

Newsletter

Keeping in Mind Global Mission In South America

Churches implementing emergency response actions

The coronavirus epidemic has different curves in each country in Latin America. Still, in all of them, it produces destruction changing the daily life of all the people who inhabit this multicolored region of more than 600 million people, who work hard, who progress with great effort, and who are predisposed to good spirits.

Latin Americans survive in societies that climb slowly and then fall back into the pit of inequality and inflation. The region has been fighting for equality and democracy for more than a century, between oligarchic governments, military dictatorships, coups d'état, and democratic processes that have achieved some good changes. The struggle and progress seem, now, to be vanished due to the blind force of the coronavirus.

The region is mourning the loss of human lives of friends and family and colleagues and knows that very hard times will come due to the crisis in the economy, the collapse of industries, businesses, and family's income. For the poorest, hunger lurks.

Latin America has been, and will be, the continent of hope, not because things have worked well, but because of the way societies face problems, how they look at the past and the future, how they live life. Hope is part of everyday life, even in the most difficult moments.

South America was, at the beginning of 2020, with serious problems to solve: the healing of the nascent democratic life in Bolivia, the configuration of a new system of economic-social balances in Chile, the threat of destroying the peace processes in Colombia, the populist and undemocratic risk in Argentina, the danger of authoritarian discourses and policies in Brazil, the constraints on the institutional order in Peru. Things were not right before coronavirus, and they will be much worse after the epidemic

Everything seems to indicate that the problems that had no solution before the COVID -19, such as education, health, the generation and fair distribution of wealth, citizen security, and adherence to democratic culture, will continue without a solution after the epidemic, but in a worse situation.

However, there is the capacity to resist. In the region, it is not necessary to create hope and resilience because it was already created, but to know how to identify efforts, see examples of overcoming and adaptation in critical moments, and take into account the strength and resistance of societies, families, and individuals.

On this basis, the ELCA Companion Churches are making contributions based on the theology of the cross; because weakness makes us more human, and it brings us closer to the Risen Christ. The churches in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Brazil, and Peru face their challenges and bear witness, fulfilling their mission and their call.

The churches are facing uncertainty, fragility, insecurity, and threats; however, from their faith in the Triune God are responding to the challenge of the coronavirus, celebrating the victory of life at Easter, and sustaining the hope as a primary dimension of faith.



Maria Chirinos, diaconal agent. IL-P Peru, visiting and delivering foodstuff



Bogotá Colombia. IELCO. Rains of Grace Mission. Migrants Support Project. LDR

Churches promoting community organizing and resilience

The ELCA companion churches Colombia (IELCO) Peru (IL-P), Bolivia (IELB), Venezuela (IELV), Chile (IELCH), Brazil (IECLB), Argentina, Uruguay (IELU) are alive, active and in service. Not all of them have the same capacities, therefore not all do the same thing, nor at the same time, but this is a description of the activities that the Lutheran churches are doing.

-Companion churches regularly hold their Word celebration, Prayer, and Bible study meetings, but these traditional activities are now through online communication. All churches have broken the limitations of quarantine and physical isolation and created new digital spaces to maintain celebration and koinonia relationships. It is enough to see the web pages, Facebook, and YouTube channels that have been the traditional channels of the churches. But they have also incorporated the use of WhatsApp, Instagram, Zoom, and Jitsi Meet to gather people and celebrate the Word. Some churches in the region have reached consensus to administer communion in the context of their online services. Interestingly, the traditional members of the churches participate in these expressions of digital communication, but also new people who have approached; in some cases, there is a revival and evangelization by digital means.

-Companion churches have created new strategies for pastoral and spiritual care for church members and non-members. Churches are intensively using the contact through social networks, by phone through messages; they are maintaining the physical-bodily distance, but increasing the spiritual closeness

-Companion churches are creating or reaffirming exiting Emergency Response Teams that include ordained and lay leaders, men and women and young people with diverse gifts, teams have implemented emergency response actions, with food and hygiene kits distribution

-Companion churches have created pieces of public health information, according to each context, and neutralizing erroneous information and creating trusting relationships with their neighborhoods

-Companion churches have adapted Bible and devotional studies that provide tools to deal with fear, hope, prevention of transmission, mourning, and caring for communities and individuals in times of pandemic, helping people to address concerns and emotions right now.

-Companion churches are praying and encouraging the health workers who are bearing the greatest tension in this pandemic.

-Companion churches are supporting processes of community organization and community resilience, identifying the skills and resources of all kinds in communities to prepare for a potentially more serious situation, and helping to create conditions for a more effective recovery once the pandemic has passed.

Most of these efforts are self-sustained by the churches. However, some of these activities need support. ELCA Mission Global has been active in providing relief from Lutheran Disaster Response to support emergency programs in Colombia (IELCO) Peru (IL-P), Bolivia (IELB), Venezuela (IELV), Chile (IELCH), Brazil (IECLB), Argentina, Uruguay (IELU)



Taliitha Kum Congregation Cusco.
IL-P. Peru.
Women Health. World Hunger Project.



La Paz Congregation. Osorno.
IELCH. Chile.
Migrants Support. LDR Project.

YOUR SUPPORT

A COMMITMENT WITH GLOBAL MISSION

HERE'S HOW TO GIVE:

Give through your synod office or mail your check to: ELCA, Gift Processing Center, P.O. Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009. By credit or debit card: <https://community.elca.org/MissionaryGiving>

Make check payable to "ELCA Global Church Sponsorship" with "Gustavo Driau GCS2045" in the memo line.

ELCA missionaries have helped establish growing churches throughout the world. As a result, we are now part of a much larger story — a global community of more than 70 million Lutherans in 79 countries

PRAYER

Beloved God,

We pray to be able to walk in love and compassion during this hard time of uncertainty, especially for the most vulnerable and at risk for COVID-19

We pray for those who are sick and for all the people who care for them

We ask that you provide discernment with justice and mercy, and that you help us live each day in faith trusting in your grace and unconditional love for us.

We ask that you provide wisdom to those who must make decisions that affect thousands of people and situations. Amen

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