welcomeforward>. Click on *Preparing to Go*.
  - To prepare the packet, draw from:
    - ELCA companion profiles;  
→ See [www.elca.org/companionprofiles](http://www.elca.org/companionprofiles)
    - information on immunizations and medications;  
→ See the Center for Disease Control at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)
    - passport and visa information (Passports should be valid for six months beyond the return date of your trip. Encourage participants to apply for or renew passports in a timely manner.); and
    - travel insurance information, in case participants want additional insurance to cover trip interruptions and delays, as well as medical evacuation. Try

Rust International Associates at [www.rustassoc.com/additional\\_insurance/travel.cfm](http://www.rustassoc.com/additional_insurance/travel.cfm) or HTH Worldwide Insurance Services at [www.hthworldwide.com](http://www.hthworldwide.com) or Travel Insurance Services at [www.travelinsure.com](http://www.travelinsure.com); and

- *Vocabulary Worksheet* filled out with help from your companion (→ See *Handout A* at the back of this handbook; also available from <http://archive.elca.org/globalmission/welcomeforward/forms.html>—select *The power of language*, which provides background on language and a blank vocabulary sheet.
- This handbook's section on Companion Synod Basics for each participant  
→ See *Part I*.
- This handbook's section on Accompaniment for each participant  
→ See *Part I*.
- Accompaniment Kyrie (Handout B) for each participant
- Copies of the *ELCA Global Mission Annual* for each participant (available free from 800-638-3522, ext. 2642) Note: this may not be available at the time of this printing.
- Nametags for participants
- Refreshments—perhaps an item or two from your companion's national cuisine
- A CD or tape of music from your companion's country or church
- A sign-in sheet to gather names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses
- A copy of *Welcome Forward*: consider purchasing a copy for each participant.  
→ See *Part IV, Welcome Forward book ...*  
→ See *Getting to Know You* in *Welcome Forward*, pp. 34–35, for ideas about helping your travel companions cohere as a group

You can find a good model for a basic information handout on the *Welcome Forward* Web site at <http://archive.elca.org/globalmission/welcomeforward/forms.html>. Under *Other*, click on *Sample document* for one that you can use to prepare for your trip.

## Time

95 minutes

### Devotions and prayer

10 minutes

- Open with a hymn from your companion.
- Pray for your companion's church and ministries, and for the success of the planned trip.
- Use the Accompaniment Kyrie (Handout B).
- Structure a short reflection around a short story from your companion relationship that helps convey something about your companion's context of ministry, or the joys and struggles of daily life.
- Teach greetings in the language of your companion, and practice with one another.

### Overview of agenda and introductions

10 minutes

Introduce yourself and walk participants through the agenda. Make sure they understand that this introductory session is designed to answer their questions and help them discern whether or not to participate. Encourage them to ask questions as needed.

To introduce everyone, ask participants to:

- give their names and the name of the congregation they belong to;
- describe briefly their involvement in your companion's program or other global mission or global travel activities; and
- share what they hope to gain from participating in this trip.

### Review purpose of trip

5 minutes

Clarify the trip's purpose, who is going and the expected outcome. Is it training leaders in Christian education, celebrating a church anniversary, or learning more and walking with your companion?

## Overview of the Companion Synod Program, your relationship and accompaniment

30 minutes

Have someone who is deeply engaged in your companion relationship—the chair of your committee, or a member—offer a history of your relationship. Review:

- how it began;
- who participates;
- mutual activities;
- basic facts about the church, its members and its ministries; and
- how the relationship benefits both companions.

Make sure participants understand that, on the trip, they represent not only themselves, but their synod and the ELCA.

→ To help participants understand the relationship of the Companion Synod Program to the ELCA's overall global mission activity, pass out the first two pages of Part I, Companion Synod Basics. Review the overall goals of the program.

Give each participant a copy of the current *ELCA Global Mission Annual*. Acquaint them with the ELCA's global mission work by asking them to:

- review the four goals of ELCA Global Mission;
- find your companion on the map in the center spread, and note the countries where the ELCA is present through international mission personnel or projects;
- review the text on the church and its ministry (if your companion's country is listed), and the ELCA's ministry there; and
- read the *Annual* more carefully when the participants get home, to get the "big picture" of ELCA Global Mission surrounding companion synod relationships.

→ To talk about how the accompaniment model of mission shapes your relationship, use the pages on Accompaniment in Part II to explain the concept and illustrate it with examples drawn from your relationship. Draw participants' attention to "Receiving."

Structure a discussion around these questions:

- What are the gifts of your companion?
- How has your relationship helped people of your synod receive those gifts?
- What gifts might participants receive on this trip?

For people new to the relationship and the accompaniment model, it will be helpful for you to model answers drawn from your experience with the relationship.

Ask for and answer any questions participants may have about these topics.

## **General trip information**

*30 minutes*

Use this time to offer basic information on the trip and answer questions. The best leader for this section is someone who has visited the country at least once and can clearly convey what the trip will be like. Distribute an information packet to each participant, and be sure to cover:

- the country: its location, language, culture, government and so forth (briefly);
- likely accommodations and travel conditions;
- medical information: shots required, precautions advised;
- security issues;
- fitness level needed to travel;
- timeline for decision;
- paperwork needed; and
- costs involved.

To introduce the country, show a short clip from a video or footage from a previous trip, or play music from the country. If your community has an international grocery, consider including a typical drink or appetizer as part of your refreshments.

When talk turns to travel conditions, be honest and forthright. Explain exactly what participants can expect and remind them to be prepared for the unexpected. Will they travel in hot climates on rugged dirt roads, with no air-conditioning? What kind of toilet facilities are available? Will participants be staying with families? What kind of food is typically served? How might the group cope

if a vehicle breaks down, leaving them stranded for a day? Being clear from the start will prevent anger and frustration during the trip, and will help participants who decide to participate prepare themselves well.

Emphasize the medical realities. Your information packet should list the immunizations needed prior to travel and the medications advised. Urge participants to be straightforward about their health and make wise decisions about participation. Ask anyone with allergies or special dietary needs to share them so appropriate food can be planned.

Many North Americans are apprehensive about security in other countries. Be honest about any concerns that may impact this trip and any measures the trip leaders or the companion are taking. Remind them that security can be a challenge even in “safe” countries and that each traveler needs to be responsible for his/her safety along the way.

Remind participants that travel can be exhilarating and frustrating. They may experience more than they bargained for and struggle to understand or be understood in a culture in which they cannot communicate. Adequate stamina and energy can make the trip smoother and more enjoyable. Encourage prospective participants to honestly evaluate their general health, fitness and energy level as they consider whether or not to join the trip.

Give a clear application deadline and explain the process of selecting travelers. Be clear about costs and when deposits are required. Review the timeline for preparation and set up a schedule for the next four orientation sessions.

## **Discerning your participation**

*5 minutes*

During the introduction, participants were asked to share their reason for wanting to be part of the trip. Ask them to take a few moments in silence to reflect more deeply on their motivation. Ask:

- How has what you have heard tonight influenced your interest?
- Is your reason still a good one?

- What is God telling you about this trip?
- How do you feel called to participate?

## **Prayer**

*5 minutes*

Thank everyone for coming and call the group to prayer. Ask that God be with all participants and the companion as they prepare for the trip. Ask for discernment, wisdom and openness to learning from one another. Pray that all participants may bear witness to God who created all humankind in the image of God. Ask that the trip may be a blessing to the synod and companion and that participants may grow in faith.

## **Refreshments**

Plan a time for informal conversation and one-on-one questions. Play a CD or tape of music from your companion's country or church while people visit.

*This portion of the trip was long and difficult. A 12-hour bus ride, without air conditioning, over rough and dusty roads. We had to go to the bathroom "in the bush" and sometimes there weren't even bushes. How did a group of ELCA women endure such a journey? We sang to keep up our spirits. We stood in circles with skirts spread to create bathrooms for one another. And we didn't complain because we knew ahead of time what the realities of the trip would be. 'You told us,' we said. 'You told us what it would be like.'"*

–Participant in Women of the ELCA trip to Madagascar

# Orientation Two: First Cross-cultural Session

## Objectives

- To identify typical U.S. cultural values;
- To contrast those values to those held by other cultures;
- To understand how those values influence the way we encounter other cultures;
- To become aware of the cultural values of your companion and country; and
- To understand the importance of developing cross-cultural relationship skills.

## Materials

- One set of Value Cards for each group of 3–5 people (see next section)
- One roll of masking tape for each group
- A copy of L. Robert Kohls' article, "The Values Americans Live By," available at several Web sites (Type "Robert Kohls Values Americans Live By" into a search engine to find downloadable copies in Microsoft Word ® or PDF.)

## Before the session

- To prepare yourself to lead this exercise, download and read Kohls' paper, which was written to help visitors to the United States understand American values. Make copies for everyone in the group to take home and read after the orientation. Reflect upon your own experience in your companion's country to identify values that it holds—and how they contrast with "typical" U.S. values.
- Create a set of Value Cards for the "Typical U.S. Values" activity. Make a set of cards for each small group of 3–5 people. On separate index cards, print each of these phrases clearly:
  - Control over time
  - Close human interaction

- Control over environment/responsibility
- Fate/destiny
- Change seen as natural/positive
- Stability/tradition/continuity
- Equality/fairness
- Hierarchy/rank/status
- Individualism/independence
- Group welfare/dependence
- Self-help/initiative
- Birthright/inheritance
- Competition
- Cooperation
- Future orientation
- Past orientation
- Action/work orientation
- "Being" orientation
- Informality
- Formality
- Directness/openness/honesty
- Indirectness/ritual/ "face"
- Practicality/efficiency
- Idealism/theory
- Materialism/acquisitiveness
- Spirituality/detachment

## Time

*90 minutes*

## Welcome and community-building exercise

*15 minutes*

Open with a prayer, a review of the evening's agenda and a welcome to all. Practice greeting one another in the language of your companion.

Ask the group to divide into groups of two or three and reflect on their childhood. When was the first time they encountered another culture while still in their own context? (Some examples might be transferring from Lutheran school to public school and making a friend who didn't celebrate Christmas; going to school in town after spending your first six years on a farm; moving to a more diverse neighborhood; or following your pastor parent to a new congregation.) What happened? What did it feel like?

After 12 minutes or so, call the group back together. Ask them to remember the stories they shared as the evening proceeds. As children, their earliest assumptions were

challenged by the encounter they described. Tonight we'll look at more cultural assumptions that influence how we see the world.

## Typical U.S. values

1 hour

### Introduction

10 minutes

Ask participants to divide into groups of 3-5, preferably with people they don't know very well.

Remind participants that in accompaniment, relationships are mutual and relationships always come before resources or projects. No matter what activity or project might be planned for the trip, its primary purpose is to *build and strengthen the relationship* between companions. Refer to Luke 24:13-35, the Easter story of the friends walking on the road to Emmaus—an example of how God accompanies us in Jesus Christ on our journey. What companions learn together in journey can change us!

Explain that this trip will take participants to a culture very different from their own. Immersion into another culture can be a very unsettling experience, like trying to play a game without knowing what the rules are. A starting point to understand another culture is to realize what your own cultural values are.

Cross-cultural consultant L. Robert Kohls has developed a list of 13 basic North American values. While not every person holds to every value listed, these values reflect the general society in the United States.

Give each group a set of Value Cards. Let them know that, in a few minutes, they will be asked to sort the values into two categories—"typical" U.S. values, and values that are not typical to the U.S. Let them know that the objective of this exercise is to begin to identify values that are so deeply ingrained in our culture that we don't even see them—so that we can keep from stumbling over them on the journey.

Explain that there are 26 cards in all that can be grouped into 13 pairs. Ask each group to take the next 15 minutes to discuss each value and identify the 13 that they consider "North American." Ask them to pair each "North American" value with its non-North American complement (e.g., "informal" and "formal.")

Encourage them to take their time with this, to really explore and share why they feel a particular value is North American. They can share stories and examples, and be personal.

### Activity

20 minutes

Groups work independently for 20 minutes. Give a five-minute warning so they can bring their work to a conclusion.

### Reporting and Discussion

30 minutes

Using the masking tape, each group displays its pairings on a wall near them. Go around in a circle and ask each group to introduce its pairings and give its rationales for its choices. After all groups have reported, examine the values where there wasn't agreement.

Remind participants that culture is internalized as patterns of thinking and behaving that are believed, in a particular culture, to be "normal"—simply the way things are. What Kohls calls "North American values" come from the dominant patterns of thinking and behaving of mainstream America—composed primarily but not exclusively of members of the white middle class. If your delegation is diverse, everyone may not share these values!

Remind participants that on this trip they will be "crossing cultures." A common stumbling block in crossing cultures is to universalize your own values—to make the values of your own culture into a norm that you expect everyone in the world to meet! Americans have ideas and values that are not always embraced by other cultures. For example, we might consider someone rude or irresponsible for being 20 minutes late, but in another culture, we may be considered

rude for abruptly ending a conversation so we can stick to our schedule.

***Gaining cultural self-awareness is important, because understanding and recognizing our culture's ideas and values will help us be aware of the "cultural blinders" that may cause us to make assumptions about others that are not accurate. Also, by understanding that values vary from place to place, we can avoid judging other values and calling them "right" or "wrong."***

Ask: In previous travels, or in work with non-U.S. groups, what clashes and misunderstandings have you experienced? Was it frustrating?

Ask: Many of today's biggest controversies are rooted in contrasting cultural beliefs. Can you think of some that we see in the headlines?

To conclude this section, congratulate everyone for taking an important first step toward cultural self-awareness. Remind them that it is important to become more conscious and knowledgeable about how our own culture has conditioned our way of thinking and planted within us the values and assumptions that govern our behaviors. This is especially important in visiting companions, because we are deepening relationships with people who have been raised under another set of values. Neither one is right or wrong!

### **Assign homework**

Hand out the Kohls paper and ask participants to read it before the next session, when the group will discuss it again.

### **Conclusion**

Conclude the orientation by teaching farewells in your companion's language. Pray for your companion, the trip and participants; sing a song from the companion's culture or church; and say goodbye to one another using the farewells you just learned.

# Orientation Three: Second Cross- cultural Session

## Objectives

- To understand the concept of cross-cultural competency;
- To explore cultural differences between the U.S. and your companion; and
- To begin to understand the effect of white privilege on companion synod relationships.

## Materials to prepare ...

### ... for the cross-cultural competency discussion:

- Copies of the “Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory” from Vangent, [www.vangent-hcm.com/solutions/performance/management/organizational\\_surveys/ccai/](http://www.vangent-hcm.com/solutions/performance/management/organizational_surveys/ccai/) or 800-922-7343. You will need one copy of the inventory and the action-planning guide for each participant, plus a manual for you.

