

*Teaching the Bible with
Children, Youth and Families*

**UNIT 2:
Service and
Learning**

-Session 1-

**Who Is My Neighbor?
Accompaniment Locally and Globally**

Select Learning

FACILITATOR GUIDE

Who Is My Neighbor? Accompaniment Globally and Locally

Gathering Table

Place on the gathering table a Bible opened to the Walk to Emmaus Story (Luke 24:13-25), a globe or world map and maps of your own state and community. Another addition could be art depicting the Walk to Emmaus story.

1. Welcome, Introductions and Opening Prayer

As people enter, ask them to mark on a USA and world map, all the places they have lived and/or traveled. As a part of Introductions, invite people to name a “Mission Trip” or “Service Project” they may have experienced.

2. Introduce the Video – Guest: Sunitha Mortha, Director Mission Formation and Relationships.

This session introduces the basic concept of “accompaniment” as the foundation for how we serve and learn from one another. In this process we discover Jesus is already present and at the center of our journey. As you watch this segment, consider:

- Your own “mission” experiences. Why, where and how did you serve? Was it locally or globally?
- Was your experience about “doing” as well as “being?” Were mutual relationships formed as a result of your serving?
- How was Christ encountered in your acts of service?

3. Watch the Video

4. Discussion

a. The Meaning of Accompaniment

Sunitha asks us to consider mission as a process of “accompaniment,” the foundation for how we serve and learn from one another and discover Jesus is at the center of our serving and our relationships.

In groups of three, discuss:

- What do you find challenging or affirming about this explanation?
- If we take this seriously, what might we, as individuals and the church need to change about how we approach mission trips or helping others?
- Give examples from your own congregation’s or youth group’s mission trips.

b. Context for Mission

Just as the Disciples needed to know what was happening in their world so that they could discuss and understand God’s call and mission in the world, we need to know what is happening in ours, so that we can talk about it with our brothers and sisters locally and globally. (If there are a variety of ages or generations present, create multi-generational small groups for this discussion.)

- Together read Luke 24:13-35. When Jesus asks, “What are you speaking of?” What would you say?
- In your same small groups, describe the neighborhood around your church, home or school. What is happening in your world today?

c. Who is My Neighbor?

Accompaniment is both a practical and a theological understanding of mission. Sunitha explains that in the past we often crossed boundaries and borders to bring God to those on the “other” side.

As a large group, list some of the boundaries or categories that divide people in your community or your school on a daily basis. When do you catch yourself saying or thinking “those” people . . . ?

Ex: **Wealth:** Rich/Middle class/Working poor/Destitute
Race: Black/White/Asian/Native American/Latino/Mixed race
Education: High-school/College/Trade School/Illiterate
Faith: Hindu/Buddhist/Muslim/Christian/Atheist
Gender: Straight/Gay/Lesbian /Trans-gendered/Bi-sexual
Denomination: Lutheran/Methodist/Roman Catholic/Assembly of God
School: Jocks/Geeks/Cheerleaders
Abilities: Slow/Gifted/Articulate/Quiet

- With one other person, share a personal story of a time when a barrier between you and another person, no longer existed.
- Describe a time when you learned to see “the other” in a new way.

5. Making it My Own—Take it Home

There are three questions we are using through-out this series “What?” “So What?” and “Now What?” to focus and deepen our reflection and help us internalize an active-learning, faith centered experience. Write down or draw your initial responses to the following three questions, then share your reflections with one other person:

- a. What?** What did you hear, see, or experience in today’s video presentation or in your conversations with other participants?

- **So what?** In what ways have your thoughts about mission, service and “the other” been challenged or expanded? What further questions do you have?
- **Now what?** What is your part in God’s reconciling mission? How might your congregation, youth group or household need to approach service for and with others in a new way?

6. Closing

7. Extend the Conversation

Recall a time when you experienced unexpected hospitality from an unlikely source.

