

Children's Enrichment Ministry Expands

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Ivan, a 9-year-old boy says, "I like this place and I want to come back again" and he mentions this because of the enjoyable time we spent together, especially since he had never had an outing with his friends from the ministry. And just as this child mentions, it is the desire of others and in which we want to include in more outings and involve parents for a family coexistence.



Frida Sophia puts the fertilized and seeded soil on her face because she likes the sensation and the cold of its texture.

This year, we have expanded our partnership with the Binational Arts Institute, who was one of the sponsors of our fortieth anniversary and

worked with our children to form a children's choir. The children's choir has also had a great impact on our community, raising its voice to sing of hope, of unity among brothers and sisters in the diversity of cultures and languages, that there are no borders for a grateful heart, and that at the same time raises praise to the Creator.



The importance it has for children is that it gives them the freedom to express themselves, and they find joy in being seen with admiration, especially in the eyes of their parents. With a song they can reach the heart of those who need hope.

David is always waiting for his next presentation and affirms that he knows the lyrics of each song very well because he has dedicated himself to studying it at home.

A mother cried from the emotion and what she was receiving when she heard her son sing, because she mentions that he was going through many difficulties and family conflicts. This gave her unexpected hope.

So with all the beauty happening all around us, we long to keep expanding, so that more boys and girls will see and believe in the God who is a safe haven, and so that they receive these blessings as well. In the fall we are planning on opening a fourth site in the northwest part of Agua Prieta in partnership with the "El Buen Pastor" Church. Pray with us that there will be continuity of this ministry that reaches not only children, but families.



Valentina says: "I like it here because they welcome me and make me feel loved despite my epilepsy. I didn't like wearing the protective helmet because I was embarrassed." She plays soccer and basketball and wants to be a teacher one day, and she tells David, her partner, "go on,

concentrate and do your homework."

Grecia proudly showed us her first A in spelling. Her grades were very low, and she quickly forgets what she learns, but she strives. This was a great achievement, and she felt like a champion.



In everything we do, the strengthening of relationships and understanding across borders is evident, welcoming intercultural diversity, sharing our lives, responding in faith in the midst of crisis and difficulty, because our faith is lived in the reality of our environment, in real people with real conflicts and struggles who, feeling embraced and important, make the community want to be part of that genuine love who cares and appreciates each other. □

Take Action—You can help the children's educational, social, and spiritual journeys by providing material goods to the Children's Enrichment Ministry. Just scan the QR code to access their Wish List on Amazon.



Frontera Participates in International Certificate Program to Accompany Migrants

by Rev. Dr. B. Hunter Farrell, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

In the face of the complex and interrelated crises that face the Church today, many of us can feel alone and helpless—the complexity shuts us down and we limit ourselves to a ministry of “thoughts and prayers.”

Yet all of us can recall in our own lifetime when the Church has chosen to join with other churches, community-based organizations, and social movements to shape a world that more closely reflects the values of the Reign of God:

- Many Black churches in the U.S. joined forces in the struggle for civil rights in the 1960s, lending legitimacy to that important movement;
- The PC(USA) and other American and European churches responded to the call of the South African Council of Churches in the Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions (BDS) movement to pressure apartheid South Africa and the U.S. companies profiting from that racist system. The churches’ role in the international BDS movement is widely cited as making a critical difference in the defeat of that racist system;
- The U.S. Catholic Church, PC(USA), and other churches partnered with Central American groups to support the Sanctuary movement and advocacy

efforts for peace and justice during the Central American wars of the 1980s.

This is the power of connection. Without connective tissue, two parts of the Body of Christ are joined, but only spiritually. When parts of the Body are joined together through the connective tissue of God’s people in mission, nothing on earth can stop them.

For decades, the Presbyterian Church (USA) has been blessed with Mexican and Central American partners who understand this power of connection. In the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, Frontera de Cristo has 40 years of experience helping U.S. and Mexican Christians imagine borders as points of connection, not separation. With Frontera, other PC(USA) partners in Central America—the Presbyterian Church of Honduras, the Protestant Center for Pastoral Studies in Central America (CEDEPCA in Guatemala) and the Reformed Calvinist Church in El Salvador (IRCES)—are seeing increased numbers of Cameroonians, Congolese, Venezuelans and others in their neighborhoods as their countries shift from solely being *sources* of U.S.-bound migrants to become *transit countries for other migrants*.

If at one time Central American Christians felt a call to work in development to reduce poverty and provide pastoral care for *los que se quedan* (those who remain behind), today many churches are sensing a new call to care for families passing through on the migrant trail en route to a safer place. Many of these partners’ experience of marginality helps them understand that the work is too big to do alone.



