

# NEWSLETTER

## INSTITUTO DE ESTUDIOS E INVESTIGACIÓN INTERCULTURAL, A.C.

### EDITORIAL

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Mt. 5:9, NRSV).

Jesus highlighted the labor of “peacemakers,” and we recognize how important, yet difficult, this work is each and every day. The level of violence in our home, Mexico, receives international news coverage. In recent days, many people called for an end to this violence through mass protests and marches. We would like to think that if everyone united, if millions of people marched in the streets, we could solve this problem. However, this is not our reality: violence is an exceedingly complex phenomenon. The capitalist dream is based on a predatory system where the legalized stripping of underdeveloped countries by prosperous nations generates a profound distance between the rich and the poor. Sewing instability in poor nations is also profitable; sooner or later these countries will accept foreign military intervention to help bring “order” to their unstable country. Criminal networks have taken advantage of the increased number of migrants to our northern neighbor through extortion and murder...how shameful! Opulence, prestige and extravagance have become the priority of politicians in poor countries. They sell their conscience for money, allowing rhetoric to disguise foreign political interests and permitting criminal networks to infiltrate the highest levels of government.

Working for peace has enormous power to redefine life, to make us rethink the world, to instill new values in our hearts and minds: values that preserve life and bring dignity to all people. But to do this, peacemaking must permeate all areas of our existence. We work for peace when we promote respect of different religious preferences and cultural diversity. We work for peace when we promote a nonaggressive relationship with the earth, when we learn to cultivate crops without the use of chemicals. We work for peace when we practice environmental responsibility. In the end, working for peace is a multi-faceted labor.

In INESIN, A. C., we humbly count ourselves among those working for peace.

We send warm greetings to our friends, associates and co-parts and present the following overview of our activities between October 2010 and May 2011.

Centro de Estudios Ecuménicos (CEE)  
 Centro Nacional de Apoyo a las Misiones Indígenas (CENAMI)  
 Comisión de Apoyo a la Unidad y Reconciliación Comunitaria (CORECO)  
 Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)  
 Comisión Diocesana de Mujeres (CODIMUJ)  
 Departamento de Misión e Intercambio de las Iglesias Reformadas de Suiza (DM)  
 Mensen Met een Missie (MMM)  
 Ministerios Globales de las Iglesias Unidas de Cristo y Discípulos de Cristo (MG)  
 Seminario Intercultural Mayense (SIM)

### SPECIAL NOTE

On April 9, 2011, our board chair, Felipe de Jesús Toussaint Loera, passed away after suffering a cardiac arrest. We lament this great loss.

At the time of his death, Felipe Toussaint served as chair of the board for Instituto *de Estudios e Investigación Intercultural, A. C. (INESIN)*, director of *Consejo para la Unidad y la Reconciliación Comunitaria, A. C. (CORECO)*, and board member of *Centro de Derechos Humanos “Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas”, A. C. (FRAYBA)*.

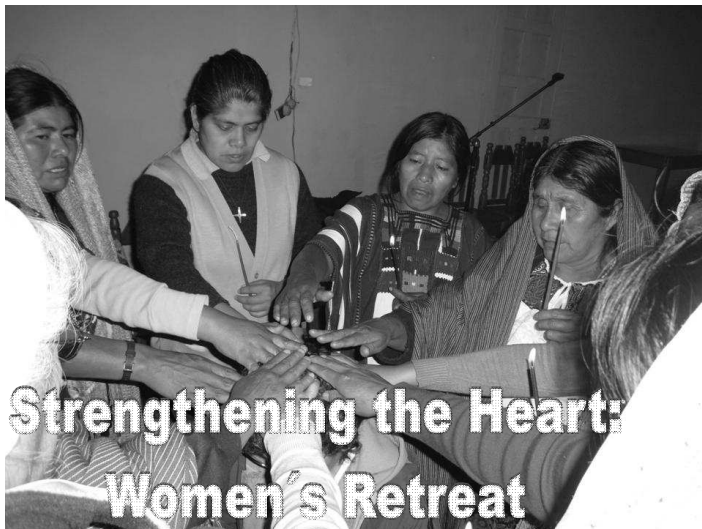
We recognize and are grateful to Felipe Toussaint for his significant contribution to the work of peace and reconciliation in this community.

† Rest in peace.

## THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY

A third round of students graduated from our *Diplomado en Lectura Pastoral de la Biblia* (Pastoral Readings of the Bible course), with the final session held between October 8 and 10, 2010.

From November 8-12, 2010, we coordinated the *Encuentro Ecuménico de Teología India Mayense* (Ecumenical Conference on Indigenous Mayan Theology), in Dzan, Yucatán, with around 400 participants (INESIN-Coordinación Regional de Teología India Mayense).



From January 12-14 we held a retreat focusing on strengthening the heart in the parish of Altamirano with 130 participants. We offered a similar workshop for indigenous Tzeltal women from six parishes between March 17-19 in Tenejapa. One hundred and fifteen women participated.

