

## **Bogotá, March 20-21, 2013 Partnership Meeting**

### **I Presentation of the participants (some were not present full-time both days)**

**Central Plains:** Don Kempf, David Boshart, Gebremichael Heramo, Holly and John Blosser Yoder, Fernando Ramos;

**Quito:** Alba Silva, Yessenia Pozo, Javier Guapaz;

**Riobamba:** Lucía Jurado and Marcelo Noriega;

**Workers:** César Moya, Patricia Urueña, Alyssa Rodriguez, David Shenk, Luz Marina and William Valencia; **MMN:** Linda Shelly

**Colombia:** Peter Stucky, María Elena Arango, Oscar Herrera, Carlos Moreno

### **II Devotional by Pastor Pedro Stucky (Acts 15:3-4 and 30.)**

We hope to give words of comfort, strength and a message of hope for our communities.

The delegation visits to Ecuador help us expand our vision of what is happening with the Mennonite churches in Ecuador.

### **III Reports**

**Reports of visitors to Ecuador.** (Peter Stucky and Maria Elena Arango of Colombia; Don Kempf, David Boshart, Gebremichael Heramo, Holly and John Blosser Yoder, Fernando Ramos, Alyssa Rodríguez and Linda Shelly from USA)

Emphasis is given to growth, the maturity of the work in Quito and Riobamba, the new work in Calderón. A good job is being done with few resources and many ministries (leadership, training, legal affairs, ministry partners). The experiences in Ecuador inspire us for our church work in our communities. We see the effort of many people reflected in the growth of the work in Ecuador

**Expectations for participation:** We clarified that everyone can participate in the meeting and if there is a vote, only the partners vote. César clarifies the agreement (2006) that the churches will not vote until they are organized, and until then will participate with their voice, but not vote. César reminds us that participants could make commitments without consulting with the community, which we could create difficulties. If Ecuador is a partner, it would not be right that they are not participating in decisions, and yet those of us from Ecuador are not ready in the moment of decision making. (This discussion was tense at times.)

**Central Plains presents.** David Boshart reports on two parts, what is happening in Central Plains and what is happening in Ecuador. Report is in Spanish and English. They give thanks for the support that has been given for the community of Ecuador. César questions whether financial support would be available for new churches. Central Plains hopes they can be self-sustaining as they feel they have a limit. We are supporting the first two churches and hope that they will be

able to support others and eventually be self-sustaining. Linda notes that the local congregations are improving their revenue. We encourage churches in Ecuador to think about how to become self-sustaining.

Pedro notes that God doesn't have limitations and that economic resources should not limit us in founding new congregations.

The initial vision was to support biblical reflection, not plant churches. It was to support indigenous churches. The vision for church-planting has been growing since 2005.

Linda noted that there are two churches that are growing and their reports are very encouraging, and these in turn will plant other churches and we encourage you to continue to grow, and while we can make some shifts, we don't have a budget to support new churches. This doesn't change the mission; it's a matter of how we manage economic support.

César, "Our churches are made up of people with few economic resources, and to build church buildings would be very difficult if we do not have financial support." From our Anabaptist perspective another challenge is the vocation of new leaders who require support for their preparation and their sustenance, and this is the dynamic of the churches. We need the affirmation of the partnership. Alone it will be very difficult to continue.

David Boshart said that if there is a property available in Ecuador, we could take into account a proposal.

**Mission Network report.** Linda said we try to maintain good communication in the course of the year. (Report attached) We are talking about having a strong church in Ecuador and recognize the ministries that have developed in Ecuador. Questions are asked. Peter asks about missionaries who go without consulting the Church of Colombia. Linda says that the intention is to always consult with Colombia and is by email.

César says the vision of indigenous ministry has continuity from 1991 when they invited the Mennonite mission board to help with theological training to indigenous communities, and since 2001 the opening of churches in Ecuador. Remember also the support requests from indigenous communities. Linda explains the process to select mission workers for ministry in different places. It is a process with much prayer and God's guidance.

We agree to discuss new workers tomorrow.

**Riobamba.** Lucy read the report. We thanked the brothers and sisters for the good work that is being developed. We asked to be informed, to participate in issues.

William: We want the voice of the church in Riobamba to be heard, to be part of the Partnership, as members of the church of Ecuador.

Peter: Are you part of the discussions on the statutes? Lucy and William respond that they want to be part of these discussions, including the two church councils. Patricia has records of the meetings of the two councils.

César explained how they are developing the statutes for the church in Ecuador, referencing IMCOL statutes, noting that under these conditions we are not an established church so far. The church in Quito has legal challenges with labor issues, since everything is personal until we have legal status. This creates urgency. He laments that we have don't have joint clarity and historical memory.

