

# Prayers for Latin America and the Caribbean

## Bolivia

**Context:** Bolivia is a landlocked country in west-central South America. Prior to colonization by the Spanish in the 16th century, Bolivia was part of the Inca Empire. Spain built its own empire in large part from the silver extracted from Bolivia's mines, primarily at Potosi. Indigenous people, as well as African slaves, were forced to work in the mines where many died as a result of accidents, brutal treatment or mercury poisoning (used in the extraction process). Gaining independence in 1825, Bolivia elected its first Indigenous president in 2005.

### *Prayer #1*

**Author:** Steve Plenert is MCC representative in Bolivia. He visited Potosi at Eastertime in 2017 and was led to write this prayer and snap the accompanying photo at a museum. He writes, "Around Easter, there can be a strong urge to look past the crucifixion and jump to the resurrection. At least that is what I was feeling this year. During the tour I took [these pictures] of Christ crucified on a cross of silver. I was reminded how it was the empire of the time that crucified Jesus, and I was struck how the Indigenous and African people were 'crucified' by the lust for silver of another empire."

### **Prayer:**

Lord God,

We come to you as people seeking to be faithful and those who wish to follow the way of the cross of our Lord. The crucifixion of Christ is ever a reminder to us of the brutality of sin. We pray that we would have the courage to face our own complicity with Empire.; that we would seek to not participate in any further oppression of Indigenous peoples anywhere in the world. We thank you that the Crucified One died for all sins of all times. May we live as people of forgiven-ness and forgiveness. Thank you that the Spirit of Christ empowers us to face the challenges of this world and to engage injustice in the world and to seek its transformation. As we think of the silver of Bolivia, may we also understand how our desire for certain things may be part of the oppression of others; may we seek to change our ways. We are eternally grateful for the sacrifice of Christ who died to show us the way to newness of life.

Amen.



## **Prayer #2**

**Author:** Leah Amstutz lived and worked in Bolivia in 2016–17 as a participant in MCC’s SALT (Serving and Learning Together) program. She worked in Montero at two community centres for children, their parents and other local women, called the Saint Joseph Parish Social Centre. She says, “The children we serve come from a variety of situations, but most come from poorer families and many come from single parent or caregiver households. The teenage pregnancy rate is high in Bolivia and so it is common for children to be raised by single mothers or perhaps by a grandmother or other relative. Domestic violence and the culture of machismo is also a problem in the community, and in Bolivia as a whole.”

### **Prayer:**

Mothering and fathering God,  
we lift to you our suffering children.

We pray  
for the children whose parent or parents have moved away to work, abandoned them, or died.  
May they receive love and care, knowing they are special and valuable.

We pray  
for the many single parents doing the hard job of parenting alone,  
for the grandmothers, aunts, and other people raising children not directly their own.  
Give them strength and patience to raise these children in love and health.

We pray  
for the children whose parents are present, but who experience the violence of neglect,  
for the children and families plagued by violence, be it physical, sexual, mental or emotional.

Lord, we reach to you for peace and reconciliation,  
for hope and strength in difficult situations.

God, touch the lives of your children, that they might know comfort, caring responsibility, and love.  
Amen.

## Ecuador

**Context:** Ecuador lies just south of Colombia, a country that has been affected by armed conflict for over 50 years. This close distance has made it a popular refuge for Colombian refugees and displaced peoples fleeing the violence. The Mennonite church in Quito, Ecuador, began receiving Colombian refugees soon after the church was planted by Colombian missionaries in 2003, as families began coming to their door for help. Soon, MCC joined the work and today, under leadership from Daniela Sanchez, the project supports 450 people a year, providing emergency food assistance, bedding, cooking supplies, psychosocial support, and a community where they can find mooring in their situation of displacement and flight. While the majority of refugees in Quito are still coming from Colombia, the project serves people of any nationality – and many are arriving.

