

Finding ourselves this morning in Bogota is based on a host of relationships. In particular, when stepping out from the airport to see a sign and logo of the Global Christian Forum and then to hear another say: "you must be Christine" – not dressed in my Salvation Army uniform – had me break out in a smile reciprocated by our great volunteer hosts of the churches in Bogota who met us as if I was their long lost relative. I needed a ride to the hotel and the Global Christian Forum hosts had a ride for me. I could say to myself that relationship is no longer a part of who I am - it is complete. And yet, as I think of the warmth of spirit in which I was met, that relationship is not old it lives with me as a form of gratitude - a mutual love.

The World Evangelical Alliance, now well over 150 years old can be viewed as over 150 years young. For all of us coming from our Christian expressions of both new and old, history and history in the making, we ask the question: do relationships get old or are they newly revived?

The early beginnings of the World Evangelical Alliance came about when returned missionaries of various denominations were looking for acknowledgement of their experiences. Coming off boats of long journeys, did they have a sense anyone was interested in their stories of new lands?

These returned missionaries did not get the welcome I received this week at the airport from Philippe and Miller. They began to seek out mutual circles of acceptance and accountability. They discovered in themselves a desire for mutual love to continue and thus the World Evangelical Alliance was birthed of their new worlds as evangelicals needing support.

When we consider old and new the rapidity of communication through media and virtual engagement has our brains let alone our spirits having difficulties to understand at depth. Our intention of building a relational Kingdom of God creates tension within us. I noticed on the program outline for this session in brackets after my name was (USA). I am a Canadian but who knows perhaps Canada while I was in flight became the new northern state of the US and the Global Christian Forum being ahead of their time picked up on it. Yes, an exaggerated example and yet the pace of our world has us waking up daily to new constructs while we engage in constructing God's Kingdom of relationships in Him and through Him with one another.

This morning two of our presenters reflect differences of old and new worlds, differences in gender, language, culture and age but with a desire to live a message of God who is unchanging and seeking to stabilize our past, present and future in new and refreshing ways of truth and Life. God does not get old. The testimonies to be shared are witness that relationships make a difference.

God only knows that outside this community a momentum of 65 million refugees and displaced persons are finding or losing their way, looking for an open space of home. As this Global Christian Forum appreciates our broad base of churches exploring and addressing such common challenges. Challenges taken up because our mutual love for God's so loved and so unloved world calls us beyond the comfort zone of our structures and familiar communication into the imagination that only unity in Christ's love can create. Newness of life.

Christine MacMillan