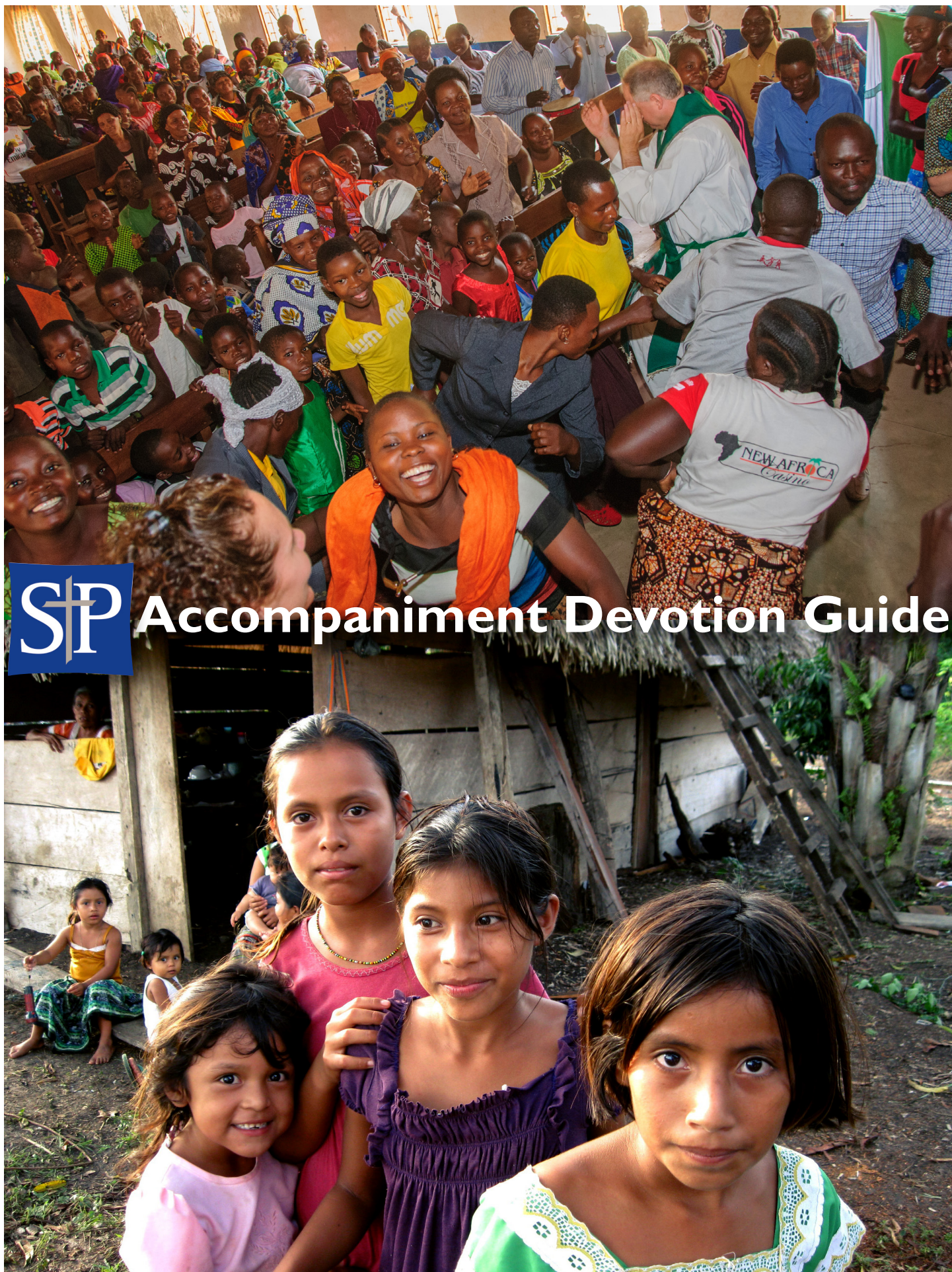




Accompaniment Devotion Guide

Letter of Introduction

On behalf of the Guatemala Taskforce and Iringa Committee, we welcome you to learn more about the theory and practice of *Accompaniment* that shapes our relationships and guides our journey with our companions among the Augustinian Lutheran Church of Guatemala, the Iringa Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, and countless other communities around the world.

More than churchy jargon or a buzzword, *accompaniment* is a way of life that reflects the key values of mutuality, inclusivity, vulnerability, empowerment, and sustainability. With deep roots in the biblical tradition, *accompaniment* bears witness to Jesus Christ, the one who came to us, the one who goes with us, and the one who we find already at work and alive among those we meet.

We offer this guide to you as encouragement for the journey, that you too may be able to speak and share about the amazing things that you see and hear “wherever two or more gather.”

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Using This Guide

This study guide is intended for global mission committees and other groups to be used as an exercise that brings to mind the ways in which we can live out the values of accompaniment in our life and work abroad and at home. Leaders are encouraged to read the text describing the accompaniment value, invite others to read the assigned biblical text, and use the suggested questions as a jumping off point for further conversation.

This guide is a shortened version of an ‘Accompaniment Bible Study’ distributed by ELCA Global Mission. To find that document and other related material, visit www.elca.org and search for accompaniment resources.

