

A friend and former co-worker of mine, Beth Beall, is in Columbia working with the Accompaniment Program between the PCUSA and the Presbyterian Church of Colombia. I would like to share her letter to us with you.

Hi again,

A few days ago I was sitting outside with a new friend. She is a Presbyterian pastor here in Barranquilla. She and I are about the same age, I enjoy her thoroughly, and I will miss her greatly when I leave. As we talked, she asked me to help her with a neighborhood children's ministry that she has started, and also to do a children's sermon at one of her worship services. I was delighted to say "yes" to such things, even as I thought, "I didn't think I'd be doing such things during my time as an accompanier, but that's OK!"

A little later in our conversation, she went on to share that her father, uncle, and two brothers had been assassinated about 20 years ago in the countryside where she grew up. Paramilitaries had stolen a cow from her father, and her father in turn denounced the pm's. He was assassinated shortly thereafter. Her uncle was assassinated by guerrillas. She said, "You must understand: there are no 'good guys' in my country's conflict." She went on to talk about the fear and paranoia that characterized her family's life for many years afterward.

She got up from her chair a little while later to go check on something. As she walked away, I understood anew that accompaniment is "deep and wide." Yes, being an accompanier means I accompany the Presbyterian Church of Colombia in its risky work with communities of displaced persons. But being an accompanier also means that I accompany the church in its very "ordinary" work of Sunday school and evening meetings, of children's sermons and youth groups.

As I accompany the church in its very "ordinary" work of Sunday School, children's sermons, etc., I learn that just about everyone I meet has been touched in some way by violence, and that I am, in a sense, surrounded by the "walking wounded." I learn that many of the "walking wounded" are also the "wounded healers" who are committed to sowing seeds of peace and non-violence. And just as my friend and I sat together the other day, so I learn that accompaniment calls me to "sit with" the complex and dis-comforting questions about what all of this, what any of this, requires of me in the weeks and months and years to come.

Thanks for *your* accompaniment on this journey,
Beth Beall

For anyone who wants to learn more about the Accompaniment Program between the PCUSA and the Presbyterian Church of Colombia:

www.presbypeacefellowship.org/colombia

—submitted by Rozolen Stanford