**Author:** Daniela Sanchez. Translated by Jes Stoltzfus Buller, Peace Education Coordinator for MCC U.S.

### Prayer (in Spanish and English):

Te pedimos que abras nuestros corazones,  
para responder a las necesidades  
de todos los hermanos y hermanas refugiadas de Colombia, Venezuela, Cuba, Haití, Nigeria, Egipto, Sri Lanka, Afganistán, Siria, Irak, Gambia, Congo y Angola que llegan a Ecuador, huyendo de la violencia, del miedo, de la angustia y soledad.

Señor Jesús, bendice toda nuestra tierra.  
Ayúdanos a ser constructores de justicia y paz, a extender nuestras manos y nuestros corazones hacia las personas con tanta necesidad, que tu Espíritu nos siga impulsando y animando a sembrar semillas de alegría, de paz y de amor, para hacer de este nuestro mundo, un lugar en el que todas las personas vivan juntas en armonía.

Que allí donde hay rencor, enséñanos el perdón y la reconciliación,  
sustituye el odio por el amor y la indiferencia por una actitud de servicio.

Lo pedimos por Cristo nuestro Señor. Amén.

We ask that you open our hearts  
to respond to the needs  
of all our refugee brothers and sisters from Colombia, Venezuela, Cuba, Haiti, Nigeria, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Gambia, Congo and Angola that arrive in Ecuador, fleeing violence, fear, angst and solitude.

Lord Jesus, bless all of our earth.  
Help us to be builders of justice and peace, to extend our hands and our hearts toward people with so much need. May your Spirit continue pushing and encouraging us to sow seeds of joy, peace and love, to make this world a place in which all people can live together in harmony.

Where there is resentment, teach us forgiveness and reconciliation,  
exchange our hate for love and our indifference for an attitude of service.

This we ask in Christ our Lord.

Amen.



Group photo from psychosocial leadership retreat in Quito May of 2017, including members from the Anabaptist Christian Church of Quito and workers from the Colombian Refugee Project, which is sponsored by MCC. Photo by Paul Stucky.



Group activity during the psychosocial leadership retreat in Quito, facilitated by Paul Stucky. Photo by Daniela Sánchez.

## Latin America and Caribbean

**Context:** The Latin America and Caribbean (LACA) program in MCC works in 7 different countries throughout the region: Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua. Currently, MCC has identified migration as its advocacy priority and focus, highlighting the ways migration is affecting MCC partners throughout all of the Americas. This compilation of prayers was put together during the Lent season 2017.

**Author:** Leidy Muñoz is a coordinator for the Seed program (a 2-year program for young adults) in MCC in Bolivia. She compiled these prayers, and Anna Vogt, Regional Advocacy Support and Context Analyst for MCC in LACA, translated them into English.

### Prayer (in English and Spanish):

We pray for drought and pollution in Bolivia, which are of great concern, especially for rural communities, as they experience the negative impacts among children, youth, grazing animals and crops diversity.

- *With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.* Isaiah 12:3



Farmer Santos Garache squats in his bean field at his farm near El Nancital Dos, Chinandega, Nicaragua. He is participating in an MCC/CFGB sponsored conservation agriculture project focused on improving production in droughts. (ADENOCH photo)

We pray for all the Colombian communities that, despite the peace accords, continue to experience violence. We pray that the churches will be spaces of reconciliation and peace, providing an example of peacebuilding.

- *With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:2-3*



Boats line a beach on Colombia's Caribbean coast. Photo by Anna Vogt.

We pray for Guatemala and the struggle of Indigenous communities. We give thanks for the young people of the Ixil region who have come together to work the land and learn about ancestral knowledge, instead of deciding to migrate to the city or another country.

- *There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28*



A woman selling wares walks past the main plaza in Guatemala City.  
Photo by Anna Vogt

We pray for Haiti and for justice for the victims of cholera, introduced into the country by United Nations peacekeeping troops. We pray for the organizations and civil society groups that are working for a response that includes reparations.



- *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 1 Peter 2:9*



In the small Hatian farming community of Kabay, farmers engage in reforestation to combat erosion and water loss. Photo by Anna Vogt.