Extended or Additional Sessions

A congregation’s small groups, youth groups and households are encouraged to use the following resources for extended learning:

- a. With children watch *Finding Nemo* or *Shrek 2001* and discuss the points made in this video.
- b. Invite youth, young adults and adults to come together to watch a movie such as *The Mission*, *The Soloist* or *Arranged*. Watch and discuss these movies through the lens of what you have learned in this session.
- c. The Core Values and Actions of Accompaniment: An In-depth Explanation and Application. (See handout)

Accompanying this Session

- Participant Guide
- Bibliography and Resources
- The Core Values and Actions of Accompaniment: An in-depth explanation and application

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

Who is My Neighbor? Accompaniment Locally and Globally

1. Welcome, Introductions and Opening Prayer

- Mark on the USA and world maps, the places you have lived and/or traveled.
- Name a “Mission Trip” or “Service Project” you have experienced.

2. Prepare to Watch the Video – Guest: Sunitha Mortha, Director Mission Formation and Relationships.

This session introduces the basic concept of “accompaniment” as the foundation for how we serve and learn from one another. In this process we discover Jesus is at the center of our journey and our relationships. As you watch this segment, consider:

- Your own “mission” experiences. Why, where and how did you serve? Was it locally or globally?
- Was your experience about “doing” as well as “being?” Were mutual relationships formed as a result of your serving?
- How was Christ encountered in your acts of service?

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a. The Meaning of Accompaniment

Sunitha asks us to consider mission as a process of “accompaniment,” the foundation for how we serve and learn from one another and discover Jesus is at the center.

In groups of three, discuss:

- What do you find challenging or affirming about this explanation?
- If we take this definition seriously, what might we, as individuals and the church need to change about how we approach mission trips or helping others?
- Give examples from your own household, congregation or youth group’s mission trips.

b. Context for Mission

Just as the Disciples needed to know what was happening in their world so that they could discuss and understand God’s call and mission in the world, we need to know what is happening in ours, so that we can talk about it with our brothers and sisters locally and globally.

- Together read Luke 24:13-35. When Jesus asks, “What are you speaking of?” What would you say?
- In your same small groups, describe the neighborhood around your church, home or school. What is happening in your world today?

c. Who is My Neighbor?

Accompaniment is both a practical and a theological understanding of mission. Sunitha explains that in the past we approached mission as God is on “our” side and in “our” story. We often crossed boundaries and borders to bring God to those on the “other” side. Our daily lives are filled with boundaries that divide us from one another.

List some of the boundaries or categories that divide people in your community or in your school. When do you catch yourself saying or thinking “those” people . . . ?

Ex: **Wealth:** Rich/Middle Class/Working Poor/Destitute
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- What?** What did you hear, see, or experience in today’s video presentation and in your conversations with other participants?
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- Now what?** What is your part in God’s reconciling mission? How might your congregation, youth group or household need to approach service for and with others in a new way?

6. Closing

Accompanying this session

- Bibliography and Resources
- The Core Values and Actions of Accompaniment: An In-depth Explanation and Application

BIBLIOGRAPHY and RESOURCES

Movies

The Mission	The Soloist	Arranged, 2007
Finding Nemo	Shrek, 2001	

Resources for understanding Accompaniment

GLOCAL Gatherings. Two-day events scheduled across the USA:

www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Global-Mission/Engage-in-Global-Mission/Global-Events/Glocal-Mission-Gatherings.asp

Videos and down-loadables from the Global Mission Unit of the E.L.C.A.

www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Global-Mission/How-We-Work/asp

Welcome Forward - A Field Guide for Global Travel. Includes a CD with global songs.
resources.elca.org/Global_Mission-Welcome_Forward_Guide

Books offering a Christian Perspective Related to Poverty and Development

Bosch, David J. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1991. *Shows how the concept of mission has changed from the OT, through the Reformation until now and calls for a new understanding which is broad and holistic. Considered to be the classic, modern text on missions.*

Kraus, Norman C. *The Intrusive Gospel: Christian Mission in the Post Modern World.* Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1998. *Calls for a sense of renewal of missions and development work--that both need to be working toward the same thing--the renewal of individuals' and society's heart and mind. Offers lots of meaningful insights.*

Schneider, John. *Godly Materialism: Rethinking Money & Possessions.* Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1994. *Offers a counterbalance to Sider. Argues, sometimes successfully, that Christians need not feel guilty for enjoying earthly bounty. Brings some balance to the argument but in the end fails to deal sufficiently with the world's need and our responsibility.*

Sider, Ron. *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997 edition. *If you are going to read one book on the topic of poverty and inequality this is it. Explores 1) the need in our world 2) what the Bible says is our responsibility and 3) how we as Christians can and should make a difference. Considered one of the most influential Christian books of the 20th century.*

Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Until Justice and Peace Embrace.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993. *He tries to answer what is a Christian's role in society. He focuses on the concept of Shalom and applies it to several troublesome social problems--global poverty and inequity, nationalism and racism, urbanization and finally Christian scholarship.*

More of Sunitha's Favorites:

Foster, Richard. *Freedom of Simplicity: Finding Harmony in a Complex World*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2005. *If you haven't read it, read it. Foster ably plots out the tensions in simplicity and the Christian life in general.*

Also read anything written by:

Lamott, Anne. *Traveling Mercies*. New York, NY: 1999.

