

Rev. Delia Leal receives second Peacemaking honor

*By Elizabeth Lovell Milford
CEDEPCA USA board member*

The Peacemaking Program of the Presbyterian Church (USA) welcomes leaders from around the world to visit the United States and help interpret issues of peace and justice. Since 1984, more than 57 countries have been represented by over 220 International Peacemakers. This year the Rev. Delia Leal, regional coordinator for CEDEPCA's Women's Ministry, is one of 15 International Peacemakers.

Delia also received the award in 2009. She is an ordained Nazarene pastor, currently serving as pastor of a Baptist congregation, Iglesia Bautista "Luz," in Cobán, Alta Verapaz, Guatemala.

Being identified as an international peacemaker, Delia said, "has meant encouraging people to hear us, to get involved, and also to be builders of peace, with actions of justice and goodness, with prayers on behalf of persons who are living in vulnerable conditions." She hopes that those to whom she speaks will "be convinced that peace is the presence of justice, and that with our actions – large or small – we can contribute to closing the gaps of inequality and of injustice."

In September and October, Delia traveled throughout the U.S., along with PC(USA) mission co-worker the Rev. Leslie Vogel, who serves with CEDEPCA's Intercultural Encounters Program. They shared stories of their work and witness to help congregations understand peace and justice concerns around the world. Visits included Louisville, KY; San Antonio and Austin, TX (Mission Presbytery); Sun City and Sun City West, Arizona (Presbytery of

and Sun City West, Arizona (Presbytery of Grand Canyon); as well as Presbyteries of Central Oregon and Des Moines, IA.

Delia's reflections on peacemaking are shaped by a reading of Matthew 20:1-16, which she describes as "a parable that speaks of God's goodness." She notes in this passage, "the Lord of the vineyard is God. God's goodness is revealed by challenging others to also express their goodness towards everyone else . . . [especially to] those who don't have

enough for a life with dignity." Reading this text contextually, she said, calls attention to the many instances, including those in Guatemala, where we must ask "who are

the ones who only work an hour?" and seek to show generosity to them.

This theological approach is a beautiful reflection of a central aspect of the ministries of CEDEPCA, particularly with attention to transforming lives in Guatemala and throughout Central America.



Rev. Leslie Vogel, CEDEPCA mission co-worker, translates for Rev. Delia Leal during their recent speaking tour of the US.

**"...with our actions – large or small – we can contribute to closing the gaps of inequality and of injustice."
—Rev. Delia Leal**

Delia's powerful witness is a gift to CEDEPCA, to partners in the PC(USA), and to the church universal. She challenges us with the reminder that the work of peacemaking is more than just words on a page or even on our lips, reminding us that "we speak about peace, but we must also act with justice."

For more information on Delia and the Peacemaking program, visit the PC(USA) website at:
www.presbyterianmission.org/story/central-american-peacemaker-visit-u-s-fall/

To find out more about Delia's work with Women's Ministry at CEDEPCA, visit the website:
www.cedepca.org/en

CALAS, CEDEPCA team up to offer counseling

By Gwen Wagner
and Sunny Stautz

In Guatemala, protesting powerful politicians or companies who are breaking laws can carry a great deal of risk. That risk isn't just for political issues, but environmental ones as well. People who try to organize their communities to fight water pollution, deforestation and other environmental issues may experience harassment, intimidation, and even death threats.

The "Peacemaking, Climate Justice and Faith in Central America" group from the Presbyterian Church (USA) heard about those experiences firsthand last summer and saw how two groups are offering help and hope.

CEDEPCA's Intercultural Encounters program and CALAS, a non-profit organization focusing on legal rights for indigenous peoples, led visits to rural communities trying to stop chemical extraction mining of metals on their land. (Photo above is of a visit.)

"They were our guides," said the Rev. Leslie Vogel about members of CALAS. "We couldn't have gone into those communities and talked with those people without them."

Vogel, a PC (USA) mission co-worker at CEDEPCA, was one of the facilitators for the Peacemaking trip to Guatemala and Costa Rica. She explained, "As an educational organization, CEDEPCA does not engage in activism or advocacy work; nevertheless, we often accompany and seek to learn from Guatemalans who do."

While in Guatemala, the Peacemaking group visited La Puya, Jalapán, Jalapa, and Santa Rosa, talking with people who had participated in psychosocial (spiritual and emotional) workshops with Ana Paxtor, a member of CEDEPCA's Disaster Ministry team.