### ... for the first race and privilege activity:

Copy the following nine statements onto index cards (one statement per card):

*I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely and positively represented.*

*I do not have to educate myself or my children to be aware of systemic racism for their daily physical protection.*

*When I am told about our national heritage or about “civilization,” I am shown that people of my color made it what is.*

*Whether I use checks, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.*

*I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.*

*If a traffic cop pulls me over, I can be sure I haven’t been singled out because of my race.*

*I am never asked to speak for all people of my racial group.*

*I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having my co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of my race.*

*I can choose public accommodations without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.*

### ... for the second race and privilege activity:

Gather index cards and a backpack containing these items:

- passport;
- money and coins;
- bottled water;
- health insurance card;
- credit card; and
- house keys.

Copy the following statements onto index cards

Two cards for the passport:

#### **U.S. citizen**

*With a U.S. passport, most borders are open to us. We can enter many countries without having to apply for visas. When we need visas, they are almost always granted. We travel with the privilege of knowing we will be admitted.*

#### **Global companion**

*I am unlikely to get a visa to an ELCA synod or churchwide assembly if invited as a guest, because the U.S. consulate considers me a possible immigrant until proven otherwise. Most borders in the world are not open to me.*

Two cards for the money and coins:

**U.S. citizen**

*We have money and means to spend our money on pleasure and things that we want to buy.*

**Global companion**

*2.8 billion people live on less than \$2.00 a day. We do not have money for travel or pleasure. We do not have enough money to feed our families.*

Two cards for the bottled water:

**U.S. citizen**

*We have access to fresh, safe water. We don't have to bring it back from a well one bucket at a time, or worry about drinking contaminated water.*

**Global companion**

*Over 1.2 billion people do not have access to clean water. Where there is safe, clean water it may be controlled by private interests who determine who has access.*

Two cards for the health insurance card:

**U.S. citizen**

*We have access to doctors and regular medical care. We are immunized against major illnesses and have enjoyed a good, healthy diet since birth.*

**Global companion**

*2.2 million children die each year because they are not immunized. Large numbers of people around the world do not have adequate health care. A million deaths every year are due to malaria.*

Two cards for the credit card:

**U.S. citizen**

*People we do not even know will LEND us money. We can get more when we run out.*

**Global companion**

*We who live in developing countries do not have personal credit cards and have little access to loans or credit.*

Two cards for the house keys:

**U.S. citizen**

*Most of us own houses and can afford to stay in hotels. We have certain expectations about our comfort level—linens, pillows, heat and air-conditioning.*

**Global companion**

*About 400 million urban dwellers are homeless or live in inadequate housing.*

*In developed and developing countries, housing shortages and poor housing conditions are life threatening. Substandard housing, unsafe water and poor sanitation are responsible for 10 million deaths worldwide each year.*

**... for the discussion of U.S. values versus your companion's values:**

- download the article on culture from <http://archive.elca.org/globalmission/welcomeforward/culture.pdf> and consider using its three scenarios to explore cultural differences.
- Purchase the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory materials and review the training manual to acquaint yourself with the test, the scoring methods and the interpretation.

**Time**

*110 minutes*

**Welcome**

*5 minutes*

Open with prayer and song. Practice greeting one another in your companion's language.

**Warm-up activity**

*5 minutes*

Expand your language. Teach everyone the basics of introducing themselves, and of wishing one another "Christ be with you," "Peace be with you," or another common liturgical phrase.

**Introduction: discuss the Kohls paper handed out in the previous session**

*20 minutes*

Invite participants to take a few moments to discuss the Kohls paper on U.S. values. What part made the deepest impression? What was something surprising they learned? What did they agree with? Disagree with?

Take a few minutes to process the paper. The main point for participants to draw from the discussion is that all of us are ethnocentric. We use our own culture as the

standard by which we make judgments about the rest of the world! Recognizing our ethnocentrism is a powerful first step in crossing cultures successfully.

## Introduce cross-cultural competence

15 minutes

Explain that the focus of this session is understanding the concept of cultural competence and assessing your own level of cultural competence.

Almost all companion relationships involve crossing cultures. Therefore, in order to authentically practice accompaniment in our relationships, we need to become culturally competent.

Cultural competence enables us to engage people who are different culturally, racially and behaviorally—and engage them with respect and compassion instead of judgment and derision. It is a set of cultural behaviors and attitudes that, when they are integrated to our every day practice, enables us to relate and work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

The bottom line is that cross-cultural competence lets us be comfortable with differences between ourselves and others and helps us make relationships across cultures. Several skills are involved:

- **The ability to value diversity**—the foundation of cultural sensitivity.
- **Mutual respect**—respecting, validating and being open toward someone whose social and cultural perceptions and expectations are not like ours. (Without mutual respect, people are threatened by or defensive about those differences.)
- **Sensitivity**—understanding and avoiding judgment about the other culture, and being respectful in dealing with people whose culture is different.
- **Ability to adapt**—being conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact, and knowing what to do when you encounter people who are different from you. This also means learning the skill of noticing and changing behavior that may be stereotypical.

- **An awareness of how culture is institutionalized**—being able to recognize the ways that institutions do not value diversity and operate with policies and practices that do not accommodate differences.
- **Communication**—the ability to communicate effectively across cultural groups.

Cultural competence begins with an awareness of your own cultural beliefs and practices and the recognition that others from other cultures may not share them.

After reading the Kohls paper, we can acknowledge that the values we live and breath are distinctly North American—a big step in the direction of understanding and accepting that people from other cultures may not share those values.

A first step in the process of mastering cultural competence is to assess your level of competence. Explain that you are going to pass out the "Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory," a self-awareness inventory that will help participants understand their potential for cross-cultural effectiveness and pinpoint areas where they might need to work. Ask participants to take it home and answer all 50 questions. When they finish, they should look inside the folder to evaluate their answers and assess their competence level.

**Emphasize that this is a private test and only they will know the results.** This test will help assess their grasp of the cross-cultural dimensions that are critical in adapting to other cultures. Its commentary will give feedback on four areas so they can understand more about how they work and raise awareness regarding potential difficulties and concerns. Explain that at the next session, we will talk about ways we can commit, individually and as a group, to increasing our cultural competence.

Distribute the tests and answer any questions.

## Comparison of U.S. and companion values

30 minutes

Most cross-cultural conflicts and problems arise from:

- differences in behavior;
- differences in thinking; and
- differences in assumptions.

Explain that the next session will focus on our companion synod church, country and culture, but that today you'd like to highlight three or four features of their culture.

Draw from your knowledge, or the knowledge of committee members who have made previous trips, to mention three or four key items, such as attitudes toward time, attitudes toward change, and attitudes about individuals and the community. Using the Kohls paper as a guide, have participants suggest potential conflicts that might arise between the companions in these areas. Discuss at length. If you can develop a case study from your relationship, this would be a good time to present and discuss it. If no case study is available, conduct a discussion of the scenarios presented in the article on culture found at <http://archive.elca.org/globalmission/welcomeforward/culture.pdf>.

Answer any questions that arise from this discussion.

(This is a long session. You might want to take a short break before starting the next activity.)

## Explore the influence of race and privilege

30 minutes

Besides adapting to cultural differences, most U.S. citizens need to understand and begin to come to terms with white privilege—something most of us do not acknowledge, but that affects us wherever we live. While 20 minutes is very little time to unpack this concept, this exercise can open the door.

A good way to introduce this topic is by explaining to participants that white privilege

is like an invisible package of unearned assets that white people are given at birth. These privileges allow white people certain things in society that are not readily, easily or at all available to people of color. These privileges are institutionalized in the United States and around the world. They are so much a part of our lives that we find them difficult to identify and name.

White privilege is global and has been in operation for centuries. "Whiteness is ownership of the earth," said W.E.B. DuBois. It has been manifested through European and American colonialism and power over economic, political and culture elements.

The global system of white privilege has based the framework for the world order on the values and interest of the white order. Historically, it is based substantially on the exploitation of non-white peoples. That exploitation of the land and resources of the eastern and southern hemispheres, where indigenous people are black, brown, red or yellow, continues today.

Even our language reinforces white privilege as it expresses ideas and concepts that shape thought and reality. In our culture, the word "white" is positive and the word "black" is negative. "Good guys" wear white hats and ride white horses; "bad guys" wear black hats and ride black horses. Angels are white; devils are black. Some of the definitions of the word "black" include "without moral light or goodness, evil, wicked, indicating disgrace, sinful," while definitions of the word "white" include "morally pure, spotless, innocent, and free from evil intent." Thus language reinforces that being something other than white is bad, and it is internalized by those people who are not white.

To create authentic relationships, particularly with companions outside Europe, we need to understand and name white privilege and begin to grasp how racism proliferates itself through societies and cultures that support white privilege of its members. It's hard. We're polite, and we don't necessarily want to discuss this. But white privilege affects all relationships with non-European companions, and we need to commit to understanding this phenomenon.

After introducing the topic of white privilege, distribute the nine index cards with quotes about white privilege. Ask participants to read them aloud. When all have been read, discuss reactions briefly. In their experience, how is white privilege carried out in the United States?

Set the backpack on the table. Pass out the backpack cards to the participants. As you pull each item from the backpack, ask participants to read the matching “U.S. citizen” and “Global companion” card.

Pull items one at a time from the backpack: passport, money and coins, bottled water, health insurance card, credit card, and house keys.

After all items have been displayed and cards read, let the group reflect in silence for a few moments and then discuss how white privilege is evident in each of these items. How might these privileges affect the companion relationship?

### **Assign media image homework**

*5 minutes*

Remind people that our perceptions of the world outside the U.S. are mediated or shaped by our news media and government. Images we see in the news may not be the ones you encounter during your visit.

Encourage participants to look out for newspaper and magazine articles and to watch TV and radio shows for images, comments and programs about the country of destination. Ask them to check the U.S. State Department and CIA Web sites to see what our government has to say about the companion. An Internet search using the country’s name will help participants find news sources from your companion’s country. Ask participants to bring clippings and printouts to the next meeting to discuss.

Answer any questions.

## **Conclusion**

End with prayer, remembering that God created the whole world and all its people. God loves the whole world and all humans are precious in God’s sight. Conclude with a song from your companion’s church or culture, and refreshments.

### **Other resources on race and privilege**

- “Power or Partnership,” pp. 72–73 of *Welcome Forward*.
- “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” by Peggy McIntosh, available on many Web sites.
- “Understanding White Privilege” by Francis E. Kendall, found in *Troubling the Waters for Healing of the Church: A Journey for White Christians from Privilege to Partnership*, at [www.cwsworkshop.org/resources/WhitePrivilege.html](http://www.cwsworkshop.org/resources/WhitePrivilege.html).
- “America’s Original Sin: A Study Guide to White Racism” from the November 1987 issue of *Sojourners Magazine*.
- “The Level Playing Field,” an activity you can download from [www.womenoftheelca.org](http://www.womenoftheelca.org) (click on Program Resources ..., then on Engaging in Ministry and Action, and then scroll down) or order from Augsburg Fortress at [www.augsburgfortress.org](http://www.augsburgfortress.org).

# Orientation Four: Companion Church Session

information published by Culture Grams  
([www.culturegrams.com](http://www.culturegrams.com)).

## Time

110 minutes

## Objective

- To acquaint participants with the culture and cultural values of your companion, as well as its history, structure, ministries, and current situation.

## Materials

- A copy of the L. Robert Kohls paper for your guest speaker
- Handout C, "Cross-Cultural Relationships"
- Handout D, "Cultural Norms Worksheet"
- The Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory materials (see materials list for Orientation Three)

## Before the session

If possible, identify someone from your companion to attend this orientation. Other resources might include former missionaries to the country, or committee members who have spent a good deal of time in your companion's country. Contact your guest ahead of time to arrange a presentation about your companion's culture, specifically: food, language, family structure, holidays and celebrations, government and politics, and religion.

Before the session, give your guest speaker a copy of the Kohls paper on basic American values and suggest that the speaker come prepared to focus on one or two contrasting values that typically cause frustration in the relationship. What have been some pitfalls for members of your synod traveling to your companion? What pitfalls have travelers from your companion encountered?

If no guest speaker is available, assemble a presentation on your companion's country and culture using information drawn from other sources, like books and online

## Welcome and warm-up

10 minutes

Be friendly with everyone. Don't be proud and feel that you are smarter than others. Make friends with ordinary people. ... But try to earn the respect of others, and do your best to live at peace with everyone.

—Romans 12:16-18 (CEV)

Remind participants that our sessions have been helping us identify and begin to master the cross-cultural tools we need to prepare ourselves for our trip. How does this verse address our preparation?

Ask participants to interlock their fingers and observe which thumb is on top. Then have them switch the position of their thumbs and be aware of their discomfort. Point out that much of our communication is unconscious, and we don't understand how natural it is until we are in a situation where it isn't natural! In small groups, have participants briefly analyze how people in your part of the U.S. dress, use time and space, and touch one another.

## Discuss the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) you took at home

20 minutes

Ask participants how taking the CCAI test went. Was scoring clear? If there are questions, use the CCAI materials to review the process (see p. 45 in the CCAI Training Guide.)

Point out that the CCAI test assesses four areas that are each important factors in cross-cultural adaptability:

1. emotional resilience;
2. flexibility/openness;
3. perceptual acuity; and
4. personal autonomy.

Pages 14–19 of the leader’s manual will help you conduct a discussion around these four areas.

Remind participants that while results are private, it is important to be honest with yourself about the results and to plan for developing your cross-cultural competence. See p. 41 of the Training Guide for advice on directing participants through the Action Planning Guide.

Distribute Handout C, “Cross-Cultural Relationships.” Review it together. Any reactions to its assertions? Revelations? How will it help us increase our cultural competence?

### **What are the values of our companion church?**

*60 minutes*

Explain that tonight’s session focuses on the culture and cultural values of your companion. Pass out Handout D, “Cultural Norms Worksheet,” and ask participants to write down answers to its questions as they listen to the presentation.

Introduce the guest speaker and ask him/her to begin by sharing his/her own story—where he/she is from, family background, ethnic roots, and so on—before talking about the country’s culture and cultural values. Encourage questions from participants!

If the guest is from your companion, be sure he/she also covers these topics:

- the history of your companion;
- challenges it has faced;
- church structure and size;
- the church’s context—what is happening in society and how the church addresses it;
- ministries and activities;
- challenges and issues it faces today; and
- the history of the country, and challenges its people have faced.

If the presenter is from the companion country but not the church, ask a leader of your companion synod committee to address these points. Some of this

information should have been introduced in the first session, and if you are working closely with your companion, it may be covered again during an on-site orientation when you arrive in the country. Reinforcing this material several times helps participants gain an understanding of your companion and its work, which they will draw on often during your visit.

### **Media images**

*15 minutes*

Ask participants to share media images that they have gathered. Discuss the images, with questions such as:

- Are the country portrayals similar?
- Do articles contradict one another?
- What surprises are there?
- How do you expect this experience to add a broader picture?

Ask your visitor to comment on the media’s image of the country, and any differences between the media image and his or her experience of the country.

### **Homework**

Ask participants to purchase a blank journal for the trip and bring it to the next meeting. Part of the agenda of the next orientation will be devoted to capturing the trip through words and pictures.

### **Conclusion**

*5 minutes*

Conclude this section of the orientation by singing a song from your host’s country or church. Pray for your presenter, your companion, all trip participants and any other concerns. Adjourn for refreshments.