(This dialogue was tense.)

o **Quito Report** . Read by Alba Silva. Report is attached. Questions, congratulations. Attached treasury report. The report is received as it was discussed in previous visits.

o **Report of the coordinators in Quito**. Read by Patricia. Written report is received and attached.

#### **Thursday March 21**

o **Devotional and IMCOL mission report**. Read by Oscar Herrera. It is received. Question asked about the relationship with the IMCOL committee and the sharing of information in regions. Sometimes regional coordinators are present and sometimes not.

o **Report on the work in Iquitos, Peru**. Presented by David and Cecy Moreno, whose ministry in Peru is supported by IMCOL. Linda thanked them and said that, in the assembly, we will want to hear more and ask questions. She led in prayer for this work.

After a brief coffee break, Linda proposed an amended agenda to ensure that we are able to make some of the necessary decisions. Continued conversations will be possible as we spend time together at the National Assembly.

William shared that at 4:00am the Holy Spirit woke him up to a text. He felt moved to ask forgiveness for what he said yesterday. The image that was presented to him was that all of us had things burning inside that we wanted to share. Some are small and some are big, and I was adding to an environment of tension and want to apologize to César and Patricia, and to all of you, especially to those who are in Ecuador. These last weeks have been complicated in terms of health issues. My wife's sickness affects me as well and makes me tense. We haven't had a lot of time to rest and restore our bodies, and that has debilitated her immune system. Since we arrived, we have been thinking of going to the doctor but she wanted to be present at these meetings. She became very sick, was unable to breathe and had pain in her chest. I took her to a clinic and she was there until 1:00am. The clinic instructed her to rest. Maybe it was irresponsible on my part

to pressure her to be here when she was sick. Maybe today, we are going to be a little bit more relaxed and hopefully continue on Saturday and Sunday. Peter embraced William and thanked him for his words, for their value, and assured him that we will be praying for her health. César embraced William. Patricia said that she and César have always spoken highly of William and Luz Marina, and are sorry for the lack of communication, and expressed a hope and desire to work together more closely. Linda proposed taking a time for prayer. She said she knew yesterday that Luz Marina was sick but she didn't understand the extent. After the prayer, Linda thanked William and said that this will help us move forward in our work together.

Linda shared what she called "Points from yesterday's reports"

### **Affirmation of work and a general recommendations:**

1. We thank and congratulate the churches of Quito and Riobamba for good work. Our visits were very encouraging. We also congratulate partnership personnel. We see the impact of good service of César, Patricia, David, and William and Luz Marina.
2. We see the importance of spending time communicating among the churches and personnel of Quito and Riobamba to reach mutual understandings and facilitate good cooperation together. Suggest that we all commit to listen and try to understand the perspectives of others. We are pleased that the church retreat will give an opportunity to be together and talk. César and Patricia also mentioned the idea of a retreat personnel and that is a good idea.
3. It will be important to clarify the role of national coordination and communication channels. We believe that we all have the same desire to see progress of the churches and ministries in Ecuador. We seek to be comprehensive in our communication, and agile in administration. We think we will be better prepared to define communication channels after achieving mutual understanding (# 2).

### **In relation to program priorities of Partnership Ecuador:**

1. We welcome the presence of people from the churches of Quito and Riobamba. We are learning together on the road. Clearly church development is a priority for the Partnership, and in the churches we see much hope for the future.
2. We also discussed the priority of theological training work among indigenous evangelical churches and the reality that our role has changed a lot over the years. We seem to be entering again in a time where FEINE is interested in our support for training, especially with women, and possibly also in the Amazon region. As a Partnership it is an important time to affirm a desire to keep walking with indigenous churches, or define our limitations. My recommendation is to keep this part of our ministry, but with the recognition that we are contributing more resources in the Mennonite churches.

### **DIALOGUE**

Linda asked for reflections or questions about the point that the work with the churches is priority and the work with indigenous churches is secondary. Patricia recalled the history, where the indigenous churches were the original priority. At this point, the churches have become the priority. However, if there are other people who arrive with the ability and training to work with indigenous churches, that is good. Don affirmed renewed attention to the work with indigenous people. David added that the indigenous training part of César and Patricia's role helps the churches become less dependent on the personnel from the Partnership, since it limits their time for the churches. Linda said that as coordinators, César and Patricia are doing a lot beyond the work of the church. The people in Quito have wanted them to continue as pastors, yet it is good to see the broader involvement of people from the churches in leadership. It is encouraging to see how the churches are developing Ecuadorian leadership.

César responded to some questions with an historical review. A need for more communication and improved relationships between Quito and Riobamba was recognized. (The dialogue was tense.)

After a break, we continued with the prepared agenda/document. Linda affirmed the work of César and Patricia and said that it is her desire to see them continue in the coordination role, recognizing that they have advanced the work in Ecuador. She also affirmed the work of David, in Quito, and of William and Luz Marina in Riobamba. The group welcomed Alyssa with applause.

