



Prophetic witness: 2013



Jesse Epp-Franssen/MCC

Thousands rally outside the U.S. Capitol in April, urging Congress to pass immigration reform legislation.

The year 2013 brought many challenges.

From Syria we continued to get ever-worsening news, as the conflict spread.

Four years after the devastating earthquake that hit Haiti, more than 100,000 Haitians still do not have permanent housing.

Immigration reform, after passing the Senate in June, has stalled in the House with no clear prospects for movement. The Obama administration, which could decrease the deportation of undocumented immigrants even without legislation, has declined to do so.

But there were hopeful signs too.

Grassroots pressure on Congress was a significant factor in leading the U.S. to back away from military strikes against Syria.

After decades of civil war in Colombia, a peace process has resulted in an agreement on several major concerns and talks are continuing.

The U.S., along with five other nations, reached an agreement with Iran on its nuclear program.

Attorney General Holder announced significant reforms to the mandatory minimum sentencing policies that have led to so many in the U.S. being locked up, disproportionately affecting communities of color.

This issue of the *Memo* takes us through these and other developments of the past year. Through it all we are grateful for your willingness to provide a prophetic witness on these matters of life and death for so many of God's children. ✨

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A lofty wish list

Many of us start the new year by making ambitious resolutions. What if we, as a country, did the same? “In 2014, we resolve to stop deporting immigrants, end mass incarceration and work toward world peace . . .”

Lofty perhaps, and yet as we move into the new year, it is worth taking a look at how we are spending our God-given time and energies. What is it that we are working towards? Longing for? How do these priorities match with those of God’s kingdom?

Our “wish list” for 2014

- A peaceful and just resolution to conflicts in Afghanistan, Syria, Palestine and Israel, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan
- An increased say for Haitian civil society in the reconstruction of their country
- Reforms to the U.S. food aid system and passage of the farm bill
- More funding for international poverty reduction programs
- Just and humane immigration reform with no further border militarization, including a suspension of detentions and deportations of undocumented immigrants
- Environmental policies that curb carbon emissions, reduce pollution and promote sustainable energy
- Access to affordable, quality health care for all
- A reversal of the tide of mass incarceration and an end to racial disparities in the criminal justice system through sentencing and reentry reforms
- The application of a restorative justice lens to criminal and juvenile justice
- Common-sense gun safety legislation

None of these will be accomplished quickly, or as a result of only our staff’s efforts. But we believe that these priorities are in keeping with our best understanding of God’s will for us on earth—that God’s desire is for an all-encompassing *shalom* that includes economic justice (Leviticus 25; Acts 2:43–45), peace (Isaiah 2:2–4; Matthew 5:43–48) and right relationships (Psalm 133; Luke 10:25–37).

If we are indeed longing, praying and working for what is in line with God’s will, Jesus promises that our prayers and efforts will be rewarded: “I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it” (John 14:13–14). This should give us great confidence and encouragement to persist in seeking to do good (Amos 5:14–15).

Our work in 2013

In the past year, we benefited from the insights of Brian Kaylor, an assistant professor at James Madison University, who was professor-in-residence at our office for three weeks during the

summer. In August we said farewell to Jesse Epp-Fransen, who is now in law school in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and welcomed Agnes Chen to the staff as our new Legislative Assistant and Communications Coordinator.

We hosted MCC staff and partners here in D.C. to talk about Haiti, Colombia, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Syria, Palestine and Israel, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, global HIV and AIDS, gun legislation and immigration.

Our staff also met directly with policymakers in the White House, Congress, the Department of State and other federal agencies.

Throughout the year our staff spoke to congregations and conferences in Arizona, New Mexico, South Dakota, Kansas, Indiana and Virginia. In the coming year we would love to visit your community as well, so please do not hesitate to invite us.

All of these efforts in the past year and our anticipated ones in the year to come, are done with fervent hope and belief in the power of God to move mountains—and yes, even a hill such as Capitol Hill. —*Rachelle Lyndaker Schlabach*



The MCC U.S. Washington Office staff. From left: Agnes Chen, Patricia Kisare, Rachelle Lyndaker Schlabach, Tammy Alexander, Theo Sittler.