Our fourth *Diplomado en Lectura Pastoral de la Biblia* began on January 21-23, 2011. Our now-deceased partner, Felipe Toussaint, was one of the facilitators. Fifteen people participated.

The *Reunión Ecuménica de Mujeres* (Women's Ecumenical Conference) took place on February 1, with 13 women participating (INESIN-CODIMUJ-SIM).

Eréndira Villanueva Sánchez and Ernesto Martín Guerrero Zavala participated in the *Visita Académica* (Academic Visit) held in Mexico City between February 8-11 (DM-CTM).

Concurrent with the *Visita Académica*, INESIN welcomed Professor Pierre Bühler who facilitated the workshop "*Lecturas Diversas de la Biblia, Introducción a La Hermenéutica*" (Diverse Readings of the Bible: Introduction to hermeneutics), from February 11-13 (INESIN-DM). Twenty-eight participated. This introductory workshop on hermeneutics was offered as a follow-up session for graduates of *Diplomado en Lectura Pastoral de la Biblia* (INESIN-MCC).

We held a conference entitled "Faith and Humor" at the *Seminario Nazareno Mexicano, A. C.* in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas with Professor Pierre Bühler. Fifteen participated (INESIN-DM).

Eighteen people participated in the third session of our *Diplomado en Acompañamiento Pastoral en Situaciones de Violencia Familiar* (Pastoral Accompaniment in Situations of Domestic Violence course) from February 16-19 (INESIN-DM).

Our project, "*Cuidado y defensa de la Madre Tierra, el agua y el maíz*" (Care and Defense of Mother Earth, Water and Corn, INESIN-MMM), organized two workshops with coordinators from three parishes: Zinacantán, Huixtán and Teopisca. Eight people participated in each workshop, with the first held on March 8 and 9 and the second on May 25 and 26.

On March 16, we held the first 2011 session of the *Grupo Ecuménico y de Análisis de la Realidad* (Ecumenical Analysis Group of Current Reality) with 15 participants from diverse organizations and churches (INESIN-CCM).

From March 22-24, 38 people participated in a follow-up workshop on systematization of indigenous theology in Huixtán (INESIN-CENAMI).

As a compliment to the course on domestic violence prevention, we organized a women's workshop on strengthening the heart. Fourteen participated. (INESIN-DM).

From April 6-8, we held a follow-up workshop for coordinators of indigenous theology in INESIN with 20 participants (INESIN-CENAMI).

On April 16th we held a workshop on positive conflict transformation in Col. Progreso, San Fernando municipality with a Presbyterian congregation. Twenty-five people participated. (INESIN-MCC).



The second session of the *Diplomado en Lectura Pastoral de la Biblia* took place May 6-8 with a total of 15 participants (INESIN-MCC).

From May 17-19, INESIN held a follow-up workshop for graduates of the *Diplomado de Espiritualidad de Teología India* (course on the spirituality of indigenous theology) with 17 participants (INESIN-CENAMI).

During the month of May, we celebrated the *Semana de Oración por la Unidad de Cristianos y Cristianas* (Week of Prayer for Christian Unity) with



various activities. We organized inter confessional services, sporting events and a special interreligious prayer service for peace and unity in Chiapas. This event took place on May 27 in San Cristóbal's *Teatro de la Ciudad*. Three hundred people, including Catholic priests and pastors from a variety of evangelical churches, were present. (INESIN-MCC).

We held six workshops on biblical Hebrew, one each month from December 2010 to May 2011. As a result of this project, we began to translate the book of Ruth into Tzeltal, Tzotzil y Spanish (INESIN-MG). A team of 12 translators is assisting us in this endeavor.

**STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES**

From November 24-30, we organized the *Encuentro Inter Comunitario* (inter-community conference) with 50 representatives from five communities participating in our ecumenical community gardening program (INESIN-CCM-CEE-MG).

In December 2010, Mennonite Agronomist Richard Block joined our Strengthening Communities team. Richard hails from Canada and is serving with INESIN through Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).

On December 18, we facilitated a workshop on ecology and the Bible with youth from the Christian association "El Buen Pastor."

Between December 2010 and February 2011 we presented diplomas to all the families who have participated in our Strengthening Communities program over the last three years. Each community celebrated by inviting their religious and co-op leaders to these celebrations (INESIN-MCC).

