The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace: A Fresh Ecumenical Approach in the Violent Context of Colombia

Fernando Enns and Andrés Pacheco Lozano

Introduction
The Tenth Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Busan, South Korea (2013) will go down in the annals of the ecumenical movement as the one that made a decision to blaze a new trail: an ecumenical “Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace” (hereafter, often PJP). In so doing the Assembly chose a new comprehensive approach that, especially for churches of the ecumenical fellowship, brings together into one coherent relationship the many different activities and dimensions of the ecumenical movement. The new approach (1) aims to build on the paradigm of “Just Peace” developed during the international Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2010, in which the Historic Peace Churches played an influential role; and (2) adds and stresses the spiritual dimension to peacebuilding with justice—indicated by the metaphor of “pilgrimage.”

From a Mennonite perspective, it is important to test the theological foundations of this fresh ecumenical approach. Does the pilgrimage metaphor uncover a deeper theological wisdom in the church’s call to peacemaking? And what might the practical implications be for situations of conflict? Does the pilgrimage approach resonate with practical experience in peacemaking? Traditionally, Mennonites have been sceptical about theological and philosophical reasoning when it is not obvious how it relates to human life.

In this article, our goal is to present some tentative answers to these questions. Fernando Enns, who represents Dutch and German Mennonites in the WCC, is involved in further development of the PJP, chairing the WCC’s Reference Group. He is supervising the doctoral project of Andrés Pacheco Lozano, a Mennonite from Colombia who works with communities there that have developed wisdom on reconciliation during a long-term
violent struggle. Research for the project basically follows the questions noted above. Here, we will look into the experience of a campesino2 (farmer) community. In the process of exploring possible resonances of the PJP in a local context, we will reflect on how doing peace theology from a Mennonite perspective could be challenged or enriched by the pilgrimage metaphor. We briefly describe the emergence of the PJP and how Mennonites played a role in the process, describe the context of Colombia as an example of conflict needing to be addressed by the ecumenical fellowship, and show how a Trinitarian approach supports the theological rooting of a transformative spirituality. We test those insights against a given context of injustice and violence, the campesino community of El Garzal.

Peace and Justice in the Ecumenical Movement—Latest Developments
Mennonites are one of the smaller communions in the WCC, and only three Mennonite Churches—from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Germany, and The Netherlands—are full members of it. Nevertheless, during the past decades Mennonites have had a great impact on the WCC, together with other Historic Peace Churches (the Society of Friends and the Church of the Brethren), reminding other churches of the central call of the gospel to be peacemakers. Two contributions of the Historic Peace Churches have been especially important: (1) the centrality of peace in Jesus’ ministry, and how this traditionally Christocentric approach helps in recognizing that peace(making) is a constitutive part of what it means to be the Church; and (2) the focus on a praxis of peacemaking, highlighting the need for conflict

1 The preliminary title of the research is “The Pilgrimage of Reconciliation: Addressing Broken Relationships in Colombia.” The goal is to explore the resonance of the proposed PJP when placed in dialogue with communities in Colombia, focusing on the challenges of reconciliation in a deeply divided society. To do so, a series of workshops (stations of the pilgrimage) is proposed for walking with the groups, reading biblical texts with the communities to aid in reflection, and collecting the wisdom of these groups. A dialogue between these communities (their theologies) and the theological/ethical framework of the PJP is the main contribution of the research. Many comments and quotations appearing in the present article come from this larger project.

2 The term campesino in Spanish could be translated as “farmer” or “peasant” in English. But these terms do not entirely capture the meaning. A campesino is not just a certain social/economic role or activity but it is also, and even more essentially, a lifestyle, shaped by a deep connection with the land. Thus, we use the Spanish term to preserve this distinctive meaning.
transformation/resolution and for nonviolent actions. In turn, these peace
churches have grown stronger in their peace theology and their identity by
sitting at the ecumenical table, challenged constantly by the different views
of other Christian traditions.³

The WCC Assembly in Busan was strongly inspired by the global
Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2010, initiated by Mennonites in
the WCC, and the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation held in
Kingston, Jamaica in 2011, which marked the culmination of that decade.⁴
“Just Peace”—a new ecumenical paradigm for doing theological ethics—was
further developed and discussed during the Busan assembly.⁵ One of the
constant critiques expressed in the Decade to Overcome Violence was the
lack of theological depth on the one hand and a missing link to the spiritual
life of the churches on the other. At times, church representatives (especially
from the Orthodox Churches) complained that the WCC activities and
programs looked very much like a simple NGO agenda. In contrast, said
the critics, the churches should be pointing out that the various crises in the
world—poverty, terrorism, racism, climate change, and so on—are actually
spiritual crises of humanity.