Immigration

U.S. Congress: For the first time in six years, the U.S. Congress debated a comprehensive immigration reform bill. In June, the Senate passed a bill that would provide a pathway to citizenship for millions (albeit a 13-year pathway), provisions to keep families together and worker protections. Unfortunately, a “border surge” amendment added in the last week of debate added \$38 billion in additional border security, including fences and drones.

In the House, a bipartisan group disbanded without producing a comprehensive bill. Democrats introduced the Senate bill in the House in November (without the onerous “border surge” provisions). Even though the bill has 193 cosponsors, including a handful of Republicans, House leadership has refused to bring the bill up for a vote.

The House Judiciary Committee, chaired by Rep. Robert Goodlatte (R-Va.) has passed several smaller enforcement-heavy bills such as the SAFE Act, which would criminalize humanitarian acts such as driving an undocumented immigrant to the grocery store or church.

With no movement toward passing immigration legislation in the full House, faith-based and other advocacy groups have been stepping up pressure with actions such as fasting and protests at detention centers.

Deportations continue: In fiscal year 2013, the Obama administration deported approximately 360,000 immigrants, most of whom have family in the U.S., long-time ties to their communities and no criminal history. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program

has helped many young immigrants remain in the U.S., but it is estimated that almost half of those eligible have yet to apply.

In October, MCC U.S. Washington Office staff met with White House officials as part of an Interfaith Immigration Coalition delegation to press the administration to immediately stop deportations. We brought photos and stories of the devastating effects that deportations have had on families.

Workshops and campaigns: Mennonite Church USA organized two regional workshops in early 2013 as part of an effort to discuss immigration issues ahead of their convention in Phoenix in July. MCC U.S. Washington Office staff helped to organize and facilitate the workshop in Wichita, Kansas, in March: “Citizens of God’s Kingdom.” More than 100 participants discussed root causes, law, enforcement, theology and advocacy, and heard stories from recent migrants in their community.

In May, nine Mennonite leaders from recent immigrant communities gathered in Washington, D.C., to learn more about immigration bills



Cristina Rodriguez Blough

Iris de León-Hartshorn, Jaime Lázaro and Nicolas Angustia at the MCC U.S. Washington Office during the Mennonite Church USA delegation visit to advocate for immigration reform.

and to visit members of Congress. At the Phoenix convention, staff co-led a 4-hour learning experience on immigration and spoke with many convention-goers at the *People on the move* exhibit.

Our staff also worked with Mennonite Church USA and the Interfaith Immigration Coalition to promote other campaigns related to immigration reform throughout the year, such as call-in days, letter-writing campaigns, and a prayer and fasting event.

New resources: A new 12-panel exhibit exploring stories of migration is now available for use in churches, colleges, conferences, relief sales and other venues (see back page).

The Spring/Summer 2013 edition of the *Washington Memo* focused on immigration policy and includes a fact sheet and principles that are great for policymaker visits. Additional resources on current legislation, worship resources, book lists, and much more are available at washington.mcc.org/immigration. —*Tammy Alexander*



Jesse Epp-Fransen/MCC

Tammy Alexander and Alicia Horst of NewBridges Immigrant Resource Center in Harrisonburg, Va. meet with Rep. Goodlatte (R-Va.), chair of the House Judiciary Committee.

Crime and justice

The U.S. criminal justice system has long operated within a retributive model. This approach was intensified 40 years ago, when U.S. lawmakers launched the failed “war on drugs.”

Since then, incarceration rates in the U.S. have soared to an unprecedented level. More than 2.3 million individuals are currently behind bars. Many of them are serving harsh mandatory minimum penalties, despite having committed low-level, nonviolent offenses only. Numerous factors, including sentence disparities between crack and powder cocaine, have also led to the disproportionate incarceration of communities of color.

