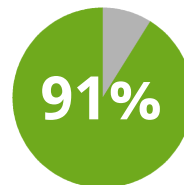


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## Walk with Me



MYLINDA BAITS



SUPPORT PLEDGED



As we walk towards our Christmas celebrations of the Incarnate Christ who comes to walk with us, this Advent I'm grateful for those who have walked with me.

*The phrase 'we make the road by walking' is an adaptation of a proverb by the Spanish poet Antonio Machado, in which one line reads 'se hace camino al andar,' or 'you make the way as you go.' " The way to do something is to start doing it and learn from it.*

In October, two female clergy friends and I spent a week in Costa Rica for a writing retreat. I had intended to work on some projects for my PhD candidacy program, inviting Diane Hooze, retired American Baptist pastor and Erika Marksberry, pastor of the 1st<sup>st</sup> Baptist Church in McMinnville, OR to join me as they worked on their own pending projects. I learned that if I wanted to accomplish large amounts of writing in solitude, I shouldn't go to a place where I have strong friendships and work partnerships. I didn't get much writing done, but I did eat well and deepen bonds that continue to sustain my soul.



Diane wrote the following about our time together, *"My first experience of a cafecito took place with the Baptist Federation leadership and colleagues in their offices in Guadalupe. It was my introduction to the depth of Mylinda's beloved relationship with people with whom she had shared ministry. The abundance of the table with beans, rice, homemade tortillas and an incredible dessert informed me that the welcome to her, and subsequently to Erika and me, was based on a deep depth of friendship. This event was the*

*beginning of my understanding of how critical **hospitality** is to the relational journey that is such a strong part of the ministry within Costa Rica. Each evening, it was a gift to share with each other around the fire in the fireplace of our lovely Casa de Los Cielos. Erika and I were able to get a substantial amount of writing done, but the gift for me was in being able to reflect on the mission work that had been a part of Mylinda's ministry and the work of our American Baptist denomination. It's a sacred opportunity to be able to walk with a friend and reflect on their past ministry and continued relationships.*

*I returned with a renewed commitment to Mylinda and her global ministry. I have a grateful heart for the time with Mylinda and Erika and the experiences that we shared. I was reminded of how important it is to remain open to other cultures in order to keep a perspective on my own. Most importantly, I was nudged to remember what a gift it is to share faith across the borders of language, countries and customs. I'm grateful to Mylinda for making a writing retreat such an educational event."*

To close our week in a sacred way, we created a natural triple spiral labyrinth using organic material laid out on the lawn. Each of us created our own spiral connected by a space of encounter in the middle. After sharing the meaning of our designs and the materials we used, we walked our own path, met in the middle and then walked the path of the others while praying for them. We shared significant affirmations and spoke sacred words to one



another. I carry this act in my bones and it reminds me often that I don't walk alone. I wrote these lines as an aesthetic response to our time together.

*Shared  
space and  
stories  
Sign in  
spiraled  
shell*

*Silly and  
significant*

*Beautiful  
simplicity*



*Sacred secrets shared*

*Marks our journeyed step*

This grace gives me hope and courage to make and walk new paths with others.

Walking forward,

Mylinda

