

Saludos desde Bolivia!

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*Enjoy an update from Chenoa Stock on the Joining
Hands UMAVIDA mission and life in the Bolivian
Andes.*



Worshiping during the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church's service to celebrate the 500th Reformation Anniversary. La Paz, Bolivia

Thank you for your continued support of my ministry through your prayers, messages and financial gifts. I continue to serve because of you and your accompaniment.

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Patient Change

A letter from Chenoa Stock serving in Bolivia

November 2017

Ah, the sun's rays are a tad bit warmer, the days are a smidge longer, and the smattering of rains are in our midst. It must be the Bolivian *primavera* (spring)! A change of (spiritual) season, a change of professional routine and, in my case, a change in personal and family growth.



Primavera (spring) is in the air!

As a Protestant, I recently had the joy of participating in the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church's (IELB, its Spanish acronym) 500th Anniversary Reformation service and celebration. What a blessing to worship alongside the Bolivian Catholic Bishop, the German ambassador to Bolivia, and so many other Lutheran congregants from around La Paz city. As a partner of our Bolivian Joining Hands Network, UMAVIDA (Joining Hands for Life), the IELB has accompanied us in our activities since our founding in 2001. In this celebratory service, we shared words of blessing on behalf of UMAVIDA, lifting up the work of IELB and our long-term partnership with them. Pastor Emilio Aslla, the president of IELB, as well as the current president of the UMAVIDA Network, preached on the values and learnings of the Reformation. We, as reformed Christian citizens, are continuously called to speak truth to power, walk alongside our marginalized brothers and sisters, and **care for God's Creation, especially when exploitation like mining and corruption pervade our governments and societies, creating distractions from our reformed**

mission path. What a message!

As Presbyterians, we hold true to the phrase, “Reformed and always reforming.” I was blessed to embrace that phrase during this service, as well as every day of my service as a PC (USA) mission co-worker.



UMAVIDA Board members present Pastor Emilio Aslla with a plaque, honoring the Lutheran Church's mission and the partnership we have had with them for 15+ years. La Paz, Bolivia

In my service with the UMAVIDA Network, I am called to continuously keep updated on the daily Bolivian political and social situation. So, when I was invited **to participate in Bread for the World's Forum on Working More Efficiently as Networks and Alliances**, I jumped at the opportunity. Presbyterians may *reform and always reform*, just as Bolivian politics *change and always change*. With that precedent, it is professionally always best to take advantage of these spaces to

meet with like-minded people and institutions who are working and struggling in the same country context in order to share ideas and experiences. I heard presentations from various organizations throughout Latin America about their best practices on working in networks, as well as presentations focused on the Bolivian context. The latter gave an eye-opening perspective on the many obstacles that have evolved over the past decade from the current government that have made work more difficult for non-governmental organizations and networks. It became clearer that, as those mentioned entities, we are not in easy times working in Bolivia. But we were also assured that we are not alone. After breaking up into groups to discuss the challenges, learnings and future steps and messages, many positive ideas were shared about how we can move forward and more effectively support each other in these times.



A panel discussion during the Forum on Working More Efficiently as Networks and Alliances, with presenters from Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia.

We did not solve the issue in our two days together, nor did we jointly write any type of agreement or letter to the government. Maybe that will be for the next **gathering. But we did listen to and hear from one another, identify with each other's** joys and struggles, and make a commitment to work together more closely to support one another. All of this is necessary in these times that have not been seen for a while in Bolivia that include government repression of any institution that questions or denounces government actions and decrees. We, as civil society organizations, must now work with more solidarity and less competition in order for the necessary voices to be heard and to make a difference in a country that currently quiets those voices rather than lifts them up.



Marco Antonio Gandarillas, from the Bolivian Center of Documentation and Information, presents on the Bolivian context of the history of NGOs and the current government relationship with them.

I am grateful I had the chance to participate in that workshop alongside a few of my UMAVIDA colleagues, as keeping connected to the grassroots communities is essential to our work. I will most definitely need even more of that connection as I will soon travel to the U.S. to prepare for our baby on the way and work long distance. I will work from home throughout November and December, until the baby is born in early January. I will then take my maternity leave, partly in the US/partly in Bolivia, depending on timing of paperwork and other baby needs. It may be a different work connection, but I will be present and walking with UMAVIDA as much as I can during these months.

As I reflect on the Reformation, our UMAVIDA long-term mission for sustainable change, our camaraderie with other like-minded institutions who are in the same long-term struggle, and this growing life inside of me, I pray for patience. Change does not happen overnight, but occurs through the work of faithful and persistent people and institutions who believe in a better world and life for all. I will accompany UMAVIDA in their continuous campaign for environmental justice throughout these months, encouraged by those who have come before me to speak truth to power and who recognized that change takes patience, love and solidarity. There would be nothing better than to bring our child into this world, teaching these values as a foundation for our family.



Left: Baby Shower Celebrations with UMAVIDA colleagues.

Right: Celebrating new life with a Bolivian friend who is now a mom!

We know we are supported by our greater Presbyterian family and could not be more grateful for that. Your prayers for my professional and our personal lives, and your constant financial support, are the foundation of my service. I could not be here, holding faith in patient change, without your accompaniment and encouragement.

In this season of Thanksgiving, I thank you for all you have been and are to us and the UMAVIDA Network.

Peace and blessings,

Chenoa

In Other News!

- We hold in our prayers all victims affected by hurricanes, floods, wildfires and earthquakes and those refugees and immigrants who struggle against injustices in their own countries. May they find relief in God's love and justice through the kindness of neighbors, family, strangers and advocates.
- Please view this [video](#) about the ongoing drought in Bolivia and the impact on some of Bolivia's first climate refugees. As we soon enter our rainy season, we pray for showers of blessings for these communities and many others.

Click [here](#) to read any of Chenoa's past newsletters!