Recently, however, there have been significant talks among U.S. policymakers to reverse the effects of mass incarceration. Members of Congress introduced and co-sponsored bipartisan legislation to address the harms of mandatory minimum penalties, including the Justice Safety Valve Act and the Smarter Sentencing Act.

In the fall of 2013, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder spoke out against mass incarceration and announced broad policy reforms to reduce mandatory minimums and to step up compassionate releases and reentry programs. As the head of the U.S. Department of Justice, his remarks were a strong encouragement to Congress to pass necessary fixes to the justice system.

Mennonite Central Committee continues to provide educational resources and implement restorative justice as an alternative means to approach crime and harm in the U.S. and abroad. In 2013, Lorraine



Jesse Epp-Franssen/MCC

Crosses on the mall in Washington, D.C. to remember victims of gun violence.

Stutzman Amstutz, Restorative Justice Coordinator for MCC U.S., taught courses on restorative justice at Anabaptist institutions and conducted workshops at the Mennonite Church USA convention and the National Restorative Justice Conference. Our office works with the MCC U.S. Restorative Justice Coordinator and regional offices to represent the voice of restorative justice practitioners to federal policymakers.

In early 2014, the Senate Judiciary Committee will begin to mark up various bills related to sentence and reentry reforms. It is our hope that a comprehensive criminal justice bill will pass during the remaining session of the 113th Congress.

U.S. health care

The rocky rollout of the federal insurance exchange (and some state exchanges) was widely covered in the news media. However, the story of millions of uninsured who will fall through a large gap in coverage has been largely overlooked.

In 2012 the Supreme Court upheld most of the Affordable Care Act, but ruled that the federal government could not compel states to expand their Medicaid programs under the

MCC U.S. also continues to support critical gun safety measures. Despite national attention given to gun violence in light of the 2012 Sandy Hook tragedy, Congress failed to pass the implementation of universal background checks and the banning of gun trafficking, assault weapons and high capacity magazines.

Join our efforts to reduce gun violence! Encourage your congregation to participate in the 2014 March Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath Weekend to pray for victims, family members, and communities affected by gun violence and urge our lawmakers to end gun violence.

—*Agnes Chen*

Act. Though the federal government will pick up 100 percent of the tab in 2014 (phasing down to 90 percent from 2016 to 2020 and beyond), only 23 states thus far have decided to expand their Medicaid programs.

As a result, more than 6 million individuals who fall below 138 percent of the federal poverty line will not receive Medicaid. Nor will they be able to receive subsidies to purchase insurance on the exchanges.

—*Tammy Alexander*

Food and hunger



Silas Crews/MCC

In 2013 Congress failed yet again to pass a comprehensive farm bill. The farm bill, which Congress must reauthorize every five years, is the main mechanism through which the government sets out its domestic and global food and agriculture policies.

After failing to agree on a long-term farm bill in 2012, Congress passed a one-year extension which expired on September 30, 2013. This past summer both the Senate and the House passed their own versions of the bill but failed to agree on key programs. The most contentious issue has been how much funding to allocate for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps). On October 30, Agriculture Committee members from both chambers began negotiations to resolve differences between

the two bills but failed to reach an agreement before year's end.

Global food programs, such as food assistance to countries experiencing humanitarian crisis, are also authorized in the farm bill. Food assistance from the U.S. and other donor countries helps to mitigate the impact of humanitarian emergencies. Despite being one of the largest donors of food aid to low-income countries, the U.S. food aid system needs to be improved to make it more efficient.

For instance, the current policy requires that at least 75 percent of food must be procured and processed in the U.S., then shipped only on U.S. vessels. This means only 25 percent of food aid can be purchased from sources near the crisis. However, studies have shown that buying food closer to where it is needed reaches affected areas faster and helps to boost the economies of countries in crisis.

