

Engaging

Equipping for mission today

REACH
Renewing, Engaging
and Advocating Churches

Session 2

Presence and Perceptions: A Story from Ecuador

Marilyn Cooper

FEDICE, one of Global Ministries partners in Ecuador, helps people help themselves. Much of their work is in indigenous communities in the Ecuador highlands, both north and south of Quito. They cannot help every community, but when a community asks for assistance, they will try to provide it in the form of agricultural and animal husbandry training, short term financial aid, assistance in building pre-schools and community centers, and high school and college scholarships.

As a FEDICE volunteer, I have been assisting since 2010. When groups come from the U.S. to help with a construction project or medical mission, I often assist, especially if the group is working north of Quito. But those visits only happen occasionally. For the rest of the year, I teach English in various pre-schools and for short times as a “day camp” experience around Otavalo.

When I first arrived in Ecuador, I felt my presence was a blessing to the people with whom I worked as well as people I simply passed on the street. I often smiled at passersby just knowing that the smile passed on Christian love.

After five years, I am not so sure. If someone were to smile at me in the U.S., would I think that smile was a blessing from a fellow Christian? Is sharing my time by teaching English a Christian blessing? Am I really sharing the love of Christ? What does my presence say to others?



Marilyn Cooper, a member of United Christian Church, Austin, Texas, serves with the Ecumenical Foundation for Integral Development, Training and Education (FEDICE). She is working in preschools and community centers in Indigenous communities teaching English.