

<sup>1</sup>How very good and pleasant it is  
when kindred live together in unity!  
<sup>2</sup>It is like the precious oil on the head,  
running down upon the beard,  
on the beard of Aaron,  
running down over the collar of his robes.  
<sup>3</sup>It is like the dew of Hermon,  
which falls on the mountains of Zion.  
For there the LORD ordained his blessing,  
life forevermore.

Psalm 133

WALKING TOGETHER  
Reverend Jon L. Brudvig

The psalmist's joyous proclamation, "How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!" reminds me of a story about a hiker exploring a dense wilderness alone. Eventually, the hiker loses his way and worries about being stranded in the forest, until, by chance, the hiker crosses paths with another wilderness explorer. "I am lost," said the hiker. "Will you please show me the way out of the wilderness?" "No," replied the fellow wilderness wanderer, "I cannot show you the way out of the forest, but maybe if I walk with you, we can find it together."

The tale of two hikers walking together through the wilderness is a wonderful illustration of the ongoing companion synod partnerships that have been developed and nurtured over the years with our Christian siblings in Papua New Guinea and Russia; relationships that have helped all of us who have participated in the visitations and shared ministries over the years to appreciate what God is doing in and through these relationships. For me, this includes, bridging cultural divides, differences of language, and ways of "doing" church – as I get to see, celebrate, and experience what it means to be the body of Christ in the world.

These days it is easy to get lost in the wilderness of life, especially when the powers and principalities of this world play upon our fears and insecurities, thereby seeking to build walls around our hearts, minds, and wallets as we distance ourselves from God's beloved children.

Walking together with our companion synod partners is an antidote to alienation and othering. Accompaniment ministry, by its very nature, moves us beyond ourselves (our own needs, wants, and desires) and opens us up to a wider perspective of what God is up to in the world and how God is calling us – all of us – to be the Church together for the sake of the world that God loves. Because the fact of the matter is that we are called to follow Jesus out into the world and not merely worship Christ in the comfort, familiarity, and security of our church buildings. And though we may sometimes lose our way. Or seek a respite when other pressing matters demand our attention. Following the way of Jesus always connects us with others. “Alone, we can do so little,” wrote Helen Keller, “together we can do so much.”

Prayer:

Jesus, the light and life of all creation, help us to be attentive to your ongoing presence in our lives so that we may follow where, when, and how you are calling us into ministry and mission. Bless and strengthen the work of our Companion Synod relationships with the people of Papua New Guinea and Russia so that we may continue to walk with one another amid the challenges of distance, worldly distractions, and political differences as we bear witness to your love for all people. Amen