Last year President Obama recommended that some of these food aid reforms be implemented. We visited key offices in Congress to request that the president's proposal be included in the new farm bill. We will continue to support these proposed policy changes, as the farm bill discussion continues in 2014. —Patricia Kisare

Pentagon spending

An interesting coalition on Capitol Hill of progressive Democrats and fiscally conservative Republicans has come together to support cuts to the Pentagon budget. National security “hawks” in both parties are trying hard to keep these cuts from happening.

The results have been mixed. The December 2013 budget agreement keeps some cuts in place for the Pentagon but softens the blow by spreading them out over more years. Compared to drawdowns after previous wars, Pentagon spending will still remain at historically high levels.

Free postcards and posters (pictured at right) calling for reductions to Pentagon spending are available at resources.mcc.org. Signed postcards can be delivered to our office for hand-delivery to congressional offices.

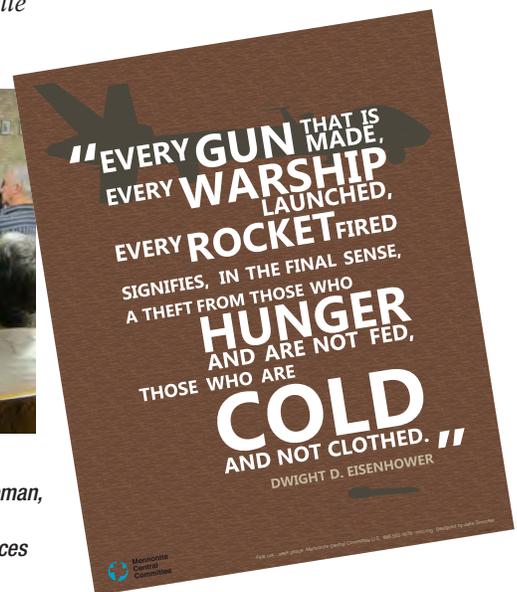
In addition, consider inviting a speaker from “Let’s Talk Peace” for

conversation in your community about Christ’s call to be a people of peace in the context of war, militarism and empire. Profiles of more than 30 available speakers are at mcc.org/fearnot/speakers. —Rachelle Lyndaker Schlabach



Karin Kaufman Wall/MCC

Rachelle Lyndaker Schlabach leads a peace forum at Hutterthal Mennonite Church in Freeman, S.D. The following day Mennonites from area congregations visited local congressional offices to ask for reductions to Pentagon spending.



HIV and AIDS

The global fight against HIV and AIDS got a boost this year when Congress passed new legislation to extend the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) for another five years. Through PEPFAR, the U.S. government provides financial support to poor countries to help them provide treatment and care to people with HIV.

Because of PEPFAR, about 6 million people across the globe receive antiretroviral treatment, 1 million

children were born HIV-free, and more than 45 million people were tested and received counselling.

This year our main focus was to ensure reauthorization of PEPFAR in solidarity with those who need this support to survive. In the coming year we will continue to petition Congress and the Administration to maintain the funding needed to support HIV and AIDS care and treatment. —Patricia Kisare



Jesse Epp-Franssen/MCC

Beth Good, MCC's Health Coordinator, and Patricia Kisare meet with congressional offices to ask for increased funding for global HIV and AIDS programs.

Democratic Republic of the Congo



Hana Clemens/MCC

Nyirandere Dafroza and her family had to leave their home, livestock and garden to escape the violence in eastern Congo.

MCC continues to advocate for an end to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This past year we focused our advocacy work on recommendations outlined by a delegation from the Church of Christ in Congo, an association with whom MCC works, that visited the U.S. in 2012 to meet with policymakers and constituents.

One of the delegation's recommendations was for the U.S. government to appoint a special envoy to work with local and Great Lakes regional entities to find a peaceful solution to the eastern Congo conflict. In addition to Congo, the Great Lakes region includes Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. In June, Secretary John Kerry selected former senator Russ Feingold for this role. Similarly, the U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon appointed Mary Robinson, former president of Ireland, to be the U.N. special envoy to the Great Lakes region.