Worldwide members of the first cohort to earn a Certificate in Migrant Ministries

It was these insightful Mexican and Central American partners who asked the PC(USA) to help them accompany migrant families and advocate with them for their human rights. Faith-based immigration activists from the various partner churches and organizations gathered in San Salvador in March 2024—on the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Saint Oscar Romero—to launch the new network. They gave a great deal of thought and prayer to ways the Network could connect various parts of the Body of Christ in Central America, Mexico, and the U.S. to equip churches to accompany migrants in their midst and advocate with them to protect their God-given human rights.

At the San Salvador gathering, the Presbyterian Mission Agency, the Office of the General Assembly, IRCES, CEDEPCA, Frontera de Cristo, the PC-Honduras, and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary began to dream of creating a virtual classroom where faith-based activists committed to loving their migrant neighbors could equip a cohort of activist learners to accompany migrants in their communities.

By the end of the March 2024 Network launch event, the group commissioned Pittsburgh Theological Seminary to create a Certificate in Migrant Ministries program, led by a 6-person team (one representative from each of the collaborating partner organizations) who would create the curriculum for the eighteen 90-minute online sessions. Pastor David Bonilla represented Frontera de Cristo on the intercultural curriculum Formation Team. Each partner brought into lesson planning their own experience of human migration in the region. Presbyterian Women, the Presbyterian Foundation, and the Presbyterian Mission Agency generously provided the needed funding. Through its Global Language Service, the Presbyterian Mission Agency provides simultaneous interpretation (Spanish <—> English) that enables Central American and U.S. Christians to engage online with each other across language and cultural differences in real time. More applicants applied than the program could manage, but the program leaders increased the number to 54 participants and the curriculum was shaped into three, 6-week modules:

- **Intercultural Studies:** Prepare for the formation of an intercultural movement of accompaniment and spiritual and social impact through a post-colonial lens on mission and cultural humility.
- **Migration and the Theology of Migration:** An analysis of contemporary migration in its complexity and in its globalized context and a theology of migration.
- **Accompaniment and Advocacy:** reviewing the history of the intersection of church and social movements for justice and equipping learners with skills to accompany migrants.

The gathered circle of program participants was impressive in its diversity: participants represent six nationalities, eight native languages, and educational



Frontera de Cristo collaborators met at Café Justo to receive their Migrant Ministries certificates awarded by Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

backgrounds ranging from secondary school graduates to PhDs. Eighteen-year-old students discussed their perspectives with 80-year-olds. But there is widespread agreement on what they seek: acquiring tools to lead their congregations to love migrant neighbors across lines of difference.

As Frontera de Cristo team member Bridich Saragos noted:

“God’s commandments teach us to love our neighbor as ourselves and my hope is to not just to learn about this commandment, but to *learn how to do it*. I’m planning to share the tools I acquire in the program with my colleagues at the Migrant Resource Center (in Agua Prieta, Mexico).”

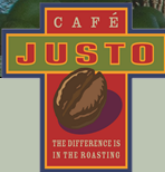
Laura VanDale is the Associate for Justice Ministries in the Presbytery of the Western Reserve and, despite other professional and family commitments, decided to invest herself in this program of intercultural formation:

“My hope is that I can...translate what I am learning into tangible ways to work with our congregations that we might feel called to challenge assumptions and stereotypes, build intentional intercultural relationships, and commit to grounding our efforts in our belief that we are all created in the image of God and deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.”

In April, 47 participants from 6 countries were awarded Pittsburgh Theological Seminary’s Certificate in Migrant Ministries, and Frontera’s participants received their certificates at a worship service and ceremony held at Café Justo in Agua Prieta. We can’t wait to see how Frontera’s students incorporate their learnings into their daily ministry and discipleship! □

To read this post in English and in Spanish and see more photos, go to <https://fronteradecristo.substack.com/p/frontera-participates-in-international> Or just scan the QR Code.





Coffee & Compassion

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138 children in the community daily receive breakfast, lunch, help with school work, and a chance to play, learn, and grow in a safe environment, and their families have pastoral, spiritual, and emotional support; **More than 200,000 women, men, and children** have been welcomed with food, clothing, shoes, and medical assistance at the MRC; **People seeking asylum at CAME** receive educational, emotional, and spiritual support. **Men & women in recovery** from addictions at Casa de Vida 'Raul Garcia' (formerly CRREDA) have a chance for a new beginning, and receive physical, emotional, and spiritual nourishment; **Women and children** have the opportunity to grow healthful, organic food for their families at DPT.

You can continue to support these life-giving ministries with a contribution via our secure online donation site: <http://fronteradecristo.org/donate/> or by returning the form below with your check.

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