

Do you know that moment when you just feel like you're in the right place? Maybe it's the people around you that give you peace or comfort, maybe it's a project at work that went well and validates the contribution you make to your job, maybe it's during a time of worship when the spirit of God permeates your being. These moments are beyond valuable, and I am blessed to have experienced them countless times while on this trip to our companion to synod in Papua New Guinea.

I am working on a devotional as part of my journaling and reflection because each day truly did bring holy moments. For the sake of brevity, I will share one from our first encounter with the ELCPNG women's group in Lae. Our group had just settled into the guest house near the National Church office after two days of travel. With our luggage in our rooms, we go out and are welcomed with singing, fruits, and 'meri' dresses. The women not only handed us the dress, but proceeded put one on each of us right over our clothes. Except for Gary, of course, he got a button up shirt that he did put on. 😊



It was such a moving moment. The woman who was putting my dress over my head radiated kindness. I was overwhelmed by this act of generosity and vulnerability. Little did I know it would be the first of many of these kinds of acts.

We hugged deeply, and when she pulled back to see my tears, she reached up and gave me the necklace off her neck. It was the necklace the women wore with their synod uniform. I don't typically wear necklaces, but I happened to have one on that day, which I think gave to her. Another hug later, and we pulled back to admire that moment of connection.

Reading back over this And I am quick to know that it cannot fully express the beautiful and special Moment. In the midst of just a couple minutes and without any words, we shared so many sentiments of joy, Christian love, unity, and sisterhood. Our two groups then sat down and ate the fruits and vegetables as we began to get to know one another.

At first I think of Psalm 133:1 "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity." There are many different reasons for having a companion synod; Global awareness, mutual support, unity, etc. It is very good and pleasing to God's church when we work together. On this brief trip, I realized how important these relationships with our companion synods are for the church and for each of us. We pray for the people in Papua New Guinea being in the church in a distinctly different, but universally Loving way. We pray for our synod and our national church in the distinctly unique ways we serve in our areas and regions. We pray for the whole world, filled with moments and opportunities for God at work. Thank you to all who support our companion synod ministries, allowing folks like me to travel and build lifelong relationships with our partners in ministry.

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