

Dear Bethel College Mennonite Church,

*Imaynalla!* Greetings from Bolivia! This past year has been full of many changes. Last January Leidy Muñoz and I married. Our wedding was in Bogotá, Colombia with a reception in Kansas. Leidy is from the Mennonite Church of Berna in Bogota, Colombia, and while we both come from distinct cultures and places in the world, we have found common ground in our Mennonite Anabaptist faith.

In February we both began a three-year service term with MCC in Bolivia where we now reside. We are living in the city of Cochabamba, which in Quechua means *land of the lagoons*. Couched in a valley within the Andes Mountains, Cochabamba is a gateway city between the vast low-lying plains of eastern Bolivia and the isolated high plains of western Bolivia.

Leidy and I will be co-facilitating an MCC program called Seed. This young adult program focuses on community accompaniment and peacebuilding. Volunteers will commit for a two-year service term working with Bolivian organizations.



January 9, 2016 – Bogota, Colombia



Mural of Andean imagery – Oruro, Bolivia



Charango workshop – Aiquile, Bolivia



Entering a mineral mine – Potosí, Bolivia

Bolivia is known today as a *pluri*-national state, recognizing the identity of several indigenous peoples that reside within the national borders. The distinct languages and apparel that date back several centuries characterize the people of the western highlands. At the same time the cities of Bolivia show a country that is desperately trying to keep up with modern global development. This fascinating mix of cultural forces can make for an interesting and at times very tense context.

Leidy and I have spent the past few months getting to know the western highlands and the variety of social justice issues that exist around mining, water rights, and urban farming. We have witnessed many realities from the darkness and isolation of mineral mining to the joy and solidarity of community gardens.

Leidy and I send you our blessings. May God be with you in all that life brings.

Nathan Toews and Leidy Muñoz