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PRESS RELEASE

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Colombian Church Leaders Share Stories of Building Peace Amidst War

BOGOTÁ, Colombia – Two Colombian church leaders will be touring churches and schools in the Eastern United States from April 28 to May 8, sharing their inspiring testimony of how churches in Colombia are struggling to faithfully follow the path of peace in the midst of a brutal armed conflict.

Daniel Herrera Viera is a member of the Christian Church, Integral Fountain of Salvation that is affiliated with the Association of Evangelical Caribbean Churches and belongs to the Council of Evangelical and Protestant Churches of Colombia, CEDECOL. He serves as a minister, and community leader, helping to organize and support members of his congregation. Olivia González serves as a representative on CEDECOL's *Commission for Life and Peace*, in Northern Santander, Colombia. Both are participants in the documentation and advocacy project of JustaPaz, an MCC partner in Colombia.

The tour serves as a promotion for the JustaPaz document, "A Prophetic Call", (mcc.org/us/Washington/prophetic_call.pdf) on violations of human rights against church leaders and communities, as well as preparation for the campaign Days of Prayer and Action for Peace in Colombia.

Colombia has been named the "worst humanitarian calamity" in the Western Hemisphere by the United Nations, and is home to world's second largest internally displaced population.

Over the last 40 years, the armed conflict has ravaged Colombia, leaving the civilian population most affected as they are caught in the crossfire of the various armed groups vying for land and power in the Andean country. Churches have not been excluded from the brutality. Olivia and Daniel will share their stories and views on the Colombian reality, United States foreign policy and how U.S.-backed "Plan Colombia" has exacerbated the violence.

U.S. churches have an important role to play in constructing a peaceful Colombia. Particularly at this crucial time, as the U.S. Congress begins debating increased military funding for Colombia, U.S. churches are called upon to show support for their Colombian brothers and sisters living the gospel and sowing seeds of peace in a land of conflict.

For information on dates and times of speaking events, please contact Grant Rissler, GrantRissler@mcc.org or Millie Nafziger, MildredNafziger@mcc.org. Visit www.mcc.org/colombia to find more information on Colombia and how to get involved.