Harvesting the results from the Decade to Overcome Violence, taking
the critiques seriously, and analyzing the changing world situation, the
Busan assembly decided to launch the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace to
build upon the insights gained and to take them to a deeper level, inviting
Christians and “all people of good will” to join in that pilgrimage:

Challenged by our experiences in Busan, we call all people –
young and old, women and men, differently abled, people of

³ For the history of ecumenical involvement, see Fernando Enns, The Peace Church and the
Ecumenical Community: Ecclesiology and the Ethics of Nonviolence, trans. Helmut Harder
(Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2007); Fernando Enns,
Ökumene und Frieden: Theologische Anstöße aus der Friedenskirche. Theologische Anstöße Bd.
Peace Convocation, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013); Sara Gehlin, Prospects for Theology in
Peacebuilding: A Theological Analysis of the Just Peace Concept in the Textual Process towards
an International Ecumenical Peace Declaration (World Council of Churches 2008-2011 (Ph.D.
diss., Lund University, 2016).
⁵ See Just Peace Companion, 2nd ed. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2012)
different faiths – to engage their God-given gifts in transforming actions, together. We call first of all on the member churches and partners to walk together in a common quest, renewing our vocation of the church through collaborative engagement with the most important issues of justice and peace, healing a world filled with conflict, injustice and pain.\textsuperscript{6}

Again, Mennonites—together with representatives from the other peace churches—had urged finding a way to continue the WCC’s focus on peace, justice, and the integrity of creation. In the preparations for Busan, the idea of employing the pilgrimage metaphor gained traction. For peace church representatives, the prospect of including the spiritual dimension as well as deepening the theological grounding of their peace and justice activities sounded promising.

A year later, at the WCC’s annual Central Committee meeting, the adoption of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace was developed further:

\begin{quote}
It is a transformative journey that God invites us to in anticipation of the final purpose for the world that the Triune God brings about. The movement of love which is essential to the Triune God manifests itself in the promise of justice and peace. They are signs of God’s reign to come which is already visible here and now wherever reconciliation and healing are seen.\textsuperscript{7}
\end{quote}

\textit{Oikoumene in Context: Learning from the “Margins” in Colombia}

One way in which the invitation to the PJP has taken concrete form is in reference to WCC’s current “priority countries,” such as Israel/Palestine, Korea, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Colombia. The realities and experiences in these contexts can provide guidance for the pilgrimage of the whole \textit{oikoumene}. In addition, these contexts obviously need the global ecumenical fellowship to accompany


\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 2.
them in solidarity and witness, and can therefore be described as “stations” of the pilgrimage. In 2016 most WCC activities focused on Israel/Palestine (and the interconnection with all the conflicts in the Middle East), and in 2017 Nigeria (since it was too dangerous to schedule international meetings in the DRC), exploring contexts of religion and violence.

For 2018 plans are to focus on Colombia and its 60-year armed conflict as well as the latest steps in political peace agreements. According to the most complete report of the National Center for Historic Memory (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica), it is estimated that from 1958 to 2012 the conflict killed at least 220,000 people. Over the years the campesino communities have experienced discrimination and direct violence, as land control and land-dispossession are two of the most important factors fueling the conflict. Both legal and illegal interests have been at the core of acquiring properties and land-titles through unlawful means or by displacing hundreds of families in order to profit from the land’s richness and wealth. In this process, more than 6,000,000 people have been displaced internally.

Since late 2012, official dialogues have taken place between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP (Spanish acronym for Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces—People’s Army), one of the largest and oldest guerrilla movements in the world. Yet, in light of the devastating numbers of victims and after decades of war, these dialogues have been accompanied by critical questions about the concepts of ‘justice’, ‘peace’, and ‘reconciliation’ within the Colombian context and its unique history. Today, one of the biggest fears—and a primary cause of polarization in Colombian society—is whether agreements signed by the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas in 2016 in Havana, Cuba will be imposed top-down, neglecting the experiences of the victims as well as ignoring the guilt of the perpetrators. Can the agreements instead be inspired as a real process of reconciliation from below? (The dialogues had very limited civil society representation.) What does an ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace add to such a context?

