



PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH (U.S.A)

COLOMBIA
ACCOMPANIMENT PROGRAM
MARCH 28 – APRIL 4, 2010

1. PROGRAM DECLARATION

Romans 12:2 “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

During Holy Week, 2010, thirty members of the Presbyterian Church of Colombia, the Presbyterian Church (USA), and partners of the Accompaniment program gathered in Barranquilla, Colombia on the campus of the Reformed University to evaluate the Presbyterian Accompaniment Program for Peace and make plans together for the future. We read evaluations from dozens of accompaniers and participants in all three presbyteries of the church in Colombia, as well as partner organizations including ANDESCOL and CEDERHNOS. Those evaluations were extremely positive, offering helpful suggestions to improve our work.

We listened to one another, studied together, and visited the communities of Pital de Megua and Villa Blanca. We shared meals and stories with one another, for the future, and developed plans to improve and guide our common work.

Most importantly, we studied scripture with one another and became convinced, once again, that God is our accompanier in this work. We believe that accompaniment is among the highest of callings in the Church, and we are grateful to God for having been called to this task at this moment in history.

The expansion of international investments and Free Trade Agreements in Colombia, the use of Colombian military bases by the U.S. Army, ecological destruction across the country, and the continuing pressures of the drug trade are all underlying causes for the growing crisis of internally displaced refugees. Concerns such as these, combined with continued Human Rights abuses, heighten the need for us to recommit to the work of accompaniment.

Common themes emerged and grounded our thinking throughout the week:

- Though the number of threats against leaders in the IPC and its partner organizations has lessened dramatically, in subtle and nuanced ways the Human Rights situation is no better, and may even be worse, than it was when we started.
- Our work needs to expand dramatically to include 1) a stronger presence of accompaniers in the Uraba and Central Presbyteries, and 2) Colombians who travel to the United States to work in education and advocacy.
- It is the work of the Diaconia Program of the IPC to “accompany” communities at risk in Colombia, at all levels of the church and in its partner relationships in communities of displaced persons.
- The role of the Accompaniment Program is to respond to specific requests of the Diaconia Committees of the three Presbyteries as they carry out their work.
- The Accompaniment Program must place a high priority on political advocacy in both the U.S.

and Colombia, working to create good policies and assure that they are carried out.

In light of the current context in our two countries, our positive working relationship over the past five year, the overwhelmingly positive responses to the evaluation, and our conviction that God is calling us to continue the partnership, we commit ourselves to continue the work of the Presbyterian Accompaniment Program for Peace.

We are partners in Christ. We have learned from our work together to trust one another and to trust that God is present with us in our work. Together, we have developed the following “Principles that Guide the Work of the Presbyterian Accompaniment Program for Peace.”

2. PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE THE ACCOMPANIMENT PROGRAM

What has made the Accompaniment Program unique has been our shared commitment to:

1. stand against violence,
2. work for the protection of Human Rights, and
3. attempt to create a culture of peace in our communities, our nations and the world.

Our effort has always been to help create a circle of protection for the IPC and its ministry partners through the accompaniment of the PC(USA). The IPC continues to show great courage in the above three areas. That accompaniment has extended to other church and secular organizations and networks that are also committed to this work, but always in support of strengthening the IPC’s presence and courage as it carries out these efforts.

Our understanding of accompaniment has broadened as the situation has changed, but we continue to believe that our primary role is to provide encouragement, support and protection for the IPC for as long as the three goals above continue to be a priority among its many objectives and challenges.

The U.S. Accompaniers’ primary role is to accompany the IPC’s efforts as it carries out its agenda as a church committed to peace and nonviolence in the areas listed below. Churches in Colombia should be made aware of these priorities, and should know that they can access the attention of accompaniers for the tasks mentioned. Accompaniers should come prepared to prioritize work related to these five concerns during their time in Colombia, at the direction of the IPC.

1. Protection for those who are doing Human Rights work that may put them at risk, both within the church, and in human rights circles in which the Church moves.
2. Support of the IPC’s own efforts to accompany those in displaced communities in Uraba, the North Coast, and Central Presbytery.
3. Support for the work of Political Advocacy within Colombia, particularly in (but not limited to) Government offices and embassies in Presbiterio Central.
4. Support for the churches’ efforts to “build a culture of peace” in the broader culture through Diaconia, and through its efforts to do conflict resolution work within the churches.

5. Work to energize the growing circle of Accompaniers in the United States on political advocacy work with the US Congress and administration regarding closing U.S. bases in Colombia, lowering military aid, raising development aid, and supporting land reform for Colombia's internally displaced population. Continue the work of education in churches and community organizations.