Additionally, we continue to urge the U.S. government not to use military force. Unfortunately, this past March the U.N. Security Council authorized creation of an intervention brigade, operating under its peacekeeping mission, to carry out targeted offensive operations against M23, a rebel group operating in eastern Congo. This is the first time a U.N. peacekeeping mission has had such a role.

MCC advocates for nonmilitary initiatives that encourage rebel groups to disarm and be reintegrated into mainstream society. Despite their effectiveness, such programs are extremely underfunded. In 2014 we will continue to urge the U.S. government to increase its support for these programs. —Patricia Kisare



Ryan Rodrick Beiler/MCC

Bedouin citizens of Israel protest the Praver Plan's destruction of their communities in the Negev desert during the annual human rights march in Tel Aviv.

Palestine and Israel

Secretary of State Kerry launched a new round of negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, set to conclude in April 2014. But many challenges have emerged to the process, including continued announcements of illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

At Mennonite Church USA's convention in Phoenix in July, MCC U.S. Washington staff assisted with three workshops on Palestine and Israel. In addition, the Mennonite Palestine-

Israel Network was launched. This is an exciting grassroots effort to bring together Mennonites with "a passion for peace with justice" in Palestine and Israel. To learn more about the network, visit mennopin.wordpress.com.

In the fall, the MCC U.S. Washington Office worked with six church organizations to bring attention to the Praver Plan, an effort by the Israeli government to forcibly relocate Bedouin communities from the Negev in southern Israel.

Many of these church organizations have also joined together to launch "Third Thursdays for Palestine and Israel," an effort to get grassroots supporters to contact Congress once a month. The effort grew out of conversations with numerous congressional staff who indicated a desire to work toward a more just U.S. policy toward Palestine and Israel, but who feel constrained by the lack of grassroots support for it. You can sign up to receive these (and other) alerts at washington.mcc.org.

In December MCC U.S. helped to bring about 50 Mennonites together at the "Impact: Holy Land" conference in Philadelphia. MCC U.S. is also working with Mennonite Church USA and related agencies to promote "Come and see" learning tours to Palestine and Israel. Perhaps in the next year you will have the opportunity to "come and see" yourself!
—*Rachelle Lyndaker Schlabach*

Zimbabwe

This past year Zimbabwe held its first general elections since 2008, when a disputed presidential election led to widespread violence. The violence ceased when the two rivals agreed to share power and form a government of national unity.

As part of the agreement, reforms to the constitution and the security sector had to be adopted before Zimbabwe could hold another election, as a way to prevent future electoral violence. President Mugabe called

for a general election in July 2013, despite the failure to produce these reforms.

Throughout the year we met with key policymakers to encourage diplomatic engagement to ensure these reforms were implemented. By the time elections were held, Zimbabwe had only instituted reforms to its constitution. Nevertheless, the electoral process was mostly peaceful. President Mugabe was re-elected for another term. —*Patricia Kisare*

Syria

The war in Syria has continued to escalate, with increasing involvement by foreign fighters. More than 100,000 people have been killed. More than 6.5 million people are displaced from their homes within Syria, and another 2.3 million Syrians have fled to neighboring countries.

MCC has continued to advocate for an immediate stop to the violence and a long-term political solution that guarantees the rights of all Syrians. In the meantime, MCC also continues to advocate for greater funding to meet the vast humanitarian needs.

After the chemical weapons attack in Damascus on August 21, 2013, President Obama indicated that the U.S. would carry out military strikes against Syria. After announcing he would seek congressional approval for military action, calls began flooding into congressional offices.

More than 1,100 of you responded to an MCC action alert, generating more than 5,000 total messages to Congress and the President. Congressional staffers told the MCC U.S. Washington Office that they received



This refugee settlement in southern Lebanon is composed almost entirely of people from the same village in Syria. The sheds are not equipped for winter and are prone to flooding.

a high volume of calls during that time, with the overwhelming majority opposed to military strikes.

In part because of the concern expressed by the American public about the use of force, the Obama administration directed its energies toward a diplomatic solution. As part of an agreement with Russia, Syria agreed to join the Chemical Weapons Convention and Syria's chemical

weapons stockpile is in the process of being destroyed.

