

# STORIES OF FAITH

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## Peace and reconciliation in Colombia



At the House of Peace and Reconciliation in Medellín, Colombia, Lutherans strive to bring peace to a community torn by conflict for many years. Founded by Misión Luterana Emaús, a mission start of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO), the House focuses on equipping people in the Comuna 13 neighborhood to resolve conflicts peacefully. **The IELCO receives grants from the ELCA to support this work through Mission Support.**

Since 1964, armed conflict in Colombia has left more than 600,000 people dead and has displaced nearly one of every 10 Colombians. While the recent peace agreement between the government and the main guerilla group holds promise, former combatants need to be reintegrated into everyday life.

“Our vision is not only to preach the gospel but to live the gospel in our community,” said John Hernandez, pastor of Emaús. “The gospel gives us a special language to talk not only about peace but also reconciliation. Generally, in the Comuna 13, the need is to learn to coexist, to accept those that think differently.”

Last year, the House of Peace and Reconciliation hosted a multi-session certificate program on peace and reconciliation that attracted 25 students from Comuna 13, and other faith communities and human rights and peace-focused organizations in Medellín. Students committed to replicating at least some of what they learned in their communities and organizations.

In the House’s theater group, young participants use theater as a creative tool to process experiences and heal. This year they are preparing to perform an adaptation of the Bible story of the feeding of the 5,000 throughout the neighborhood and for the national IELCO education gathering.

They hope to send a message “that we can abandon the presumption of scarcity and begin to trust in the abundance of resources around us,” Hernandez said.

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