



Spring
2014

The Ecuador Partnership

is a joint mission, beginning in 1998, and is supported by three organizations: Central Plains Mennonite

Conference, Mennonite Mission Network and the Colombian Mennonite

Church (IMCOL). The three Mennonite churches in Ecuador planted

through the Partnership are becoming new

partners with us. A very important part of the

Partnership is developing relationships among the people of Central Plains,

the Colombian Mennonite Church and the people in Ecuador. This is

accomplished by sending Fellowship and Service

Teams and Learning Tours to Ecuador, and sometimes Colombia.

We also encourage and support visits to Central Plains by our brothers and

sisters from Ecuador and Colombia. Partnership Meetings are held every

one to two years in one of the three countries, bringing together

representatives from each entity, to evaluate the past and plan for the future of

the Partnership. To learn more about the churches in Ecuador, go to www.anabautistasenecuador.weebly.com.

Ecuador Partnership

For we have become partners of Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end.

- Hebrews 3:14

Of this we are all witnesses...

by David Boshart, Executive Conference Minister

We are blessed to be in ministry with our sisters and brothers in Ecuador and Colombia. This issue of the Ecuador Partnership Newsletter brings you the latest news from the emerging church and new leadership developments. In late spring, long time leaders Cesar Moya and Patricia Urueña will be transitioning back to Colombia after 14 years of faithful leadership in this national coordinating role. We also welcomed Alyssa Rodriguez home early following a difficult personal experience. Caleb Yoder is settling in to his work in Quito and Calderon. David Shenk continues his significant work in refugee resettlement. Raul and Yvette Escobar have been appointed to pastoral leadership in Riobamba following William and Luz Marina Valencia's return to Colombia. Finally, in this issue you will be introduced to Luiz and Jennifer Tapia who recently arrived in Quito to assume pastoral leadership for the Quito Mennonite Church. Change and transition are happening at a dizzying pace, but in all these things we are witnesses to God's faithfulness and provision. To assist in this time of transition, Central Plains Mennonite Conference has agreed to provide additional \$11,000 for partial financial support in the coming fiscal year for the Tapias as they lead the church in Quito. Enclosed in this newsletter you will find an envelope for your contribution. Will you help us? ■

From Cesar and Patricia:



Thank you, everyone, for your support of our ministry and your prayers during the last few months.

After fourteen years of serving in Ecuador, we will be returning to Colombia in April of 2014. This situation will bring changes and challenges for our lives and the work in Ecuador. Please pray that the transition will be a blessing for everyone and that God will show us the ministries that he would have us do in Colombia.

Our leaving Ecuador will bring challenges to the church, pastoral, and administrative work. Of course, these challenges can become opportunities for the development of the national church's own vision. Because of this it is necessary for the Mission Network and/or the Partnership to prioritize support for biblical and theological training of the congregations and the formation of Ecuadorian leadership. This support must be given through PROPAZ and also in other theological seminaries in Ecuador that offer degrees in theology. What could be envisioned in this way within at least two years, would be licensed men and women pastors ready to be ordained in the future in each congregation. This is the way we plan with Alba Silva and Oswaldo Moina in Jardines del Inca, Tatiana Jhayya in Calderon (although Titiana can be promoted to being a pastor sooner due to her theological training), and Raul and Ivette Escobar in Riobamba.

New Pastor for Quito Mennonite Church



Luiz Tapia has been chosen to be the new pastor for Quito Mennonite Church. Luiz and his wife Jennifer are an answer to prayer in a process which was very deliberate with very specific qualifications. Luiz and Jennifer are from Chile although Jennifer spent many of her childhood years in Quito, as the daughter of a Baptist pastor. Luiz became acquainted with Anabaptism at the Baptist Seminary in Santiago, Chile, where he studied under Omar Cortes, a worker for Witness Canada and Mennonite Mission Network in past years. In addition to pastoral experience, Luiz has studied theology and recently graduated with a master's degree in Philosophy at the Catholic University of Valparaiso, Chile. Jennifer is a psychologist.

It was a privilege for the 2014 Fellowship and Learning Tour members to be present as Luiz preached his second sermon as a pastoral candidate and then the members of the congregation voted almost unanimously to accept him as their pastor. A comment from one of the members was that "I have never been part of a process where I could vote to decide who my pastor would be".

Luiz and his wife Jennifer accompanied the tour in Quito and they made quite a favorable impression on the group. It was quite rewarding to become acquainted with this young couple who have a solid understanding of Anabaptist theology and are also very articulate in expressing it. We expect that the congregation in Quito will receive many blessings as they receive the gifts that Luis and Jennifer bring to them.

From Caleb Yoder:



The start of a new year means it is time to update on what I have been up to. I have continued the activities that I mentioned in the last post. I have preached quite a bit over the past month or so, including once in the Quito church because of the pastors' absence. I expect I will preach less often

as soon as I have things to do with PROPOAZ. Along with that my routine has been to make visits with members of the Calderon church. Whether the visit is social or becomes more pastoral is something I play by ear.

I finished teaching my first course with the PROPAZ program. This was a New Testament Greek course that is considered the equivalent of two university credits and lasted four weeks, with three people completing all the requirements. This was not the course I expected to start out teaching but it was fun. One student commented that even if we didn't get so far what we did cover was solid.

