



## **Rooted and Grounded in Love**

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Mission in Latin America and the Caribbean can be interpreted as a clash between narratives. On the one hand, people can access the news delivered by mass media, which can give us the impression of knowing what is happening on the continent at the touch of our fingers on a keypad or the image through a computer screen. However, as we dig deeper into the facts and diversify the information we receive with the experience of our Global Ministries partners in the region, we realize that we are victims of a single narrative that responds to the powers that be. Accumulation of wealth, exploitation of natural resources, and the imposition of a particular social model are the order of the day on the continent. Then, along with our partners, we assume the challenge of confronting that narrative with the one “rooted in love,” as the text of the letter from Paul to the Ephesians (Eph. 3:17-19) invites us to do. This alternative narrative allows us to connect with God’s fullness (plér-ma) as well as the joy of our brothers and sisters “with all the saints” in unity, inclusion, and hope. The “Gentiles” of these lands are called to sit at the same table as the ones in eminence. That calling comes with devoted labor of solidarity, sensibility, and presence.

I have had the blessing and the opportunity of living the pleroma of God amid the challenges and dreams of missional partners on the continent. In Colombia, I can recall visiting projects and churches in four different locations in the country. One of the projects was called the “Peace Sanctuary” in Magre, Medellín. There, leaders from Justapaz, one of our partners in the country, engaged in dialogue with people affected by recent attacks by paramilitaries in the area. They shared how relatives either disappeared or were found dead during the shootings. Churches and organizations from civil society are working there on alternatives to avoid the forced recruitment of young people and denounce human rights violations by armed groups in the area. In Mexico, I have had the opportunity to share with the Mexican Roundtable for Mission. As part of the Roundtable, the two expressions of the Disciples of Christ in

Mexico and the Central Board for Congregational Churches promote sustainable development projects sponsored by women (“Woman-to-Woman Mexico”) and the Summer School Program, and they welcome pilgrimages from the United States as they visit and live among the people in that country. On a recent trip to Guatemala, I was honored to see Rosalina Tuyuc, Coordinator of the National Confederation of Widows of Guatemala (CONAVIGUA), at the organization’s main offices in Ciudad de Guatemala. Rosalina and her colleagues shared the experiences of dealing with the consequences of the civil war in Guatemala in their ministry, recovering the bodies and remains of families killed by the repression of those years, and collecting evidence to sue the Guatemalan state for violation of human rights and genocide.

I have seen the fruit of the mission “rooted and grounded in love.” “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13). All of those experiences challenge the single narrative that we could read in media, which tells us constantly that there are no alternatives for the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Rooted and grounded in love, I have had a different experience. Our partners’ commitment flourishes amid people’s needs and visions. Our call will always need to be grounded and rooted in love for those who write new pages of blessing and the fullness of life abroad and in our own country.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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