We pray for Honduras, currently the most dangerous country in which to defend the environment in the world. We pray for the men and women who continue to denounce the activities of multinational companies and say no to corruption. We pray for the Anabaptist churches that live in the midst of challenging contexts and are an example of nonviolence.

- *Those who walk righteously and speak uprightly, who despise the gain of oppression, who wave away a bribe instead of accepting it, who stop their ears from hearing of bloodshed and shut their eyes from looking on evil, they will live on the heights; their refuge will be the fortresses of rocks; their food will be supplied, their water assured. Isaiah 33:15–16*



Overlooking the Honduran hills from the outskirts of the capital of Tegucigalpa. Photo by Anna Vogt.

We pray for Mexico and for all the migrants who pass through the country, often facing situations of violence and extortion. We pray that the churches will be spaces of refuge and hospitality.

- *When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 19:33–34*



Many migrants travelling North through Mexico put their lives on the line when they ride on top of this cargo train, commonly known as the Bestia. Photo by Anna Vogt.

We pray for food security in Nicaragua, especially as the impacts of climate change are being seen in the forms of droughts and flooding. We pray that people would be able to cultivate their land and have access to food.

- *It is the farmer who does the work who ought to have the first share of the crops. 2 Timothy 2:6*



Farmer Santos Garache squats in his bean field at his farm near El Nancital Dos, Chinandega, Nicaragua. He is participating in an MCC/CFGB sponsored conservation agriculture project focused on improving production in droughts. (ADENOCH photo)

Oremos por Bolivia, la sequía y la contaminación que son una gran preocupación en el país principalmente para las comunidades rurales al ver afectada la salud de niños-as y jóvenes, animales de pastoreo y diversidad de cultivos.

- *Con gozo sacarás agua de los manantiales de la salvación. Isaías 12:3*

Oremos por Colombia y las comunidades que a pesar del acuerdo de paz, siguen experimentando violencia. Que las iglesias sean lugares de reconciliación y de paz en medio del conflicto, dando el ejemplo de la construcción de paz.

- *Sean humildes y amables; tengan paciencia y sopórtense unos a otros con amor; procuren mantener la unidad que proviene del Espíritu Santo, por medio de la paz que une a todos. Efesios 4:2-3*

Oremos por Guatemala y la lucha de los pueblos indígenas. Damos gracias por los y las jóvenes de la región Ixil, quienes han formado un grupo para trabajar la tierra y aprender sobre los conocimientos ancestrales, en vez de migrar del país o a la ciudad.

- *Ya no hay judío ni griego; no hay esclavo ni libre; no hay varón ni mujer; porque todos vosotros sois uno en Cristo Jesús. Gálatas 3:28*

Oremos por Haití, para que haya justicia para las víctimas del cólera, introducido al país por unos militares de la Organización de Naciones Unidas después del terremoto. Organizaciones y grupos de la sociedad civil están trabajando para buscar una respuesta, con reparaciones para las víctimas.

- *Pero ustedes son linaje escogido, real sacerdocio, nación santa, pueblo que pertenece a Dios, para que proclamen las obras maravillosas de aquel que los llamó de las tinieblas a su luz admirable. 1 Pedro 2:9*

Oremos por Honduras, actualmente es el país más peligroso para defender al medio ambiente. Estamos en oración por los hombres y las mujeres quienes siguen denunciando las actividades de las empresas multinacionales y diciendo no a la corrupción. Las iglesias menonitas viven en medio de estos contextos difíciles, donde son ejemplos de la no-violencia.

- *El que procede rectamente y dice la verdad, el que no se enriquece abusando de la fuerza ni se deja comprar con regalos, el que no hace caso a sugerencias criminales y cierra los ojos para no fijarse en el mal, ése vivirá seguro, tendrá su refugio en una fortaleza de rocas, siempre tendrá pan y el agua no le faltará. Isaías 33:15-16*

Oremos por México, muchos migrantes de Centroamérica pasan por México, donde enfrentan situaciones difíciles de violencia y extorsión. Oremos para que las iglesias sean lugares de hospitalidad y refugio para los migrantes.

