

Guatemala, April 8/2020

***“Help one another bear your burdens and so you will fulfill the law of Christ”
Galatians 6:2***

To all of our brothers and sisters in Christ:

In these moments, we live in uncertainty, in which we do not know what will happen tomorrow. I want to make a plea for a call to action, for us to think further about the lives of those who we serve.

We ask you to think about how our brothers and sisters in our rural farming communities are doing, as they do not have a monthly salary, savings, or a trust. Think of the people who do not have access to basic services, not even access to buy soap to wash their worked and tired hands; people who do not have access to a hospital or even a clinic near their community or home. Can you imagine what life could be like without these resources that give us a certain security and guarantee that our basic needs will be met?

This is the situation of our farming brothers and sisters in rural areas. We carry them in our souls, in our hearts and in our prayers at this time, as we have not been able to visit them in person, due to restrictive measures for prevention that our government has taken for the well-being of our country in order to prepare for what is to come. During this time, the only means of communication we have had with our rural communities has been via cell phone, and we are talking about a basic cell phone for communication, not a smart phone.

We are concerned for their health and food security: two basic human rights to which not everyone has access, especially in the rural areas, where ILAG has accompanied people living in extreme poverty for 30 years. This is the most vulnerable population in our country, as they have no access to health care services and limited access to food.

In order to better explain this, we want to share a link of Philanthropic Foundation, who expresses the concern for rural farming communities in a very clear way. Please take the time to read it:

<https://gophilanthropic.org/impact-of-coronavirus-in-rural-guatemala/>

In addition to sharing this information we ask your prayers, for health, mercy and love for one another as we go through this pandemic, and also we take the liberty in this call to action to ask for your help in solidarity, to send an offering for an emergency relief fund to buy food and hygiene supplies for one month for these farming families. It is very important that our brothers and sisters from these rural faith communities do not go outside of their villages to look for food and risk exposure to the COVID-19 virus, which would lead to massive tragedy in their communities.

Our pastoral team, together with the leaders from these rural communities, made a list of supplies that are most needed in the immediate future. Please remember that each family consists of an average of 8 or more people, including many children and elderly. This

means that we are supporting each person with less than \$ 15, so that they have everything that is necessary to survive for one month.

The list that follows was created from communication with the community leaders:

100 pounds of corn	Q.	200	\$	27
25 pounds of beans	Q.	125	\$	17
25 pounds of rice	Q	125	\$	17
25 pounds of incaparina	Q	75	\$	10
(Incaparina is a vitamin-fortified protein drink mix)				
25 pounds of sugar	Q	125	\$	17
10 pounds of salt	Q	20	\$	3
Hygiene supplies	Q	100	\$	14
TOTAL PER FAMILY	Q	<u>770</u>	\$	<u>105</u>

This budget is for each family, and we have a total of 450 families who need this life-sustaining help.

The way that we are planning to sent this aid is through trucks that are allowed by the government to deliver food. These trucks are the only vehicles authorized by the government to be out on the roads at this time.

This emergency relief needs to be delivered in the middle of the month of May, when we believe the crisis and lack of food will be at its worst. By mid-May, families will have spent several weeks living in quarantine. We also understand that these are difficult times for everyone and that it may take longer for donations to come in, so we hope that highlighting this call to action will help in planning ahead for future events in the upcoming months.

We greatly appreciate your support; we know that you are also going through difficult times. You are in our prayers and our hearts every day at 4:00 PM when we pause for prayer in Guatemala.

Grateful for the gift of life,
On behalf of the Augustinian Lutheran Church of Guatemala

Rev. Karen Castillo
President