# Orientation Five: Pre-trip Planning Session

## Objectives

- To review the trip itinerary and other final details; and
- To draft a trip covenant.

## Materials

- Flip chart and markers; write these three questions on the chart:
  - What is your greatest anxiety or fear as you begin this trip?
  - What are you most excited about?
  - For you, what would be the most satisfactory result of this trip?
- These activities from *Welcome Forward*:
  - “Great Expectations,” pp. 22–23
  - “Family Matters,” pp. 30–31
  - “Fear Not,” pp. 32–33
  - “Covenant Making,” pp. 36–37
  - “Packing Light,” pp. 52–53
  - “I’m Overwhelmed,” pp. 78–79
- Download and copy the Packing Checklist and “The Power of Language” from <http://archive.elca.org/global/mission/welcomeforward/forms.html>. Visit <http://archive.elca.org/global/mission/welcomeforward/communicate.html> for tips on taking photos. Download and distribute or encourage travelers to visit the site themselves.
- Handout E, “A Code of Ethics for Tourists”
- Handout F, “Team Member Roles”
- Handout G, “Journaling Worksheet”

## Before the session

Is an experienced writer or journal keeper participating in this trip? Consider asking him/her to lead the journal exercise. Give him/her the session planning materials and the journaling handout so he/she can prepare.

## Time

90 minutes

## Overview of session

10 minutes

Welcome everyone. Have them practice greeting each other in the companion’s language. Open with prayer.

Explain the purpose of this session and let participants know that they will review and discuss:

- the final itinerary;
- roommates;
- what to bring;
- how to capture their trip in film and words;
- travel etiquette;
- Code of Ethics for Tourists; and
- roles and expectations.

## Itinerary

20 minutes

Distribute the itinerary and review it carefully, answering questions as they are asked.

Include maps, as town names might not mean anything to participants. Discuss what will happen at each stop, where participants will stay and what will be expected of them. Be sure to explain who will be rooming together and how the decision was made. If daily reflections or devotions are part of the trip, clarify when they will be held and who will lead them. Leave plenty of time for questions—there will be many!

## What to bring

10 minutes

Distribute and discuss the Packing Checklist as a group. The most important points for people to grasp are:

- travel as lightly as possible—very hard for North Americans;
- dress appropriately (draw on the cultural knowledge the group gained during Session Four);
- protect documents in a money belt or document pouch, and leave duplicates with family and the group leader;

- bring comfortable shoes and a brimmed hat for travel to hot climates;
- keep sharp objects (pocket knife) in checked luggage, not in carry-on; and
- tie a bright ribbon on each participant's luggage, to make it easier to identify luggage at the airport.

## Trip etiquette and responsibilities

20 minutes

Distribute Handout E, “A Code of Ethics for Tourists.” Discuss good guest behavior, including sharing the local view on tobacco, alcohol and appropriate dress. Refer back to what everyone learned about your companion’s culture in the fourth session. Answer any questions.

As a group, discuss or decide:

- who will introduce the group at its various visits;
- what kind of gifts are appropriate for hosts;
- how to gracefully accept gifts from hosts (refer to “Grace-full Receiving” on pp. 66–67 of *Welcome Forward*;
- how to ask permission to take photos
- how to handle requests for money.  
→ See the column at right for ideas.

Take a few minutes to review “appropriate” language using “The Power of Language” handout downloaded from the *Welcome Forward* Web site. Review basic vocabulary of mission (for example, “companion church,” not “mission field”) and take a few moments to review and practice basic greetings and vocabulary in your companion’s language.

Distribute Handout F, “Team Member Roles,” and assign tasks to willing participants to make the trip easier and more enjoyable for all. You may wish to send this to participants prior to the orientation, so that they can think about what they might be willing and able to do

Seek other ways to use the knowledge of the group. If someone has a bend toward architecture, history, botany, or anthropology, ask that they research some of what will be seen to offer insights. Do not rely completely on members of your group

for information—you will want to get the local interpretation as well, which may be different.

## Handling requests for money

Delegation members may be approached by someone who asks for help or a gift. Do not be surprised or offended. In many cultures, asking a new acquaintance for help or for a gift can be an accepted and conventional way of beginning a friendship or showing respect for a new friend. But remember—in all cultures the giving and receiving of gifts follows certain traditions and customs. As guests, you will not be aware of these traditions and will need some guidance. Urge your delegation to follow these guidelines:

1. **Respond courteously without making any commitment.** Don’t promise something you cannot deliver, then or in the future, to get out of what may be for you an embarrassing situation. Do have a short conversation about the circumstances prompting the request, and express your understanding and sympathy regarding the need.
2. **Say that you need to talk to your group leader first.** Be very careful about selective generosity. A gift to a particular person, group or congregation can create difficulties for local church leadership. The group leader can accept requests and discuss them with local companion leaders. The covenant that governs your companion relationship probably clarifies procedures around monetary gifts. If it doesn’t, this issue needs to be discussed by both companions.
3. **No matter how great the need may appear to be, do not let the impulse of the moment prompt you to offer assistance.** What you may intend as a spontaneous expression of generosity on your part may be demeaning or cause problems.
4. **Remember, as guests in your companion’s church and country, you are the receiver, not the bearer,**

**of gifts.** Urge travelers to practice accepting the hospitality and friendship of your companion graciously. Be open to the many and various gifts they offer you—their insight into the gospel, their faith, their strength in adversity, their joy in living. Your willingness to receive what they have to offer you is the highest compliment you can pay.

## How to capture the trip in film and words

15 minutes

Distribute Handout G, “Journaling Worksheet.” Distribute or call participants’ attention to the photo advice on the *Welcome Forward* Web site.

Remind participants that in a journal you can record and process your experiences. It’s a safe place for first reactions—frustration, discouragement, joy—to experiences that may become clearer later in the trip. The journal is for *your* benefit, not others! While you may later rewrite sections of a journal to share with others, you’re more likely to be candid about feelings if you write for yourself.

Ask participants to take a few moments to reflect on the questions shown on the worksheet and make some initial entries now. Answers are private, and can be elaborated on at home.

Direct their attention to the flip chart where you have written the following questions, and ask them to answer them in their journals. Let them know that these answers will be shared, so group members can learn more about each other and better support one another on the journey:

- What is your greatest anxiety or fear as you begin this trip?
- What are you most excited about?
- For you, what would be the most satisfactory result of this trip?

Write participants’ responses to each question on the flip chart, and save the sheets for the Debriefing Your Journey session (below). Answer questions.

## Formulate a covenant

15 minutes

Create a group covenant that articulates:

- the purpose and mission of your trip;
- expectations of the experience; and
- agreements around behavior.

Use “Covenant Making” on pp. 36–37 and “The Ugly American” on pp. 38–39 of *Welcome Forward* (Leader Guide available at <http://archive.elca.org/globalmission/welcomeforward>) to structure this activity.

When the covenant is complete and written on the flip chart, have everyone sign it. Bring the covenant along on the trip in case participants need encouragement or a gentle reminder about their behavior!

## Questions

Answer any other questions. Leave lots of time for questions.

## Conclusion

Practice saying “good-bye” in your companion’s language, and enjoy more music from its country as you have refreshments.

## Sample covenant

*During our trip, we will be living and learning together as Christians, and participating in the life of our companion. We believe this unique opportunity to travel and learn together will strengthen our individual and collective witness as Christians. We agree to:*

- *keep our hearts open, so that we may receive all that we are about to experience;*
- *learn from our hosts and respect their culture;*
- *abstain from profanity, smoking, the use of illegal drugs;*
- *strive to communicate honestly and openly;*
- *be slow to anger and quick to forgive; and*
- *pray for one another and our hosts.*

[All participants sign.]

### **We were asked to help**

*During a women's visit from the ELCA, a woman in the destination country asked whether one of the ELCA visitors could act as her sponsor to expedite her emigration to the United States. The visitor had the presence of mind to offer nothing, but pass the request on to the group leader. The group leader talked to the companion leadership, only to find that the companion church was doing everything in its power to help the woman emigrate to America. Had the ELCA visitors intervened, it could have jeopardized her standing in the emigration process and ruined her chances of leaving her country. In proper time, within the correct channels, the ELCA member was able to be her sponsor. But since we never know the whole story by talking to one individual, do not give or promise anything. Talk to leaders of your travel group, and with your companion. Trying to give little gifts to many may be difficult. A better idea might be to give gifts to a school or church that can later be distributed and shared with many.*

–Women of the ELCA trip participant

# Daily reflections on the journey

Set aside time each day for travelers to check in on their experiences. Use these ideas and questions to guide discussions that help identify and process emotions, ideas, and experience.

Consider dividing a large delegation into smaller peer groups or “families” to facilitate reflection and sharing. They can check in with one another during the day. Ask them to discuss:

- What is going well for you at this point in the trip?
- What is not going so well for you?
- What things are going especially well in this trip?
- What things have not been helpful?
- What other questions and concerns are surfacing for you?

Many other questions and tools for reflections, for daily prayer and worship, and for processing feelings may be found on pp. 78–129 of *Welcome Forward*

- Reflections:
  - “I’m Overwhelmed,” pp. 78–79;
  - “The Tough Stuff,” pp. 80–81;
  - “Processing for Peace,” pp. 82–83; and
  - “More Processing Tools,” pp. 84–85.
- Devotions:
  - “Hopelessly Devoted to God,” pp. 90–91;
  - “Spiritual Practices,” pp. 92–93; and
  - “More Spiritual Practices,” pp. 94–95.
- Processing emotions: *Welcome Forward* also helps travelers process their emotions on returning to the United States (the Leader Guide at <http://archive.elca.org/globalmission/welcomeforward> offers tips for deepening and extending these activities):
  - “Prepare for Reentry,” pp. 96–97;
  - “Talking Your Way Home,” pp. 98–99; and
  - all of the entries in the “Living the Questions” section, pp. 102–129.

Before you return to the U.S., help participants be able to talk about the trip by

preparing three or four main points that they would want people to know about following their journey.

## Debriefing your journey

After arriving in Antioch, they [Paul and Barnabas] called the church together. They told the people what God had helped them do and how he had made it possible for the Gentiles to believe. Then they stayed there with the followers for a long time.

—Acts 14:27-28 (CEV)

Orientations help participants get the most out of the trip; debriefings help them process their experiences. Travel can often be intense, and without guided reflection it is easy for participants to get swept up in their daily lives and lose sight of what they learned or experienced.

Schedule the debriefing for a week or two after your return. If the distances within the synod make this difficult, hold the debriefing immediately after the trip, at the airport if necessary.

### Objectives

- To process the experiences of the trip in a safe environment; and
- To provide feedback for future activities and visits.

### Materials

- White board or flip chart to record group process

### Time

2–3 hours

### Before the session

Ask participants to bring their photos and travel journals so they can make notes or share from entries they wrote during the trip. Ask them to read the “Living the Questions” section of *Welcome Forward* (pp. 102–129) before they attend the session.

## Welcome

Welcome everyone with prayers of thanksgiving for a safe trip and prayers of support for everyone you met along the way.

## Debrief your experience

1 hour

Divide participants into groups of 4–5 and ask them to reflect on these questions.

- What were the highlights?
- What things were disturbing?
- What was most surprising about the companion?
- How did the experience shape your view of God?
- How has the trip influenced you?
- What concerns do you have?
- What would you like to share with the rest of the synod?

Have each group quickly summarize its responses for the whole delegation. Leave time for group processing and discussion.

Invite participants to revisit the fears they articulated in Orientation Five, Pre-Trip Planning Session.

- What is your greatest anxiety or fear as you begin this trip?
- What are you most excited about?
- For you, what would be the most satisfactory result of this trip?

Did those fears materialize? How do they feel about the trip now? Take time to probe this.

## Identify photos

15 minutes

Encourage participants to bring photos to the debriefing. Use the group to help identify and label any “mystery” photos.

## Discuss presentation responsibilities

20 minutes

Remind participants that as part of a companion synod delegation, they need to share their experiences with others—through congregational presentations, articles in synod newsletters, videos or PowerPoint® presentations, or music.

Have participants share their plans for presentations, especially any ideas they have about organizing the material.

Encourage participants to use these tips for effective presentations:

- Use photos, slides, PowerPoint® presentations, objects, or other visual aids.
- Focus on highlights or special moments of the trip, especially faith-changing moments, rather than giving a day-by-day account.
- Present a balanced view of positive and negative experiences. Focusing on the story of the stolen suitcase may give the impression that the people of that country are dishonest.
- Incorporate music from your companion.
- Open and close with prayer.

Close the debriefing with a song you learned on your journey and with prayers of thanksgiving!

## Complete an evaluation

What does your committee need to know about this trip in order to plan more mutually supportive activities and trips in the future? Design and distribute an evaluation form to solicit feedback.

→ See *Appendix 6* for a sample evaluation form.

# PART V:

## Hosting International Guests

**B**e sure to welcome strangers into your home. By doing this, some people have welcomed angels as guests, without even knowing it.

—Hebrews 13:2 (CEV)

Welcoming visitors is at the heart of *receiving*—that part of accompaniment in which we graciously receive gifts from others. When we open our lives and homes to offer hospitality to others, we create a space where gifts can be exchanged. Host and guest have much to offer each other in terms of cultural knowledge. Both are ambassadors for their cultures, churches, and countries.

Extending hospitality to global companions can be an exciting and educational experience. This section covers the many aspects of inviting and hosting international visitors. Use it to plan a successful visit or exchange!

### The gift of cultural exchange

People in relationship are curious about one another and want to get to know one another's reality. When you travel to visit your companions, you get a first-hand taste of the culture and context in which your companions live and carry out their ministry. Your companions are just as curious about you! They want to see where and how you live, work, worship and serve. When both companions have experienced one another's reality, your ability to understand one another will grow, and your relationship will deepen. So will your understanding of your own reality, because your guests will

enable you to experience it through new eyes.

Because cultural exchanges are cross-cultural experiences, they challenge all participants. Seeing your own culture through the eyes of a guest can be frustrating. By offering cross-cultural training to everyone who participates in your program—committee members, hosts, and others—all participants will increase their cross-cultural competence and benefit more from the visit.

### Helpful resources on hosting international guests

- *Welcoming Friends from Abroad: A Guidebook for Hospitality*, available from ELCA Global Mission.
- The University of Minnesota's *International Visitors Guide*, online at [www.international.umn.edu/visitors/guide/](http://www.international.umn.edu/visitors/guide/) (very helpful, although written for international exchanges within the university).
- *Africans and Americans: Embracing Cultural Differences* by Joseph L. Mbele. Order through [www.afri.conexion.com](http://www.afri.conexion.com).

### Set the vision and purpose

Why are your visitors coming? Before you invite anyone, you and your companion should define the purpose for the visit.

- What does your synod hope to gain from having visitors?
- What do congregations hope to gain?
- What does your companion hope to gain by visiting?
- For your committee, what would be the characteristics of a "successful" companion visit to your synod or congregation?
- For your companion, what would be the characteristics of a "successful" visit?

