

Ending of PCUSA World Mission: Lament and Gratitude

On March 24, 2025, the Interim Unified Agency (IUA) of the Presbyterian Church (USA) stopped sending Mission Co-workers to serve with church and community partners throughout the world, thus ending a model of ministry in which mission co-workers served at the invitation of and under the direction of partners on every continent. Without consulting Frontera de Cristo (FDC), PCUSA Interim Unified Agency ended Miriam Maldonado Escobar's and Mark Adams' service with FDC as PCUSA Mission Co-workers. They were offered a position with the new organization being formed, but rejected it, instead choosing to stay and serve with Frontera de Cristo as "volunteers" during the generous severance period that the IUA granted them.

Over the eight months, the board of FDC has worked with the leadership teams of the Arizona presbyteries de Cristo and Grand Canyon to form a memorandum of understanding in which the presbyteries will call Miriam and Mark as Mission Co-workers and FDC will provide the funding. Below are some of the thoughts of Mark and Miriam as one chapter of life and ministry ends and another begins.

We are grateful to God for:

- the privilege, honor, and responsibility of 41 years of combined service as PCUSA Mission Co-workers with Frontera de Cristo;
- the connections with and encouragement of Mission Co-workers throughout the world that allowed us to understand and experience the reality of being one part of the worldwide body of Christ;
- the encouragement and support of churches and individuals throughout the US that helped make possible our service as mission co-workers and who opened up the doors of their homes and the pulpits of their congregations to share how God is at work here on the US/Mexico border;
- the vision of those Mexican Presbyterian Co-workers and PCUSA Mission Co-workers who went before us to create a bi-national ministry that strived to live out the gospel in partnership, bringing together persons with a diversity of political, cultural, economic, and linguistic backgrounds to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God;
- the incredible community of faith that has been formed here over the years—Presbyterian, Catholic, Mennonite, Pentecostal, non-denomina-

tional; rich and poor; English speaking and Spanish speaking; conservative and progressive; folks who are in recovery from addictions to drugs and/or alcohol and folks who have never drunk alcohol; from north and south, east and west—as one visiting university PhD student who was with us for 6 months said: “I mean this in the best way: this is the weirdest community I have ever been a part of.”

- the engagement of the community of faith here with secular non-profits, human rights organizations, universities, elected officials, and government entities in order to make our border reflect welcome, opportunity, and hope.

And while we remain deeply grateful, we also lament:

- the rejection by the PCUSA Interim Unified Agency of a model of ministry to which we have invested our adult lives;
- a process of changing the structure of the national church that led to the deep alienation of partners, local congregations, and Mission Co-workers;
- the widening gulf between local congregations and the national denominational offices/institutions;
- a process that did not work toward the peace, unity, and purity of the church;
- the extra chaos that partners throughout the world have experienced this year by PCUSA IUA changes coinciding with the “America First” policies of the US government;
- the immense amount of extra energy we expended on internal church and family matters instead of energy focused in our community when the world seemed to be being pulled apart.

We continue to be amazed by the ministry and larger community here that constantly lives out the good news of Jesus in the face of bad news of the world and that in the midst of all the challenges it faces they have embraced us with God's love, peace, and hope as we have dealt with the reality of being fired. This ministry has continued to expand its impact even as it faces the disruptions brought by political, economic, and ecclesiastical changes. Even as we lament what has been lost with the ending of PCUSA World Mission, we look forward in hope and gratitude to what new things God will do. As someone said recently: “God is not done with us yet.” □

Take Action—Help support the ministries of Frontera de Cristo.



Between Courage and Fear An Art Exhibit at Café Justo y Más

by Yadira Camacho Villa

Café Justo y Más celebrated the opening of Yadira Camacho's art exhibit "Between Courage and Fear" on Saturday November 22. Yadira, a lawyer and artist born and raised in Agua Prieta, has seen the growth of Agua Prieta from a "sleepy border town" in the 80s, to being a destination of persons from throughout Mexico in the 90s to work in the US-owned assembly plants, to being a primary crossing point for persons migrating in the late 90s and early 2000s, to today's Agua Prieta that sees a community living between courage and fear. Her exhibit follows the exhibit "Libertad/Freedom" an exhibit of art of the children of our enrichment ministry that explored what freedom means to each child. Yadira taught intensive art classes at each of our four enrichment ministry sites, leading up to the exhibit.

How close are we to a stranger's pain?

Can we look at a wound that is not ours and feel it as our own?

