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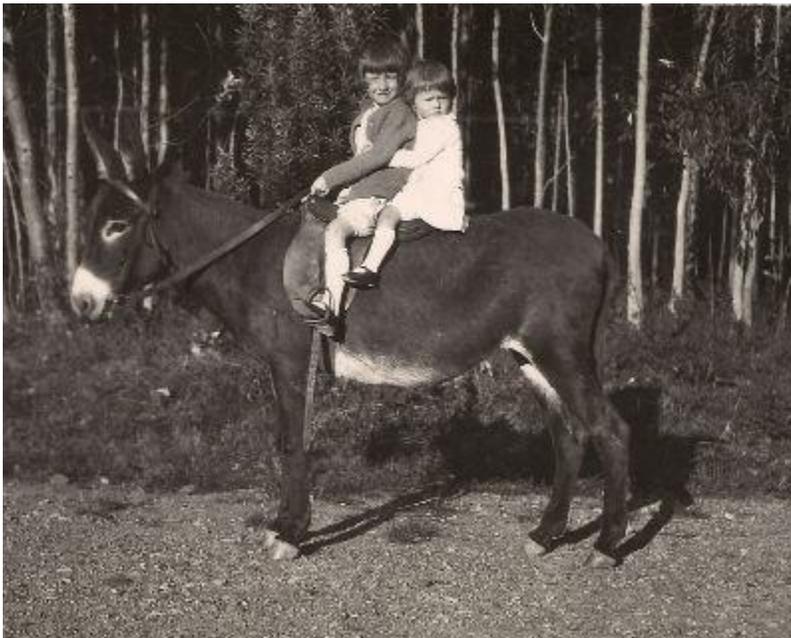
Note from Nora - May 15, 2017



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA  
L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

**May 15, 2017**

*I am excited to visit Colombia, to see how the generosity of United Church members is improving lives in a country my mother lived in almost 90 years ago.*



The photograph above of two little girls sitting on a donkey was taken a little less than 90 years ago, in Colombia. My mother is the larger child, sitting in front of her little sister.

My grandfather, a young graduate of the Ontario Agricultural College, was employed setting up an experimental farm with cattle imported from Canada. In times when global travel and intercultural experience was much less common than it is today, I respect my grandparents' willingness to embrace such a bold venture.

In the picture, the girls look a little uncertain. I don't know if that is because they have been perched on a donkey, or if it is due to the presence of the camera. Growing up, the stories we heard of that time in Colombia were always told with the sense of it being an amazing adventure... a life-shaping experience that the family had shared together.

It's Mother's Day, so naturally I am thinking of my mother. I think of her often anyway, and of all the little ways that my life has been influenced by her. And right now, as I prepare for my first trip to Colombia, I am thinking particularly of her childhood days there.

My journey to Colombia will be with colleagues from our full communion partner, the United Church of Christ, and their full communion partner, the Disciples of Christ. Those two churches do their global work together and have invited me to visit mission partners alongside them. Later in the trip, Jim Hodgson, who coordinates our church's Caribbean, Central American, and South American work, will join me to visit other United Church mission partners.

Colombia has been through a lot since my mother's childhood days there. Years of guerrilla warfare have taken their toll. Still, the peace process in place with the largest guerrilla group, and discussions underway with the other major group, offer huge hope.

I have been thinking about this trip, reading and preparing, for weeks now. But with all the preparation, I am aware that much of what I experience there will be very new for me. I am excited at the opportunity to gain a first-hand understanding of how lives in Colombia have been affected by all the turmoil. I am also looking forward to see how the generosity of church members in Canada and the United States has made a difference in the lives of Colombian people.

I have made sure that I have a "roaming" plan on my cellphone and with any luck, I will be able to send some pictures and small updates for the [United Church Facebook page](#).

Nora



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