Clarifying a mutual purpose and developing mutual goals *before* you begin planning will help focus your work. Are you inviting a delegation to a special festival or synod

assembly? Are you focusing the visit on health and well-being ministries, rural issues, young people or education? Are you exchanging leaders to better understand the context of ministry? The overall vision for the visit will make it easier to plan activities.

Other questions you may want to consider to help you define the purpose and vision for the visit:

- What ministries would you like to share with your companion?
- How can synodical members prepare themselves in attitude to receive the guests?
- How can synodical members be encouraged to listen to the witness and observations of the guests?
- How will you create occasions for your guests to speak to your synod?
- Are you prepared to be changed by their visit?

## Keep both bishops in the loop!

Even if your exchange is between two congregations, be sure to inform *both* bishops of your intention and keep them apprised of all developments.

## Who should visit?

While the vision and purpose of the visit will help pinpoint the guests to be invited, it's a good idea to strive for diversity. Offer people of all ages the opportunity to visit, so that as people mature, there are always younger participants to continue the relationship. Remember to include men and women, young and old, people from various ethnic backgrounds represented in your congregation or synod, and leaders with different gifts:

- choirs, music directors, and musicians;
- pastors;
- lay workers;
- Sunday school or vacation Bible school teachers;
- women's groups;
- men's groups;
- youth groups; and
- dancers and drama groups.

## Send the invitation

When you and your companion have established your mutual purpose, send two letters of invitation to your companion.

The first letter, addressed to the companion bishop or president, spells out the vision and invites your companion to continue thinking about what is expected from the visit. It should also clarify the dates of the visit and who is invited.

→ See *Appendix 6* for a sample.

A second, "official" letter—one for each guest—outlines the purpose and overall expectations and includes the appropriate language that the U.S. Department of State requires in order to issue a visa. Make sure this letter clearly states the fact that your congregation or synod is an expression of the 5-million member ELCA—a factor that will add credibility to your request for a visa.

→ See *Appendix 7* for a sample.

## Agree on mutual responsibilities

A visit or exchange will go more smoothly if you and your companion take the time to draw up an agreement of mutual expectations first. This covenant agreement can list in detail:

- the purpose or vision for the exchange;
- the responsibilities your synod or congregation will take on for the visitors;
- what visitors can expect from the hosting companion'
- the expectations, needs and responsibilities of visitors;
- financial expectations—the overall budget, per diem payments, and so forth; and
- what will happen if either party fails to meet its responsibilities.

Clarifying mutual expectations and responsibilities up front can save disagreements later—disagreements that can be hurtful and disastrous once guests have arrived. A mutual covenant can help prevent conflict triggered by unclear expectations.

The more detailed and mutual the covenant, the more likely it will be that the visit will run

smoothly. Sharing the covenant with individual host families and others involved in the exchange or visit will also answer questions about their responsibilities.

When the covenant agreement is complete, both bishops should sign it before the visit, along with representatives of the planning committee, the guests and perhaps the host families. Both parties are expected to abide by the covenant. However, if its terms are broken by either party—as distasteful and as unlikely as this may be—conditions for doing so should be stated in the covenant itself. For the guest or the host, this might involve termination of the visit and/or reimbursement of funds.

If an agreement cannot be reached, then arrangements should be cancelled early in the planning stages.

Some points a covenant or mutual agreement might cover:

- **Dates.** Precise dates of arrival in and departure from the host community should be set.
- **International transportation.** Who pays for air travel to and from the guest's country and the U.S.?
- **National transportation.** Who pays for travel within the U.S.?
- **Local transportation.** How will guests get from place to place? If public transportation is available, who will pay for it? How often can the visitor rely on designated drivers and cars? Will the guest have a car at her or his disposal? (If so, an international driver's license will be needed.)
- **Housing.** Will guests stay in a single home or with different families for specific periods? What about hotels? Will there be any time when the guest will have to pay for his or her own food or accommodation? If so, remember that your guests may not be able to come up with resources to cover these expenses.
- **Activities.** Approximately how often will the guest be expected to attend meetings or make presentations? How much free time will he or she have?
- **Paid employment.** Is paid work possible either as part of the guest's

official duties or privately? (Most visas do not permit visitors to work.)

- **Allowances and per diems.** Will the host provide any special allowances to the guests? If so, for what purpose, how much, and when will it be paid?
- **Insurance.** What types of coverage will the guest have? Who funds it?
- **Reporting.** Will the visitor be responsible for making a report of the visit? What guidelines should the report follow?
- **Fund-raising.** Will the guest be able to raise funds for a ministry back home or sell hand-crafted items?

## Sample planning timeline

### 16–18 months ahead

With your companion, discuss and discern:

- the purpose of the trip;
- mutual hopes for the visit;
- possible groups to invite—e.g. women's groups, youth group, synodical leaders; and
- mutually convenient dates.

With your committee:

- form a planning committee or leadership team and name a chairperson;
- schedule an overall orientation for committee members that includes cross-cultural material (draw from Orientation Sessions 3 and 4 in Part IV);
- establish a schedule for committee meetings;
- determine number of participants and criteria for selection; and
- gather cost estimates and develop a budget.

When mutual hopes and expectations, the number and names of the visitors and the budget are clear:

- Develop a covenant with your companion, clarifying mutual expectations and responsibilities.

### 12–16 months ahead

- Send two letters of invitation—one spelling out the vision for the visit, and one providing details necessary for the U.S. Department of State.  
→ See *Appendices 7 and 8.*

- Begin to discuss itinerary with the companion.
- Discuss what will be needed to accommodate guests (housing, transportation, translators, and so forth).
- Communicate closely and often with your companion and the specific guests who will be coming.

#### **9–12 months ahead**

- Prepare materials to assist visitors with U.S. State Department visa process.
- Secure biographical and medical information on guests; determine any special needs (diet, mobility, and the like).
- Begin to find hosts for visitors.
- Based on mutual discussions with your companion, begin firming up itinerary.
- Finalize the budget.
- Communicate closely and often with your companion and guests.

#### **6–8 months ahead**

- Confirm host families and/or individuals.
- Exchange biographical info— host families get profiles of guests; guests get profiles of hosts and host families plus background on hosting congregations and communities.
- Prepare materials (additional letters, interview tips, and so forth) to assist your guests through the visa application process.
- Continue to communicate closely with your companion and guests.

#### **4–6 months ahead**

- Monitor your guests' progress through the visa application process so that problems can be addressed as soon as they arise.
- Plan cross-cultural and country orientation sessions for the hosts and local participants.
- Schedule opportunities for your visitors to share their stories and gifts.
- Begin to publicize the visit in your synod or congregation communications.
- Continue to communicate closely with your companion and guests.

#### **1–3 months ahead**

- Hold a cross-cultural orientation for hosts and other participants.

- Continue to communicate with your companion and guests.
- Prepare a final itinerary with destination addresses, phone numbers and e-mail of hosts and share with your companion.
- Get emergency contact information for your guests.
- Plan welcome and farewell events.

#### **When guests arrive**

- Make sure guests can rest upon arrival, before any visits or events take place.
- Have a general welcome event where everyone involved in the exchange can officially welcome the guests.
- Schedule an orientation for the guests.
- Confirm that you have emergency contact information for your guests.
- Purchase and distribute phone cards so guests can call home if that is a possibility for them.

#### **As the visit ends**

- Debrief the guests on their experience, and let their wisdom enhance planning for future visits.
- Debrief the hosts and other participants on their experience.
- Debrief the committee.

Have questions about hosting exchanges and delegations? Ask your peers in these synods, who have considerable experience with large-group visits:

- Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod
- Nebraska Synod
- Northeastern Ohio Synod
- Northwest Synod of Wisconsin

#### **Plan the visit**

Once the purpose and vision of the exchange or visit has been clarified, appoint a planning committee to create the program and line up hosts. Be sure to assign a key contact who can oversee the entire process—one person who will know everything about the exchange. A key contact and a small, core committee of 2–3 people will be more focused and less likely to drop details than a much larger committee. The core group can always delegate additional tasks to others.

Everyone playing a role in the visit—core committee or ad hoc members, hosts, and others—will benefit from a general orientation to the country, church and culture. Draw on the history of your relationship, and the cross-cultural orientations in Part IV of this handbook to construct an orientation session.

Among the details committee members will need to coordinate are:

- monitoring and assisting with the visa process;
- arranging visits to ministries;
- arranging other tours and visits;
- securing opportunities for guests to share in your synod or congregations;
- identifying host families and housing;
- securing visitor insurance;
- arranging transportation to the U.S. and your location;
- arranging transportation during the visit;
- orienting host families and participants;
- arranging interpretation and/or translation services;
- identifying special needs of guests (disability, medical issues, and the like);
- planning the guests' arrival;
- orienting the guests;
- planning welcome and farewell events;
- arranging per diem and other financial arrangements;
- troubleshooting during the visit;
- handling medical emergencies; and
- debriefing participants.

## Help guests secure visas

Your guests need to secure non-immigrant visas in order to be admitted to the United States.

→ See *Appendix 8* for summaries of the types of visas that work best for international church visitors.

For information on the overall visa process, visit the U.S. Department of State Web site, [http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa\\_1750.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html).

Through their applications and in personal interviews, applicants for U.S. visas must convince consular officers that:

- they are not terrorists (consular officers who issue a visa to a person who commits an act of terrorism are personally liable); and

- they *will* return to their home country and not stay illegally in the United States.

The Consular Officer of the U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in a meeting with ELCA representatives, gave these reasons why church members from Tanzania may have a hard time getting U.S. visas. These reasons apply around the globe.

- Church members are just as likely as non-church members to overstay a visa and remain in the U.S. illegally.
- Tanzanians and others from countries that are statistically high on the list of people who don't return will have a more difficult time getting visas.
- It is difficult for males, singles or young people under 30 to get visas because consular officers feel that they are less likely to return (in countries suspected of terrorism, young men are suspected of being terrorists).
- It is difficult for anyone earning less than \$1,000 a month to get a visa.

To increase the likelihood of admission, guests who are young, single, and earning less than \$1000 a month can bring along these items to their interview:

- a deed to a home;
- current bank statement and a letter from the bank stating how long the person has had an account;
- letters from their own church showing that they are an elder in the church and have been a member for a long time, preferably 10–12 years;
- letters from employers showing that they have held their job for a long time; and
- anything to prove deep roots in their community, such as letters from local institutions (ward, community, or district councils).

## Detailed itineraries can help

An interview with a U.S. consular officer lasts approximately two minutes and thirty seconds. The prospective guest must answer a series of very personal and often culturally insensitive questions very briefly and clearly. Often these questions concern where the person is going and what he or she will be doing on arrival. *You can help by providing a detailed itinerary that includes*

*where the person will go, who he/she will meet with and the purpose of the meeting.*

Instead of saying “July 1: visit St. Paul’s Lutheran Church,” say something like, “July 1: Visit St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to speak to the St. Paul women’s group about women’s ministry in Tanzania.”

## **Practicing ahead of time is a good idea**

Ask your guests to practice the interview beforehand with someone who has gone through the process. They should practice answering rapid-fire questions like:

- Where are you going?
- What is the purpose of your journey?
- Who will you meet with?
- How much money did you make last year?
- Do you own a home?

People who have gone through the process make very effective coaches!

## **Start early**

To increase the likelihood that your visitors receive visas, encourage your guests to start the visa process early. If they wait too long, they may receive an interview appointment that falls after the date of your invitation!

## **Arrange tours and visits**

If the initial visioning process was thorough, arranging tours and visits will be a matter of implementing the overall vision for the visit.

Seek ways to integrate your guests into the life of the community. Plan to have them participate in a variety of activities including small and large, formal and informal events. Take into account the guests’ background and any special talents, interests and preferences. Be sure that everyone is clear about when and where activities are to take place.

Your guests will want to experience all aspects of the reality of life in the U.S. Don’t edit! Aim for the broadest possible

experiences. To show that poverty and suffering exist in the middle of our abundance, take them to food pantries or serve a meal to the homeless together. Look for places you might not normally take a visitor. A visit to a thrift store can introduce a new perspective: that some people in the U.S. have clothes to spare, while others can’t afford to buy new clothes in the store. That’s an important insight for anyone seeking to deepen their understanding of the context for U.S. ministry.

## **Plan on rest, spontaneity and family visits**

Leave time for rest. Make it clear to everyone that the guests will have some time off, perhaps a day or two each week. Let the guests determine the activities (or absence of them) for these days.

Time for spontaneous, fun activities is good, too. Once your guests have arrived, confirm that the program covers areas that they are interested in, and ask about any additional activities or sights they would like to participate in or see.

Many guests will have family or friends in the U.S. that they will want to visit or telephone. Ask about these relationships early in your planning process, so you can determine together where the itinerary can include visiting time and who will pay for any domestic travel to see friends.

## **Address financial issues early**

In consultation with your companion, committee leadership needs to clarify who will pay for what during this visit. Who will pay for airfare to the U.S.? Domestic airfare? Travel around your area? Hotels, if needed? What about per diem payments? When we travel outside the U.S., we bring along spending money. That may not be true for your visitors. Arranging a per diem payment means that even if hosts absorb the cost of housing, food and transportation, your guests have the autonomy and means to buy their own toothpaste, books or newspapers. Money means strength and autonomy. Make sure your guests have enough to make their own choices.

## Arrange for housing

If long-term visitors are being housed with families, allow at least a month with each host. Moving from house to house too often can be exhausting.

A household with lots of people, including children, can alleviate loneliness and avoid tensions in relating exclusively to one or two people. Look for families or couples who have *time* to spend with their visitors—not people who are continually on the run.

When you approach people about hosting, clarify that they are willing to accept responsibility for the guests, especially transportation, which can be a considerable burden. Ask how a guest would complement or interfere with their life style. Will someone be displaced from a room in order to accommodate the guest? How will that affect family dynamics? Ideally, host families should be able to maintain their normal routine while graciously including an additional member. Guests should be treated as members of the family and given choices about participating in family activities.

Are there pets in the home? Dogs and cats are not indoor animals in many parts of the world, and your guest may be afraid of them—or surprised to see them treated almost like people!

A cross-cultural orientation will help prepare people for the surprises and misunderstandings that will inevitably occur when people from different cultures live together. Other hints for hosting can be found in the reproducible Handout H, “Receiving International Visitors.”

## Arrange local transportation

Transportation requires careful planning. For short-term visits, it is reasonable for the committee to plan and provide all necessary transportation. But if guests are staying for more than three months, discuss whether they will have access to their own car, money for public transportation, or will still rely on others for transportation.

Draw up a roster of activities, such as shopping, visits, sporting events, meetings, and worship, along with the names of people who are responsible for taking the visitor to and from venues. As an alternative, assignments can be made for specific periods of time. The guest’s transportation needs can be combined with those of family members whenever possible.

Make sure your visitors know these transportation assignments and have a list of names and numbers of people to call in case of emergency.

## Provide insurance for medical care

The ELCA has contracted with Rust International Associates and HTH Worldwide Insurance to provide all ELCA-affiliated international guests with emergency medical insurance. To enroll your guests, contact your synod office to speak with your synod’s international travel insurance administrator. For each guest, you will need a birth date, place of birth, and arrival and departure dates.

