

## PERU ROUNDTABLE REPORT AND PARTNERSHIP VISIT

### A CHURCH WORKING TO PROTECT THE VULNERABLE



The Methodist Church in Peru is a pioneer in the region in safeguarding issues. It is part of the World Council of Churches' Global Ecumenical Children's Network, and is a leader in this forum for churches in Peru. Next year, the church will be bringing its policy paper on safeguarding to its National Assembly, in the hope that it will be agreed and implemented in local churches. This work will be especially important with the influx of Venezuelan migrants into the country, and with vulnerable communities in rural areas that it seeks to create safe spaces for.

The church is also making significant strides towards self-sustainability, and has invested in real estate that they hope will begin to generate

considerable income for the church as of 2020. This is part of a changing church culture in Peru. For the last few years the Bishop of the church, Bishop Samuel Aguilar Curi, has been encouraging every local church, District and church members who makes a financial request of the church to make efforts to contribute something themselves. This is helping to change the culture of dependency of the local church and helping members gain a greater sense of dignity and worth.

### A CHURCH WELCOMING MIGRANTS



Imagine you are a young migrant mother with three children under 5 years old. You have none of your identity documents from back home, or any immigration papers to regularise your stay in the country you have migrated to. Your husband had found work, but recently had to have an operation to remove his appendix and has not been able to carry on working. You can't get access to cheaper healthcare because you have no documentation, so you have had to pay the full cost of the operation, after care and medicine. You have had to borrow money from a loan shark to cover these health costs and you are two months behind in your rent.

This is the situation of Francesca, a Venezuelan migrant, pictured on the extreme right. Francesca's situation is not uncommon to the hundreds of thousands of Venezuelan migrants in Peru and in all other neighbouring countries to Venezuela. The Methodist Church in Peru is doing all it can to support the influx of migrants in its church communities, and is currently housing several

#### The Facts

**When:** 15-21 May 2019

**Where:** Peru: Lima, Jaen, Bagua, Imasita, Emat

**Who:** The Methodist Church in Peru

**Why:** Partners roundtable meeting with the General Board of Global Ministries, General Board of Higher Education, World Methodist Council, UMC Women in Latin America

To visit a new, rural Methodist community located in the Amazon, the Emat community.

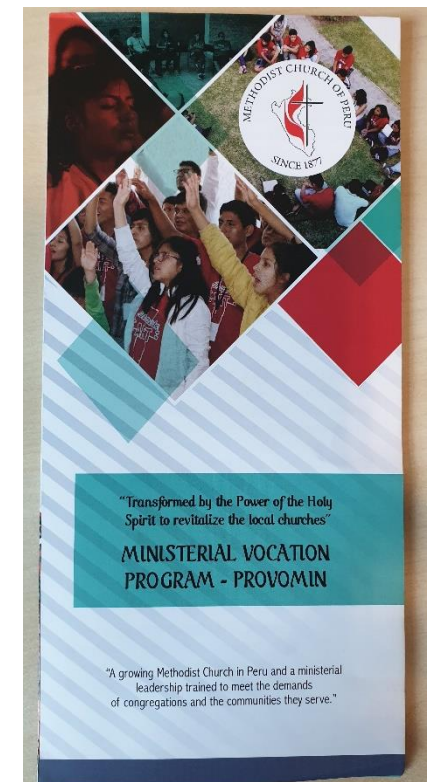
families at its Methodist guest House in Lima. The Methodist Church Fino Alto in the town of Jaen (north west of Peru), has been supporting Francesca and her family through prayer and pastoral support since she arrived by bus with her three children. When we heard her story, Bishop Samuel Aguilar and Carmen Mollo, the church's secretary for Life and Mission, got busy making phone calls. They then proceeded to commit the church to paying her arrears, paying off her loan and paying for her family's travel by bus to Lima where they will stay at the Methodist guest house until they find employment. They promised to support them with immigration issues, to help them regularise their stay. They did this because they recognised that Francesca's situation in Jaen is hopeless-and the family would be much better off starting afresh in the capital.

At the roundtable meeting, the Methodist Church in Peru sought support from partners towards this work with Venezuelans. The Methodist Church in Britain was able to give its permission to the Church to use some remaining funds from a previous National in Mission Appointments post to do the following:

- Provide emergency assistance for the most vulnerable families in need of documentation, food, clothing, medical attention.
- Find temporary housing for Venezuelan migrant families.
- Provide information and advice on immigration, access to health, education, validation of university qualifications and employment
- Support social care campaigns in coordination with other organizations.

