

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.