

A SERVICE TO CELEBRATE COMPANION SYNOD RELATIONSHIPS



One, holy, catholic and apostolic...the marks of the church. We know that the eye, foot and ear need one another in the body of Christ with which we gather each Lord's Day. This service celebrates the relationships that bind the universal church as well—relationships that are flourishing between ELCA synods and companion churches and synods. To celebrate your own Companion Synod relationship, include hymns from your Companion Synod (found in Country Packets from the ELCA Division for Global Mission) and stories from people who have visited the companion church.

Use for...

- * Celebrating your Companion Synod relationship
- * Welcoming a visitor from your Companion Synod
- * Lifting up your Companion Synods in your congregation
- * Devotions for youth and adult forums and congregation committees

Suggestions for Gathering

Opening Hymn: LBW 359 "In Christ There Is No East or West"
Hymn of Praise: WOV 717 "Come, All You People"

Prayer of the Day:

Spirit of energy and change,
in whose power Jesus was anointed to be the hope of the nations;
be poured out also upon us without reserve or distinction,

that we may have confidence and strength to plant your justice
on the earth,
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Source: *In Spirit and Truth* (see page 20)

Suggestions for the Word

First Reading: Hebrews 12:1-2

Psalm: Isaiah 55:1-13

Second Reading 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

Gospel Acclamation: WOV 612 "Halle, Halle, Hallelujah"

Gospel: Luke 10:1-9

Sermon or Reflection (see box)

Hymn of the Day: LBW 369 "The Church's One Foundation"

Affirmation of Faith:

We are not alone; we live in God's world.

We believe in God
who has created and is creating;
who has come in Jesus, to reconcile and make new.

We trust God
who calls us to be the church;
to love and serve others;
to seek justice and resist evil;
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death,
God is with us.
We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

Source: *Jesus Christ, the Life of the World* (see page 20)

Sample Story for Sermon or Reflection

Marilyn Fursman, Southwest California Synod, and Wenda Sang, Northwestern Minnesota Synod

This story is drawn from experiences of women who visited Malaysia in 1999. Ask your Companion Synod chair for stories of visits to your Companion Synod, and use them to prepare your sermon or reflection.

What would it be like to practice your faith and live in a nation a little smaller than Nevada, with 64 ethnic and subethnic groups in a predominately Muslim population of 20 million? How would you feel if the magnificent fairytale-designed religious edifices in the city, subsidized by the government, were not for you and you couldn't even get a permit to build your church? What if, dripping with sweat from heat and humidity, you had to walk barefoot through a jungle, wary of pythons, orangutans and sudden downpours, and climb a rough-hewn stairway to get to your place of worship?

Wenda Sang from Karlstad, Minnesota, was one of 24 women who learned the answers to their questions during a Companion Synod trip to Malaysia. ELCA members joined women from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Papua New Guinea, India and Malaysia in a journey through Malaysia.

Wenda expected that she and her companions would spend much of their time witnessing to Christians in Malaysia. "I was wrong," she said. "They witnessed to us more openly than I have ever experienced. It touched each of our hearts to hear the women talk about their work in the church. To hear the women share stories of their families who were not always Christian. What a feeling it was to listen to the women sing about their love of Our Lord in our language or their own. I could feel the Holy Spirit's presence during a very charismatic church service, during the singing of a Chinese hymn, and at every gathering and service."

Wenda and some of her companions visited a remote village in Tenon. "After a long, rough, four-hour bus ride, we loaded our things onto a small boat. We had to cross a river in groups for the next part of the journey. We walked about 10 minutes into the forest, before coming to a hanging bridge. It was scary to cross, but we all made it!" In the village, the travelers slept on a bamboo bench in a longhouse used for drying grain and storage. In the village's school/church, children sang Sunday School songs and the women joined in. Singing, dancing, and witnessing made up that evening's fellowship. A highlight in many locations was singing "Dalem Yesus Kita Bersaudara," or "In Christ Jesus, we are one family." As they passed the peace, the men of the village touched their hearts as they shook hands. "The greeting was coming from their heart and would be kept in their heart. Yes, in Christ we are one family, from this time and forever more!"

The Prayers:

LBW (168) The Variety of Races and Cultures p. 42

O Lord Jesus, stretch forth thy wounded hands
in blessing over thy people, to heal and to restore,
and to draw them to thyself and to one another in love.

O God, thou art one; make us one.

Source: *Jesus Christ, Life of the World* (see page 20)

Suggestions for the Meal

Eucharistic Acclamation: WOV 681 "Come, O Holy Spirit, Come"

Communion Hymn: WOV 710 "One Bread, One Body"

Benediction:

As the earth keeps turning, hurtling through space, and night falls and day breaks from land to land, let us remember people—waking, sleeping, being born and dying—one world, one humanity. Let us go from here in peace. Amen.

Source: *Banquet of Praise* (see page 20)

Closing Hymn: LBW 370 "Blest Be the Tie That Binds"

For More Ideas

Visit the ELCA Companion Synod Web site, www.elca.org/dgm/csp or contact your Synod's Companion Synod chair.