Ask your guests to complete a medical information form. Make copies and distribute to the guest and everyone who will host the guest, so that medical emergencies can be taken care of promptly.

## Enable guests to share

In a cultural exchange, everyone listens. Include plenty of time in the schedule for guests to talk about their culture, church and country with members of your synod or congregation.

When you set up visits to congregations, prepare them for your visitors. Distribute their biographies plus information about their church/congregation and country before the visit so that everyone has some background into the visitors’ lives.

Plan various ways that visitors can share. Speeches before large groups of people may not be the most effective way for guests to communicate. Small groups, panel

presentations and interviews with time for clarification may be more productive.

Take care not to schedule speaking events during meals. It forces your guest to rush through his or her meal and is considered insulting in cultures where eating meals together is held in high regard. Eat first and have the speech follow.

During your orientation, help your visitors organize their information so they are ready to adapt their words to different time lengths. Help him or her prepare a short greeting, a 5-minute greeting and overview, as well as 15- and 30-minute presentations. Some ideas for presentations:

- a story about a person, incident, or situation that had impact on their faith or person;
- a cross-cultural interaction that taught the guest something about the body of Christ;
- a typical day in their life and how the U.S. seems different;
- a particular custom, tradition, ritual or saying from their culture that is special to them;
- the meaning of life lived in their country or cultural context;
- the meaning of community and family in contrast to a focus on individual fulfillment, needs and desires;
- theological insights from their cultural context; and
- interpreting and understanding Scripture in their cultural context.

Will your visitor need equipment to show a PowerPoint® presentation or a DVD? Find out about technical needs before the visitor arrives or during the orientation, so congregations can be prepared to meet these needs.

Use the ELCA companion profiles ([www.elca.org/companionprofiles](http://www.elca.org/companionprofiles)) to provide basic facts about your visitor's country. Make sure they are distributed, along with a brief biography or bulletin insert about the visit, to congregations and groups before your visitor arrives.

### **Orient your visitors**

After your guests arrive and have an opportunity to rest, invite them to a formal

orientation where they can get a clear idea of the itinerary, arrangements and expectations for their stay. Together, review the mutual covenant of agreement and its details, and answer any questions.

Distribute per diem payments, phone cards, domestic tickets or other documents guests will need. Other topics to cover might include:

- the planned itinerary, day by day;
- how the visitor will move between destinations;
- special events or highlights of the itinerary;
- host families, congregations and cities;
- the visitor's role in the congregation or synod;
- the role of the North American church in the visit;
- the role of the visitor in the community;
- responsibilities of the visitor;
- responsibilities of the host congregation/synod;
- how personal needs will be met;
- financial guidelines (advice on purchases, expenditures, collecting receipts for reimbursement and the like);
- an introduction to North American culture, especially male-female relations and the individualistic focus of U.S. culture (consider distributing the article by L. Robert Kohls, "The Values Americans Live By," available at several Web sites);
- names of people to call for help or in case of emergency; and
- an introduction to the city, campus, local public transportation system, and so forth.

### **During the visit**

On day one or two, consider taking guests for a drive so they can get a sense of the area. Otherwise, postpone orientations and activities until day two and let your visitors rest.

Hold a welcoming event during the first week where everyone involved in the visit can meet one another. Introduce North American culture by serving "typical" food and including typical music and games. Include time for formal welcoming remarks from your synod or congregational

leadership, and time for visitors to express their feelings about the visit.

Assign a primary host or contact person to each guest who will check in often—even daily—to see how the visit is going and to handle any problems that might arise. It's better to err on the side of *too* much contact and companionship than assume that visitors share our independent, do-it-yourself mindset—something that can seem rude and indifferent to visitors from other cultures.

## **When the visit ends**

Invite guests and all hosts and participants to a formal closing celebration, where gifts can be presented and farewells made. Schedule time for the guest to debrief with the contact person or committee chair. Debrief hosts and other participants, too, and use all the feedback to plan a better visit next time!

# Appendix 1: Protocol agreement

The following "Agreement between the Conference of Bishops and the Global Mission unit on companion synod relationships in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" was recommended for preliminary approval at the ELCA Conference of Bishops meeting on March 9, 2009.

## INTRODUCTION

God's purpose for the world is for it to be a reflection of that which God is: a community sustained by love where each of the persons of the Trinity dwells reciprocally within one another. Through Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, we are called to participate in this mission through our proclamation, service and witness of how God continues to restore community with humanity and all of creation. The mutuality and reciprocity reflective of God's being shapes our response to and participation in God's mission.<sup>1</sup>

To aid in the fulfillment of God's mission to create community, this protocol between synodical bishops and the Global Mission program unit defines the partners and principles involved in companion synod relationships, and outlines how to develop new initiatives within those relationships.

Since its inception early in the life of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the Companion Synod Program has grown rapidly. Due to this rapid growth and the evolving challenges, this protocol may require frequent revision.

## I. PARTNERS

### A. National Churches Who Are

**Companions** – Through The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the ELCA is in relationship with 140 Lutheran church bodies in 78 countries.<sup>2</sup> Each of these national churches has primary responsibility for mission and ministry within its territory. The ELCA also has bilateral (church-to-church) relationships with 80 of these national churches, which can include sending missionaries, providing grants or having a companion synod relationship.

**B. Global Mission Program Unit** – The Global Mission unit "shall be responsible for this church's mission in other countries and shall be the channel through which churches in other countries engage in mission to this church and society." The Global Mission unit stewards a complex array of activities, personnel and relationships, including missionaries, grants and scholarships for the purposes of "evangelism, witness, education, promotion of justice, service, relief, and development" in cooperation with ecumenical, global, regional and mission organizations (ELCA Constitution 16.12.B05).

**C. ELCA Synods and International Companions** – The Global Mission unit established, shapes and supports the Companion Synod Program as a way to deepen bilateral relationships.<sup>3</sup> The Global Mission unit connects<sup>4</sup> each ELCA synod with one or more Lutheran church bodies (called "international companions" in this Protocol). In some cases, these international companions will be national churches. In other cases, they will be synods, dioceses or districts of those national churches.<sup>5</sup> ELCA synods are responsible for deepening relationships with specific international companions on behalf of the entire ELCA.<sup>6</sup> Companion synod relationships are part of the wider work of the church for the sake of mission.

**D. Bishops** – The Global Mission unit has oversight over the Companion Synod Program. Bishops have oversight over how the companion synod relationships are carried out in their synods. Both the bishop of the ELCA synod and the bishop/president of the international companion share a significant and complementary role in developing this relationship, under the oversight of the Global Mission unit (and the national church of the international companion, when applicable). These two leaders set the tone and the manner by which the relationship emerges.<sup>7</sup> For ELCA synodical bishops, this role arises from their constitutional responsibility to be

the “chief ecumenical officer,”<sup>8</sup> to “exercise leadership in the mission of this church,” to “interpret and advocate the mission and theology of the whole church,” and to “foster awareness of other churches throughout the Lutheran world communion and, where appropriate, engage in contact with leaders of those churches.”<sup>9</sup> These responsibilities include promoting interdependent relationships among the expressions of the ELCA, overseeing the church’s mission within the territory of the synod, and serving as a “sign of the unity of the church, between their respective synod and other denominational families and ecumenical organizations.”<sup>10</sup>

## II. PRINCIPLES

- A. **Accompaniment** – “A walking together in solidarity that practices interdependence” in a way that honors each other’s integrity and wholeness.<sup>11</sup> The first priority is to pray for each other.
- B. **Patience** – Companion relationships take years to grow into true accompaniment, and sustainable programs are preferable to those that are short-term.
- C. **Mutuality** – ELCA synods and international companions working with the Global Mission unit and the national church body of the companions will establish priorities and agendas together. ELCA synods and the Global Mission unit learn from each other as they interact with companions.
- D. **Transparency** – ELCA synods and the Global Mission unit will inform each other of ministry undertaken with their international companions (such as volunteers or funds sent to or received from an international companion) in order to avoid duplication, competition and mixed messages. ELCA synods and the Global Mission unit commit themselves to engage in ongoing mapping of evolving relationships, and to seek mutual accountability for the management, allocation and distribution of resources.<sup>12</sup>
- E. **Sharing Information** – ELCA synods should try to communicate frequently with their international companions

through exchange of official visitors and prayer requests. ELCA synods should discuss with the Global Mission unit if they prepare to engage in ministry in other countries, within or outside of the international companion relationship (see section III which follows). The Global Mission unit will inform an ELCA synod if it engages in ministry within the territory of that synod.<sup>13</sup>

- F. **Preparation** – ELCA synods and the Global Mission unit are committed to provide quality orientation for visitors and personnel traveling to and from international companions.
- G. **Collaboration** – This is necessary in all companion relationships, particularly where more than one ELCA synod has the same international companion, or when an international companion is also a national church.<sup>14</sup> Mutual planning between these synods and the Global Mission unit enhances the development of healthy, non-competitive relationships.
- H. **Representation** – Each of us represents all of us. Representatives of the ELCA synods are recognized as representatives of the ELCA in their international companion activities. Therefore, ELCA synods will exercise caution and diplomacy, recognizing that their speech and action are understood by companions to express the position and commitment of the whole ELCA. ELCA synods and the Global Mission unit commit themselves to formalizing relationships through agreements which both strengthen the companion relationships and also take into account the implications for the whole church.

## III. HOW TO DEVELOP NEW INITIATIVES

- A. **Step One: Companion Request** – ELCA synods and the Global Mission unit will develop new initiatives in the territory of an international companion only in response to that companion’s request. (If the international companion is a synod, diocese or district, the national church will also need to endorse the request.)
- B. **Step Two: Inform Partners** – To ensure effective ministry and to avoid duplication, ELCA synods and the

Global Mission unit will inform each other of these companion requests,<sup>15</sup> jointly assess requests,<sup>16</sup> and coordinate responses. ELCA synods will provide regular progress reports to the Global Mission unit, and the Global Mission unit will provide regular progress reports to and maintain communication with other ministry partners involved in related projects in international companions (for example, national churches, LWF, Lutheran World Relief, ecumenical groups, European churches and agencies, and other ELCA synods also in relationship with that international companion).<sup>17</sup>

- C. **Scholarships** – The Global Mission unit will inform ELCA synods of ELCA or LWF scholarships given to members of their international companions. ELCA synods will first consult with the Global Mission unit before providing scholarships to students from any other countries, to avoid duplication and provide consistent guidelines and expectations for scholarship recipients and donors.
- D. **Funding Requests**<sup>18</sup> – Priority should be given to requests from international companions that build capacity for future ministry rather than funding an ongoing expense. For example, some international companions request ELCA synods to provide salaries for their pastors. This practice can encourage an unhealthy dependency and paternalism—and sow seeds of envy *between* international companions, when one receives salary support and others do not.<sup>19</sup>
- E. **Shared Personnel Placements** – A creative context exists today<sup>20</sup> for synergistic collaboration through shared personnel placements in international companions sponsored by ELCA synods and the Global Mission unit. Options include:
  - 1. **Short-term Volunteers (two weeks to three months)** – The ELCA synod conducts its own selection process, provides orientation using Global Mission unit materials, arranges for funding (for example, self-funding or sponsorships), and informs the Global Mission unit of this placement. In addition, ELCA

synods are encouraged to arrange for direct orientation at the Lutheran Center. ELCA synods are advised to consider issues relating to health insurance, evacuation, liability, housing, transportation and other matters, some of which are described in the *Companion Synod Handbook*.

- 2. **Mid-term Volunteers (three to nine months)** – The ELCA synod conducts its own selection process, provides orientation using Global Mission unit materials, and writes an endorsement letter to the international companion and to the Global Mission unit, attaching the volunteer's biographical material. In addition, ELCA synods are encouraged to arrange for direct orientation at the Lutheran Center. The Global Mission unit then appoints the volunteer as an ELCA volunteer missionary under a Letter of Agreement. In turn, the volunteer agrees to serve under the Global Mission unit *Personnel Policies and Expectations*. The Global Mission unit provides major medical insurance, including evacuation coverage, for all volunteers who request it, based on the availability of funding from the Global Mission unit's spending plan. Arrangements for all other provisions and financial support are developed between the volunteer and the ELCA synod.
- 3. **Long-term Volunteers and Compensated Personnel (nine or more months)** – The international companion, the ELCA synod, and the Global Mission unit will jointly develop a job description. If the ELCA synod identifies a person for this position, that person would make application for service with the Global Mission unit and go through the candidate screening process. Following this process, the Synod Council would then endorse this person to the Global Mission unit for service as a missionary in the international companion.
  - i. The Global Mission unit will provide orientation, medical and evacuation insurance, regular

communication with the continental desk, and assistance in securing visas and work permits. Further financial support will be provided by the ELCA synod or, in some instances, jointly by the ELCA synod and the Global Mission unit.<sup>21</sup>

- ii. For rostered people serving in stipendiary positions, the Global Mission unit will recommend to the ELCA Church Council a call to service outside the territory of the ELCA synod and the ELCA.<sup>22</sup> Non-rostered people will receive a Letter of Agreement from the Global Mission unit.
- iii. The missionary will provide annual reports to the local bishop of the international companion, with copies to the national church office, the ELCA synod and the Global Mission unit, and will serve under Global Mission *Personnel Policies and Expectations*. As with other ELCA missionaries, the Global Mission unit will be the employer of record, provide contractual details of employment through a Letter of Agreement developed jointly with the ELCA synod, and will provide for support, care and supervision.

#### IV. AREAS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- A. **How do we receive** the expertise and gifts of international companions in order to enhance the mutuality of the companion relationship? This may involve creating tools and formats for ELCA synods and international companions to jointly engage in asset mapping, gift assessment and planning for mission.
- B. **How do we develop communication tools** for ELCA synods and the Global Mission unit to share information in a manner that is simple and accessible (for example, through the internet)?
- C. **What is the role of congregations** within companion synod relationships and in other global relationships (for

example, with congregations or mission organizations in other countries)?<sup>23</sup>

- D. **How do we share concerns** that surface about relationships, interference or involvements in our international companions by other churches outside of the ELCA or LWF (for example, by other Lutheran bodies)?
- E. **How do ELCA synods invite, welcome and utilize personnel** from our international companions to engage in ministry in their synods?

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<sup>1</sup> The accompaniment model assumes a "relational missiology" based on the New Testament understanding of *koinonia* and the doctrine of the Trinity. See Rafael Malpica-Padilla, "Accompaniment as an Alternative Model for the Practice of Mission," [www.trinitylutheranseminary.edu/publications/TSRvol29.2](http://www.trinitylutheranseminary.edu/publications/TSRvol29.2).

<sup>2</sup> As of March 1, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> The Global Mission unit staff includes associate directors for companion relationships who provide guidance and support for companion synod relationships through resources, events and consultations. They work with the Area Program Directors of the four continental desks (Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, and Africa) to coordinate ELCA companion synod relationships with the ELCA's wider church-to-church commitments.