We had a youth retreat on December 20 and 21, before the Christmas service on December 22.. This was with young people from all three churches near Quito. Highlights were Capture the Flag that night (the terrain gave one side a huge advantage however), a bonfire, a speaker the following day, and Minute to Win it challenges.

The retreat ended Saturday and Sunday was a joint Christmas service.

Ecuador Learning and Fellowship Tour: January 17-28, 2014

by Joetta Schlabach

Gerald and I were privileged to participate in the January 2014 Learning and Fellowship Tour in Ecuador. We traveled with three other couples from Central Plains Mennonite Conference (Don & Shirley Kempf, tour leaders, from Shickley, NE; Mark Epp and Cathy Wismer from Henderson, NE; and Dennis and Carolyn Peters from Lincoln, NE) and two young men from the Colombian Mennonite Church (Santiago Marin and Miguel Basabe). Elaine Kauffman from Mountain Lake, MN joined us in Ecuador.

This was Gerald's and my first time in South America. We were very impressed by the changes brought about by the government of Rafael Correa who was first elected as Ecuador's president in 2006, following a time of instability in which seven presidents served in six years.

David Shenk helped us understand the situation in Colombia that is producing 1000 refugees entering Ecuador each month. The refugee's personal stories put flesh on his information. One woman came with her children after paramilitaries came to her home at night and forced her husband and her to the floor with faces down. When her husband raised his head, the intruders shot and killed him. She took her family and fled the next morning. Another, Rosío, explained that her family (husband and four children

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ages 19, 17, 5 (?), and infant) fled after witnessing a murder and receiving death threats. Since arriving in Ecuador the daughter has had a child and several weeks ago the father was put in prison when he was with some people accused of a crime. The family currently has no source of income and fears eviction from their apartment. They are depending on support from the Refugee Program and the Quito Mennonite Church which they attend. According to David and César, the Mennonite Church (which now has a 3-year commitment of support from MCC) is the only Protestant church involved in refugee work.

While we were in Riobamba we were fortunate to be housed together with Miguel and Santiago from Colombia. This made it possible for us to get better acquainted with both Ecuadoran and Colombian culture. We had an interesting conversation on our first morning with the family, when Nancy's elderly parents who are deeply observant Catholics, joined us for breakfast. Her father asked, "What do Mennonites believe?" I gave the standard 3-point response about "discipleship, community, and peace." Miguel added, "we believe that our faith needs to leave the church and be in service to others."

The church in Riobamba was begun by Catholic couples who had participated in a marriage encounter and were looking for ways to continue strengthening their marital relationships and deepen their faith. The church has developed with a specific mission of supporting and strengthening marriages. We heard several testimonies from young couples who were at the point of separation and divorce and how the church and their faith have sustained them. ■

Find Joetta's full report on the CPMC website at: www.centralplainsmc.org/latest-news-from-ecuador.html

Ecuador mission workers train for trauma care

ELKHART, Ind. (Mennonite Mission Network) — As David Shenk tried to fall asleep, terrifying images of the refugees' stories of escape ran through his head.

He imagined the death threats and tense midnight escapes from the violence in Colombia. He saw how hard it was to build a new life after leaving everything behind.

Shenk serves as the coordinator of the Quito Mennonite Church refugee project, which receives much of its funding from Mennonite Central Committee Colombia. He is sent by Mennonite Mission Network and Virginia Mennonite Missions.

Shenk listens to the refugees' stories and decides how the organization can best help them with food, housing, microloans, and asylum applications. The issues people were dealing with began to get overwhelming, and he identified in himself the symptoms of fatigue and overwork that can come from social work.

Refugees often arrive in Ecuador with only the clothes on their back since they had to leave Colombia so quickly. Their land and livelihood were forcefully taken from them in Colombia. When they flee to Ecuador, most are unable to find work; those that do are often not paid a fair wage. Some sleep on mats on the floor and go hungry.

"I felt constantly stressed by the situations people were dealing with, and I struggled to respond," said Shenk. "It felt like my mind was constantly churning and I couldn't stop thinking about the things different refugees were experiencing that seemed unsolvable."

When Shenk heard of the Strategies for Trauma Awareness and

Resilience program (STAR) from Eastern Mennonite University, he brought the idea to César Moya and Patricia Urueña, who together provide pastoral leadership for Quito Mennonite Church. They were sent to serve by the Colombia Mennonite Church, Mennonite Mission Network, and Central Plains Mennonite Conference.

The workshop, held in late October, helped participants understand the psychology behind the behaviors of the refugees who've had intense traumatic experiences. As the staff members understand the effects of violence and stress on the refugees, they feel better prepared to make decisions on how to serve refugees.

Paul Stucky, a certified facilitator for STAR workshops, who lives in Colombia and works with the Colombia Mennonite Church justice and peace programs, led the weekend seminar.

They learned that people who have experienced trauma may be afraid, depressed, in shock, angry, confused, disoriented, resentful, suspicious, apathetic, aggressive, and they may deal with physical ailments like headaches, digestive problems, blood pressure issues, and hypertension, Shenk said.

Participants received visuals, like the Enemy/Aggressor and Survivor/Victim Cycles, which help them to understand the psychology of violence. They also used Bible stories to illustrate the effects of traumatic experiences.

"The training will certainly help guide how we interview, visit and accompany refugees and identify their needs," said Shenk. "It will also help us better define our specific role as a project in the larger issue, which [helps us identify] what we can and can't do and how we can improve our work." ■

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