In Spanish, the acronym CALAS stands for the Legal-Environmental and Social Action Center of Guatemala. The group, founded in 2000, is located in Guatemala

City. Because the Guatemalan government has not always followed international law, CALAS also works to change Guatemalan political policies.

A happy accident created an informal partnership between CEDEPCA and CALAS.

Dr. Yuri Giovanni Melini, a doctor and environmental activist who is the director at CALAS, was asked to speak to an Intercultural Encounter group about mining issues in Guatemala.

The "happy accident" occurred when Melini arrived on time, but the Intercultural Encounters group was delayed. While Melini waited, he had a chance to talk with coordinators from all four of



CEDEPCA's programs. Vogel said the coordinators sat in on his presentation and "a light bulb came on." The same psychosocial counseling that helps people recover from natural disasters could also work for other human-induced issues that cause stress, anxiety, and depression. CALAS works with people who experience trauma and crisis and they seemed like perfect candidates for that psychosocial training.

CEDEPCA's Disaster Ministry team met with CALAS to identify a pilot community and develop a proposal for workshops. All they needed was funding, and turned to a 30-year CEDEPCA partner, Presbytery of the Peaks in Virginia.

"We shared the proposal because we knew some of their members have identified with mining issues in Guatemala because of mining in their home state of Virginia," said Vogel.

Money for this Disaster Ministry project was incorporated into a larger grant proposal from presbyteries of Peaks and James, Virginia, to the Mid-Atlantic Synod of the PC (USA) (See related stories on finding grants, and reforestation trip.)

Vogel said CALAS helped identify 15 women from five different communities in and around San Rafael las Flores, all impacted by the El Escobal silver mine.

Continued page 3

Counseling, continued from pg 2

As soon as funding was received, Paxtor started the workshops. Afterward, the women trained others in their communities.

The following year, an Intercultural Encounter group from the presbyteries responsible for funding had a chance see what their financial gift had accomplished. They visited the rural areas around La Puya, met with women trained by CEDEPCA, and participated in workshops that expanded the training to men in the communities. (Photo of group at right)

"It was really exciting for them to see visible results," said Vogel. "There continues to be a huge need."

This year, CALAS escorted members of the PC(USA) Peacemaking trip to talk with the same rural groups, which include indigenous Xinka people. Vogel said a woman leader in La Puya's peaceful resistance told them that there aren't enough psychologists to go



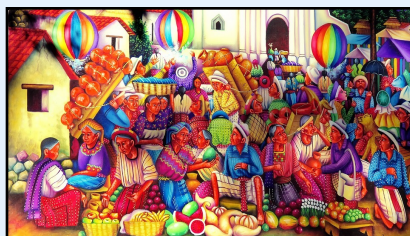
around to help the people involved in the struggle for environmental rights. "It just highlighted how important this (psychosocial) work is," said Vogel.

CEDEPCA USA debuts new mobile-friendly website

CEDEPCA USA has a new website, with more resources now available online. Board member Gwen Wagner donated her time and talent over the summer to create the site, which launched last month. It is now mobile-friendly, meaning you can view it in an easy-to-read format on your tablet or smart phone. Check it out at www.cedepca.us

Some of the website resources now available include:

- back issues of both the print and electronic newsletters
- access to photos from Intercultural Encounter groups
- a downloadable PDF of the CEDEPCA USA brochure
- a CEDEPCA Powerpoint presentation



- viewable videos on the site
- links to related YouTube videos
- a simple way to enroll in Amazon Smile. For every eligible purchase, Amazon donates .5% of the cost to the charity you designate. It's only pennies, but if enough people participate, the pennies add up. See the website for more info.
- multiple ways to donate, via credit card, PayPal or check
- links to the CEDEPCA website for in-depth information on programs

Here's your chance to double your donations

If you haven't donated to CEDEPCA before, please consider giving now—all new donor gifts are being matched, which means your monetary gift will be doubled.

Between now and May of 2018, new donor gifts to CEDEPCA will be matched, thanks to a generous grant from a foundation. The foundation has committed to matching funds up to \$20,000.