In December Sarah Adams, MCC's former representative for Syria and Lebanon, came to Washington to meet with policymakers. Her unique, on-the-ground perspective was heard at the State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development, and on Capitol Hill. —*Rachelle Lyndaker Schlabach*



Give to MCC's Middle East crisis response donate.mcc.org/project/middle-east-crisis

The humanitarian crisis in Syria continues and is taking a toll on the children. You can help.

The children of Syria continue to live with the uncertainty that comes with being a refugee from war. Often living in temporary housing and without the structure of school and community they lack the sense of normalcy and routine that children thrive on.

Along with providing food and material aid, your support will help MCC provide educational and recreational activities for the children. Children benefit when they can "take a break" from war to see a movie, play music or paint and draw.

Thank you for your support!

\$22 provides a monthly food basket for a family.

\$55 provides cash support for a family's rent.

Iran

In a historic breakthrough on November 24, the United States, along with the United Kingdom, France, China, Russia and Germany, reached an agreement with Iran on Iran's nuclear program. Iran will suspend most of its uranium enrichment in exchange for the loosening of some sanctions. The six-month interim deal is intended to allow time for a comprehensive agreement to be reached.

While some senators, such as Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.) and Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) have supported the agreement, saying "it offers the chance to end our confrontation with Iran peacefully," others in Congress have been much more skeptical.

In December efforts in both the House and Senate to pass additional sanctions on Iran did not succeed, but Senators Menendez (D-N.J.), Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Kirk (R-Ill.) have vowed to pick up these efforts in 2014. Analysts believe that the imposition of new sanctions would make a longer-term agreement more difficult to achieve.

For more than 20 years, MCC has sought to strengthen people-to-people ties with Iran. We have long called for differences between the U.S. and Iran to be resolved diplomatically.
—*Rachelle Lyndaker Schlabach*



Jesse Epp-Franssen/MCC

Boris Ozuna speaks at Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church during last year's Days of Prayer and Action for Colombia.

Days of Prayer and Action for Colombia

April 6–7, 2014

Sign up today at washington.mcc.org/days. Advocacy and worship resources coming soon.

Colombia

The year 2013 was a crucial turning point in Colombia's history.

After more than 50 years of civil war, Colombia has shown signs of moving towards peace. Peace negotiations that began in 2012 between the Colombian government and the country's largest rebel group, the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) have progressed. Two of the six negotiation points were agreed upon: agrarian reform and political participation for opposition movements. These agreements are positive signs that peace can be achieved.

On April 28–29, 20 Mennonite congregations joined in the Days of Prayer and Action for Colombia. With the theme of "Now is the Time for Peace," congregations hosted events, focused on Colombia in their worship services, and signed a petition to President Obama calling for the United States to actively support the peace process by reducing the amount of military aid.

Much of this aid is used to eradicate illegal drugs produced in the country. In May aerial fumigation

destroyed a food security project of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Chocó, Colombia, despite promises from the government that they would not spray that region.

In October Ricardo Esquivia, director of *Sembrandopaz* (Sowing Peace), visited D.C. and met with congressional offices and the State Department to discuss threats against himself and other community leaders. Reps. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.), Joe Pitts (R-Pa.), and Frank Wolf (R-Va.) sent a joint letter to the U.S. Department of State, at the request of MCC and grassroots supporters, urging the State Department and the U.S. embassy in Colombia to take action on behalf of Ricardo Esquivia and other community leaders who are under threat.

MCC will continue to monitor this situation while advocating for a just and peaceful resolution to the decades long conflict. To learn more, see the Fall/Winter 2013 issue of the *Washington Memo* at washingtonmemo.org/newsletter/fall2013. —*Jacque Schrag*



Silas Crews/MCC

Johnny Louis, an engineer for Mennonite Central Committee Haiti, and Jean Jacques Tileon, project coordinator for MCC partner, Christian Center for Integrated Development, walk through the almost-finished housing project that they have worked on together in Cabaret, Haiti.