---

Confessing the Triune God on a Spiritual Journey of Peace and Justice
The spiritual dimension of the ecumenical PJP can be rooted in a Trinitarian framework of faith, and it unfolds in several dimensions representing traditional aspects of any pilgrimage: the via positiva, the via negativa, and the via transformativa. In the WCC’s deliberations, the theological work of Dorothee Soelle has proved helpful for exploring in detail how these dimensions illuminate the new ecumenical journey of justice and peace.10 Below we describe the three vias, link them to different ways of speaking of and confessing the One God within a Trinitarian framework, and show how the PJP is grounded in ecumenical theology. We then test this theology against the concrete experience of one rural community in Colombia.

Via positiva: Celebrating the Gifts of Creation
At the Busan assembly, a short but pointed theological document was adopted that represents some of the results of the former Decade. The “Statement on the Way of Just Peace” roots the concept of “Just Peace” in a Trinitarian approach. Every paragraph starts with a common statement of faith:

Together we believe in God, the Creator of all life. Therefore we acknowledge that every human being is made in the image and likeness of God. . . . In wondrously creating a world with more than enough natural riches to support countless generations of human beings and other living things, God makes manifest a vision for all people to live in the fullness of life and with dignity, regardless of class, gender, religion, race or ethnicity.11

The ecumenical community begins its PJP not as those who are seeking but as those who have been found. The pilgrimage starts with amazement at the goodness of creation, and an awareness that we all are part of the precious web of life. We recognize ourselves as being in relation with all of life, with our fellow creatures, with our “mother earth,” long before we ourselves give

shape to any of these relationships—because of our faith in God the Creator of all. In addition, we are created in God’s image, we are formed according to the community of love of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God’s story of life, God’s creation of humankind, does not begin with original sin but with original blessing. This amazement leads immediately to praising God and to celebration, a natural reaction to “God’s great gift of life, the beauty of creation and the unity of a reconciled diversity.”\textsuperscript{12} This joy provides a vision of the possibility of a life in just relationships liberated from all violence—not only among humans but with all other creatures and with nature. In addition, this amazement about the miracle of life motivates us to seek to maintain these vital relationships by careful stewardship. The pilgrimage is a joyful journey filled with hope and trust, because we experience our lives in relation with all of life as the (original) blessing of God the Creator.

El Garzal is a rural community of 340 farmer families located in the municipality of Simití, along the Magdalena River in the South of Bolivar. It is the richness, beauty, and diversity of the natural environment that is the residents’ point of pride. It is the land that connects the families to this particular place. The connection is expressed this way by one of the campesinos of the community:

\begin{quote}
I was born and lived in a place that was by the river, and I have spent most of my life living next to the river. . . . And sometimes when I go out to the river, I am happy to see it, and I remember my childhood when the houses were there by the river. Many times, when I come close to the river, I feel a certain freshness; the running water seems to bring messages from other places, because the water goes through many zones of the country.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

These words capture something of the bond between the campesinos and the natural environment, in this case illustrated by the river. Most of the accompanying organizations that support the community of El Garzal look at the members “as an example of the struggle and hope for the just stewardship of land in Colombia.”\textsuperscript{14} It is this strong bond with the land that

\textsuperscript{12} WCC, “An Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace,” no. 3.
\textsuperscript{13} Session on The Pilgrimage of Reconciliation with Andrés Pacheco, September 24, 2015, El Garzal, Colombia.
\textsuperscript{14} “El Garzal: A Community of Hope,” in A Prophetic Call: Summary Report (Bogotá: Justapaz
sustains them; it provides their identity, they are *campesinos* because of the land. The land is interpreted as a blessing of God. Despite all their struggles, this notion has made the community even more convinced of the gift of life. It is neither the injustice nor the suffering from violence that unites them and keeps them together, but the inspiration of being blessed by natural creation and by everything that shares in this blessing. This strong bond of awareness, the sense that “we belong here,” creates solidarity among members of the community.

It is obvious how celebrating creation, glorifying the Creator God, resonates with the *campesinos*. In fact, they are able to teach that orientation to others. The *via positiva* dimension of the PJP is clearly rooted in their spirituality and identity. In terms of the pilgrimage, the question is whether it is, or could become, a spiritual source for peacebuilding and nonviolent resistance against injustice.