#### **Administrative recommendations regarding existing staff:**

- We commit to pray for César, Patricia, David, and William Luz Marina in decision-making on another period.
- For planning it would be good to suggest a date for decision-making. (June 1?)
- The Church of Riobamba took the initiative to invite William and Luz Marina to extend their term by two years (total 4 years). We have the impression that the church of Quito also wants David, César and Patricia to stay for another term. We invite them to share their perspective.
- After hearing from Ecuador, it's up to the sending agency to confirm the duration of their stay in Ecuador, always inviting other partners to share their perspective.

#### **Administrative recommendations regarding applications and processing personnel:**

- Given the priority of training in the process of establishing new churches and also the beginning of the new work in Calderon, we recommend the partnership endorsement of Caleb Yoder for an invitation to serve in Ecuador, with details pending. César and Patricia could work with churches to discern his role, with the idea that he would serve as pastoral accompaniment (not as pastor) in Calderon and with theological training in Quito and Riobamba according to local planning. MMN would follow-up.

- We affirm the current process with YAMEN! for the refugee program and also encourage the churches of Ecuador and Colombia to consider YAMEN! as an option for young adults, even for sending from Ecuador to other countries, and as an option in response to the wishes of Riobamba for someone to work with young people and music.
- We encourage churches to consider options for the service and to talk to the coordinators in Ecuador and prepare descriptions of work to socialize and discern together.
- In the case of the mutual interests of the Ross Richer family and FEINE for service in theological training among evangelical churches, with emphasis on women, youth and the environment, we ask the members present if they are willing to appoint Caesar, Patricia and Linda responsible for the process and decision-making, or how they want to define their own participation in the decision.
- We recognize that there are too many pending decisions to respond to the mature couple with pastoral experience and social work, but we want to pray for them and ask God's guidance in their lives, staying available longer if Ecuador is to be their place of service .

## **DIALOGUE**

César suggested that more background about Caleb's familiarity with the Ecuador Partnership and Central Plains be explained, e.g. his membership at West Union Mennonite Church, seminary training. He is looking at other options as well, according to Linda. The partnership is willing for him to be invited.

Linda introduced the agenda regarding the process of calling the Ross-Richer family to work with FEINE. What more input would the group like to have, or would they like to leave that in the hands of Linda, César and Patricia?

Patricia suggested more explanation of how their work would be funded. Linda explained that they might continue to work part of the year for Goshen College, which would help a lot. But also, their home church in Indiana has a heart for mission and would likely provide adequate support.

Peter said, it seems good to us that you are considering this in Ecuador and that MMN is presenting this in front of us to the Partnership. I think it is the Partnership that in general should make this kind of decision, although sometimes we don't have the opportunity to know those specific details—it's kind of like a puzzle to know what to do first. But it is important to consult with the Partnership on this issue. Don Kempf said he would affirm the process. Linda said she would inform partners if we reach a point when we are ready to formally invite them.

Linda said that, with everything else going on, it may be too much to respond to the mature couple with pastoral experience (last point). This couple worked previously as country reps for MCC Mexico. Since returning to the US, he has been working in plumbing and with solar

systems for electricity. They are looking for pastoral work within the US or abroad. She is 60 and he is 51. They are a great couple.

César said he doesn't think the doors will ever close for people with a desire to close. I would give my vote to continue to look for options for that couple. The profile really caught my attention. They have a lot of experience in public advocacy and with peace. I think we have a lot to learn from that.

Peter said, I don't understand what it would be for. What would they be helping with in the church? Linda said, that is her concern, and that we should wait to see how we are doing with the other personnel decisions before we present a proposal. As César said, we want to encourage the churches in their proposals. We don't want to overwhelm Ecuador with a lot of foreign workers, yet we don't know yet which personnel will extend and whether the new workers in process will come. Until we have more clarity, we can't move forward with this couple, yet I wanted to mention them in case we need more personnel. Like César was saying, this couple could really fit in with the ministries in Ecuador.

**Budget:** Linda brought up the program budget on the screen for funds that comes from MMN and Central Plains. She pointed out that personnel support comes from churches and people who help send them, and in this way doesn't impact the program budget.

We congratulate both churches in Ecuador for the increase in contributions that they have had. The Partnership has supported these churches, but in the long-term it will be the churches themselves who fund their needs, including items such as rent for the church facility, which the Quito church has already begun to participate in.

César mentioned projects that require funds, e.g. the one in Jardines del Inca. Could we consider \$2,000 for three projects? Linda said that this would be a point that they could talk about in the retreat with both churches, and that the "local program" budget line has some flexibility to accommodate priorities of the churches and program in Ecuador.

