



Witness

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January 2004, *Equipping*

Dear Friends;



A group of 8 individuals participated in a Colombia Learning Tour from November 13 – 25th. This group met with Peter Stucky, pastor of the Teusaquilla Mennonite Church in Bogotá, Colombia. In the meeting, Peter shared that the church sees itself as called:

- to disciple men and women to follow Jesus
- to grow together as Anabaptist communities of faith
- to transform Colombia towards the intention of God

Every week I get an electronic copy of the church bulletin for the Sunday morning service in the Teusaquillo Mennonite Church. I find that bulletins often give a good reflection on the interests and involvements of a congregation. I share this as a piece that could be fruitfully used to reflect on how the church tries to be the church. Only pieces of the bulletin have been translated here.

Please take a moment to read and reflect on this church in another country, another culture.

Yours in Christ,
Robert J. Suderman
Executive secretary, Christian Witness

Sampling a Sunday morning church bulletin (October 26, 2003)

**Teusaquillo Mennonite Church
Bogotá, COLOMBIA**

Our Vision:

We are a Christian community, a missionary of love, that, via the impulse of the Holy Spirit and guided by the Word of God, prays and works in order to do the will of God, on earth as it is in heaven.

YOU ARE WELCOME IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.

Theme of the month: "THE BIBLE IS THE BOOK OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD"

First worship service: **"The Bible as Inspiration for Life and Action"**

Second worship service: **"The Bible is not just any book"**

8:00 am (before the first service): A service of prayer. Prayer is the power of God that changes lives and society.

Classes for Congregational Biblical Discernment:

- 1) Economy and Solidarity in the People of God
- 2) Walking in Christian Discipleship
- 3) Improve your life: Practical Biblical advice for your family
- 4) Basic Foundations for the Christian Life

- 5) Baptism and membership class
- 6) Youth class
- 7) Class for junior youth and children

Offering:

Today and throughout this month we invite you to give a special offering to the Colombian Bible Society...

Announcements:

- 1) Monday: the Committee dedicated to discern the needs of the displaced persons in our midst will be available for interviews
- 2) Tuesday: Prayer meeting
- 3) Wednesday, 7:00am: Prayer meeting
- 4) Wednesday, 9:00am: Committee for Justice and Peace meets
- 5) Wednesday, 12:30-1:30: A Moment for Peace, reflecting on the theme: "Should we vote in the upcoming elections or not?" Please be there, as this is an important time of reflection and prayer for peace for our country, which is followed by a humble bowl of soup that we share with all in the name of our Lord.
- 6) Saturday: Painting and accounting classes
- 7) Saturday morning: Worship team practices
- 8) Saturday morning: Fasting and prayer
- 9) Saturday: 2pm: Guitar classes
- 10) Sunday: 10am; Guitar classes for junior youth
- 11) Sunday: 2:30 pm: English classes for youth
- 12) October 30: Workshop: The Lord is your healer: Humans and their health
- 13) November 3: 50th anniversary of the La Mesa Mennonite Church; let's be present with massive attendance
- 14) November 6: Meeting of the Committee for Prison Ministry
- 15) November 8: Flea market sale for our Mutual Aid fund and to bless our community; save your things and bring them to sell and to buy
- 16) November 8: Regional meeting of the Executive Council of the national church
- 17) November 10-15: New seminary course: "Jesus and our models for teaching" (you can get 4 credits in the Seminary for this course)
- 18) November 15: We will receive a new congregation into our national church in Cali, Colombia
- 19) November 22: Accounting workshop, to serve the church better
- 20) Employment announcements, identifying various employment opportunities
- 21) JUSTAPAZ is looking for an accountant
- 22) Saturdays: painting and guitar classes

We thank God for:

- 1) The all-night prayer vigil last Saturday. God was present with his people.
- 2) The reappearance of the son of one of our members, who had been taken and disappeared for quite a while

Pray for:

- 1) The elections that are taking place today
- 2) For the pastor and Ricardo who are going on a "pastoral mission" this week
- 3) Mary whose hip hurts when she moves
- 4) For the persons who are kidnapped: may God give them strength and freedom.