Berry, Wendell. *Read any of his many poems and essays.*

PRESENTER'S PROFILE

Sunitha Mortha, ordained through the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church in India, serves as Director for Mission Formation & Relationships at the ELCA churchwide offices in Chicago, Ill. In her work at the ELCA, she has created programs and systems that have developed congregational capacities to critically explore worldviews, meta-narratives and cultures to motivate better practices of mission, globally and locally. She is committed to community building, mobilizing, and providing safe environments for difficult, complex conversations. The Glocal Mission Gatherings (www.elca.org/glocals) and Accompaniment resources reflect her work. Sunitha.Mortha@elca.org

The Core Values and Actions of Accompaniment

Jesus is our peace. In his life and death on the cross, Jesus broke down the dividing walls so that we are no longer strangers and outsiders, but we are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God. The foundation of God's house was built of apostles and prophets, and Jesus, the cornerstone, holds it all together. Ephesians 2:14–20

Accompaniment Values

The story of Jesus and the disciples traveling to Emmaus reminds us that mission is a journey, and that it has a goal – living out Christ's reconciliation, breaking bread together.

The mission journey does not end at a fixed point. Like the disciples, we might think we know where we are going, and where we plan to stop – but when the unrecognized Christ is revealed, our plans, and our journey, are transformed. We walk towards meeting Christ; we return to share what we have learned in that meeting.

In service and mission, our companions on the road may be individuals in our own community or congregations in other countries. Engaging in mission through Accompaniment, we remember that to proclaim the Gospel, we must place a high priority on the development of relationship – a relationship that God has intended for us since the beginning of the world.

When we are walking down the road together, we need to be able to talk honestly, to share with one another, to get to know one another – to undo the boundary of strangeness or suspicion between us. It takes time, thought, and commitment to learn to see how we create boundaries, to perceive the asymmetries of power, and to respond to them from Christ's reconciling mission.

The mission journey begins with understanding Accompaniment Values. These are the five intertwined Values that assist us in living out God's mission of reconciliation. Recognizing and committing to Empowerment in our relationships is an important part of being Vulnerable and living out the values of Sustainability, Mutuality, and Inclusivity.

Vulnerability

Vulnerability is the driving force in opening ourselves to relationship and God's reconciliation in mission. In our culture, vulnerability often seems to be weakness. But Jesus shows us that vulnerability – openness to relationship and giving up power – is God's way of redemption, just as Jesus became vulnerable to us and with us.

Give examples of what "being vulnerable" means to you. How can being vulnerable open one up to a deepening relationship with people in the pew, across the street or across the globe?

Mutuality

Together, we work to build up our capacities to proclaim and live out the Gospel of Christ. We offer thoughtful care for one another, working towards deeper relationship, because we value one another's wellbeing just as we value our own. Mutuality is built upon trust in and from one another. This requires time and patience as we make plans and decisions together.

Give an example of a "mutual" relationship that you had to work diligently at establishing.

Inclusivity

All communities exclude someone. In accompanying one another, we look to see who is excluded, and why, and by whom. We commit to intentionally including those who are being left out. Inclusivity requires self-reflection and honesty about our own communities and relationships. As we live out reconciling mission, we often must ask ourselves "Who is part of our community? Who is absent? Why?"

Think of a time when you were excluded. Why? How did you feel? When have you intentionally or un-intentionally excluded someone or a group of people?

Sustainability

Relationships are not simple, instead they are complex and require much attention, over time, to sustain them. 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 or service 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.

Share how you most often hear the word, "sustainability" used in our society and world today. What questions or challenges does this description of sustainability raise for you?