*Via negativa: Liberation from Power and Violence*

The Statement on the Way of Justice and Peace continues:

*Together we believe in Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.* Therefore we acknowledge that humankind is reconciled with God, by grace, and we strive to live reconciled with one another. The life and teachings, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, point toward the peaceable kingdom of God. Despite persecution and suffering, Jesus remains steadfast in his way of humility and active non-violence, even unto death. His life of commitment to justice leads to the cross, an instrument of torture and execution. With the resurrection of Jesus, God confirms that such steadfast love, such obedience, such trust, leads to life. By God’s grace we too are enabled to take the way of the cross, be disciples and bear the costs.\(^{15}\)

This Christological statement resonates well with traditional Mennonite peace theology. Here, in the ecumenical discernment, it is part of a larger Trinitarian framework. It is precisely the fact that the PJP begins

---

with an ontological starting point, not a chronological one—with being reconciled and not with condemning—that “makes the horror about the destruction of wonder so radical. . . . Mystical spirituality of creation will very likely move deeper and deeper into the dark night of being delivered into the hands of the principalities and powers that dominate us.”16

Delegates representing the global ecumenical family within the WCC fellowship are have no illusions about the vast destruction of created life by violence and exploitation. For them it is clear that the pilgrimage “will lead us to the locations of ugly violence and injustices. We intend to look for God's incarnated presence in the midst of suffering, exclusion and discrimination.”17 The painful dimension of a pilgrimage is to seek the divine incarnation precisely in places apparently abandoned by God, where violence and injustice harm life or even destroy it. A pilgrimage of justice and of peace, if it is to become a path followed by the churches as disciples of Jesus in his suffering, cannot bypass the horrors and distress of the helpless, those on the margins. “Following Jesus means meeting him wherever people suffer injustice, violence, and war.”18 Only here, by actually encountering wounds and confronting our own powerlessness, our “relation to the basic realities of ownership, violence, and the self is changing.”19

These direct encounters with violence may lead the Church to “repentance and – in a movement of purification – liberate us from obsession with power, possessions, ego, and violence, so that we become ever more Christ-like.”20 The WCC’s *Just Peace Companion* indicates how “putting on the mind of Christ, being formed in Christ, involves spiritual practices and disciplines that embody peace in our own bodies.”21 Some of these practices are:

- communal acts of worship in order to be nourished by God’s Word and by the Eucharist;
- making prayers of intercession as part of our mindfulness of

---

17 WCC, “An Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace,” no. 3.
18 Ibid, 2.
20 WCC, “An Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace,” no. 3.
being formed in Christ;
• seeking and extending forgiveness, so as to create truthfulness in ourselves and to create the space for others who need to seek repentance;
• washing one another’s feet, so as to learn the ways of service;
• engaging in times of fasting, to review our patterns of consumption and relationships to one another and to the earth;
• consistent and sustained acts of caring for others, especially those most in need of healing, liberation, and reconciliation;
• consistent and sustained acts of caring for the earth.22

In this way the pilgrimage can be described as involving a learning curve that requires us to “give up looking for justifications of what we have done and train ourselves in the practice of justice.”23 The pilgrimage will become credible only if it is a journey of repentance for those in power allowing the marginalized to take the lead. This may present the greatest challenge for the whole fellowship of churches, as it does for individual denominations like the Mennonites, on a common spiritual journey.

The El Garzal community is “currently engaged in a legal battle to defend their right to their land; a right that is threatened because Manuel Enrique Barreto, a large landowner has fraudulently acquired property titles to much of El Garzal.”24 This struggle has brought many threats to community leaders—to Salvador Alcántara in particular, pastor of the Foursquare Church—and to the community itself, constantly in danger of being displaced by armed groups (instrumentalized by the presumed landowner) or of being dispossessed of their land by government institutions on false allegations by Barreto and his family. The community’s bond with the land has been threatened by armed violence to the point that the Magdalena river has been turned into a symbol of death. The same campesino who described his personal connection with the river continues: “I also remember the times of violence, when violence was so strong, because those ‘messages’ also came through the river.”25 He is referring to the bodies of tortured and

22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., 5.
25 Session on The Pilgrimage of Reconciliation with Andrés Pacheco, September 24, 2015, El
killed people sent down the river by the armed groups as a death threat against local residents.

