

was really attending the worship services? When might some dangerous incident occur? Would our children be secure in this church? Besides, who said that this type of intervention is the work of the church? Would it not be better to stick to something more traditional instead of things that are so dangerous and even political?

With this burden, the committee asked for an appointment with the governing council of the church, composed of five marvelous women at that time. Committee members expressed their doubts and their hesitations and asked for advice from the council.

These five women listened carefully and then, with the clarity of the Holy Spirit, said: "In spite of the doubts that have taken place in the church, this is from the Lord. This is precisely what

the church should do. With these people that have arrived at the church, we have had the privilege of meeting the Lord Jesus Christ, who has come in those who are displaced, handicapped, persecuted, hungry, and incarcerated. These events have renewed the church and permitted us to have a privileged and unequalled ministry. What you have done has been very good." The members of the Justice and Peace Committee left that meeting with renewed strength and new energy.

The work continues. Many of the people who have come to our church would be able to hate some or all sides of the current conflict: the guerrillas, the paramilitaries, the armed forces. Some may have participated in one of these groups in the past.

Some come with a great deal of distrust towards others in the church. But in the new community of Jesus, they have learned to forgive. Around the Lord's table, they make real the words of Ephesians 2:14—"Christ is our peace. He made the Jews and the Gentiles one single people, destroyed the wall of separation, and annulled in his own body the enmity that existed."

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Feeding the hungry is a matter of justice

by Jonathan Stucky

When Jesus was faced with 5,000 hungry people in the desert, he found them something to eat through a miracle. Something similar has happened in the Teusaquillo Mennonite Church in Bogotá, Colombia.

Bread and Life is a ministry that arose from the concern several of us had about hunger in our country. More than 40% of Colombians live in poverty and have little to eat, many as the result of being internally displaced by the armed conflicts in many areas.

In 2005, three of us—Emilio, who had been forced to flee from his home in an outlying city by paramilitary forces; Teresa, an elderly woman with a burden for the hungry; and I visited a small project begun by a foreign student in Bogotá. This student would cook 20 meals once a week and go out and share them with the homeless she saw in the street. However, she was leaving the country soon.

We three decided we wanted to continue this ministry. Teresa said, "I

will give \$15 dollars; let's cook some meals." So the next Saturday we made 30 meals, prayed for them, and went to the streets. The next day we shared with the church community what we had done, and by the following Saturday we again had money to cook more meals—plus other people to help.

We have never stopped. Today we make 300 to 400 meals each week and have 20 to 25 volunteers, many of whom have been internally displaced or are unemployed and find in this activity a way of feeling useful again.

As this program developed, our concern about reaching other populations also grew. We wanted to extend the program to other vulnerable communities. So when Carmenza, a woman from church told me she felt strongly about working with children, we decided to begin another ministry to feed children. She had worked for Habitat for Humanity and knew people in a neighborhood that is part of the Bogotá "misery belts." She and I visited that neighborhood, where we found extreme poverty and lots of children critically undernourished.

We decided to rent a house in the neighborhood. We only had enough money for two months' rent, but we felt God was leading us there. Again we began experiencing God's faithfulness: someone gave us some chairs, others tables, pots, plates—everything we needed for the work. In mid-2006 we began with 30 children ages 3-14. Today we have two feeding programs for children that feed 120 on a daily basis. We purchased one of the houses and we continue to feed around 400 homeless people every weekend.

Food is the right of every human being. God is generous and provides enough for everyone. The ministry of Bread and Life is our affirmation that the image of God is in every person and must be protected. Feeding the hungry is not a matter of charity; it's a matter of justice.

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