Haiti

In 2013 the MCC U.S. Washington Office continued to advocate for aid transparency and accountability in Haiti. After the earthquake hit Haiti in January 2010, Congress appropriated \$1.14 billion in reconstruction funds to help.

In February 2013 our office participated in a series of briefings on Capitol Hill commemorating three years since the earthquake. Theo Sither, our Senior Legislative Associate for International Affairs, moderated a panel discussion on addressing long-term housing concerns in Haiti. MCC partners from Haiti testified on the panel highlighting the need for adequate housing for the displaced.

The MCC U.S. Washington Office supports the Assessing Progress in Haiti Act, a bill that was introduced by Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.) in the House and Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.) in the Senate. The Assessing Progress in Haiti Act would help bring some transparency and accountability to U.S. aid efforts in Haiti by requiring the State Department to report on and account for the status of post-earthquake reconstruction and development efforts in Haiti.

The Washington Office, in coalition with other faith based and non-governmental organizations, worked to gain Republican support for the bill and advocated for its passage in

the House of Representatives. The Assessing Progress in Haiti Act passed in the House with bipartisan support in December. In the coming months, we will continue to advocate for its passage in the Senate.

In June 2013, Kristen and Wawa Chege, MCC advocacy workers in Haiti, visited Washington to meet with policymakers to convey MCC's experience and analysis from Haiti.

Our office has also advocated for sustainable solutions to the cholera epidemic. In October 2010, U.N. peacekeepers inadvertently introduced the disease to Haiti by tainting Haiti's largest river system with waste. More than 8,000 people have died from the disease and more than 600,000 people have contracted it. The disease has also begun to spread to other countries, leading to additional deaths.

The MCC U.S. Washington Office has worked with Congress to urge Ambassador Samantha Power, the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., to hold the United Nations accountable for

the outbreak and fully commit to funding the Cholera Elimination Plan to stop the spread of the disease. Reconstruction efforts in Haiti should include a proper water and sanitation infrastructure.

Reconstruction efforts should also focus on building sustainable housing. Four years after the earthquake, more than 100,000 people are still living in emergency shelters or substandard housing. In the summer of 2013, the MCC office in Haiti released a policy brief titled "Permanent, Social Housing in Haiti: Recommendations for the U.S. Government." The brief outlines the numerous challenges that Haitians face when it comes to housing, including a lack of funding that is dedicated to housing, a government relocation plan and illegal forced evictions.

As Haiti commemorates four years since the devastating earthquake, MCC will continue to advocate for U.S. policies that promote justice and holistic development and reconstruction efforts in Haiti. —*Jacque Schrag*

Theo Sither of the MCC U.S. Washington Office speaks at a congressional briefing on Haiti.



How to be an advocate

Christian political advocacy is a powerful opportunity for us to engage decision makers from a faith-based perspective and to show love for our neighbors in a tangible way.

Visiting a legislator's office, either locally or in Washington, D.C., is the most effective way for a citizen to do advocacy. Meeting locally with your legislator works best during congressional recesses.

Here are some tips for making a congressional visit:

- **Schedule your visit**, preferably at least two weeks in advance, specifying the issue you would like to discuss. Mention a preferred date, length of meeting, and the number of people coming.
- **Choose a specific issue** to discuss and assign roles if you are visiting as a group.
- **Prepare for the visit** by researching information on your legislator's co-sponsorship of bills and previous votes. The Washington Office is happy to help with this.
- **Keep it short and simple.** Keep your main message clear and concise, between three to five points. If possible, include personal stories. Listen well and feel free to ask them questions.
- **Leave materials.** It is useful to bring supporting materials or position papers to leave with the person you meet.
- **Write a follow up letter** thanking the legislator or staff member for the meeting. Reiterate your position.
- **Let us know how it went!**

Letters and e-mails are also excellent means to educate and persuade your member of Congress. Emails are good ways to ensure timely delivery of your views while providing a written record of your communication.