- *No hagan sufrir al extranjero que viva entre ustedes. Trátenlo como a uno de ustedes; ámenlo, pues es como ustedes. Además, también ustedes fueron extranjeros en Egipto. Yo soy el Señor su Dios. Levítico 19:33-34*

Oremos por Nicaragua y la seguridad alimentaria. Ya hay muchas manifestaciones del cambio climático, en forma de sequías y fuertes inundaciones. Oremos para las familias y organizaciones quienes están buscando diferentes maneras de cultivar y tener comida.

*El labrador que trabaja debe ser el primero en recibir su parte de los frutos. 2 Timoteo 2:6*

## Mexico

### Prayer #1

**Context:** Chiapas, Mexico is a region many migrants pass through from Central and South America on their way north to the U.S. But many people from Chiapas also feel the need to migrate due to economic circumstances, violence in their communities, and political pressures. In both Central America and Mexico, there are numerous cases of people, especially from *campesino* and Indigenous communities, who have been displaced from their lands by mining projects, hydroelectric dams, and other initiatives from foreign transnational businesses.

**Author:** Chris Fretz is an MCC worker serving in the city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas in the state of Chiapas in Southern Mexico. He is serving with the MCC partner organization, Voces Mesoamericanas<sup>1</sup>, Acción con Pueblos Migrantes, and serves in San Cristóbal with his wife, Lindsey Frye, and two daughters. He is from Landisville, PA, and is a member at Laurel Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster City.

### Prayer:

O God of justice,

We pray for safety, wisdom and peace of mind for migrants who are fleeing from intimidation, threats and violence in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.

O God of abundance,

We pray for creativity, resourcefulness and opportunity for migrants who are leaving their homes in Mexico because their lands and traditional ways of life can no longer sustain them.

O God of the least of these,

We pray for a new life and a way forward for displaced migrants throughout Mesoamerica who are being displaced from their homes, whether it is by gangs, drug cartels, corrupt politicians or transnational businesses.

O God of hospitality,

Give us the willingness to accompany our brothers and sisters, walking with them in their joys and struggles, and committing ourselves to share your love, justice and shalom with all those we encounter. Amen.

### Prayer #2

**Context:** This is a prayer that Miguel Paz, the General Coordinator of the MCC partner organization, Voces Mesoamericanas, Acción con Pueblos Migrantes, has taped above his desk in his office. According to the documentary film, *Who is Dayani Cristal?*, this short prayer was found in the pocket of a Central

---

<sup>1</sup> Mesoamerica is a region that includes most of Mexico and Central America (down through the northern part of Costa Rica). It was defined as a regional and cultural area due to the Indigenous roots and civilizations that controlled it until the Spanish conquest in the 16th century. The term is still commonly used as a reference to the area with Indigenous historical roots and ongoing presence of Indigenous cultures. It also defines a more specific area than Central America to refer to the region from which massive migration is occurring.

American migrant who died in the desert while attempting to cross into the United States. Marc Silver, the film's director, has made the prayer available to the public.

**Prayer (in English and Spanish):**

The journey towards you Lord, is life.  
To set off, is to die a little.  
To arrive is never to arrive, until one is at rest with you.  
You, Lord, experienced migration.  
You brought it upon all men who know what it is to live;  
and who want to arrive safely at the gate of life.  
You took Abraham, father of all believers, out of his land.  
You remembered which are the paths leading to you, by the prophets and the apostles.  
You yourself became a migrant from heaven to earth.

Viajar hacia Ti Señor, eso es vivir.  
Partir es un poco morir.  
Llegar nunca es llegar definitivo hasta descansar en Ti.  
Tú, Señor, conociste la migrancia,  
y la hiciste presente a todo hombre que comprende qué es vivir,  
y quiere llegar seguro al puerto de la vida.  
Tú sacaste de su tierra a Abraham, padre de todos los creyentes.  
Tú recordaste cuáles eran los caminos para llegar a Ti, por los profetas y los apóstoles.  
Tú mismo te hiciste Migrante del cielo a la tierra.