Most of the people of El Garzal belong to one of the evangelical churches in the region, but that has not necessarily meant they could count on support from the denominational structures in their struggle. Different churches of the same denominations have labeled El Garzal’s resistance as “too political” or “disconnected from the ministry of the church.” Indeed, it has been NGOs and some other actors, including other churches, who answered the call of the community for accompaniment. The Mennonite Church in Colombia, for example, represented by Justapaz26 and Mencoldes,27 and Christian Peacemaker Teams are among those who have been accompanying the community by concrete actions, such as making prayer requests, sharing liturgical resources, conducting visits, and participating in events, as well as taking urgent actions like maintaining a physical presence to protect community members, and conducting political advocacy at national and international levels.

This is an example of walking the via negativa dimension of the PJP with the people of El Garzal. It has meant “taking up the cross” for some. Accepting the via negativa dimension of a true discipleship supports taking a realistic view of cruel, unjust realities and mourning together in the presence of the crucified Christ. It reveals the need for the churches to acknowledge how their piety and their theologies might actually harm people and relations instead of assisting them. The concept of a pilgrimage allows the churches to learn about their own failures and to let go of power, control,

Garzal, Colombia.

26 JUSTAPAZ: Asociación Cristiana Menonita para Justicia, Paz y Acción Noviolenta (Mennonite-Christian Association for Justice, Peace and Nonviolent Action) is a ministry of the Mennonite Church of Colombia that promotes nonviolence, conflict transformation, and peacebuilding in Colombia. JUSTAPAZ has accompanied the community of El Garzal in its struggle through pastoral/psychological care, emergency response, and political advocacy. See www.justapaz.org.

27 MENCOLDES: Fundación Menonita Colombiana para el Desarrollo (Mennonite Foundation for Development in Colombia) is an initiative of the Mennonite Church and the Brethren Mennonite Church in Colombia that promotes integral (holistic) development in communities living in vulnerable and risky situations and that have suffered from human rights violations. MENCOLDES has also accompanied the community in psychosocial care, advocacy, and especially legal assistance and support. See www.fundacionmencoldes.org.
and dominating economic interests that sometimes drive their leaders and their denominations. It might also purify the churches in credibly testifying to the way of Jesus. For Mennonites, this is a reminder that peacemaking, especially when rooted in the second article of the Creed, is not so much part of a theologia gloriae but much more a part of a theologia crucis.

Via transformativa: Resist the Injustices
As a third article of faith, the fellowship of churches confess in the Statement on the Way of Justice and Peace that:

Together we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Giver and Sustainer of all life. Therefore we acknowledge the sanctifying presence of God in all of life, strive to protect life and to heal broken lives.... We can state that: the Holy Spirit assures us that the Triune God will perfect and consummate all of creation at the end of time. In this we recognize justice and peace as both promise and present – hope for the future and a gift here and now.28

Pilgrims can become “healed healers.” Only in becoming one with Christ does Dorothee Soelle see gaining strength to resist injustice and violence: “Salvation means that humans live in compassion and justice co-creatively; in being healed (saved) they experience also that they can heal (save).”29 This is the third dimension of pilgrimage. In the pilgrims’ (and thus in the churches’) own self-transformation the courage and strength grows to resist evil, injustice, and violence. The PJP is much more than simply a new programmatic approach to action or advocacy strategies, all of which are meaningful and necessary. Its first aim is a life in God’s Spirit, which causes transformation into a gentle relationship with creation and a “morality of enough” in order to resist immense economic and ecological injustices. This transformative spirituality is interpreted as a gift of the Holy Spirit that guides into all truth (John 16:13).

Even though El Garzal finds itself in the midst of a challenging legal struggle to obtain land-titles, members are helping others—an expression of how transformation and resistance can grow. Today, the community is

---

29 Soelle, The Silent Cry, 93.
inspiring and supporting various projects and people in the whole region. Their commitment is expressed this way by Pastor Salvador Alcántara:

Defending human rights in Colombia is a way of life; it is a collective project that one must take hold of with body and soul in order to bring about change. Once you start there is no going back because once you take that first step you are no longer responsible just for yourself, but rather for the entire community.30

As result of reflecting on the metaphor of the pilgrimage, members of the community were able to reframe their struggle for justice as a spiritual journey of justice and peace. One campesino mentioned that undertaking the pilgrimage is “to walk in our community or wherever; we will encourage the people to walk in peace. And [to show] that in Colombia we have a peace process and that it is everybody’s task.”31

The notion of pilgrimage as “walking in peace” is also reflected in the way members see and even intercede for Barreto, the person behind the attempts to displace the community. One member reports that:

Even though he (the pretended land owner) has tried to harm us, to kick us out from here … we have prayed many nights, done vigils and all that, and we have prayed: “Lord: have mercy on him; that he may acknowledge one day that what he is doing is not right.” And even though I wished him to die, I do not feel that hatred against him or something similar any longer….