You can donate by check, credit card or PayPal. Mail checks to CEDEPCA USA, P.O. Box 920243, Norcross, GA 30010. To use credit card or PayPal, go through the CEDEPCA USA website: www.cedepca.us. Because CEDEPCA USA is a 501(c)(3) organization, your donations are tax-deductible. Email us at: info@cedepca.us for more information.

Stay in touch

Like us on Facebook:
CEDEPCA USA,
CEDEPCA & Casa
Materna Ana Sayre



Find your Intercultural
Encounters group travel
photos on the new
CEDEPCA USA web-
site or on Flickr:
www.flickr.com/photos/cedepca/sets



Scan this code or
sign up at
www.cedepca.us for
our bi-monthly
electronic newsletter



Planting trees provides fertile soil for Creation Care trip

By Mary Jane Winter,
James Presbytery
And Suzanne Reisinger,
Peaks Presbytery



where they have been working since 1992 to train farmers, plant trees, develop nurseries and build fuel-efficient stoves. We spent the day preparing the site, digging holes, and then planting Black Alder seedlings. Black Alder is a fast-growing species of tree well-suited to the mountainous climate. We were joined by community leaders who worked alongside us.

Several days later, our group was high in the mountains (7,700 feet) in a remote Mayan community of Nueva Concepcion, where the clouds closed in as we planted seedlings on steep hillsides with Mayan sisters and brothers of La Fraternidad de Presbiteriales Maya, pictured above, and joined them for lunch. The seedlings for both sites were purchased with funds from the Synod grant.

"The plan was to plant trees, but it became so much more," said Kathleen Murphy, a recent Young Adult Volunteer. "In the cab of a pickup, in the middle of nowhere Guatemala, I started to have a conversation with a man whose language I couldn't speak. He pointed to the livestock that were escorting us down the dirt road and said the Spanish word for each animal. I repeated and then said the English word. We went back and forth, in between smiles and laughter, teaching each other these simple words. Here I was in a foreign country with almost zero vocabulary in the native tongue, and I was able to share a moment with a new friend. This dirty pickup with springs coming out of the seats became a little church that morning where I caught a glimpse of God as Guillermo and I understood one another without having to speak each other's language, sharing our smiles, laughter, and joy."

"When I first heard about an upcoming Intercultural Encounter in Guatemala in which we would be planting trees, I thought, 'Gee, I love plants and gardening. I bet I could do that,'" said Randy Welch of Richmond, VA.

A group of 20 of us from neighboring presbyteries in Virginia—Peaks and James—joined together for a Care of Creation Intercultural Encounter. Our two presbyteries had worked together on a grant for CEDEPCA from the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic. (See related story on finding funding.)

The idea of including reforestation in the Care of Creation trip began with Tom Reisinger, a professional forester in Blacksburg, VA. He worked with Kathy Carpenter, the Peaks group leader pictured above, to find the right organization in Guatemala. Their efforts led to AIR, the Alliance for International Reforestation.

AIR hosted us at our first site in the department of Chimaltenango,

In addition to planting trees, our group brought organic kale seeds for the Disaster Ministry's work with family gardens, because the seeds are difficult to get in Guatemala.

Karen Stanley, a retired pastor and member of our group, realized that while we had brought seeds with us to be planted there, "what was more important were the seeds planted in us." As they grow, those seeds carry the promise of a better, more hopeful future for those engaged in CEDEPCA's ministries.

We came home with a renewed commitment to the work of CEDEPCA, and to the environment as well.

Finding funding

Sometimes finding the money to help CEDEPCA get something done is a matter of research. What funding grants are out there? What are the requirements? Who can apply?

Teresa Auldridge, from Presbytery of the Peaks, VA, is a perfect example of a person inspired by an Intercultural Encounter. When she returned home, she heard about funds that the Synod of Mid-Atlantic had designated for endeavors when two or more presbyteries worked together. To meet that requirement she and Kathy Carpenter reached out to neighboring Presbytery of the James and Mary Jane Winter, who was glad to assist. Together they wrote a grant for funds that were needed by CEDEPCA for the Disaster Ministry and the women's program in Cobán. Over the next several years their collaborative work continued with success. Funds directed to the Disaster Ministry enabled them to work with CALAS, AIR and La Fraternidad. (See related stories)

Has CEDEPCA's ministry inspired you? Are there opportunities in your work, in your school, or in your church's mid-councils that offer grants or matching funds for non-profits? Share your ideas with us! Contact us at info@cedepca.us.