3. PLAN OF ACTION

In order to improve the program's work, the following actions have been planned for 2010 – 2011:

1. **Promotion of the program within the presbyteries and local churches of the IPC, and consultation on needs for accompaniment:** the diaconia office in coordination with the presbytery committees will carry out this task, with the goal of clarifying and prioritizing the needs of each presbytery for focused support from the program.
2. **Resource packet on political advocacy:** seek and organize resources from different offices of the PCUSA that provide a biblical or theological base for understanding the role of political advocacy in the church.
3. **Urgent action request protocol:** Elaboration of a protocol which indicates the steps to follow and people to contact when the IPC identifies a case which requires urgent action, to enable effective support from the offices of the church in the U.S.
4. **Clarify lines of communication:** create a diagram of two-way communication between U.S. and Colombian partners.
5. **Create a document of ethical norms for accompanier communications:** Put together a list of ethical guidelines that each U.S. accompanier should have in mind when sending information obtained through the process of accompanying the IPC.
6. **Create accompanier profiles:** upon learning the priority needs of the IPC for accompaniment program support, identify profiles and characteristics of accompaniers who can provide support in these areas. This does not exclude the participation of accompaniers who do not fit a particular profile.
7. **Preparation in the U.S.A. according to preferred profiles:** Incorporate the created profiles into the accompanier recruitment, discernment, and preparation process.
8. **Virtual Meeting:** Via the internet, a time for a virtual meeting of all program participants will be established, in order to share experiences related to the program.
9. **Two accompaniment experiences per IPC presbytery and a Colombian to the U.S.A. (annually):** As a minimum, each of the IPC's three presbyteries should receive at least two accompaniment visits per year, and each year one or more Colombians should travel to the U.S.A. to share the experiences of the IPC in its work to promote life.
10. **Connection with the Mission Network:** Increase and improve contact between the accompaniment program and the Colombia Mission Network, which also includes the IPC and the four U.S. presbyteries with Colombian partnerships.
11. **Creation of an urgent response group:** Compile a list of U.S. accompaniers who would be willing to come to Colombia immediately in case of emergency.

12. **Organize a binational editorial group for the informational newsletter, and elaborate publication of the newsletter every three months:** Create an editorial team from both churches to edit a trimestral accompaniment program newsletter, to make known program work and advances and share information about political advocacy undertaken in the U.S. and Colombia.
13. **Program history book:** Design a book that compiles the experiences of accompaniers and the IPC during the first five years of the accompaniment program's existence.
14. **Study the proposal regarding IPC political advocacy with the Colombian government:** The IPC should study the possibilities of establishing an advocacy office in the church, perhaps with counsel from the PCUSA Washington Office.
15. **Program publicity pamphlet:** Create a booklet which gives general information about the program, its theological foundations, results obtained, and dreams for the future.

4. WORK TIMELINE

TASK	APPROXIMATE DATE OF COMPLETION	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES
Resource packet on political advocacy	May 15	Mark & Cathy
Naming the new U.S. program coordination team	May 15	PPF
Program publicity pamphlet	May 30 (before PCUSA GA 2010)	María Arroyo, Milton, Tom, German, Sarah, Diego
Promotion of the program within the presbyteries and local churches of the IPC, and consultation on needs for accompaniment	May 30	IPC diaconía office and presbytery committees
Create a document of ethical norms for accompanier communications	May 30	U.S. coordinators and IPC diaconia office
Create accompanier profiles	May 30	U.S. coordinators
Organize a binational editorial group for the informational newsletter	May 30	U.S. coordinators and IPC diaconia office
Connection with the Mission Network	May 30	Robert Leslie
Clarify lines of communication	May 30	U.S. coordinators and IPC diaconia office
Urgent action request protocol	June 30	Group designated by PPF & IPC
Elaboration of an activity calendar which prioritizes accompaniment needs	June 30	IPC diaconía office and presbytery committees
Study the proposal regarding IPC political advocacy with the Colombian government	Next meeting of the IPC synod council	IPC Synod
Publication of the first newsletter	August 30	Binational editorial group
Preparation in the U.S.A. according to preferred profiles	September 30	U.S. coordinators
Creation of an urgent response group	September 30	
Virtual Meeting	September 30	U.S. coordinators and IPC diaconia office
Two accompaniment experiences per IPC presbytery and a Colombian to the U.S.A.	2011	
Program history book	2011	Anne, Linda y someone from the IPC

Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia – Oficina Nacional de Diaconía

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) – Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, World Mission, Colombia Accompaniment Program