

mission trip

It was only a 10-day trip, but those who attended the most recent mission trip to Colombia came back with a lifetime of memories.

Eleven representatives from First Lutheran Church returned from a trip to Colombia, South America, on July 19. The immersion-style trip had a central goal of building relationships and understanding the country in a more holistic way.

While there, the group worshipped at San Pablo Lutheran Church and New Life Lutheran Church; visited one of the poorest communities in Bogota—Soacha; visited the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO) offices for meetings regarding the church, AIDS awareness and more; took part in celebrations including dancing, games and music with new-found friends; and much more.

Following are reflections on the trip from a few of the participants.

Be more thankful, pray more often!

All of the elders and their stories made me feel so humble. They have so little and yet were so joyful in their praise of God, their dancing, and their pride that they had items to sell. Even in their extremely meager existence, God was there in their midst bringing them hope and joy.

I will never again take the gifts God has given me for granted. We have clean water, ample food to eat, a comfortable and clean home, and we can jump in the car and enter a big parking lot each week to attend worship. Our church facility is huge with rooms available for all of our activities. I do not have to fear that I might be forced from my home or that I might lose all of my worldly possessions. I do not have to see soldiers on the streets of my town helping to keep the peace.

From now on I will be more thankful for what I have, and following Pastor Nate's example I will pray more often. In deep humility I will try to keep the memory of the Colombian people alive in my heart so that I am moved to action on their part.

I know I must put my faith into action apart from and in addition to activities in my own church. I believe God is encouraging me to volunteer more, give more financially, and reach out to help others in a physical way. I also feel a need to read my Bible more and do daily devotions. **Marcia Huffman**

Stronger faith in God!

I experienced a lot in the past 10 days. One of the many ways I was changed is that I have formed a deeper inner connection with God. I feel as if some of my doubts about Christianity have vanished as I saw the ways God touches the lives of the Colombians. I

have a stronger faith in God and feel a lot closer to him through the people we've met in Colombia. **Claire Doeden**

Colombian people make an impact!

Many times when you go on these trips you think you are going to help make a difference, but the bigger picture is that the Colombian peoples' faith and zest for life make an even greater impact on you. I will never forget their faces. The touching stories and their enduring faith does so much. It gives you an even deeper faith. –**Eric Sather**

May we love as Jesus did!

I think that Jeff [Backer] said it best: May we not forget the people of Colombia. May we not forget people struggling to gather \$30 for rent when we are thinking about spending \$4 at Starbucks. May we think twice about their needs when we think we need that new gadget or piece of clothing. May we love as Jesus did by giving sacrificially to others in need. **David Anfenson**

I was changed for the better!

It was so clear that God is alive and well in Colombia. I was particularly moved when we visited Soacha which was a very, very poor community filled with displaced people. The elders were among the happiest people we got to visit, yet the poorest. Poor as they

were, they illuminated Christ's awesome love, and I witnessed Christ in each of them.

It made me realize how poor I was in the spirit. But because of the amazing love we received I was changed for the better. Service will now be a part of my life even more than before. **Austin Nickel**

Faith reaffirmed!

I wouldn't say that my faith has changed so much as it has been reaffirmed. Everybody we met welcomed us with warm hearts. We learned about Colombia's troubled and violent history, including conflicts that are ongoing to this day. My faith grew, and I am inspired by the stories we heard and the examples we witnessed. Even though many of the people we met have lived through hardships, they are still proud of their accomplishments and have hope for the future. **Eric Hernes**