Empowerment

When we recognize that relationships often have an imbalance of power, and when we struggle to balance and correct those asymmetries, then we are engaging in empowerment. Sometimes empowerment will mean that the more powerful partner steps back so that the less powerful partner has a chance to shine, or that the more powerful partner will work to increase the power of the less powerful. Sometimes empowerment will mean that the less powerful partner will step up to take power.

Share a time when you felt "empowered." Who or what empowered you? Share a time when you let deliberately let go of your power and empowered someone else.

Accompaniment in Action

St. Augustine wrote, “It is solved by walking.” Accompaniment bears fruit when we truly walk the road together. The “accompaniment values” (*see above*) come into play when we *make decisions, share resources, recognize expertise, tell stories, and build networks* as we engage in service and God’s mission. We have many opportunities to put accompaniment values into action in everyday life.

Resource Sharing

We often think of resources as dollars and time. Resources are also: opportunities, access to decision-makers, family connections, housing and building facilities. In a situation where we are reaching out to people or a community beyond our church walls, we’ll often have to think carefully about how to share resources, and to receive resources, with the people we meet in a way that respects the whole community, and doesn’t lead to undermining relationships or self-sufficiency.

Resource sharing through a lens of accompaniment happens when we make decisions to share resources mutually, with the goal of serving the well being and dignity of all, and with attention to the balance of power in relationships and resources.

Think of your family's or congregations last service project or mission opportunity. How was the sharing of resources addressed?

Expertise Recognizing

Expertise in our culture usually means a special skill or advanced education, something that you would pay someone to do for you. In relationships with people in another culture we can recognize the expertise of the local immigrant community or native community in teaching us about their country and culture.

Accompaniment happens when we see, value, and apply the expertise of all for the good of the community. Expertise recognizing happens when we recognize and value the expertise of the less powerful and build mutual relationships.

How can you practice “expertise recognition” across generations – in your household? Youth ministry? Older Adult Ministry? Congregation?

Story-telling

Story-telling means sharing and listening to stories. Story telling is also recognizing that our stories are told within a larger cultural story that gives them meaning. Because of this larger story, the stories we tell may have unintended consequences for our relationships. For example, when we tell a story about immigrants, do we emphasize their English language capacity, or how their customs and practices are different from our own community? Are we also telling the story of the reasons they left their homeland, the contributions immigrants make to American culture, or the immigrant history of our own families?

Story-telling in accompaniment happens when we tell stories recognizing and asking questions about the imbalances in power that have shaped our perceptions; when we lift up

the voices and stories of those who do not have an audience or access to the tools of communication such as laptops or cameras. Story-telling seeks to give witness to those who are not allowed or are not able to tell their stories, and to acknowledge the asymmetries in power that keep them silent.

How does our larger Christian story shape your personal story about how you welcome the “other?” The immigrant? The stranger?

Network Building

We usually think of network building as something we do professionally – to meet and make connections with people who might be able to help us in our work lives. Network building is also creating connections over time and space that supports a sustainable community. If we are developing a relationship with a project in a low-income area in our local city, how can we connect the people in that community with the decision-makers at the political level? Can we create a network that brings those two groups together?

Network building in accompaniment happens when we intentionally work to create networks that include those who have been excluded, and that begins to balance power by connecting the more and less powerful together in Christ’s mission of reconciliation.

How is “network building” a part of advocacy? Who is excluded and lacks voice and power in your school? Your neighborhood? How can you be an advocate, help build networks in your school or community?

Decision Making

We might think of decision making as something that’s done at a political level. Decision-making is something we do every day, at home, in school, in our youth groups, congregations and community. In making decisions, who is involved in the decision making process? Are there a few insiders who make the decisions? How can we involve those who don’t feel included in the process?

Decision-making in accompaniment happens when we commit to negotiation, taking seriously the needs and suggestions of all who will be affected, and when we work to hear all voices, paying special attention to the voices of those who are less powerful.

Evaluate one of your past service projects or mission trips through the lens of the five accompaniment values and five actions. What are the strengths of your last service projects or mission trips based on the accompaniment values and actions? What are the growth areas?

How might you apply the five accompaniment values and five actions in the planning of your next community service project or your next mission trip?

Thank you to the Global Mission Unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America for providing this template and language in which to understand the concept of Accompaniment. More information may be found at <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Global-Mission/How-We-Work.aspx>