



Global Connections

By Andrea Tinsley

It was 4 a.m. on Thursday, March 27, 2014. Our small team gathered in the church parking lot, loading our luggage into church vans for a quick trip to the Lexington Bluegrass Airport. From there, we would make two more stops before arriving in Medellín, Colombia. I was excited and nervous. Would we meet all our flights? Would we experience turbulence? Would we be ready when we arrived? Was I ready now?

Though this was my first mission trip, I already felt quite engaged with the global church. Since childhood, I was intrigued by the missionary books in our church library and looked forward to pulling the Free Methodist World Missions People publication from the mailbox. I loved reading about the lives of men and women around the world who faithfully walked with Jesus. I looked for families who had children my age. I prayed for them, memorizing their names and faces.

I met missionaries at Family Camp and was fascinated by stories about their lives, their work, the people they served and the places they called home. In college, I was exposed to the global church through speakers, conferences and classes.

I had friends and family who were serving around the world. But this, bag and passport in hand, was a new experience. I was literally stepping into the latitude and longitude of the global church.

Almost six years and five trips later, I consider the impact these trips have on my life. Catching glimpses of God's kingdom on earth, particularly in Latin America, broadened my understanding of His kingdom and His heart for the world. Sharing the table with missionary families stretches my heart, and I find myself leaving behind pieces of my heart wherever I go. Experiencing the kind, generous and holy grace of Jesus' presence heightens my awareness of the growing edges in my life and His deep desire to transform me.

Today, when I pull the FMWM Heartbeat out of my mailbox, my mind is flooded with memories and the faces of brothers and sisters living out their call to Christ in ordinary, everyday ways. I pray more specifically and earnestly because I have peeked into their lives. I am filled with this overwhelming love for the missionary families I now call mine. And I am awestruck to belong to the family of God and be counted among the Free Methodist cousins.

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