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MCC CS Executive Director Report
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Relief, development and peace in the name of Christ is not the call of the uncertain, hesitant or fearful. Now, that is not to say that some of us have come to MCC a little uncertain, a little hesitant about the mission and what it entails or with a little fear of what God is getting us into. But I have come to believe and realize that God makes Christ real as we live out the mission of MCC.

Recently, I have been contemplating “what does it mean to bear witness?” When we say that we “walk along side of people and communities” are we bearing witness? How does “bearing witness” deepen/strengthen our call/witness?

There are many ways that MCC Central States bore our witness this past year, however I will focus on three.

Ana Alicia Hinojosa, Immigration Education Coordinator for MCC Central States, was able to bear witness with and for Oscar Sanchez and Irma Quiñones in Brownsville, Texas. Threatened with deportation and being separated from their three children, Ana was able to mobilize and rally pastors, such as our new board member Gracie Tijerina, and organizations such as the National Immigrant Justice Center, to advocate and fight for their right to stay. As a result, Irma, Oscar and their children are now citizens. Demonstrating to us that bearing witness can't be done alone.

Second, was the opportunity to financially support Susan and Jim Jantzen's return to Chad, Africa where they were MCC service workers over 30 years ago. Their term was cut short when MCC made them leave Chad due to rising violence. Soon after they left, most of the men in the local villages were killed in the violence. Susan and Jim approached MCC with their desire to return to Chad to reconnect with survivors of the war and give them photos and recordings of their deceased family members. The Jantzen's were able to travel to Chad in January 2018. After returning to Kansas, Susan and Jim have spoken about what it meant for them to reconnect with people in Chad and what it meant for their families. Their journey towards healing and reconciliation, is a way of bearing witness that deepens and strengthens our faith and mission. It suggests that seeking mutually beneficial healing and reconciliation is how we bear witness.

Last, is bearing witness by providing space and opportunity for people to tell their stories. Since the murder of Michael “MJ” Sharp a UN worker who had previously served with MCC in DR Congo, we have been in contact with his parents- John and

Michelle in Hesston, Kansas. We assured them that when they were ready we would host a Lunch and Learn event at MCC in North Newton. Recently, John blessed us by sharing his story. The meeting room was packed with more than 100 people who heard the story through John's tears. Afterwards, a woman whose son was murdered in Wichita, twenty years ago, approached him and offered to be willing to be there for him and Michelle. She said, "I know it is not easy to lose a child- especially to murder. Twenty years later, the pain is still there, you just learn to live with it." Bearing witness includes providing brave and holy places for people to be human and connect.

There are many more examples, I assure you, of MCC Central States bearing witness to our mission.

As we enter our 100th anniversary, my prayer is that we honor, lament and celebrate because relief, development and peace, in the name of Christ is not for the faint of heart.

Asante Sana,
Michelle