

Articles:

- The Gospel of Peace (1-2)
- Why do they do that? A look at Colombian culture. (1-2)
- In Focus: Childhood with a Purpose (2)

Prayer Concerns:

- Pray that God will continue to guide and bless the growing youth group at church.
- Remember Aaron as he begins teaching "World religions" at the Arise and Shine Mission Institute that meets on Saturdays at the church.
- Pray for new believers Yuri and Sandra as they grow in their faith and commitment to Christ.
- Ask for guidance and courage as Laura helps form a health team at church to do outreach in the rural communities around La Mesa.
- Remember us as we continue adjusting to the culture, especially in the way organizations function. Pray for patience and understanding.

News from the Kauffman family in La Mesa, Colombia

The Gospel of Peace



Colombia is a country with a long history of violence. The current conflict between armed guerrilla movements like the FARC and ELN and the government has been ongoing for nearly forty years. The death toll is estimated to be some 39,000 since 1988.

The Colombian Mennonite Church has had an impact disproportionate to its small size in this context of perpetual warfare. It has provided conflict resolution training to politicians from the local to national level, and its witness to the state won conscientious objection for students connected with the seminary. Justapaz (Just peace) is a ministry of the church that has worked at many of these issues, and also raises awareness of the human rights abuses taking place in many corners of Colombia.

Knowing the church had this reputation, we were surprised to find very little overt focus on peace and justice at the La Mesa Mennonite Church. In seven months at the church we have heard only two offhand references to peacemaking from the pulpit. We've heard nothing of how Colombian pastors

and congregations suffer at the hands of the guerrillas and paramilitaries. Though we have found this confusing and even frustrating at times, we've come to understand a few possible reasons for this apparent vacuum.

1. The conflict is not visibly active in La Mesa. While we have heard that there are former guerrillas in the countryside and even some paramilitaries who patrol town, we have seen nothing personally. La Mesa is a genuinely "tranquilo" municipality.
2. Fifty years of violence tends to make



Aaron preaches about the gospel of peace from Ephesians 2:11-19.

Understanding Warm and Cold Cultures



Laura looks out over the city of Bogotá from Monserrate.

"Colombia has one of the highest number of beauty contests per capita in the world. Necklines plunge, skirts flare high on the thigh, most of the jeans are second-skin with sequins glittering down the leg. Even though people walk a lot, the shoes are flimsy, tottering, but very stylish. Earrings hang to the shoulders, and the colors scream loudly. People jangle, glitter and shine.

"The people are beautiful and I enjoy the teeming, vibrant life here. But sometimes I miss the understated quiet beauty of my dear Menno friends and family back home."

These thoughts that Laura posted on our weblog reflect the culture clash we have experienced in adjusting to life here in Colombia. Reading the book, *Foreign to Familiar*, by Sarah Lanier, has helped us try to understand rather than simply judge the differences we see. She categorizes culture broadly as hot- or cold-climate.

Aaron & Laura
Kauffman

Calle 5, # 14-32
La Mesa, Colombia
Tel: 011-57-1-847-2553
aaronlaurak@gmail.com

*Trust in the Lord with all
your heart and lean not
on your own
understanding; in all
your ways acknowledge
him, and he will make
your paths straight.*

Proverbs 3:5,6

**Our Support Team
from
Zion Mennonite Church**

Chairperson
Matthew Hunsberger

Prayer Coordinator
Mark Mast

Church Communicator
Sharon Showalter

Finance Manager
Todd Stoltzfus

Encourager
Mandi Stoltzfus

To contact, write to:

Kauffman Support Team
Zion Mennonite Church
2160 Zion Church Road
Broadway, VA

kauffmansincolombia
@gmail.com

We're on the Web!

See us at:
kauffmanhome.net

The Gospel of Peace, Continued

people numb to it. It simply becomes everyday news to hear about so-and-so being kidnapped or killed or x number of soldiers dying in such-and-such a town.

3. It's actually hard to find out the truth of what's happening. One of Justapaz's projects is to officially document cases of human rights abuses because most people are afraid to talk. Some of the more horrifying acts of violence are never covered by the media, and even fewer are actually investigated by the police.

In a recent sermon on the gospel of peace, Aaron made the point that it is only through acts of sacrificial love that

cycles of violence can truly come to an end. He asked the congregation what would happen if Christians in Colombia would unite in prayer and brainstorm ways to actively love their enemies the way Jesus taught us. "Radical change!" one person called out from the congregation.

May 21 and 22 there is an opportunity for Colombians and North Americans to come together in just such a way. Justapaz and Witness for Peace are cosponsoring an event called "Days of Prayer and Action for Peace in Colombia." If your congregation would like to participate, find out more at <http://peace.mennolink.org>.

In Focus: Childhood with a Purpose Project

La Mesa Mennonite Church is launching a new project that we are very enthusiastic about. The goal is to minister to women and children in marginalized neighborhoods who are overlooked by other churches and the government. The program will seek to minister to their physical and spiritual needs "through the creation of children's centers of nutritional reinforcement, hygiene, and community spiritual support," according to the mission statement.

Initially, the church hopes to open three centers to serve the approximate 130 children in these overlooked neighborhoods. The church will expand its current ministry of providing school kits by adding health kits as well, something Zion Mennonite's Sunday school program is currently raising money for. Laura will have a key role in putting together the health kits and designing health workshops for families.

Eventually the church hopes to train five women from each neighborhood to be in charge of the centers. *Please pray for us as we collaborate with this budding project.*

Understanding Colombian Culture, Continued

Hot-climate cultures are relationship based, expressive, flexible with time and schedules, and more group oriented. Cold-climate cultures are efficient, rationalistic, structured around the clock, and more individualistic. These are overgeneralizations, and not all cultures fit neatly into these categories, but they do help us understand some basic differences.

The warmth of Colombian culture comes through in greetings and hospitality. When meet someone you know on the street, you greet the person with a handshake and a kiss on the cheek (unless two men are greeting each other), ask how they are doing, and then repeat the handshake and kiss to say goodbye, even if the whole exchange takes less than a minute. When invited

to get something to eat or drink, you know the person who invited will pay. And there is always room for one more around a table or in a taxi.

We also see hot-climate characteristics in the Colombian attitude toward time. In many ways, they are more punctual than we anticipated. Church and school always start right on time. But special events at school always start later than the appointed hour, with people rushing around to pull together last minute details. Other times guest speakers show up unannounced and the school halts classes to welcome them.

Understanding another culture is one thing. Adapting is another. Of course we're still in the midst of that process, but grateful for what we're learning.