

Accompaniment Report #3 from Sue Cossey and Jeffrey Todd (August 2016, Urabá)  
(Revised)

Imagine...

Who doesn't know John Lennon's peace anthem? In Colombia they can stop listening to the song of his dream of peace because it's not a dream here anymore. The historic Havana Accords were signed this week and the image was broadcast live across the country followed by an address to the nation by President Juan Manuel Santos. It was pure coincidence that we happened to be visiting in a pastor's home with a TV on that evening.

We were glued to the screen, hanging on every word. The most tender moment of the evening was what was shown in between the two live broadcasts: a video presentation of the national anthem being sung by different children from each region of the nation dressed in their traditional clothing. This is the real hope of the nation, that these young lives will be lived without the violence of the past into a future of peace.

So many in Urabá have suffered in the violence and displacement of the last twenty years. Story after story have been shared with us without even asking. The pain is still very close to the surface in people whose lives were forever changed by the murder of family members and the loss of traditional life working the land on the family finca. Our churches are primarily populated by Presbyterians of long-standing. Many were in churches that no longer exist due to abandonment when armed groups drove out the community in the 90's. They've not only kept their ties to the church in their new communities but also maintained their faith in God through trials we cannot imagine.

The peacemaking has begun even though there is a referendum on October 2 where citizens will vote Si or No on the peace accords. The Presbyterian Church in Uraba is in training to become leaders in building the peace in their communities. This week representatives from many Presbyterian congregations came together in Apartadó to participate in a training program offered by a group from the Mennonite tradition in Colombia. Mennonites are known as a 'peace church' since they embrace non-violence and an anti-war position. Much of what we did together was to remember our faith tradition of peace and finding paths to put into action what we say we believe.

We watched as representatives from each church stepped up to say they would coordinate efforts locally through their church and community leadership. This is a huge responsibility and those who volunteered appear to be ready for the task. They are steeped in Presbyterian organizational expertise and we know the potential built into that!

Isaiah 54: 10 – For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

Let the peacemaking begin! Thanks be to God who makes all things new!