<sup>4</sup> The original process for establishing a companion synod relationship was for the Global Mission unit to determine which potential companion churches were available to engage in a companion relationship, to speak with interested ELCA synods about their options, and to communicate their selection to the international companion for concurrence and approval. Increasingly this process involves mutual conversation and concurrence between an ELCA synod and a potential international companion.

<sup>5</sup> In 2008, 26 ELCA synods have one companion synod relationship; 27 synods have two; seven synods have three; two synods have four; and two synods have five, for a grand total of 122 relationships with international companions in 63 national churches (almost half the total number in the LWF) in 52 countries.

<sup>6</sup> This may lead to a variety of combinations of bilateral (church-to-church) and companion synod relationships. For example, the Lutheran Church in Malawi is a national church with a bilateral (church-to-church) relationship with the ELCA. It is also in a companion synod relationship with the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin.

<sup>7</sup> See the article "Some thoughts about being companions," by former bishop Gary Hansen on p. 65 of the *Companion Synod Handbook*, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Global Mission; see also p. 6 for further discussion of the role of bishops. For further reading on the role of bishops, please

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see "Advice and Principles for Companion Synod Relationships as Written by Synodical Bishops – March 2006," in which former bishop. Gary Hansen summarized bishops' comments.

<sup>8</sup> ELCA Constitution 10.31.5.

<sup>9</sup> ELCA Constitution for Synods S8.12.h.5.

<sup>10</sup> "Relational Agreement Among Synodical Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America," p. 2, section I.

<sup>11</sup> A further description of accompaniment may be found in *Global Mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Vision of Evangelical Faithfulness in God's Mission* (ELCA Division for Global Mission, 1999), [www.elca.org/globalmission/policy/gm21full.pdf](http://www.elca.org/globalmission/policy/gm21full.pdf), or in the article "The Road to Emmaus: A Model of Accompaniment," by Bp. Richard H. Graham, Jan. 2008, and other materials on the Global Mission unit's Web site.

<sup>12</sup> This may involve more collaborative efforts in the transfer of funds to the companion through the Global Mission unit to ensure compliance with such legislation as the U.S. Patriot Act.

<sup>13</sup> This provision arises from synodical bishops' constitutional responsibility for "oversight of the preaching, teaching, and administration of the sacraments" within the territory of the synod (ELCA Constitution for Synods S8.12.h.1), and is similar to the current practice between bishops ("Relational Agreement among Synodical Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America," section III.A). Global Mission staff will inform bishops when they preach or teach in a synod congregation, for example, a missionary on home leave or a regional director commissioning a missionary. If staff of the Global Mission unit serve on the board of an educational or mission organization on the territory of that synod, they would not necessarily need to inform a bishop of their presence or activities unless it impacted ministry in that synod.

<sup>14</sup> For example, the national church in Peru, the Iglesia Luterana Evangelica Peruana has a bilateral (church-to-church) relationship with the ELCA and also has companion synod relationships with the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod and the La Crosse Area Synod.

<sup>15</sup> The Global Mission unit's initial point of contact in a synod will be the bishop, who may refer the proposal to a synod volunteer, committee or staff member. A synod's initial point of contact in the Global Mission unit will be the associate director for companion relationships for the appropriate continental desk, who may coordinate a response to the proposal or refer it to the appropriate person.

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<sup>16</sup> The "Project Assessment" on p. 19 of the *Companion Synod Handbook* is a useful tool. Other questions to consider include: Will this initiative enhance the missional capacity and impact of the companion synod, the national church, the synod and the Global Mission unit? Has there been adequate consultation between the companion synod, the national church, the synod, and the Global Mission unit, as well as any other ministry partners (for example, LWF, LWR, and other mission organizations)?

<sup>17</sup> Since companion synods and national churches often have multiple partners, a commitment from one in a capital expenditure can sometimes "leverage" other support. For example, in Liberia, Global Mission agreed to provide half the funds needed for a vehicle, joining with another European church partner that has had a long-standing relationship with the Liberian church. That purchase "leveraged" a commitment from the European Union of four times the dollars spent—60,000 Euro—for programmatic costs relating to the expansion of primary health care around Curran Hospital.

<sup>18</sup> Further information is available in the "Pamphlet for Bishops on Global Relationships" (ELCA Division for Global Mission, August 24, 2001) distributed to the ELCA Conference of Bishops, October 2001, Exhibit K, Part 2.

<sup>19</sup> For further discussion of this principle, see pp. 16–17 of *Global Mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (ELCA Division for Global Mission, 1999).

<sup>20</sup> Global travel and communication are exploding. New patterns of global service are emerging. Pastors are taking sabbaticals overseas. Synods and congregations are sponsoring mission trips to international companions or to countries in which a national church is located (for example, "Thrivent/Habitat Builds Worldwide"). Synods are inviting international companions to send missionaries and to exchange pastors.

<sup>21</sup> For example, a pastor was sent for two years to Lithuania, with \$28,000 per year provided by the Grand Canyon Synod and \$21,500 per year by the Global Mission unit.

<sup>22</sup> ELCA Constitution 7.44.A05a.

<sup>23</sup> A simple survey to assess the extent of congregational global involvement may be the first step, followed by the development of an ongoing reporting mechanism. This may resemble a greatly simplified parochial report, with results tabulated and shared between synods and the churchwide organization.

## Appendix 2: Some thoughts about being companions

–Gary L. Hansen, *former bishop, North/West Lower Michigan Synod*

1. Our global mission relationships take time to grow into true accompaniment. That is, we walk with our partner seeking to step at their pace, seeking to see and understand their present context.
2. The role of a bishop or president in each church is understood by most as a critical one; to represent a wider set of concentric circles is viewed as of great importance.
3. The role of bishop or president goes beyond sending individuals from our synod to another part of the world. It also includes providing oversight to a fabric of relationships and understandings.
4. Our relationships grow when we understand that gifts are being unveiled and offered to us through sisters and brothers in our companion churches. In my synodical ministry it is helpful to ask what have I received as a gift that informs what I am doing.
5. Many will find it helpful to sharpen and define the purposes of each companion church visit, both ways: stewardship, lay Bible study, structured for mission, and so forth.
6. In our society many of us seek to be doers (at least I do) in companion visits. It is important that we seek to nourish both the doing and the being within us.
7. Groups from our synod seek to be a great gift and to learn much.
8. Occasionally, one can be tinkering in something wider or deeper than we understand; keeping the ELCA Global Mission area program director up to speed with what we are planning/doing/hearing is of great help.
9. Gifts carry great meaning beyond their apparent value. In some cases they become “cargo” with all kinds of expectations or “trappings” attached that are real or not real. As citizens of the U.S., many of us need lifelong learning to understand the complexities of this.
10. A helpful response as a companion church is to grow in the understanding we have of each other’s context; to advocate and be aware of justice issues, crises or persecution means reading and discussion.
10. Transparency is a 12-letter word that reminds us how valuable it is to have all the people who might be involved know what we are up to, what we are thinking or planning.

An illustration might help.:  
Joseph Campbell once said, “Where we thought to travel outward, we shall come to the center of our own existence. Where we had thought to be alone, we shall be with all the world.”

# Appendix 3: Sample companion synod covenant

## Companion Synod Covenant

between the **Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church in India**  
and the **South Central Synod of Wisconsin, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

### VISION

The companion synod relationship exists for the purpose of strengthening one another for life and mission within the body of Christ. It offers us the privilege of participating in the life of another church through prayer, study, communication, and exchange of people and resources. It opens our eyes to the global challenge that Christ offers us today and calls us to deepen our commitment and discipleship as individual persons and as a community of faith.

### MISSION

Through the companion synod relationship, as “walking partners,” we will:

- be a part of the vision, life and mission goals of one another;
- be renewed and empowered in faith and commitment to mission by one another’s witness to Christ;
- be educated and challenged by encounters with one another’s joys and sorrows; and
- encourage one another to participate in each other’s ministries through prayer, communication and exchange of resources and people.

### EXPRESSIONS

- Share with each other statements of vision and mission for greater understanding of one another.
- Continue to embrace and practice transparency and mutual accountability in our ongoing relationship as partners.
- Be “walking partners” with one another as we pray for each other weekly.
- Be alert to the needs of each other as we communicate regularly through e-mail, newsletters and visits.
- Encourage congregations of each synod to become “companion congregations” as a means to grow in relationship with one another. Begin with 10 congregational partnerships.
- Develop exchange programs with mutually agreed upon scheduled visits to focus on:
  - healthcare;
  - education, both secular and theological;
  - youth; and
  - women to women.
- Consider support of project possibilities, such as Rural Development and the NELC Don Bosco School, evaluating long-term sustainability.
- Explore possibilities for marketing weavings and tea through fair trade.
- Create a second devotional booklet with submitted writings from both the NELC and SCSW.
- Review annually this covenant as an expression of our developing relationship.

Initiated at the Joint Synod Consultation, Chennai, India, October 11–12, 2005:

NORTHERN EVANGELICAL  
LUTHERAN CHURCH IN INDIA (NELC)  
Bishop \_\_\_\_\_

SOUTH CENTRAL SYNOD  
OF WISCONSIN (SCSW-ELCA)  
Bishop \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix 4: Sample application

Application for Companion Delegation Trip

## BASIC DATA

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Last name	First	MI
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Address

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City	State	Zip Code
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Home Phone	Work Phone	E-mail
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## APPLICANT INFORMATION

**Describe your reasons for wanting to become a member of the delegation to our companion.**

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**Our companion synod relationship is one of accompaniment, i.e. walking together. Please share your ideas about examples of how this accompaniment might be expressed with our brothers and sisters in \_\_\_\_\_.**

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**List your travels outside of the United States, your experience in or with other cultures, and your education, background and skill level in speaking another language.**

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**Suggest ways you might be able to share this experience with other members of the synod once you are home (for example, with church or community groups).**

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HEALTH INFORMATION

**General health** \_\_\_\_\_

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair

**Do you have any:**

Allergies?

Dietary restrictions?

Physical challenges?

Emotional challenges?

If yes, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Are you currently under a doctor's care and/or receiving prescribed medication of which we should be aware?**

- Yes
- No

If yes, please explain and list medications: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Are you covered by medical insurance?**

- Yes
- No

**Are there any other special considerations we should know about?**

- Yes
- No

If yes, please list: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

APPLICANT REFERENCES

1. Pastor's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

EXPECTATIONS FOR TRAVELERS

1. Timeline:
  - a. A completed application form by January 31;
  - b. Screening interview on February 13, 14 or 15;
  - c. Group preparatory meetings prior to the trip:
    - i. 6–9 pm on March 14;
    - ii. 6–9 pm on April 6;
    - iii. 9 am–5 pm on May 6;
    - iv. during June–August as needed and
    - v. Sept. 9 and/or Sept. 16 (time TBD);
  - d. Commissioning on June 3 during synod assembly; and
  - e. Contribute to ongoing education in the synod regarding Global Mission and our companion after your return.
2. Flexibility, teamwork, good health (see note below), strong faith, a sense of humor, sensitivity to cross-cultural differences and a willingness to serve as a representative of the synod and the ELCA.
3. Each traveler is expected to contribute a minimum of \$\_\_\_\_ of the total travel costs (estimated to be \$\_\_\_\_) and to help secure sponsors for the group (you will be provided sponsorship letters and other helpful resources).
4. Secure a valid passport with necessary visas, vaccinations, spending money and miscellaneous expenses.
5. Check that you have adequate health insurance. We encourage obtaining medical evacuation insurance for the duration of the trip. (This is not costly and can be arranged through the group.)

Note: At the interview, please be prepared to discuss any health or family considerations that might affect your ability to travel. If there are health considerations, please submit a letter from your health care provider regarding any health and fitness issues that might be impacted by travel to an underdeveloped country.

Dear Bishop \_\_\_\_\_,

*I have prayerfully considered the opportunity to visit our companion in \_\_\_\_\_, and I understand and agree with the expectations listed above. I am interested in interviewing to be a member of your delegation.*

---

Applicant signature

Date

Please mail this application by January 31, 20XX, to:

Questions? Please  
contact: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix 5: Sample trip evaluation

## I. Goals

To what extent have you increased your understanding of:	<b>(Very much)</b>		<b>(Very little)</b>			
a. the cultural, religious, historical and political realities in this part of the world	6	5	4	3	2	1
b. the role of the churches in the country of your companion	6	5	4	3	2	1
c. the extent to which various “-isms” affect individuals and societies	6	5	4	3	2	1
d. the interconnections between global and local issues	6	5	4	3	2	1

## II. Content

How do you rate the following?	<b>(Very much)</b>		<b>(Very little)</b>			
a. Pre-trip orientations, discussions and reflections	6	5	4	3	2	1
b. Hearing from our companions	6	5	4	3	2	1
c. Visiting various projects	6	5	4	3	2	1
d. Devotional and spiritual aspect of the tour	6	5	4	3	2	1

## III. Your personal reactions

- What new insights have you gained about yourself during this trip?
- What were the most satisfactory parts of the trip for you? Why?
- What were the least satisfactory parts of the trip for you? Why?
- What will you most remember from this trip one year from now?
- Do you have any additional comments on your experience?

Thank you for sharing your comments and suggestions.

Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix 6: Sample letter of invitation to guest

April 15, 2008

[Title] [Firstname] [Lastname]  
[Address]

Dear [Title] [Lastname]:

We are pleased and honored that you have accepted our invitation to be a presenter at the ELCA 2008 Summer Missionary Conference (SMC) which will be held from July 25 to July 28, 2008 at Carthage College Wisconsin. This annual event gives our new and retiring mission personnel an opportunity to meet, along with continuing mission personnel on home leave together with Global Mission staff for a short conference. Our objective is to provide the Global Mission community with the opportunity to share information needed by all of us so that we work together more smoothly to carry out the mission with which we have been entrusted. We hope that both missionaries and staff leave the event inspired and with an enhanced ability for service in global mission. The conference will have about 160 adults including missionaries, Global Mission staff, children plus presenters. I am attaching a copy of the schedule of events so you will be able to get a better feel for just exactly what we are planning to do this year.

We will make your travel arrangements. We will reimburse you for all travel-related expenses. A single dorm room will be reserved for you at Carthage.

There will be 3 track sessions, one per day, held throughout the conference. We focused our track planning on broad strokes which take into consideration the themes of our strategic planning on capacity building. Missionaries and staff will chose one track to follow for in-depth capacity-building around that theme.

Overall track objectives are to create/provide and in-depth education program for DGM staff and Mission Personnel that:

1. provides an opportunity for cross-context (country/region/continent) sharing of experiences and knowledge
2. introduces expertise on critical issue topics of global mission and service
3. facilitates an application of knowledge and skills in contexts of service

We hope this answers many of the questions you have since you so graciously agreed to be part of this. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Just to summarize our requests at this time, we will need from you:

- 1) brief track description
- 2) your audiovisual needs for the track sessions

Looking forward to seeing you at the SMC!

