Down by the Riverside

This past Sunday morning, I was blessed to be present for the sacrament of Baptism at the Disciples of Christ church in Ciudad del Este, Paraguay. After the Sunday morning service, the whole congregation caravanned down to the river on the city’s outskirts. The two pastors and several elders marched into the water, and then the deacons escorted 70 new church members into the river to be baptized. Everyone shared in the spirit of joy.

The people being baptized were accompanied to the water’s edge with warm encouragement by family, friends, and the 8-12 people that each person meets with once or twice a week for Bible Study and devotion. This allows people to form close friendships and get to know one another even in a church with over 700 members.

Some were young, maybe 11 or 12, while others were more advanced in life. Many were serious, but a few were laughing. Some had been born and raised in the city; others had migrated from the campo. Yet despite all of this, everyone shared in beginning a new phase of their faith journey—the moment when they committed themselves to following Christ together with the whole congregation.

The experience of their baptism must have been exhilarating, overwhelming, and reassuring, all at the same time.

Prayer: God of the nations, in a time of divisions and difficulties for many, may we all be refreshed by your presence and promise. May we each remember our baptisms into the life of Jesus Christ and allow him to guide us each day to make the right decisions. And, may we be opened up to the magic of the Holy Spirit who throughout time and space knits us together, through love, into one body. In the name of all that is holy, Amen."

James deBoer and Marian Thorpe were long-term missionaries with the Disciples of Christ in Argentina and Paraguay. They served as consultants for Mission Development.