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Note from Nora - June 2, 2017



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

June 2, 2017

Photos cannot capture the hope I saw in the faces of people who desperately want peace.



My [last stop in Colombia](#) was in Medellin, for a visit with our partners in the [Methodist Church of Colombia](#). On the way from the airport, along a good road but with many twists and turns down into the valley where the city is situated, both [Jim Hodgson](#) (our church's Program Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean) and I spotted a statue of what appeared to be a tall, thin Jesus. It was on a hillside and there

were cows grazing in the long grass at the feet of the Good Shepherd.

It was a quirky yet lovely image, but I wasn't quick enough to grab my phone to take a picture as we sped by in Bishop Juan Alberto Cardona's car. On the way back to the airport the next day, I was prepared with my phone poised all the way up the mountain, but the statue was right at a turn in the road, and the traffic was moving fast. I was only able to get a blurry shot from a weird angle.

In a way that picture is representative of my journey to Colombia. I have a lot of pictures (see my [Facebook photo album](#)) and a lot of notes that capture vivid bits of what I saw and heard, but fall far short of capturing the full experience.

The images in my head and the impressions I carry in my heart are so much stronger than those captured in words or digital pictures. Those include:

- An image of a woman who lived for years with violent deaths in her family and community, and fear about what might explode next, who now reaches out in reconciliation to those responsible for the violence.
- An image of a man recruited by the guerrillas as a boy, who learned to kill and lived that life until one of these acts sent him to jail, where he found faith in Jesus through a prison ministry that later led him to be part of the reconciliation process.
- An image of enemies who are now willing to come to a table together to discuss their shared commitment to peace.
- An image of a child who was rescued from a house destroyed by a bomb, and now, eight years later, is playing with her friends at church.

- An image of a woman telling with passion of the Methodist-run health centre that provides vital services to a small community that was devastated by the years of violence.
- Images of verdant mountains, stark poverty as well as wealth, bustling cities, and people working together to create a better future for their children.

It was humbling. It was inspiring. It was an experience that I am grateful to have had.

Nora

P.S.: Prayers and support are needed for the people at risk of starvation in parts of Africa and the Middle East. The United Church's [Extreme Hunger Appeal](#) is helping our partners on the ground respond to this crisis. All eligible donations made from March 17 to June 30 will be matched by the federal government. Please give!



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