Mary Campbell  
Global Mission  
Manager of Relationship for Latin America and the Caribbean  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
8765 W. Higgins Road  
Chicago, IL 60631

## Appendix 7: Sample official invitation addressed to consulate

April 24, 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

Pastor [Firstname Lastname] of the [church body name] has been invited by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to visit and participate in events from July 3 to July 20, 2005. This trip to the United States has been organized so that Pastor [Firstname Lastname] may:

- serve as a keynote speaker and workshop leader at the Women of the ELCA 6th Triennial Gathering in San Antonio, Texas, July 3–10, 2005;
- visit the Florida-Bahamas Synod staff and leadership in Tampa, Florida, July 11–13, 2005, to strengthen relationships;
- attend the ELCA Global Mission Event, July 14–17, 2005, in Fargo, North Dakota, to do presentations and workshops; and
- visit the Evangelical Lutheran Church offices in Chicago, Illinois, to work with the staff of the Latin America/Caribbean desk and other staff of the Global Mission unit, July 18–20, 2005.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America – Women of the ELCA and the Global Mission unit will be responsible for Pastor [Firstname Lastname]’s travel, lodging, food, expenses and medical insurance during the time that [she/he] is in the United States of America from July 3–20, 2005.

We would appreciate any help that can be given to Pastor [Firstname Lastname] to obtain a B-1 VISA and any other necessary travel documents for [his/her] visit to the ELCA synods and participation in the summer 2005 events of the ELCA.

Thank you for your assistance.

[Firstname Lastname]  
Global Mission  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
8765 W. Higgins Road  
Chicago, IL 60631

## Appendix 8: Visas

This section is provided for your background information, so that you can be aware of the challenges faced by your companions when they visit you and offer information and assistance to them as needed. The entire process of obtaining a visa to study, conduct research or work can be overwhelming for an international guest.

### Non-immigrant visas

International students, research scholars, professors, exchange pastors and most visitors need a visa to enter the U.S. Visas are issued by the U.S. State Department. Non-immigrant visas are issued for a temporary visit or residence serving a particular purpose.

### Applying for a visa

To gain entry into the U.S., one must be:

- Healthy—No inoculations are required to enter the U.S., unless one has been recently in a country with epidemics such as cholera or yellow fever. The Department of Homeland Security has issued a rule providing for entrance into the U.S. by persons infected by HIV on a limited and categorical basis
- Law-abiding—Criminal behavior is grounds for deportation.
- Able to financially support oneself during the period one plans to be in the U.S.
- Committed to leave the U.S. after studies, research and work are completed.

All visa applicants should apply at the U.S. embassy or consulate with jurisdiction over their place of permanent residence (home country or the country in which one permanently resides). Although visa applicants may apply at any U.S. consular office abroad, it may be more difficult to qualify for the visa outside the country of permanent residence.

When applying at the consulate for a visa:

- Pay a non-refundable application fee and, if required, an issuance fee as directed by the U.S. consulate. (The money will not be refunded if the visa is denied.) Retain the receipt for each application, including for each child listed in a parent's passport who is also applying for a U.S. visa.
- Complete and sign an application Form DS-156, together with a Form DS-158.

These forms are free at all U.S. Consular offices.

- All males aged 16–45 must complete form DS-157.
- Possess a passport valid for travel to the U.S. with a validity date at least six months beyond the intended period of stay in the U.S. If more than one person is included in the passport, each person desiring a visa must make an application.
- Bring one or more photographs 1 1/2 inches square (37x37mm) for each applicant, showing full face, without head-covering, against a light background.
- F applicants should bring a Form I-20A-B obtained from the host school; J applicants, a Form DS-2019 obtained from the sponsoring school or agency.
- Show evidence of sponsorship or proof of other funds available to cover expenses while in the U.S.
- Prove to the consular officer that the visit is temporary and that the intent is to return home after the legal authorized stay. For example, the applicant must prove strong ties to permanent residency in his/her own country, show no intention of leaving his/her own country, and prove that he/she will leave the U.S. when program or visit is complete.
- Take as much evidence as possible to show that there are ties to the home country: ownership of property; proof of immediate family based in the home country, such as parents, brothers, sisters; evidence of a mortgage payment; letter from a future employer stating that there is a specific job offer when returning home; other assets that show or prove that the intention is to return to the home country.
- Undergo security clearance procedures.

### **Length of stay**

All visas differ in length of stay in the U.S. The expiration of the visa does not necessarily have any relationship to the date stamped in the passport. Non-immigrant visas are void as soon as a non-immigrant overstays the visa.

### **Entering the U.S.**

A visa does not guarantee entry into the U.S. The visa allows a foreign citizen coming from abroad to travel to a U.S. port of entry and request permission to enter the U.S. The Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Transportation Security (BTS) has authority to permit or deny admission to the U.S. A U.S. immigration officer of the BTS, not the consular officer, determines the period for which the bearer of a visa is authorized to remain in the United States. At the time of entry, a Form I-94 notes the length of stay permitted and is validated by the immigration official at the port of entry.

### **Travel and insurance**

The visa holder should notify the issuing Designated School Official (DSO), the Responsible Officer (RO) or Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO) who signed the I-20 or DS-2019 form, employer or designated companion synod staff representative when he or she is planning to travel outside of the United States, to request a visa extension, to change current visa status or if a referral to immigration counsel is needed. Contact the DSO or RO/ARO for ELCA-sponsored health insurance policy concerns and issues. The ELCA international health insurance plan does not cover persons while they are in their home country.

Dependent children 18 years and older are excluded from the ELCA-sponsored insurance plan.

### **Taxes**

All visa holders must comply with applicable tax filing laws. F and J visa holders specifically are required to file a Form 8843 report with the Internal Revenue Service along with other applicable reports. Normally, the tax reporting and payment deadline is April 15 for federal, state and local governments for the previous calendar year. See government publications 519 and

535. See Rev. Rule 67-159, 1967-1C.B.280 and Treas. Reg. Section 31.3121 (b) (19)-1 (a) (1) for exceptions of FICA (social security) taxes (check for tax treaty benefits). The DSO or RO/ARO will be able to give the non-immigrant a referral to a tax accountant or attorney who specializes in non-immigrant taxes. ELCA Global Mission Leadership Development staff and ELCA seminaries staff provide information and assistance to sponsored international students, research scholars and professors.

### **Types of visas**

Official ELCA visitors, sponsored students, professors, research scholars, camp counselors and companion synod visitors/exchange pastors coming to the United States will most often apply for one of these four types of visas:

#### **1. B-1/B-2 visas: Business/pleasure**

General. B-1 visitor for business or B-2 visitor for pleasure may be admitted for one year and may be granted extensions of temporary stay in increments of not more than six months.

Any B-2 visitor who is found to be admissible will be admitted for a minimum period of six months, regardless of the request, provided that any required passport is valid as specified in section 212 (six months beyond the intended departure date) Exceptions to the minimum six-month admission may be made only in individual cases.

May have multiple entries.

B visa holders are prohibited from accepting employment or enrolling in studies.

People on business visas cannot be paid by any source located in the U.S.

Visitors must not engage in any business activities.

B visa applicants should apply for the visa in their home country.

ELCA-sponsored B-1 and B-2 visitors are required to carry health, accident,

repatriation and medical evacuation insurance coverage.

## **2. F-1/F-2 visas: Students (and qualified dependents)**

F-1 visas are issued to students who enter the U.S. to study at colleges, universities, language schools, or seminaries. F-2 visas are issued to qualified dependents.

Visas are valid for the duration of full-time studies, plus 60 days within which student and family must leave the U.S.

Students must have an I-20 form from the institution where they will study and be able to demonstrate that they are proficient in English.

Immigration regulations are very strict with respect to working while carrying a student visa. F-1 status, which is the most common status for full-time international students, allows for part time, on-campus employment (fewer than 20 hours per week) with permission from the Designated School Official. F-2 visa holders are not authorized to work. Spouses remaining on an F-2 visa are not authorized to engage in studies for credit, or enroll in public college/university adult education programs.

All F visa holders must comply with federal and state income tax regulations.

All F visa holders must carry health insurance meeting the F visa regulation requirements. (Dependent children 18 years and older are excluded from the ELCA-sponsored insurance plan.)

## **3. J-1/J-2 visas: Exchange student/professor/research scholar/short-term scholar/camp counselors (and qualified dependents)**

J-1 visas are issued to exchange visitors for several different categories. J-2 visas are issued to qualified dependents.

J visa holders under ELCA sponsorship must be accepted in a program as a student, professor, research scholar, short-term scholar or camp counselor only. The period

of stay differs according to the category, plus 30 days within which the visa holder/dependents must leave the U.S.

J visa applicants must have a DS-2019 form in hand prior to applying for a J-1 visa.

J visa holders may work only if permission is obtained from the Responsible or Alternate Responsible Officer issuing the J-visa documentation. J-2 visa holders may request work authorization from the Bureau of Citizenship & Immigration Services in the Department of Homeland Security. Employment may be authorized for the duration of the J-1 validity or four years, whichever is shorter.

All J visa holders must comply with federal and state income tax regulations.

ELCA-sponsored J visa holders are required to obtain the ELCA-approved health, repatriation and medical evacuation insurance, which meet and surpass the J visa requirements.

## **4. R-1/R-2 visa: Exchange pastors (and qualified dependents)**

R-1 visas are issued to religious workers (usually clergy). R-2 visas are issued to qualified dependents.

R visa applicants must have a letter of invitation or job offer listing all duties and activities they are expected to perform along with showing they have adequate financial support for the participant and family during the duration of stay. The R applicant must have certification from the designated church official in the home country stating that the applicant has been a Lutheran in good standing for two years. The R visa applicant should also present a copy of the host's tax-exempt status, and be prepared to show that their educational level is appropriate for performing the tasks assigned.

R visas are valid for the duration of the specified employment offer for a period up to three years. The R visa may be renewed for a maximum of two years.

R-2 visa holders are not allowed to work. Government regulations regarding studies for spouses are not defined.

R visa holders must comply with federal and state income tax regulations.

The ELCA requires R visa holders to carry health, accident, repatriation and medical evacuation insurance coverage.

# Appendix 9: Accompanying your companion's scholarship students

**Background:** Each year, between 50 and 75 students are supported by the ELCA International Scholarship Program from companion churches (national Lutheran church bodies) across the world. These scholarships are part of a leadership development initiative, whereby the students are given the opportunity for deeper studies that will prepare them for future ministry in their home context. You are invited to participate in the life of these students during their years of study in the U.S. or another foreign country away from home.

## Be connected!

### Welcome them

- Send an email or a letter. Congratulate them on their scholarship, and welcome them to the U.S. (or other country of study). Be sure to introduce yourself and your synod or organization!
- Publicize their arrival and contact info. Make information available so that others can connect to the student, too.
- Pray for these students. Ask that God would bless their time of study.

### Hear their story

- Invite them to visit in your synod, your congregation, your campus, and so forth. They are not only students, but also missionaries – called and sent by their church, to mutually give as well as receive. Make connections. Listen to their stories. Invite them to preach or teach. Consider having them present at a synod assembly.
- Offer to host them for a weekend or holiday. It might be to make a presentation, or just to “get away” for a while.
- Find opportunities to share what they are doing. If the students send out newsletters, emails, or e-letters, include these in your synod and congregational newsletters.

### Get involved

- Welcome them to events. Perhaps a Global Mission Sunday or Global Formation Event in your area.
- Encourage them with a care package. A little care goes a long way. You might designate a family or an individual to do something special for the student each month, or a few times a year.

### Keep in touch

- Continue the relationship after their studies. After the student returns home, mutual communication will strengthen your own relationship, as well as communication between the ELCA and their home church.

For a current list of international students, contact Tammy Jackson, Director for International Leadership Development, at 773-380-2639 or [tammy.jackson@elca.org](mailto:tammy.jackson@elca.org).

# HANDOUT A

## Vocabulary Worksheet

-Source: <http://archive.elca.org/globalmission/welcomeforward>

Learning a few words in the language of your companion can help foster communication. Below are some useful words and phrases. Ask someone who speaks the language of the country to help you translate the phrases.

Please \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you \_\_\_\_\_

Hello \_\_\_\_\_

Good bye \_\_\_\_\_

I'm pleased to meet you \_\_\_\_\_

Good morning \_\_\_\_\_

Good evening \_\_\_\_\_

Good night \_\_\_\_\_

God bless you \_\_\_\_\_

God be with you \_\_\_\_\_

Peace be with you \_\_\_\_\_

Breakfast \_\_\_\_\_

Lunch \_\_\_\_\_

Dinner/supper \_\_\_\_\_

Where is the restroom? \_\_\_\_\_

How much does this cost? \_\_\_\_\_

Very nice (general compliment) \_\_\_\_\_

Where is the church? \_\_\_\_\_

... the hotel? \_\_\_\_\_

... the bus? \_\_\_\_\_

... the market? \_\_\_\_\_

## HANDOUT B

# Accompaniment Kyrie

**Leader:** As you walked in the Garden with Adam and Eve,  
**People:** Accompany us, O Lord.

**Leader:** As you watched Jacob walk to meet his brother Esau,  
**People:** Accompany us, O Lord.

**Leader:** As you led your people through the desert with a pillar of fire,  
**People:** Accompany us, O Lord.

**Leader:** As you inspired Ruth to faithfully follow Naomi,  
**People:** Accompany us, O Lord.

**Leader:** As you walked with your disciples, healing and preaching,  
**People:** Accompany us, O Lord.

**Leader:** As you joined Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus,  
**People:** Accompany us, O Lord.

**Leader:** As you traveled with Paul and Timothy on their missionary journeys,  
**People:** Accompany us, O Lord.

**All:** Amen.

## HANDOUT C

# Cross-cultural Relationships

–Roberto Chené, *Intercultural Community Leadership Project*

1. Peerness should be the principal characteristic of our interaction with those different from us. Each human being is valid and should be actively affirmed by others.
2. We should be willing “to get to know each other.” This relationship process cannot be rushed. It is at the heart of establishing trust.
3. Expect some distrust until you have had time to establish your credibility. This will usually involve action, not just words.
4. Each of us should take full pride in our cultural identity and expect to be fully validated for who we are. We should want others to feel the same about themselves and learn to validate them.
5. Each of us should expect to cooperate with others, not feel that we or they have to accommodate or deny part of who we are for the sake of the interaction.
6. We should be fully aware of the various ways in which society excludes and discriminates against some members. We cannot be naïve about the realities of our social context.
7. When it occurs, we should admit to ourselves that we are afraid of those who are different from us. At times it is appropriate to admit this to others.
8. We should expect to make mistakes in cross-cultural relating. It helps to be able to say, “I’m sorry.”
9. We should not expect to have attention for this work if we have not taken care of nourishing our own support system.
10. It is important to consciously develop ally relationships with people from our culture. We need friendships.
11. We need to be able to share our history and ask them for theirs.
12. Periodically feeling like a failure is part of the process. There will inevitably be mistakes as we relate across differences.
13. Be able to articulate how cross-cultural relationships are in your self-interest.
14. Strive to understand just how you may have been taught to have biased feelings and attitudes toward others.
15. Acquire as much accurate information about other people as you possibly can.
16. Any effective relationship needs to have at its roots a sense of personal empowerment and self-confidence.

