

September 2010

Dear Covenant Church Family and Friends,

Karen Hallberg and Kim Crawford, Covenant World Mission Mission Mobilization and Connection directors, Becca Slomiany, ECC Executive board member (and Gary's sister), and Dave Scherrer, Pastor from Christ Community Covenant Church of Arvada, CO, were the members of the Vision Trip 2010. They were able to experience and be exposed to the Covenant in Barranquilla, San Carlos, Monteria, Bogota and Medellin. Many good conversations took place with Colombian leaders as to how to deepen partnerships and how to partner further.

VISION TRIPS are times to meet different people and hear who they are and what they are about. While in Medellin the Vision Trippers attended three different church services, visited Children's ministry sites, Church sites, City government-Covenant Church partnerships, spoke to Covenant women leaders, ate great Antioquian food, rode the Medellin Metro train and the Medellin Cable Metro (Gondola), and enjoyed great weather. They got up to the El Pinar Santo Domingo Church plant by riding the Metro Train, the Metro Cable, a Bus and walked 1 kilometer.

SAN CARLOS, MONTERIA, CORDOBA was the first of the "hot spots" where the VISION TEAM traveled. Leaving on a 6:00 am flight, arriving at 7:00 am, visiting fincas, Covenant World Relief projects, the new home town of the recently retired Colombian president, seeing many pigs, hearing the hearts and visions of the most remote Covenant pastors and church leaders was what filled up the morning. The afternoon was spent seeing the San Carlos Let's Be Friends Community Center property, (a vision of the Colombia Covenant Youth and the Shekinah Glory Covenant Church), traveling to Monteria to visit the Central Covenant Church, the Light of Christ Covenant Church (located in the largest refugee neighborhood in Colombia). By the end of the day everyone was ready for supper that was shared with the Barrientos brothers (Covenant pastors and leaders) and their wives and the Barrera brothers, our drivers for the day. It was a good day in a very hot spot (temps in the high nineties all day).

BARRANQUILLA was quite the good experience for the VISION TRIP team members. It impressed the team to see what God is doing through the four pastors and four Covenant churches and four Covenant schools with the fewest resources of any Colombian Churches. For instance, in the Paradise neighborhood Covenant Church, they have over 150 students in the elementary school, serve 130 lunches each day to elderly people from the neighborhood, work with a leadership team of 25 young adults, have started the Master's Workshop to employ the youth and to help support the church ministries, and are trying to pay the pastor, Jesus, a minimum salary. Each of the pastors and churches have stories worthy of telling and hearing and as the Vision Team spent time and listened to the hearts of the pastors, they were proud to call these servants of Jesus their brothers and sisters in Christ.

BOGOTA always surprises the teams that visit. The weather is cool, the people are many and the city goes on forever. The Covenant of Colombia is very present in the city in its many ways of reaching out to those who are desperate to improve their quality of life. Potosi Christian School, Project Hope, Bethlehem Foundation, Covenant Foundation, Education Foundation, Rehab programs, Villa Ester Women's Rehab – the list goes on and on. Not only that, but the only Norwegian missionaries right now in the world are located in Bogota and the Covenant of Colombia and our Covenant Mission is blessed to have them as partners.

Love, Gary and Mary Lou Sander

Check out the photos of this trip under the blog at www.pactocol.org.