**Prayer #3**

**Context:** One of MCC's focus areas in Latin America is migration, working at advocacy, education and direct services along the U.S.-Mexico border. This prayer was shared during an encounter of Anabaptist leaders in March 2017. The encounter, facilitated by MCC, focused on themes of migration, deportation and the biblical response of the church toward migrants.

**Author:** Dan Gonzalez, Director of the Theological Community of Mexico.

*\*Translated by Erica VanEssendelft, Connecting Peoples Coordinator and Program Assistant for MCC Mexico*

**Prayer (in Spanish and English):**

*Padre nuestro* que parece estar en el extranjero, nacionalizado sea tu nombre.  
Venga a nosotros tu asilo político,  
Hágase tu voluntad así en mi tierra, y todos nuestros países periféricos,  
como en el extranjero...los países centrales o del norte a donde buscamos luego mejores  
oportunidades.  
El pan nuestro de cada día...  
...esa fue la motivación que hizo a la matriarca Noemí repatriarse: la esperanza de que  
"Dios había visitado a su Pueblo con pan"<sup>2</sup> y volvió haciendo de su antes-nuera-ahora-

---

<sup>2</sup> Rut 1:6

*amiga*, Rut, una “bracera espalda mojada” en el campo, recolectora de espigas de trigo para preparar su propio pan...¡pan de extranjera! Porque: “no sólo de pan viven las personas.”<sup>3</sup>  
¡Pero también de pan!

Al punto: el *dream* nuestro de cada día, dáoslo hoy.

Perdona nuestras deudas, no hagas como nuestros acreedores que a razón de seguir cobrando nos obligan a dejar casa, tierra y familia para buscar la manera de pagarles. Hasta las empresas de envío de dinero nos cobran fortunas por las remesas y con un tipo de cambio chapucero que les hace ganar “en minutos” lo que nosotros ganamos en días de trabajo y a nuestras familias en el sur les da de comer y para vivir por meses.

Como nosotros perdonamos...¿perdónanos? La mayoría de las veces no sabemos perdonar, cuando alguien, por necesidad, nos debe una parte de las remesas que nuestros hijos e hijas mandan del norte. O cuando hermanas guatemaltecas, salvadoreñas, hondureñas, africanas o asiáticas llegan como migrantes a México para buscar su propio pan.

No nos metas en la tentación de olvidar la esperanza y buscar, como apátridas, nuevas ciudadanías, nuevos pasaportes y otros derechos de residencia que no encontremos en nuestra propia nación. Y no nos dejes caer en el programa DACA porque dejaremos de ser *dreamers* para convertirnos en *bad hombres* localizables para deportación.

Y líbranos de los muros y decretos contra refugiados o, de los millones de deportaciones y, de los malos, esos a los que llaman “polleros” y nos dejan a mitad del camino en el desierto rumbo al norte. Líbranos de los traficantes de mujeres o redes de prostitución que roban a las niñas para hacerlas adictas y luego servirse de ellas a través de sus cuerpos. Líbranos del desplazamiento obligado a causa del odio étnico, religioso y homicida. Líbranos de ser balseiros, arrojándonos al mar a merced de tormentas, tiburones y deshidratación, sólo para cerrar los ojos y querer creer que la esperanza está sólo en la otra punta del mar.

Porque tuya es la ciudadanía, la oficina de migraciones y las fronteras.

Por todos los exilios y las diásporas.

Amén.

*Our Father* who art in the foreign, nationalized be thy name.

Thy political asylum come,

Thy will be done in my land, and all of our peripheral countries,

as it is in the foreign land...the central or northern countries where we look for better opportunities.

Our daily bread...

