

Why I choose to be part of the church

Andrea Moya Urueña

I grew up in Colombia, Ecuador, and the United States, and I have spent about a third of my life so far in each of these countries. I have enjoyed the richness of Spanish, Kichwa, and English languages. I have been grateful for bodies brown, white, and black. I have delighted in snow-capped volcanoes, valleys, and plains. Throughout this diversity of experiences, the church has remained as a constant in my life. Why? For three reasons.

First, identity. The values of building community, serving, and making peace and justice have nurtured my development. These values I have learned through seeing how the church body moved and spoke.

Second, relevance. Sometimes, especially when I have been living in the United States, I have struggled to continue to be part of the church. I have sought out Mennonite churches that have welcoming and inclusive stances, but when I look around me I see almost no one else who is not white. This is hard. I know, race shouldn't matter, but it does. I sometimes hear a church member grieve the death of yet another Black person at the hands of the police, or invite our congregation to support a neighbor who is facing deportation, or call us to stand with the mostly immigrant and refugee poultry factory workers as they demand fair compensation and safe working conditions. When this happens, what I hear is people for the most part recognizing realities of our relationships outside the church. I hope this awareness of people around us begins to translate into meaningful relationships across diversity that are integrated into the body of the church.

Third, accountability. This aspect of faith I am learning to put in practice, and it is difficult, because it involves responsibility. My commitment is to remain with the body wherever I go and to keep it accountable in upholding God's invitation to all to have life—not just to survive. This invitation means acknowledging and including our races, ethnicities, cultures, sexual orientations, genders, and abilities.

About the author

Andrea Moya Urueña is completing an MA in conflict transformation through the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding of Eastern Mennonite University (Harrisonburg, VA). She plans to return to Colombia to work in peacebuilding there.