- **Keep it short** and focus on one subject.
- **State your purpose** and be clear what action you are asking the congressperson to take.
- **Identify the bill or issue.** It is helpful to summarize and include the bill number or legislation title when referring to a specific piece of legislation.
- **Personalize your message.** MCC often provides sample letters. Personalize them and use them to guide your own letter instead of copying them word-for-word. Be sure to identify yourself as a constituent and include personal stories and connections to your district.
- **Say "well done."** Be sure to thank your congressperson when they vote the right way or take a courageous stand!

Use social media accounts to talk to your Members of Congress. Let them act as educational and motivational tools to affect the way Congress makes policy in relation to the issues you are concerned about. Here are a few ideas:

- **Facebook:** Monitor and contribute comments to your congressperson's official Facebook page. Post things you find meaningful and helpful and tag your congressperson (i.e. @[name of congressperson]) to your posts.
- **Twitter:** Use Twitter to share what you are doing with your Members of Congress by sending them a direct tweet or mentioning them in your tweet. Look up a specific hashtag for topics you are tweeting on by using tagdef.com.

Thank you!

Many thanks to the following interns, who helped us out in 2013:

- Sterling Miller
- Danielle Crooks
- Sarah Gross
- Julia Stafford
- Brandon Waggy
- Jacque Schrag

IMPORTANT ADDRESSES

Senator _____
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-3121
senate.gov

Representative _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 224-3121
house.gov

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500
(202) 456-1111
president@whitehouse.gov

GET INVOLVED!

- Check out our website at washington.mcc.org.
- Read our blog at washingtonmemo.org.
- Follow us on **Twitter** at twitter.com/mccwashington. Like us on **Facebook** at facebook.com/MCCWashingtonOffice.

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 13–16

**Gun Violence Prevention
Sabbath Weekend**

washington.mcc.org/gvp-sabbath-weekend

March 21–24

Ecumenical Advocacy Days

*Jesus weeps—Resisting violence,
building peace*

Washington, D.C.
advocacydays.org

April 6–7

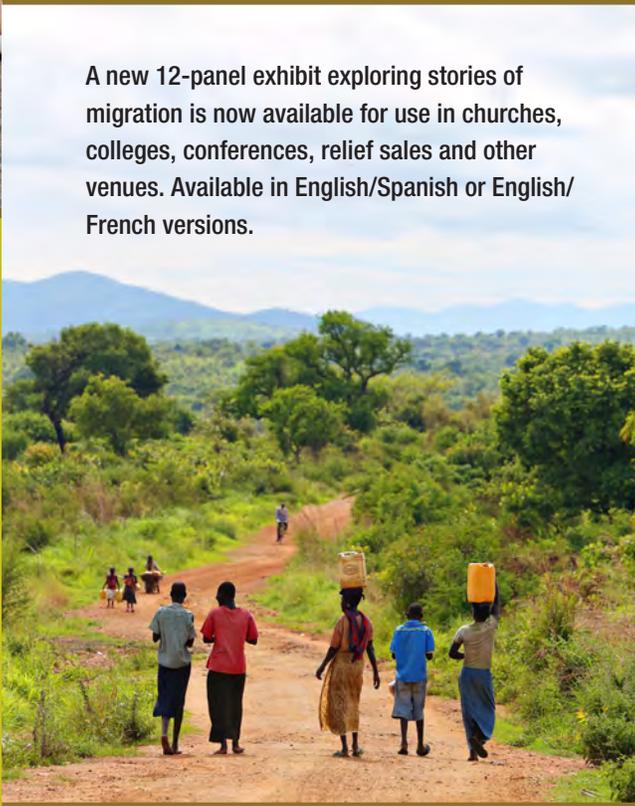
Days of Prayer and Action for Colombia

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WASHINGTON MEMO is published three times a year by Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office staff. Subscribe or change your address by sending an email to mccwash@mcc.org or by calling (202) 544-6564.

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All biblical quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.



Nina Linton/MCC

People on the move: The human face of migration

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