...was the motivation that made the matriarch Naomi repatriate; the hope that God had visited her community with bread<sup>4</sup> and returned making what was her daughter-in-law, now *friend*, Ruth, a “wetback” farm labourer in the field, gatherer of ears of wheat to prepare her own bread... foreign bread! Because: “people do not live by bread alone.”<sup>5</sup>

But by bread as well!

The point:

give us this day our daily *dream*.

---

<sup>3</sup> Mateo 4:4

<sup>4</sup> Ruth 1:6

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 4:4

Forgive us our debts, don't be like our creditors who continue to charge us,  
forcing us to leave home, land and family to find a way to pay them.  
Even the money-transferring companies charge us fortunes for the remittances and with a  
shoddy exchange rate that allows them to earn in minutes what we earn working for days,  
which provides our families in the South enough to eat and live for months.

As we forgive...forgive? The majority of the time we don't know how to forgive.  
When someone, out of necessity, owes us a part of the remittances that our sons and daughters  
send from the North. Or when Guatemalan, Salvadoran, Honduran, African or Asian brothers  
and sisters arrive as migrants to Mexico to look for their own bread.

And lead us not into temptation, temptation to forget to hope for, or look for, the stateless persons.  
New citizenships, new passports and other rights of residence that we do not find in our nation.  
And let us not fall into the DACA<sup>6</sup> program because we will stop being *dreamers*, converted into  
*bad men* locatable for deportation.

Deliver us from walls and decrees and three million deportations, and the bad guys...those who are  
called "chicken" and leave us in the middle of the journey, in the desert heading North.  
Deliver us from the traffickers or networks of prostitution that steal girls to make them addicted  
and then use them through their bodies.  
Deliver us from forced displacement because of ethnic, religious and homicidal hatred.  
Deliver us from being boat people, thrown to the sea at the mercy of storms, sharks and  
dehydration, only to close our eyes and want to believe that hope is just on the other side of the  
water.

For thine is citizenship, the migration offices and the borders.  
For all the exiles and diasporas.  
Amen.

---

<sup>6</sup> Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is an administrative procedure within the United States of America to protect eligible immigrant youth who entered the country as children from deportation.

## Nicaragua

**Context:** Nicaragua is known as the second poorest country in the western hemisphere (after Haiti). It was originally colonized by the Spanish and British who fought over the various resources which they viewed as theirs for the taking. Beginning in the 19th century, the United States began to play a tremendous role in the political and economic life of the nation. Nicaragua is still struggling to move forward politically and socially from the U.S.'s involvement in setting up three Somoza presidents (a powerful and pro-U.S. dynasty that ruled from 1936 to 1979) and eventually fighting against a Nicaraguan popular movement which sought social reform.

**Author:** Derrick Charles is MCC representative for Nicaragua. His prayer is in the form of a song (see audio link) and is part of a collection of songs that he has written out of times of personal reflection since he and his family arrived in Nicaragua in 2016. He writes, "In these songs, the image of dust invites us to consider our common humanity, our responsibility to care for creation, and the red flags around climate change that threaten especially the most vulnerable people on the planet."

**Audio Link:** <http://goodcharlesfamily.blogspot.ca/2016/12/considering-dust-considering-us.html>

**Prayer:** Remember us, O Lord

remember us, O Lord, as we remember you  
forgive us, O Lord, as we forgive  
save, O Lord, save us  
mercy, O Lord, have mercy on us

a broken body in the street  
among skid marks and broken glass  
outlined in chalk and then carried away  
helpless, the onlookers pass

far from the city, a hungry child  
the rains fail the fields  
his father leaves the country, his mother's at the factory  
earning something for the next meal

remember us, O Lord...

warmer and wilder  
an angry creation  
the poor suffer under climate's revolt  
against the rich world's industrial revolution

quietly, mysteriously  
disease overcomes  
communities are crippled, is there hope in the womb?  
wondering, we are left numb



remember us, O Lord...

gates and gangs, investing in tanks  
looking for violence to save  
living and dying by the sword  
will we choose another way?

we organize religion  
for assurance that we're forgiven  
while so much brokenness around us  
is bound to how we're living

remember us, O Lord...