

March 20, 2015

Dear friends,



The months go by quickly even as the church in Ecuador continues the same work. The principal goal of this work is to be a faith community that is a sign of God's reign that Jesus announced, where each person is able to freely share the gifts God has given him or her in order to build up one another. We are very imperfect but hope that worship services, ministry with refugee families, workshops, and courses work toward that end.

Most of my time continues with the church plant in Calderon, which this last week had to say good-bye to Esneda and her two daughters as they travel to Sweden. We have also welcomed the family of Marta and Moisés, who were here last year before returning to Colombia for a time. There are also another small family and a single woman who have begun to attend. While the Calderon church can hardly be said to be "established," my call is to offer pastoral accompaniment to the persons that God has brought our way. We continue with both Sunday morning worship and "small group" on Thursdays. María Helena López has returned as pastoral coordinator in Calderón with me and as one of the national coordinators for the new Mennonite denomination.

What is most rewarding in this work is to experience the energy and expressions of faith of the participants in the church. At the same time, it is difficult to know how to respond pastorally to the great number of problems that particularly the refugee families have.

We have been able to start out the year with several ProPaz activities. The first of



these was a workshop I led on Understanding and transforming conflicts. It was good to have a large group (21 people). We also this month had the first of a series of Bible workshops. The idea is to continue for 12 months covering topics that include basic Bible knowledge and how to interpret the Bible. The goal is for participants, some with little knowledge of the Bible, to feel able to contribute whenever we read and interpret the Bible together as a church. Finally, we are at the tail end of a complete ProPaz class taught by pastor Luis Tapia entitled, "Let's be the church," that discusses the Anabaptist understanding of church, including communal discernment and equal sharing of gifts as part of a universal priesthood.

María Helena shared a poem with the Calderón group written anonymously by a Spanish mystic that calls us to love the God revealed in Jesus without any concrete reward or punishment:

I am not moved, my God, to love you
By the Heaven you have promised me.
Nor I am moved by Hell so fearful
To cease therefore to offend you.

I am moved, in a word, by your love, and in such a way,
That though there were no Heaven, I would love you.
And though there were no Hell, I would fear you.

You move me, Lord. I am moved seeing you
Nailed to a cross and scorned.
I am moved seeing your wounded body.
I am moved by your insults and your death.

You need give me naught for me to love you.
For though I hoped not for that which I hope,
By the very same love, I would love you.

Some prayer requests to remember:

- For wisdom for all leaders in knowing how to accompany families with unique sets of problems
- For families that deal with loneliness and uncertainty for the future
- For the church as it seeks to move more toward being a body where everyone is equally valued and has something to share for the community to be built up
- For new participants to the churches who have gifts to share and will receive from what God is doing here
- For the new legalized Anabaptist Mennonite Christian Church of Ecuador (ICAME) as we figure out how to do accounting as the government requires

Thank you again for your prayers and your desire to be connected to this ministry.

Blessings,

Caleb Yoder