

REFLECTIONS FROM PAST TRIPS



“A life experience that opens your eyes, your mind and your heart to God’s hands creating mutual ministry in the world.” – Dr. Alan and Pam Stewart

“This trip to Cambodia was an opportunity of a lifetime to see firsthand the work of my church that I’ve spent a lifetime hearing about. It was a memorable gift to get to befriend the very people who are doing things that bring them hope and joy because of a few resources we’ve shared along the way.” – Nancy Baden



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

THE CHURCH

The Lutheran churches of Latin America and the Caribbean have heard the cry of the poor. A minority denomination in an overwhelmingly Roman Catholic region, these churches have responded to that cry with a holistic ministry that serves the community and blends word and sacrament with advocacy and ministry in education, human rights, migrant relief, gender and economic justice, and opposition to human trafficking.

The Colombian civil war was one of the longest running in world history, lasting from 1964 until a peace agreement was signed in 2016. It left more than 600,000 people dead and displaced nearly 1 in 10 Colombians. The war was fueled by social inequality, and Colombia remains one of the most inequitable countries in the world. The pandemic worsened the situation: currently 39% of the population lives in poverty, with rates even higher in rural areas and among Indigenous groups, Afro-Colombians, migrants and victims of conflict.

This is the climate in which the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (Iglesia Evangélica Luterana de Colombia or IELCO) shares the gospel of Christ. Made up of 21 congregations and nearly 2,000 members, the church serves its communities through development and outreach projects, evangelism programs and schools. IELCO also plays a vital role in the national peace dialogue process, promoting understanding between different groups and conflicting parties.

THE OPPORTUNITY

The ELCA accompanies IELCO with grants, companion synod relationships and personnel in response to the unique needs of its communities. In the wake of the 50-year civil war we are walking with the IELCO as it promotes the protection and teaching of human rights and works toward reconciliation and peace through workshops on conflict resolution, knowing and exercising your rights, and protection of children's rights. In response to rising sexual and gender-based violence suffered by children, adolescents and women, we are partnering on economic development for women in rural areas and raising their awareness of their rights. Located along a key migrant route, IELCO has felt the impact of the recent influx of displaced Venezuelans, and the ELCA supports the church in its ministry with migrants and immigrants. Through schools and evangelism programs, we work together to build up leaders and communities of the global Lutheran church.

YOUR INVITATION

Join us on a trip to Colombia to see God's work firsthand. You will experience development projects in vulnerable communities and with refugees, stories of church sustainability and empowerment, a Lutheran school, and the church's involvement in the national peace and reconciliation process. You will find community in our siblings in Christ, rejuvenate your vision for the church and witness the powerful impact of companion relationships at work in the world.



TENTATIVE TRIP ITINERARY: OCT. 12-19, 2024

- Oct. 12** Depart from the U.S. (departure airport TBD), arrive in Bogotá.

- Oct. 13** Worship at IELCO congregations.

- Oct. 14** Meet with IELCO bishop and leaders to learn about the church's mission and ministry in Colombia. Visit the La Gracia building, a success story in church sustainability, and go sightseeing in Bogotá.

- Oct. 15** Group 1: Fly to Yopal. Visit church ministries, a Lutheran school, and outreach and development projects in vulnerable communities. Travel by car to the town of Paz de Ariporo for the night.
Group 2: Fly to Bucaramanga. Visit outreach and development projects in vulnerable communities.

- Oct. 16** Group 1: Visit church ministries with vulnerable communities and refugees. Return to Yopal by car and fly back to Bogotá.
Group 2: Visit church ministries and outreach and development projects. Fly back to Bogotá.

- Oct. 17** Learn about the IELCO's participation in the national peace dialogue processes, the church's advocacy work and that of the Interethnic Dialogue Table. Hear from an intercultural, interracial panel on peace-building and reconciliation.

- Oct. 18** Visit Vid Verdadera, a ministry serving people with disabilities and a success story of church empowerment and sustainability. Enjoy a group lunch, sightseeing and free time in Bogotá.

- Oct. 19** Depart from Bogotá, arrive back in the U.S.

COST PER PERSON: \$3,000

This cost includes international airfare, lodging, transportation and food for eight days of travel. All overnight stays will be in hotels. The cost does not include domestic transportation to/from the departure airport, personal extended stays, personal purchases or alcohol.

REGISTRATION

To register or for more information, please contact Jennifer Kenyeri, manager of development events, at Jennifer.Kenyeri@elca.org or 773-380-2872. The trip will involve long road trips, lake ferry, long periods of walking and limited access for those with mobility challenges.