Don noted that funds from Central Plains have increased over the past few years, and we cannot increase our support through the central budget. Dave added that, it is important to note that this is the largest program item in the CPMC budget. We are spending more here than anywhere else, by a lot. Linda expressed gratitude. David said, "We are very excited about it." Don said, "Yes, it is a good thing, but we have limited budget." Linda emphasized the benefit of relationships for mission.

**History document:** Linda said she wanted to take five minutes to talk about recent happenings in Ecuador. We looked at the history document and dates/events were suggested for additions. Linda emphasized that we have a lot to celebrate!

**Fellowship and work teams and learning tours:** César raised the question of the spacing of groups coming to Ecuador for hosting. It was a bit much this year. Linda said that she wanted to say officially that Ecuador should feel free to say no to groups when the timing isn't right. She knows it is hard to say no, but they should feel free. We can all also think more about this.

**Covenant for William and Luz Marina:** Pedro raised the issue of William and Luz not having a proper contract. Linda said that, if they return, it would be good for the mission committee to sign a contract. Peter asked if that was the responsibility of the mission committee. Linda said for her it's clear that the church that sends volunteers makes a covenant. The covenant that MMN makes does not include a lot of details. We work out the details separately. In the case of William and Luz, we have raised money for their support, and we could formalize that, but the sending institution should make the covenant. We want each partner to have the opportunity to send their personnel. In our case, because CPMC is part of Mennonite Church USA, they work through Mission Network. The covenant is something that confirms the work and the relationship. A conversation among IMCOL people followed which will need follow-up.

Pedro Stucky said that he would like to invite feedback about these meetings. Participants felt rushed. William had to leave, said good-bye until Saturday. Because of Luz Marina's health problems, his arrival at the assembly will be delayed.

**Partnership Covenant:** Linda had hoped to have an hour to review the partnership covenant together, working part of the time in small groups, but noted that there would not be time. She asked that each partner take the time in upcoming meetings to review the covenant and see what changes they would recommend for next time. It will also help us when we have more clarity about personnel.

But I want to at least give time to look at it. I know some of you may not have seen the covenant since 2008 and some maybe seeing it for the first time. It is quite long—has theology, bible references, a description of the partnership groups (here we may have to add new things from the church in Ecuador), the vision of the partnership and some of the mission. What we have here is the mission that we are doing. It would be a good exercise to write a more concise description. We have a section about Principles of Collaboration, etc. (See document.) Maybe more can be done through email or through visits with the partners. If there are ideas for next steps to take it would be good to mention that now.

Peter said that the partnership is a model of how to do mission in other countries. Don has said that CPMC is arriving at the limit of their funds, but for Colombia it has been a good experience. Still pending are IMCOL conversations about their role in Peru and maybe Venezuela. These would be issues to discuss briefly, if CPMC has expectations or a question about what is happening in Venezuela. We noted that the upcoming visit to Venezuela will be a time of learning and that no decisions have been made yet regarding follow-up.

**Next meeting:**

Linda: For the next meeting, we would like to go to Ecuador. Are we thinking of a year, a year and a half? To have meetings in the spring? In the fall? Not to confirm but just to have a little direction. César proposed November 2014, after Nov 1-2, which is a vacation time; after the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> of November would be idea. Peter suggested 2 days of meetings next time. Linda agreed.

The rain was very loud and discussion was not ideal.

Linda thanked the church in Colombia for hosting the Partnership. Fernando added words of thanks, saying that he always leaves these meetings encouraged, that it affirms his vision for his church as a pastor; he hopes that his church in Davenport, Iowa, will increase its interest and support for the church in Ecuador. Patricia and others added thanks. Lucia said that the work with children really touched her heart. Yessenia brought greetings from Ecuador, and blessed the Colombians to continue in their work. Alba said that it's great to see how the kingdom of God is growing everywhere, and especially to see how the church is sowing seeds of the gospel with the children. Marcelo thanked Colombia for giving them enthusiasm to participate more actively in their community, that we can be the representation of the Anabaptist vision in the world; we hope that this partnership can be strengthened, and that the work of God will be strengthened; thanks also for the important contributions of Wm and Luz Marina. César said he values a lot that people have come from Ecuador to be here, e.g. Lucia had a surgery a month ago—that she is here is a sign of her commitment to the work of God. In the case of Yessenia and Javier, they left their business for more than a week, something we really appreciate. Javier also paid his own way out of his own pocket—that means that there is love for the work and commitment to the church. Secondly, I have always understood that you have backed us; I appreciate your support, advice and wisdom. Thank you for trusting us and for giving us the work that we have. We ask for your prayers.

**Closing:** We ended with a circle of prayer and lunch, and then left for the Colombia Mennonite Church assembly in Cachipay.