Between January and May 2011, we made monthly visits to support the cultivation and consumption of organic vegetables in the following communities:

- San Gregorio, Huixtán
- San Gregorio Chamic, Frontera Comalapa municipality
- Pablo L. Sidar, Chicomuselo municipality
- Pacayal, Bella Vista municipality
- Zapotillo, Porvenir municipality

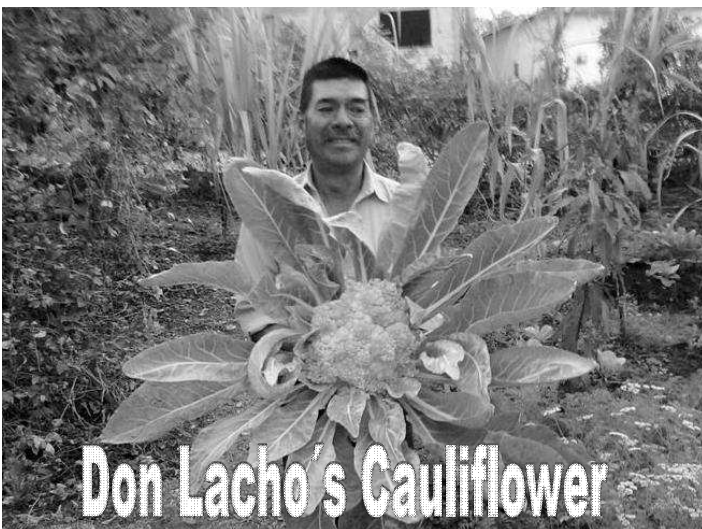


We also added the following two communities to our program upon their request:

- San José La Palma, Frontera Comalapa municipality
- Col. Progreso, San Fernando municipality

We currently have 142 families involved in these 7 communities. They have cultivated around 270 garden beds.

Between April 26-29 we organized a workshop with children from the Christian association "El Buen Pastor." Our theme was "Boys and Girls on the Road with Ruth, the Moabite Migrant." INESIN developed and facilitated the sessions and agro ecological activities (INESIN-DM).



## INSTITUCIONAL CAPACITY-BUILDING

On October 7 and 8, 2010, we attended Mennonite Central Committee's strategic planning workshop for organizations which receive their funds. This event took place in Mexico City (INESIN-MCC).

DM invited INESIN's director Ernesto Martín Guerrero Zavala to attend *Seminario UNITÉ* in Bogotá, Colombia from October 24-30. This provided an important opportunity to connect the work of Latin American civil society with their co-parts in Switzerland.

Jorge Santiago conducted our institutional evaluation on November 29 and 30, 2010.

We hosted a delegation from the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ from December 28-31.

From January 3-10, a delegation from Mennonite Central Committee immersed themselves in our Latin American context and reality. They also helped repaint our facility, Casa INESIN.

From January 11-13, we met with pastors from the United Church of Christ, USA in *El Encanto* estate. This was an important opportunity to review our relationship with sister churches from the Wisconsin and Illinois conferences and to develop concrete proposals for future cooperation.

We received a Swiss delegation of pastors and laity between April 10 and 16. INESIN, along with sister organizations, worked to expose these delegates to our Latin American, and more specifically, Chiapan, context and reality. Concurrent with this visit, we received two computers from the *Departamento de Misión e Intercambio de las Iglesias Reformadas de Suiza*.

From April 29-31 we held the final session of the *Diplomado en Metodologías Populares* (Popular Methodologies course) and graduated 16 students. Anne Roulet, from the *Departamento de Misión e Intercambio de las Iglesias Reformadas de Suiza francófona*, joined us for this final session (INESIN-DM).

On March 29, Coralie Blandenier, a Swiss volunteer, joined us. She assisted us in our library (INESIN-DM).

We finished the construction of INESIN's new apartment. It is comprised of three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a living room, dining room, kitchen and study. This apartment has water, light, telephone and internet service and the profits generated through its rental will be used to advance the work of INESIN. Our sincere thanks to those who contributed individually and to our sister organizations *Departamento de Misión e Intercambio de las Iglesias Reformadas de Suiza* and the United Church of Christ, USA.

Our facility, Casa-INESIN, continues serving as a space for sister organizations and other local groups to rent for meetings and retreats. We offer affordable prices and income generated through this venture provides our organization with a measure of economic support.

## JOINT ENDEVORS

Following the unfortunate death of jTatic Samuel Ruíz on January 24, INESIN joined a variety of organizations in observing his funeral rites. On January 26, we presented the second "jTatic Samuel jCanan Lum" award to recognize the individual and joint work of community and social organizations in Chiapas. The following organizations (by acronym) worked together to organize this event: CORECO, A. C., DESMI, A. C., INESIN, A. C., SERAPAZ, A. C., SIPAZ, CDH FRAYBA, A. C., y CICSAL, A. C.

Around 250 people attended this event and Don Raúl Vera, Bishop of Saltillo, presented the award.

We co-organized SAT Maya (*Escuela de Buscadores de la Verdad Interior*), a collaborative project focusing on personal development in Huixtán from April 28 to May 1. Thirty-five people participated (INESIN-CORECO-EDUPAZ).



## CURRENTLY...

Three organizations (DM-INESIN-SBM [Baptist Seminary of Mexico]) are organizing a *Diplomado en Interculturalidad y Migración* (course on intercultural issues and migration) which will consist of six sessions over the course of two years. This course seeks to prepare pastors and other church leaders to better respond to the challenges facing the migrant community (those passing through Chiapas en route to another destination, those preparing to leave their home community and church as well as returning migrants). The first session took place on July 17 with facilitators Corinne Lanoir and Ariel Corpus. The course location will alternate between INESIN in Chiapas and SBM in Mexico City.