## HANDOUT D

# Cultural Norms Worksheet

–Source: <http://archive.elca.org/globalmission/welcomeforward>

What are the main food staples? \_\_\_\_\_

What kind of dress is customary? \_\_\_\_\_

What languages are spoken? \_\_\_\_\_

What holidays are celebrated? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there other specific customs that may be unfamiliar? \_\_\_\_\_

How do people regard physical proximity? \_\_\_\_\_

In what situations is behavior formal or informal? \_\_\_\_\_

To what extent are openness and confrontation valued? \_\_\_\_\_

With whom is it best to be discreet and polite? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the established roles for men? For women? \_\_\_\_\_

How do the genders relate to one another? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the concept of time? \_\_\_\_\_

What role does tradition play? \_\_\_\_\_

Is the orientation more towards immediate conditions or the future? \_\_\_\_\_

To whom, from whom and how is respect shown? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the local definitions of honor and dignity? \_\_\_\_\_

## HANDOUT E

# A Code of Ethics for Tourists

—First issued in 1975 by the Christian Conference of Asia

Travel in a spirit of humility and with a genuine desire to learn more about the people of your host country.

Be sensitive to the feelings of other people, thus preventing what might be offensive behavior on your part. This applies to photography as well.

Cultivate the habit of listening and observing, rather than merely hearing and seeing.

Realize that often the people in the country you visit have time concepts and thought patterns different from your own; this does not make them inferior, only different.

Instead of looking for that beach paradise, discover the enrichment of seeing a different way of life through other eyes.

Acquaint yourself with local customs. What is courteous in one country may be quite the reverse in another. People will be happy to help you.

Instead of the practice of knowing all the answers, cultivate the habit of asking questions.

Remember that you are only one of the thousands of tourists visiting this country, and do not expect special privileges.

If you really want your experience to be a “home away from home,” it is foolish to waste time and money on traveling.

When you are shopping, remember that the bargain you obtain is only possible because of the low wages paid to the maker.

Do not make promises to people in your host country unless you are certain you can carry them through.

Spend time reflecting on your daily experiences in an attempt to deepen your understanding. It has been said that what enriches you may rob and violate others.

## HANDOUT F

# Team Member Roles

### **First aid organizer/giver**

This person is aware of participants' medical conditions and gives first aid attention if necessary. Medical knowledge, including CPR and the Heimlich maneuver, would be helpful. He/she should assemble two small first aid kits, packed in different suitcases, containing:

- Band-Aids®;
- Ace® bandages;
- heat/cold packs;
- analgesics;
- decongestants;
- fever reducers;
- Pepto-Bismol®;
- antidiarrheal medicine;
- antibacterial ointments;
- laxatives;
- antihistamines;
- sunburn relief;
- sterile syringes, for use in medical emergency;
- gloves; and
- Epipen® (antidote for bee sting).

### **Gift coordinator**

Lists and coordinates group gifts for local hosts: small or handmade gifts symbolic of the synod or area, or an expression of Christian fellowship, such as books, music,

banners or recordings. Pack in several suitcases.

### **Photographer**

Takes photos on behalf of group so that eight people don't try to get the same shot. Consider two photographers, one with a conventional camera and one with a digital camera, for a variety of media presentations upon return. On site visits, this person should ask local leaders for permission to take photos *before* anyone begins snapping.

### **Name and note taker**

Records, with correct spelling, the names and titles of people who make presentations to your group during the trip—a detail that is often overlooked and is difficult to reconstruct later. Notes addresses as well, for sending thank you notes after the trip.

### **Telephone/e-mail tree person**

Phones or e-mails home when communication is available, initiating a phone tree to contact the families of other travelers. This is especially important if traveling to places where unrest may leave families at home anxious.

# HANDOUT G

## Journaling Worksheet

–Source: <http://archive.elca.org/globalmission/welcomeforward>.

### Use your journal to:

- capture impressions of the journey;
- process the experience as it happens; and
- remember the experience when it is over.

### Observe and record

Include details that capture the breadth of your experience: who you meet; what you see and do; what everything looked like.

### Feel

Feelings can serve as a barometer by alerting you to what's going on and can help you understand your reaction to a situation. They also help you clarify your expectations. What's hard? Hurtful? Challenging? Joyful?

### Link observation and feelings about crossing cultures

A good way to process cross-cultural settings, recommended by L. Robert Kohls, is to divide the journal page into two columns:

#### 1. Observation/description

On this side of the journal, describe what you saw. Anything that strikes you as different, funny, weird, sad, and so forth is appropriate. Feelings, emotions, judgments should not be expressed on this side. Just stick to the facts.

#### 2. Opinion/analysis

On this side of the journal, describe your thoughts, feelings, and so on about the event. Then try to analyze why you feel this way. What in your cultural makeup may be affecting what you feel? How is that different from whatever values or assumptions may be at work in the new culture?

### Interpret

Capture meditations that allow a pattern of meaning to emerge.

- What about this experience is particular, that is, has to do with you who you are, what you intended?
- What has to do with objects, people and causes in the world?

### Reflect

How does this experience fit into your life story? What is its meaning for you? What makes this experience uniquely yours? What makes it universal? How does this experience help you understand your life as a person of faith, and to what does God call you in relation to it? What did you learn? What did you use from your education in the midst of the experience?

### Reread

Reread your journal entries once or twice during your trip. If more time in the country has changed or deepened your impressions, make notes. Save space for more entries when you return home. Reread your entries again, and write new ones about your feelings and observations now that the trip is over. What ideas were challenged? Questions answered? Hypotheses confirmed? Highlight or circle important passages you want to reread later. Use another color ink to make notes on your entries in the margins. Number the pages and, on a blank page, create an index ("p. 20: Tuesday, October 2; visit to Iglesia San Juan and lunch with parishioners").

### Things to include

- Notes from speakers, including time, date, names and places;
- Specific quotes you hear;
- Day-to-day agenda;
- Sights, sounds and smells that you are experiencing;
- Questions that arise;
- Experiences that happen outside the formal agenda;
- Stories, poems, sketches;
- Dreams;

- Hopes and visions you have for the people you meet and your loved ones back home; and
- Commitments you make to yourself or others, especially as they relate to your life back home.

**Make it easy**

Don't worry about grammar or even complete sentences. A list of sounds and smells or a couple of phrases can capture the feelings of the moment.

**Start now**

Before you leave, answer these questions in your journal:

- Why am I taking this journey?
- What am I anticipating most about this journey?
- What are my fears?

- What questions and concerns do my family and friends have?
- What are my key questions?
- When did I have a "journey" experience in the past?
- What was the effect of that experience on my life?
- What does that experience tell me about preparing for the upcoming journey?
- Who are some of the people I wish could accompany me on this journey? Have I told them? What are some ways in which they can accompany me?
- How will my faith affect my attitude as I travel to a culture very different from my own?

Put your name and address in your journal, so it can be returned if it is lost.

## HANDOUT H

# Receiving International Visitors

Welcoming visitors is at the heart of *receiving*—that part of accompaniment in which we graciously receive gifts from others. When we open our lives and homes to offer hospitality to others, we create a space where gifts can be exchanged.

As you and your congregation prepare for your visitors, remember: our countries and our cultures are different. It's important for all participants in the exchange to be sensitive and flexible with one another as the gifts of our cultures are revealed.

### PREPARING FOR THE VISIT

#### Read about your guest

Learn all you can about your guest before he or she arrives: name, age, home town, birthplace and other background information. Special needs—diet, transportation, disability issues, and so forth—should also be listed in his or her profile.

#### Sample the culture

Try to learn a little about your guest's culture and foods. Read a book or see a movie from your guest's culture. And try to learn a few words of welcome in your guest's language!

#### Remember your own experiences

If you have traveled outside the U.S., recall what it is like to visit a different country. (If you haven't, imagine it! Or talk to someone who has traveled outside of the U.S.) What was a help to you, the last time you were in a new place for an extended period of time? Use your memory to make your guest's visit more comfortable. When your guest arrives, find out about his or her trips outside his/her country. What is it like for them?

### WELCOMING YOUR GUEST

If it is your job to meet your guest at the airport, arrange a meeting place, be on time and bring a sign with his or her name to make yourself easy to identify. At your first

meal, pray a prayer of thanksgiving for your guest's safe arrival.

Offer your guests a gift on arrival *and* departure. A gift at the beginning of the visit may be something that will help during their visit—a journal, writing materials or a book about your region. On departure, give something more meaningful, as you will know them better.

Gifts don't need to be expensive; in fact, expensive gifts may put a burden on the visitor to give a valuable gift in return. Look for something made locally. T-shirts or photo albums of the visit can also make great gifts. Think twice about objects that are heavy or fragile—they may have a long way to travel.

The best gift is to keep in touch after the visit. Write letters or exchange e-mail messages. Keeping in touch not only reminds your visitors that you are thinking of them, but helps synodical members and congregations retain some of the vitality of the visit.

#### Introduce your guest to household routines

Make a list of household guidelines that will help make your guests more comfortable (sleeping arrangements, wake up time, using the bathroom, kitchen, laundry, TV and so on). Introduce your guests to the routines of the household and encourage them to ask questions if they are unsure about something. Go slowly as guests may be worried about their English ability at this point. Let your guests know what they are expected to do and not do around the house. Introduce your guest to any ritual activities (such as saying grace at meal times) that may be part of your daily life in the home.

#### Address food concerns

Sharing a meal can be one of the highlights of the visit ... and a difficult transition for internationals who have never been to the U.S. before. Think back to your first

experiences with international cuisine. If you have lived abroad, did you miss the food that you grew up with? Be sensitive to different palates and try to gauge what your guests may or may not want.

Encourage the guest to state food preferences. Don't push food on the guest, either in amount or kind. But do try to proceed as normally as possible, sharing your customary diet with visitors. Most guests will be curious about food and will be glad to try a new dish.

While guests should be willing to try the food in your home, please have some basic staples, such as rice, available for the guests. Their bodies may not be accustomed to the wide range of rich foods found in the U.S. Offer them the opportunity to prepare something for themselves if they want. It's a good idea to locate a grocery store that stocks food from the guest's home location, in case he or she misses something or wants to cook for you. Go shopping together so that they can pick out something they might want to eat. Some people may be shy about voicing their likes and dislikes, while others may be quite vocal!

### **Listen**

After arriving, your guest may be overwhelmed with the stimulus of being in a new place. Your efforts to reach out in helpful ways during this time will go a long way in establishing a mutually rewarding friendship. Ask frequently and personally if your guest needs something. Guests may feel shy about asking for anything or asking "silly questions," but they may have questions about your city/town, the U.S. and about life in general here.

### **GETTING ALONG WITH YOUR GUEST**

#### **Cultural and personality differences**

Recognize that everyone has a different personality. Some international guests will be outgoing, others shy. Some will have considerable experience abroad; for others, this will be their first international visit. It may take time to know your guest well. Be patient and consistent. Remember that your guest is coming from a very different cultural background and may have some initial

trouble adapting to life in the U.S. Be open and enjoy the diversity of opinions, cultural customs, food and habits. You may be surprised by your reactions to some of these differences. Ask your guest if he or she is surprised by anything here in the U.S.

#### **Avoid judgment**

All of us tend to evaluate behavior that is different from what we are used to. It may strike us as too much, too little, good, wrong, rude, and so on. Resist the temptation to make judgments! Try observing the behavior and asking questions instead.

### **COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR GUEST**

Communicating can be difficult—even between two people of the same culture who speak the same language. The possibilities for misunderstanding multiply when people are from different cultures and speak different languages! Your guest may not understand what you are saying; you may not understand what your guest means. Keep these guidelines in mind:

- Make no assumptions about what your guest expects, what they know or what they have understood: **ask**. For example, don't assume that silence means the guest has not understood you. Maybe they are waiting for you to finish or thinking about an answer; maybe, in their culture, it is impolite to jump right in with an answer, the way we do.
- Encourage your guest to approach you about anything they do not understand.
- Pay attention to non-verbal cues—the "unspoken message" conveyed by eye contact, arms and legs, silences, nods. Some say 80% of communication is non-verbal, especially at the beginning of the conversation. Tone of voice and facial expressions are important clues too.
- Remember that under conditions of high anxiety or fatigue communication effectiveness decreases drastically. Do not overload your guest with information upon arrival. Give them a day or two to settle in.
- Keep in mind that trying to communicate in a foreign language all the time can be exhausting, and be patient with your guest and yourself.

- Know your own limitations and biases, and be open to cultural differences. Self-awareness and awareness of your own culture is essential.

### Conversing

Follow these suggestions for better communication:

- Start slowly until you can gauge your guest's comfort level with English.
- Speak clearly and a little more slowly than usual. Avoid exaggerating and speaking broken English.
- Give instructions in simple language and ask the guest to tell you what he/she understood. Avoid asking, "Do you understand?" as the answer will always be yes, even if they have not understood!
- North American culture is characterized by indirect and euphemistic communication. Use very explicit, direct questions, not relying on such things as tone of voice and the guest inferring what you mean. State your assumptions.
- Expect some awkward silences in the conversation and don't expect to fill every gap.
- Give your guest enough time to form his or her sentences. Be flexible and rephrase your sentences if you are not understood.
- Encourage your guest to talk about himself/herself. Ask open-ended questions such as: "What sports do you like?" "Tell me about your family."
- Listen until they have finished—right to the end. North Americans usually place the most important points at the beginning of their speech. In some cultures it is the exact opposite, with background information given at the beginning.
- Allow extra time and be patient.
- Do things that don't require lots of words, such as outdoor games, sports or taking a walk.

### SCHEDULING YOUR GUEST'S TIME

Worship, potlucks, sightseeing, and outings to museums, parks, zoos, and other cultural venues: North American life is fast-paced

and fun, but may overwhelm visitors. As you plan your guest's visit:

- Leave time for rest and relaxation.
- Ask your guests about their interests and take them to one event in that area (music, sports, theatre, and so on).
- Share local events. A high school ball game may be just as exciting as a professional one.
- Include interaction with many kinds of people—perhaps friends from other denominations and individuals outside the Christian community.

### FAQ FOR INTERNATIONAL HOSTS

***Do I have to entertain the guest or plan special activities?*** Remember that adjusting to a different culture and speaking a different language is physically, emotionally and mentally exhausting—a balance of schedule is necessary. Offer options.

***What do I do if my guest simply wants to stay in his or her room and read?*** This might be exactly what that guest needs to do to unwind. Remember, being far from home and having little privacy can be very stressful. It is best to offer the guest the opportunity to participate in family activities and then leave the decision up to him or her.

***What do I do if a guest becomes ill or needs to go to the hospital?*** Seek help immediately. Your guest has emergency medical insurance through the ELCA. Take your guest to the doctor or hospital with the medical information form you received from your coordinator. Let the visit coordinator know that you are going.

***Is there anything else I should know about hosting a guest with limited language ability?*** Yes: trying to speak in a new or second language for extended periods of time can be exhausting, so be patient with your guest and don't be offended if he or she does not try to keep up a constant conversation. Also, some guests are embarrassed by their limited ability, so letting them see that you are pleased with their efforts is a wonderful way to encourage your guest to use this time with you to improve their English.