Here, exploring a PJP serves as a great invitation to revisit traditional theological and spiritual notions, and to discover their relevance in shaping political and social realities, allowing oneself to be transformed by a journey of faith. Peace and justice cannot simply be seen as a result of a process or as a “problem to be solved.” If experienced as a costly and transformative process of transformation, peace and justice must be understood as a spiritual journey of “walking in peace” in an eschatological horizon of the

31 Session on the “Pilgrimage of Reconciliation” with Andrés Pacheco, December 18, 2016, El Garzal, Colombia.
32 Interview with Andrés Pacheco, September 25, 2015, El Garzal, Colombia.
great reconciliation in Christ, with God, the Creator, in order to live in the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Sustainer of all life.

**Conclusion**

By initiating a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, the ecumenical fellowship of churches allows itself to be reminded of its common beliefs—faith in the Triune God, as well as its common calling—to be ambassadors of justice and peace. Churches begin to understand that this calling is not to be lived out by representative specialized ministries or political advocacy with those in power. It is much more than that: it is a spiritual movement. And this movement, undertaken together as a global family of shared faith, provides opportunities as well as challenges. The call to worship and glorify God the Creator reminds the Church about its own worth—as individuals as well as communities—and how it is embedded in creation. The call to take up the cross and to walk the path of Jesus does not allow believers to stand on the sidelines as spectators, but makes them vulnerable to injustices and violence in order to unmask the limitations of the powers that be. The assurance that it is the Spirit of God within individuals and communities that will provide the strength to resist all evil, including the temptations within ecclesial institutions, is transforming this calling into a way of life in peace and justice.

For doing peace theology from a Mennonite perspective, the proposed Trinitarian framing of the PJP offers a twofold invitation. On the one hand, it invites people to enlarge an exclusively Christological understanding of peace-making (and justice) into a much wider theological framework. This perspective can help identify multiple ways in which God relates to creation in general and to humankind in particular. It does not allow for reducing peacebuilding to a simple ethical demand to follow Jesus, the “ethical model” for Christians, but embraces God the Creator, Christ the Redeemer and Reconciler, and the Holy Spirit the Sustainer of life as three complementary ways of God’s peacebuilding with justice. On this basis, peace and justice are rooted in the heart of Christian faith and confession, and can no longer be reduced to a simple “ethical option” for the Church.

On the other hand, to frame peacebuilding as a pilgrimage also invites Mennonites to revisit peace and justice first of all as a spiritual attitude, not as a pragmatic or programmatic issue on the Church’s agenda. The ecumenical
pilgrimage invites the historic peace churches to rediscover the centrality of peacebuilding to be primarily a spiritual gift and challenge. To welcome this pilgrimage raises new awareness of how to glorify God in worship, liturgy, “sacraments” (such as the Lord’s Supper or footwashing), prayer, music, and the arts as expressions of a way of living peace and justice.

The application of this new ecumenical approach to local communities in a context of conflict—here, the El Garzal community—has shown that this approach resonates quite well with the experience of Christian faith challenged by violence and injustice. It is captured nicely by one of the campesinos: “[The pilgrimage] is my personal and spiritual journey while I am in this earth in order to know how I shall behave while I am here.” The pilgrimage in this journey of peace and justice invites the ecumenical family of churches to turn the traditional perspectives of “center/s” and “marginalized” upside down, without romanticizing poverty and displacement, or threatening violence. It could lead to a bold step, namely allowing the most vulnerable to take the lead, since God in his gracious and healing love has chosen to make them the center of God’s presence and transformation. Listening to their experience of spiritual transformation may reveal that this way of peace and justice belongs to the very heart of the whole ecumenical family.

Fernando Enns is Professor of Peace Theology and Ethics at the Free University Amsterdam and Director of the Institute for Peace Church Theology at the University of Hamburg. Andrés Pacheco Lozano is a Ph.D. Researcher at the Free University Amsterdam and Student Assistant of the Amsterdam Center for Religion, Peace and Justice Studies (affiliated with the Mennonite Seminary of Amsterdam).

33 Session on the “Pilgrimage of Reconciliation” with Andrés, 18 December 2016, El Garzal, Colombia