## A CHURCH MOBILISING ITS YOUTH

While the church is growing in rural communities and among indigenous people in Peru, it is declining in urban areas of the country. To address this, the church shared with roundtable delegates that it has been seriously looking at the future of the church, the youth, and at how to mobilise them, awaken their calling and God-given purpose. The fruit of this introspection is a ministerial vocational training programme called *PROVOMIN*. *PROVOMIN* will help young people explore and discover whether they are called to pastoral ministry, the diaconate or any other area of ministry that will help build and strengthen the church. Over 400 young people aged between 16 and 30 years old will be participating in district and circuit opportunities to explore their God given calling in 2019. In 2020, those young people who feel called to ministry of any kind will spend time deepening their ministerial vocation. It is hoped that at least 30 young people will be selected to begin their theological studies from this group, which they will begin in 2021. By the year 2025, the aim of the Church is to incorporate this cohort of theologically trained and mentored youth into of the Methodist Church in Peru. This is a well thought out plan, which is supported by a number of external partners such as the Methodist University of Sao Paulo's Faculty of Theology, the United Methodist Church's General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and the General Board of Global Ministries.



## A CHURCH DEVELOPING CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



This is Revd Cesar Llanco, the Church's National Christian Education Officer and a National in Mission Appointments post holder. His post has been supported by your generous giving to the World Mission Fund for the past two years. His work has had the impact of training more Sunday School teachers in the Andean area of Cusco, which is where the church is rapidly growing. The challenge now is to produce more resources in Quechua, the language spoken by the Quechua indigenous people in this region. The church is seeking to be relevant to its mission context, and by having more resources in indigenous languages, the gospel can be most effective and have maximum impact on the lives of its communities.

## A CHURCH MAKING NEW DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

This is Edgar Tiwat (photo on the right), the local Methodist Pastor of the Emat community of the Awajún indigenous people. Your generous donations to the World Mission Fund are supporting his salary as a National in Mission Appointments postholder, and his role is of great significance to this community. He will become the first Awajún Methodist minister, and the only one in his community to have studied theology. The Amazonian community of Emat is an hour and a half away from the nearest town of Imasa by *chapule*, a motorised boat, or two hours by *peque peque* a smaller, wooden, motorised boat. The people of Emat first heard the gospel in 2014, and since then the church has been

working to build them up in the faith, and identify church leaders. In this community, everything good is shared. If someone hunts and catches an animal for food, the whole community will be called together to share in the food. If someone is able to sell fruit or cassava in the nearest town Imasa, the money earned is shared among the community. This is the same for the gospel. The good news of Jesus Christ was shared with the community, and now the whole community is a Christian community. Praise the Lord!

57 people live in the community, with 23 of these being school aged children. The nearest school is an expensive boat ride away in Imasa town. The cost of the children travelling every day to Imasa for school is an impossible cost for the community and other communities like it. This has led to parents pooling their money together and renting a room for several school children from as young as 10 years old in the town. However, these children have no responsible adult to look after them-they are completely alone in the town, expected to care for themselves, feed themselves and study. The vulnerability of these children has led to some being groomed and coerced into prostitution in exchange for money, clothes and food. Many young girls and teenagers end up pregnant. This is a source of heartbreak for the Methodist church and it is seeking a way to support these children. They are currently having conversations with the local council to explore setting up a home for the town's children, so that they can be cared for by guardians and be kept safe from adults who seek to harm them. This is a church that wants to get stuck into a community with serious social issues, and be the salt and light of Christ for that community.



Pastor Edgar Tiwat, using a shell to call the entire community to make their way to their church





A *peque peque* boat



From right to left: Bishop Samuel Aguilar Curi, Veronica from Emat community, Sandra Lopez, Daniela from Emat community and Carmen Mollo, standing in front of a *chalupe* boat.



Emat community on the Marañón river



Imasa town

**Other info:****Websites**

The Methodist Church in Peru: <http://www.iglesiametodista.org.pe/iglesiametodista/>

General Board of Global Ministries: [www.umcmmission.org](http://www.umcmmission.org)

United Methodist Church: [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org)

World Council of Churches: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/>

**Follow up actions/outcomes**

- To explore the possibility of further support to the Church for its work with Venezuelan Migrants
- To exchange resources on safeguarding
- To explore the possibility of a National in Mission Appointments post to support the vision of the church to open a children's hostel in Imasa town (to support the nearby indigenous communities).
- To partner with the church in its youth vocational training programme if necessary, through Scholarship group training grants