

COLOMBIA PARTNERS TO VISIT NORTHWEST REGION

Partners to meet with United Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ Annual and Regional Meetings



Xiomara Cintron-Garcia serves with the Christian Centre for Justice, Peace and Nonviolent Action (Justapaz), Bogota, Colombia.



Pablo Moreno is a Baptist minister and the Rector of the Baptist University and Seminary in Cali and is the National Coordinator of the CEDECOL Peace Commission since 2010.

Two peace and justice Global Mission Partners from Colombia will be guests at the 2024 spring gatherings of the United Church of Christ Pacific Northwest Conference and the Northern Lights Region of the Disciples of Christ. The UCC Annual Meeting will be held in Seattle April 28-30, 2024 and the Disciples of Christ Northern Lights Regional Assembly is in Wenatchee May 3-5, 2024 .

Pablo Moreno and Xiomara Cintron-Garcia will be visiting in the Pacific Northwest representing Justapaz and CEDECOL, two important peace, justice and human rights organizations in Colombia They'll provide information about their efforts to help establish peace, justice and human rights in Columbia and the renewed efforts to bring new life and revitalize the Colombia Peace Accords process adopted by a vote of the people in 2016. Implementation of the those Accords has languished under the leadership of former President Iván Duque. With the election of Gustavo Petro in 2022, peace organizations across Colombia are expressing new hope about revitalizing the Accords.

Their visit is coordinated by the joint Global Ministries Committee of the UCC Conference and Disciples' North Lights Region. The Region and Conference both voted to establish partnership relationships with Justapaz and CEDECOL as we accompany them on their journey as they serve as important voices of faith in the peace movement in Colombia.

Xiomara and her husband, Alex Maldonado, were both appointed by Global Ministries to serve as mission co-workers in Colombia and currently live in Bogota.

Xiomara's work with Justapaz is in the area of "Mujer y Paz" (Women and Peace) where she helps women from churches, communities and socio-ecclesial organizations to develop and build a peace

making processes. Along with the women, Mujer y Paz helps develop initiatives that guarantee their participation in different social and political scenarios within the framework of the UN 1325 Resolution, from a peace building perspective.

She also supports women's political advocacy on rural territories with a gender perspective concurring with the 2016 Peace Accord. In that role she promotes and witnesses dialogues for reconciliation between diverse women victims of Colombia's armed conflict. Lastly, the area acts on making visible the process of participation and leadership of women in instances of peace building and human rights concerns in the territories.

You can learn more about their work in Colombia on YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_p-ITiQNDV8&t=41s

PABLO MORENO

Pablo Moreno has been a professor at the Universidad Bautista de Cali, Colombia for the past 30 years. From this institution he has participated in the promotion and construction of peace since 2006 as a teacher of the Biblical School of Training for Peace. In 2009 he was elected Director of the Peace Commission of the Evangelical Council of Colombia, which brings together 70% of Protestant churches and denominations in Colombia.

From the direction of the Commission he has promoted several programs: Churches sanctuaries of peace, support network for women victims of the conflict, School of Bible training for peace and the program of investigation and advocacy for the victims of the conflict in Colombia. During the 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC, we participated in the revision of the agreement so that the recognition of church victims was specifically included and the participation of churches and the interreligious sector in future conversations with other armed groups was allowed. Today we participate as part of the National Dialogue Table with the ELN. Our purpose has always been to support peace-building efforts with other social organizations that have as their goal reconciliation in our country, that's why we have been active in non-governmental organization tables and with the Catholic Church.

HOST FAMILIES AND HOMES SOUGHT

The Global Ministries is inviting area churches of the Conference and Region to provide opportunities for visits and tours. Pablo and Xiomara will travel together or separately to maximize your chance to learn up close and personal what is happening in Colombia as well as to share what supports justice and peace in your area.

Pablo and Xiomara will arrive in Seattle on April 22. They will be in the Western Washington area from Tuesday (April 22), Wednesday (April 23), Thursday (April 24). They will be at the Annual UCC Conference at Plymouth UCC Seattle April 26-28. We are looking for hosts, transportation and Spanish translators.

They will travel to Central/ Eastern Washington Monday (April 29), Tuesday (April 30) and Wednesday (May 1) before heading to the Northern Lights Regional Assembly May 3-5 in Wenatchee, WA. We anticipate they might travel to the Tri Cities Area Monday April 29, to Spokane/Palouse area Tuesday April 30, towards Central Washington Wednesday May 1. This could change depending upon invitation.

UCC/ DOC Global Missions Committee would like to encourage you to offer your hospitality to Pablo and Xiomara. This is different from an iteration visit, though donations to Global Ministries are appreciated. Your church or one near you in our Disciples Region and UCC Conference should request early to host these important guests as available times are limited.

The visits will be coordinated by the Logistics Team; please contact Ruth for more information.

Contact person: Ruth Brandon 425-220-2476; arembe@mac.com

WHY BE IN PARTNERSHIP AND ACCOMPANY COLOMBIA?

"Your presence has allowed us to be here in our village and be alive. You give us hope!"

- In 2006, U.S. assistance to Colombia amounted to an estimated USD \$728 million, approximately 80% of which was military and police assistance.
 - At least 25,000 people were forcibly "disappeared" in Colombia.
 - More than 5.7 million people internally displaced.
 - Syria: 6.5 million people displaced; Colombia: 5.7 million; Democratic Republic of Congo: 2.9 million; Sudan: 2.4 million.
 - More than 27,000 people have been kidnapped, mainly by guerrillas.
 - Guerrillas kidnapped 25,482; paramilitary groups kidnapped 2,541.
 - More than 11,700 people killed in 1,982 massacres largely perpetrated by paramilitary groups.
 - Over 256,000 people newly displaced in 2012.
 - More than 16,800 people displaced in mass displacements in 2013. Of those, 73 percent were Afro-Colombian or indigenous.
 - 359 people wounded or killed by landmines in 2013. 169 people were registered as forcibly disappeared in 2013. Of those, 10 were found dead; 36 were found alive; 123 remain missing.
 - 26 union members assassinated in 2013. 78 human rights defenders assassinated in 2013.
- [Statistics by Amnesty International and Latin American Working Group.]