



Seek Peace and Pursue It - Reflections for Lent 2018
Week 1 – 18th February
Written by Sandra Lopez

Disarming hearts

Jesus is an amazing saviour. Even during his arrest, a time of great distress and foreboding, He preserved the Word of God in His heart and in His actions. Until the very end, He continued to teach His disciples the Word of God and revealed God's character through His own behaviour and reaction to what He was going through. Instead of being relieved that His companions were defending Him, or pride in knowing that they were willing to fight for His freedom, He diffused the situation and brought peace to a situation that could have ended in bloodshed. As He healed the slave's ear, He went one step further, and protested what had been done through violence, even though He was innocent.

In Colombia, until last year, there had been bloodshed between Colombians for over 50 years because of the internal conflict perpetrated by left-wing guerrilla groups and right wing paramilitaries. This civil war left over 5 million Colombians internally displaced, over 200,000 dead, and communities living in impoverishment, fear and hopelessness. The Peace Treaty agreement of last year, signed by the Colombian government and the largest rebel group known as the FARC (the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), has put an end to hopelessness and has opened the way for peace and reconciliation.

The Colombian Methodist Church, who works in the communities most affected by the conflict, has played a key role at the negotiating table during the peace talks, as part of a cohort of Colombian protestant churches. It will also play a key role in bringing peace and reconciliation and forgiveness between former FARC soldiers and affected communities. The rebel soldiers have now been disarmed, but Bishop Juan Alberto Cardona of the Colombian Methodist Church has said that the most important role will be that of the church is now to 'disarm hearts' both of those who have been affected by the conflict and those who perpetrated the conflict. Just like Jesus disarmed the hearts of those who were ready for a fight during His arrest, God's church in Colombia can bring true hope of peace and reconciliation between Colombians.



Colombia's Protestant Churches at the signing of the peace treaty

To ponder: What situations do we face in life where we have been wronged? Do we react by instinct to these situations and feel hard done by, or do we chose to respond like Jesus, by disarming hearts and truly seeking peace?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I ask your Holy Spirit to give me the wisdom to become a disarmer of hearts in every volatile situation I find myself in. Help me to truly seek peace in every situation even if it means I may not obtain justice for myself in that instance. Help me see the bigger picture of your plan for peace in your world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Hymn: Singing the Faith 656 When the bonds of love are breaking

Bible link: Luke 22:47-51 and John 16:33 *"I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!"* (NRSV)

These Lent reflections are written to link with the 2018 Easter Offering Dedication Service, 'Seek Peace and Pursue It' which will be used by most circuits of the Methodist Church in Britain during the weeks following Easter. Orders of service and other resources can be found at www.mwib.org.uk