Today I am not only presenting an art exhibition, I present to you the Stations of the Cross of our sisters and brothers who are in transit. This is my way of saying: **"Look, feel, understand."**

Migration is a phenomenon that has marked the history of humanity.



**"El sueño de mis padres es que yo viva mejor.
Pero por primera vez me sentí alone, lonely, solo,
Solito, solito de verdad"
Nací con un nombre y ahora me llaman: ilegal.**

*"My parents' dream is for me to have a better life.
But for the first time I felt alone, lonely, alone,
Alone, truly alone"
I was born with a name, now, they call me:
Illegal immigrant.*

Acrylic on canvas
Yadira Camacho Villa

Each of these works are NOT just images; They are visual testimonies of the ordeal that is experienced on the route and also on arrival at their destination since many times the ordeal and danger do not cease upon arrival at the destination, but can be intensified, it is a new emotional and social ordeal.

The Constant Persecution: If before the danger was the desert or organized crime, now it is the shadow of authority. It is the terror that authority, a uniform or a roadblock will take away what little you have achieved and return you to the starting point. It is to live with the soul in suspense, day after day.

Social Signaling: They are judged. They are singled out, stigmatized, seen as a threat or a problem, not as the person who risked everything to survive. Their dreams are ignored, their value is invisible.

Living Cornered: Life becomes a labyrinth of fear. They live on the peripheries, without a voice, without full rights, forced to work in the shadows. They feel cornered, caught between the fear of being discovered and the need to move on. The dream refuge becomes an invisible cage.

Therefore, the compassion we ask for is not only for the road traveled, but for the life they are forced to lead. My art is a mirror for society, so that we may see the pain that *we* inadvertently, or actively, continue to inflict.

The Risk: The "The Beast" train, the desert.

Physical Suffering: Hunger, thirst, wounds, exhaustion.

Violence and Abuse: The risks of kidnapping, extortion, rape.

Loneliness: Leaving family behind.

People who migrate are people with dreams, not numbers!

I have been asked why I make this type of art. And the answer is clear: Art allows you to stop time in that moment of pain, so that the audience can't just "pass by." Through art we can connect with those stories.

My intention in making these works are: Empathy and Understanding. I know that they are images that are painful, that can be difficult to look at. But if it hurts us to see them for an instant, how much pain does someone feel who lives it for months? My goal is not to shock, but to move. It is not to show a fantasy, it is to expose a naked truth. And art is a bridge that brings us closer to that reality.

The suffering of the migrant ends in the hope of a better life. And we as a society must learn to recognize, to recognize the dignity of the migrant.

What can art do that a documentary or a news story cannot? Touching the soul and memory through pure emotion.

This exhibition is an invitation to humanity. A reminder that compassion knows no borders. □



Path of Hope (below)

Tired by firm steps, carrying in their wake the wound of displacement and the seed of hope, dreaming of a horizon where life flourishes without borders.

Camino de esperanza

Pasos cansados pero firmes, llevando en su andar la herida del desarraigo y la semilla de las esperanza, sonando con un horizonte donde la vida florezca sin fronteras.

Acrylic on clay tile with relief and gold leaf

Yadira Camacho Villa, 2025

The title of this exhibition, **‘Between Courage and Fear,’** is not a simple description; it is the pulse of each person who undertakes the route.

Fear: It is the shadow that accompanies each step. It is the fear of uncertainty, of “The Beast,” of extortion, of violence, and, above all, of never seeing the family again. Fear is the force that tries to paralyze them, the wound that bleeds in my works.

Courage: But if fear is the shadow, courage is the light that pushes them to continue. It is the courage to leave everything behind for the dignity of their children, the courage to cross deserts despite thirst, the courage to get on the train knowing the risk, the courage to protest and the courage to dream.

My works explore that exact point, where Fear and Courage meet. They do not travel *without* fear, they travel *in spite of* fear. And it is in that internal struggle that the true heroism of migration lies.

Look around me. They see strong images, I know. But I ask you: What is the price of dignity? Today I am not going to ask you to feel pity, I ask you for something deeper: I ask you to feel the weight of a suitcase, to feel the burning of the desert in your throat. Because while we are here comfortable, at this moment, there is someone who is walking. And every step he takes is a step ‘Between Courage and Fear.’

Finally: I ask you not to forget these images. May the pain you have felt today become the seed of empathy and action tomorrow.

Lic. Yadira Camacho Villa





Coffee & Compassion

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So much of what transpires in the borderlands each day is because you care, you pray, and you give. *Thank you. Because you give—*



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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