

*Presbyterian Church of Colombia*  
*Presbytery of the North Coast*

Barranquilla, December 23, 2024

Presbytery of the Miami Valley  
Presbyteries in Partnership  
Attention: Presbytery Executive, Miami Valley

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, please accept a warm greeting from our Assembly of the Presbytery of the North Coast gathered on December 13 and 14, 2024. It is a pleasure to be able to greet you in this time of Advent when hope is reborn and we are on our way to the celebration of the birth of the life that brought light to the world in Jesus.

We are also preparing to celebrate 30 years of relationship between our presbyteries, a time that has translated into fruits of familial fellowship, ranging from deep friendships between believers of both presbyteries, through the sister church connections of individual Churches, and culminating in feeling the vibrant and exciting adventure of walking together in shared mission despite the distance between us.

We share news from our Presbytery. Our Assembly was held in an atmosphere of reflection, work, and decisions that contribute to the advancement of the life of our churches and educational institutions. We continue to move forward in the midst of the challenges of the historic moment in which we live. The Presbytery Council has been ratified and is made up of:

Moderator: Rev. Adriano Portillo  
Secretary: Elder Gina Zabala  
Treasurer: Rev. Vilma Yáñez  
1st Vocal: Elder Signey de la Sala  
2nd Vocal: Rev. Flor Cárdenas

It is also a source of joy for us to share with you that Rev. Cristhian Gómez has been ratified by the Presbytery Council for an additional term in 2025.

We join you in prayer for the Presbytery of the Miami Valley, its pastors, its leaders who are Ruling Elders, and all the families that comprise it. We wish you meaningful worship celebrations, many opportunities for learning, and many blessings for all faith communities during this Christmas season. We hope to see you soon and continue this journey in which the Spirit of God has guided us during all these years to grow together and find possibilities for mutuality, cooperation, and the transformation of our lives and institutions. May the peace of God always be with you.

**Assembly of the Presbytery of the North Coast 2024, Presbyterian Church of Colombia**

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**STATEMENT OF THE PRESBYTERY OF THE NORTH COAST ON  
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND FOR PEACE**

*In Christ there is no longer man or woman. Galatians 3:28*

The Presbytery of the North Coast of the Presbyterian Church of Colombia met in its 99<sup>th</sup> Assembly in Barranquilla on December 13 and 14, 2024. In analyzing the reality of the violence that affects our country, and in light of the reflection on the word of God that calls us to sisterhood with vulnerable people, the Assembly expresses its concern and rejects the violence against women and girls that has been increasing in recent years in Colombia. We express this concern based on the following facts:

- Femicides (*commonly defined as “the gender-based murder of a woman or girl by a man”*) in Colombia continue to be a cause for alarm. According to data from the Colombian Femicide Observatory, as of September 2024, 673 femicides have already occurred this year in our country, which means that in these months almost 3 women have been murdered per day.
- According to figures from the Instituto de Medicina Legal, more than 13,000 women were victims of sexual violence and more than 26,000 women were victims of domestic violence between January and September 2024. The Instituto de Medicina Legal also points out that more than 3,000 children and adolescents were victims of intrafamilial violence between January and September 2024.
- In some regions of the country, armed groups continue to threaten women and have declared women to be military targets, resorting to gender-based violence as a control strategy in the midst of territorial disputes. This strategy was dubbed “Plan Femicide” by one of these groups.
- Although in Colombia we have legal instruments to prevent and confront violence against women, such as Law 1257 of 2008 and Law 1761 of 2015, known as Rosa Elvira Cely, and the country has signed the Convention on the Elimination of Violence against Women, we see that these are not adequately complied with or are very slow, since they generally do not prevent murder and there are tendencies to justify and normalize the violence suffered by women and girls.

Faced with this reality, which the United Nations has declared a human tragedy, the Assembly of the Presbytery of the North Coast calls on the Presbyterian Church of Colombia (IPC) and our

communities to initiate programs and actions to prevent and end violence against women and girls. These actions must seek to:

- a. That the IPC synod and presbyteries strengthen peace-building, prevention, protection, and care programs that contribute to ending violence against women, girls, and boys who are victims of violence.
- b. Advocate for the national government and local authorities to make strides in the effective implementation of legal frameworks, public policies, and plans to protect and end violence and femicide against women.
- c. Create legal support programs so that there is justice for women and that the judicial and police systems have the necessary capacity and sensitivity to handle cases of violence against girls and women.
- d. Insist that the government's peace talks with the different armed groups include agreements for the protection and ending of violence against women, boys, and girls.

The North Coast Presbytery invites our faith communities, educational institutions, social projects, and their settings to become safe spaces free of violence against women and girls, since every act of violence against them, no matter how small, contributes to a cycle that culminates in femicides. Ignoring it is allowing it to be repeated. We need to promote capacity building programs in Gender Justice and it is urgent to work for a culture that does not allow violence to be normalized so that we can create a present and future where men and women fully enjoy the dignity that God has given us and we can live together in peace.

**Assembly of the Presbytery of the North Coast, Presbyterian Church of Colombia**