

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. Ask for ISBN 6-0002-0186-9.

The Web site 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!”

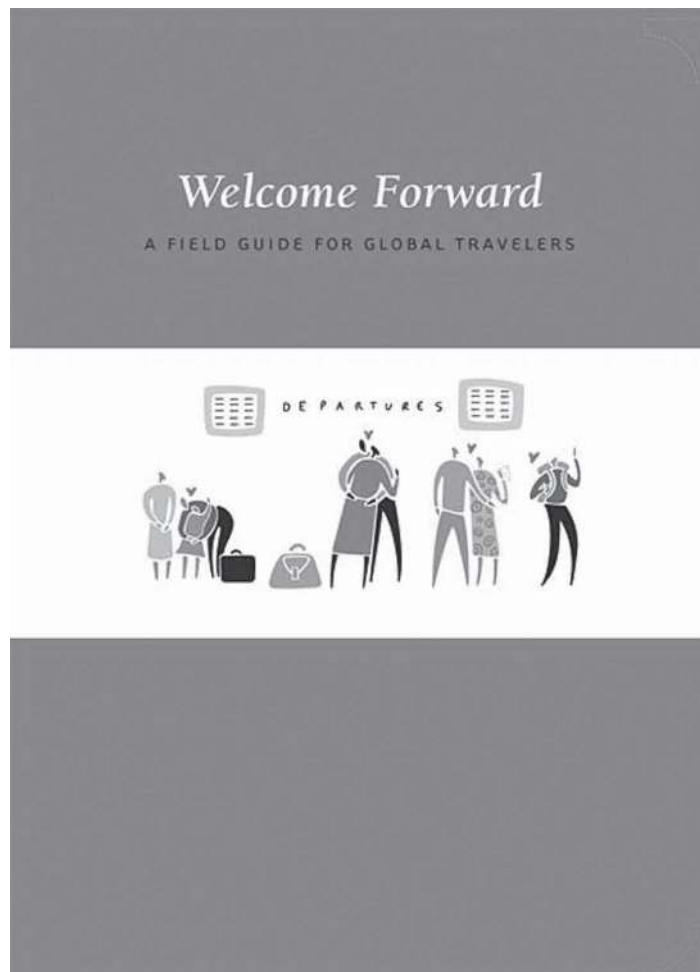
I liked how the book was laid out, with a pre-trip section, an on-the-road section, and a re-entry-to-the-zany-U.S.-culture section.

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
 - information on immunizations and medications;
→ See the Center for Disease Control at 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 or HTH Worldwide Insurance Services at www.hthworldwide.com or Travel Insurance Services at 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/ 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.
- “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 (click on Program Resources ..., then on Engaging in Ministry and Action, and then scroll down) or order from Augsburg Fortress at www.augsburgfortress.org.

Orientation Four: Companion Church Session

information published by Culture Grams
(www.culturegrams.com).

Time

110 minutes

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.

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

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.