About This Guide

This guide is a shortened version of an Accompaniment Bible Study, available on the ELCA website (go to www.elca.org and search for accompaniment resources). It is intended for global mission committees and other groups to be used as opening devotions that bring to mind ways we can live out the values of accompaniment. Leaders are encouraged to read the text describing the accompaniment value, then invite a committee member to read the assigned biblical text, and then lead the committee in a conversation, using the accompanying questions as a guide. Leaders can close with their own prayer, or use the prayer offered at the end of each session.

Session One: Mutuality

Together, we work to build up our capacities to proclaim and live out the gospel of Christ. We work to recognize that all of us have gifts to offer to God's mission, and to value the gifts of all, while caring for one another's needs. Mutuality is built upon giving and receiving trust as we grow together.

Text: Luke 24:13-35

Questions

1. How were the disciples surprised in the story?
2. How were the roles reversed?
3. How have you been surprised in our global companionship?
4. When have you experienced a role reversal?
5. How could we better recognize and name the gifts and needs of all in our relationship?

Prayer

Gracious God, we thank you for walking with us in our pilgrimage on earth. Help us to walk with our global companions, side by side and shoulder to shoulder, recognizing that you are always in our midst, through Christ our Lord; amen.

Session Two: Vulnerability

Vulnerability is the driving force in opening ourselves to relationship and God's reconciliation in mission. In the dominant U.S. culture, vulnerability often seems to be a weakness, but Jesus shows us that vulnerability — openness to relationship, giving up power — is God's way of redemption. We choose to enter God's mission through vulnerability, just as Jesus became vulnerable to us and with us.

Text: Philippians 2:1-8

Questions

1. What phrase leaps out at you in this passage?
2. In what ways do you see Jesus' vulnerability?
3. What would it mean for us to look not to our own interests, but to the interests of our global companions?
4. How have we shown vulnerability to our companions?
5. Have we ever shared a problem or struggle we are having and asked them to pray for us?

Prayer

Holy God, we thank you for the gift of your Son, who came to us as a vulnerable infant, giving up his power to share our humanity. Guide us in our global relationships, that we can share our strengths and our weaknesses, our joys and our sorrows, so that we can deepen and strengthen our connections with our partners, through Christ our Lord; amen.

Session Three: Inclusivity

God calls us to include everyone in the mission of reconciliation, yet we know that all communities exclude someone. In accompanying one another, we look to see who is excluded, and why, and commit to change community structures and habits that can exclude people without any deliberate intention. For those who experience exclusion, as well as for those who are “inside,” it takes great effort and courage to continue to attempt to build relationships across boundaries. Inclusivity requires self-reflection and honesty about our own communities and relationships. We often must ask ourselves, “Who is part of our community? Who is absent? Why?”

Text: Ephesians 2:11-22

Questions

1. What kinds of “dividing walls” have we experienced in our global companionship?
2. What has helped break down these walls?
3. What are the elements of our global relationship that keep us united?

Prayer

Great God of all, we recognize that there are many walls that keep us divided from our neighbors. We confess that sometimes we hide behind the safety of these walls, and that we don’t always want to or know how to tear them down. Help us to remember that you have already made us one people in our baptism, and that your mission is always to build bridges of reconciliation, peace, and understanding, that we can truly be your body on earth, through Christ our Lord; amen.

Session Four: Empowerment

As we accompany one another, we struggle to recognize and name power as it affects our relationships. When we recognize that relationships have asymmetries of power, and struggle to balance and correct those asymmetries, we are working to empower ourselves and one another. Learning to let go of power — to become vulnerable — is an act of empowerment, as is recognizing and standing up to power that hobbles people in their walk through life.

Text: Luke 1:46-55 (alternate text, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31)

Questions

1. How have we experienced an imbalance of power in our global relationships?
2. In what ways have we been surprised by a role reversal? How have the “powerless” demonstrated their power?
3. How have we experienced an unhealthy use of power?
4. What steps can we take to help all our partners discover and use their power to build up the body of Christ?

Prayer

Almighty God, we recognize that there are deep inequalities in our world and that these often benefit us. Help us to use the gifts and resources that we have in a way that builds up our global companions; help us to let go of our need to be in charge; help us to celebrate and name the gifts and strengths of our partners, through Christ our Lord; amen.

Session Five: Sustainability

Often we imagine our relationships as simple and self-sustaining. In fact, relationships are complex and connected to other relationships and commitments and require much attention over time to sustain. The accompaniment value of sustainability means that we recognize that any given relationship will require an intentional commitment of attention and time to build up all those who are involved. In a mission project context, sustainability means embedding the project or work in the community as a whole so that the project doesn't depend only on one or two people and can continue over time.

Text: 1 Corinthians 3:1-11

Questions

1. Who are the people who have tilled the soil, planted the seeds, and nurtured the growth of our global companionship?
2. What steps can we take to make sure that our relationship endures?
3. How can we keep Christ at the foundation of all that we do?

Prayer

Sustaining God, we are grateful for the many ways that we have been blessed by our global companion relationships. Help us to find ways to sustain this relationship as we travel the long and slow road of accompaniment, that the work of your church might be strengthened and endure for many generations, through Christ our Lord; amen.