THE CENTRE OF THE BIBLE:

DID YOU KNOW THAT:

- 1) Psalm 118 is the chapter that is in the centre of the entire Bible?
- 2) Psalm 117, the one before, is the shortest chapter in the Bible?
- 3) Psalm 119, the one after, is the longest chapter in the Bible?
- 4) That there are 594 chapters before Psalm 118 and 594 chapters after Psalm 118?
- 5) This means that there are a total of 1189 chapters in the Bible?
- 6) Psalm 118:8 is the verse in the centre of the chapter, and therefore also of the Bible?
- 7) Don't you think that a verse right in the middle of the Bible should be taken seriously?
- 8) It says: "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put one's trust in mortals"
- 9) Don't you think this is really the basic theme of the entire Bible?
- 10) Isn't this verse important as we think about electing persons to political positions?

A Process of Reconciliation to Reintegrate Armed Groups back into legal and civil life: Bogotá, October/03

[The church has been asked by the Colombian government to be present in the governmental discussions with the Para-military groups in their negotiations about how to reinsert these armed and very brutal groups back into civil society. This document reflects some of the basic thoughts the church has as it prepares to be present there. These thoughts were processed in the weekly "Moment of Peace" that takes place in the church. This is just a brief glimpse into the life of another church as it struggles to be faithful in its context. - RJS].

In light of the fact that it is important that the reconciliation processes between the Colombian society and the armed groups have integrity, it is important that the church develop some ideas from its Judeo-Christian heritage in order to facilitate and critique the process so that it really contributes to lasting peace.

Some ideas are:

- 1) Return to the original owners what the armed groups have stolen from them (Lev. 6:2-5; Numbers 5:6-7)
- 2) Reparation to the victims through psychological help, economic compensation, and a return to or relocation of the victims
 - For those killed and disappeared
 - For wounds
 - For torture and handicaps
 - For time that has been lost
 - For emotional and moral damage
 - (Luke 19:8; Exodus 22)
- 3) Use the money of those who created the victims in projects of social justice (education and health) (Luke 19:8)
- 4) Acknowledgement of crimes
- 5) Forgiveness for crimes that are admitted and confessed
- 6) Punishment for crimes that are not admitted nor confessed (Lev. 4:22-24, 27-29; 5:17-19; I John 1:9)
- 7) About public positions:
 - Those that admit and confess their crimes should be forgiven and allowed to be public servants again in 5 years
 - Those that do not admit and confess their crimes should be processed by judicial procedures and punished according to those criteria, and they lose all right to get a position of public trust
- 8) Provide opportunities for those who are reinserted into civil life to earn a living
- 9) That the processes of peace and reconciliation become permanent policies of the state.

Further questions and comments about the reconciliation process and our participation in it:

- 1) Is the process Colombian or American?
- 2) We need more of a Christological vision.
- 3) We need to be careful that this doesn't turn into the church's attempt to benefit from the material goods of the para-military organizations.
- 4) In order not to be "used" nor for the church to simply be a "smoke-screen" we need to have a vision based on the values of the Kingdom of God through Jesus Christ.
- 5) Is it even legitimate to use resources gained in evil ways for good purposes?
- 6) Our concern is that the process is truly one on reintegration not simply one of demobilization.
- 7) What will the absence of the para-military groups mean in those zones where they are the primary authority?
- 8) Who provides reparation for the victims? The government? The para-military groups? Others?
- 9) It is important to have the participation of other sectors of the civil population so that the process is more communitarian. We want to make sure that the victims are represented as well as those who offer forgiveness and those who receive forgiveness.
- 10) What are the guarantees?
 - For those who will be reinserted, given that many of them have been killed when they try this
 - For the economic viability of those reinserted
 - For those who go back to their farms
 - So that they become free agents and not obligated to participate in mega projects
- 11) The evangelical church needs to be providing information about what is actually happening.
- 12) What is the urgency of this government to deal with the para-military groups?
- 13) What "peace" are we talking about? The rural areas continue to fill up with cadavers.
- 14) It is, however, important to participate in the process. Confidence is the foundation of it all.
- 15) We need to prepare the civil society for this process. Why all these privileges for those who have been outside of the law? We need to help them to live within other groups in society.