

God's Love

IN ACTION



IN THIS ISSUE:

How your congregation's LOVE
is keeping families together in Guatemala

Restoring HOPE:
Addressing the root causes of migration

Türkiye UPDATE: How your generosity
is reaching our neighbors in Türkiye



LUTHERAN
WORLD RELIEF

CONNECTING LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS WITH
NEIGHBORS AROUND THE WORLD | **SPRING 2023**

God's Love IN ACTION

DEAR PARTNER IN MINISTRY,

Thank you for your love and leadership that is reaching far beyond the walls of your church. As a parish pastor, I know you receive many requests seeking the support of your congregation. The choices are never easy to make. Thank you for making those hard decisions.

A recent report by the United Nations indicated the number of people needing humanitarian assistance in 2023 will grow by 25% to 339 million people. That's roughly the size of the United States.

Simply put, the needs of our neighbors around the world are growing. Lives are still being shattered by the war in Ukraine. Millions of people in Türkiye are living in temporary shelters. Children, women and men are fleeing from their homes in Central America because of violence and limited job opportunities.

The needs are too great for one congregation, and yet when we work together, we can make an incredible difference. This newsletter highlights some of the ways our neighbors desperately need your congregation's love.

Thank you for trusting Lutheran World Relief to be your hands and feet in the world as we do God's work together. We will continue to persist until your love reaches every neighbor.

In faith,



**AMBASSADOR
DANIEL SPECKHARD**
President and CEO



Roselvina no longer thinks of migrating away from her community. Your compassion has empowered Roselvina to be a strong female leader and provide for her family.

How your congregation's *love* is **empowering women** and keeping **families together** in Guatemala

Roselvina De León González smiles as she dices tomatoes and onions she grew in her garden plot, chatting casually with a guest as she prepares a nutritious meal for her family. She beams with pride as she shows off the star of the show: a meaty oyster mushroom she grew in the greenhouse module she co-owns with her brother Oribel. Joy made possible by the generosity of caring congregations like yours.

Oribel and Roselvina have learned to cultivate these mushrooms near their home in the Cantón Pin Pin community in Tacaná, Guatemala. The siblings have improved their own and their families' health by adding the mushrooms — which contain fiber, protein and a variety of vitamins and minerals — to their diets, and they have also begun earning an income by selling them to their neighbors.

"Because I take care of my health, I take care of my neighbor's health, of my family's health, by consuming this nutritious food," Roselvina says.

“We have learned how to feed our families, how to feed our children,” adds Rosaura Sunun Gomez, an agricultural developer and local Lutheran World Relief partner. Rosaura receives training in agricultural practices and dietary needs and then shares the information with local community members like Roselvina and Oribel, who in turn share it with their neighbors. She gives families the knowledge and skills they need to produce their own food.

Your love shared through Lutheran World Relief not only enables families to avoid traveling to markets to buy their food, but it also helps them stay in their communities rather than migrate to seek work.

Roselvina and Oribel's sister tried twice to immigrate to the USA because of lack of economic opportunities in their local community, but she was turned away. Roselvina sees every day how opportunities like oyster mushroom farming are changing the lives of people like her sister, who has since returned to the community. **“To no longer think about migrating is the goal,”** says Roselvina.



WATCH THE FEATURE VIDEO

Thanks to the generosity of congregations like yours, Roselvina has learned how to farm mushrooms and earn a profitable income. Her family no longer thinks of migrating. To watch the video, visit lwr.org/congregations.

Thanks to the generosity of Lutherans in the US, the education they've received has empowered Roselvina and Rosaura and other women like them, in a community where agriculture was traditionally considered men's work. **“We have learned that we also can get things done as women,”** Rosaura notes.

Today, Rosaura is dreaming big. “We already know we can generate income here so that we no longer have to emigrate,” she says. “Our goal is to be a large company and not only sell here in the municipality but perhaps to export one day.” ■



Manolo, Roselvina's 12-year-old son, holds a baby goat named Ernesto, on his family's farm.

**“We have learned
how to feed our
families, how to
feed our children.”**



SUPPORT FAMILIES LIKE ROSELVINA'S

Your congregation's love can help **empower more women and keep families and communities together**. Visit lwr.org/congregations to watch and share a powerful video featuring Roselvina with your congregation.

To support families like Roselvina's, send your congregation's gift to:

Lutheran World Relief, PO Box 17061
Baltimore, MD 21297-1061
or give online at lwr.org/congregations.

Restoring Hope

ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES OF MIGRATION



IN GUATEMALA, Maily Lucia (above) lives with her mother and older sister. Before your love provided education for the women in her village, Maily's mother was unable to farm and use agriculture as a means to support her family. Your generous gift will help us reach farther so that children across Central America will have healthy, nutritious meals each day.

Across Central America, a host of factors are driving high levels of migration, especially among youth. Research indicates that grinding poverty and lack of economic opportunities are the major push factors, but violence and political instability are also key drivers of migration. Back-to-back hurricane systems Eta and Iota that followed similar destructive paths across the region in 2020, as well as the heavy toll of the COVID pandemic, have only further exacerbated the dire situation for many Central Americans.

But that's not the whole story.

IN EL SALVADOR, Williams (below, left), a 30-year-old father of two, was able to earn a diploma in cocoa production and has started his own chocolate business. Williams buys fermented cocoa beans, toasts, grinds and mixes them with sugar and spices to make a delicious product. His wife, Margarita, and their two children help to package the chocolates. The love of congregations like yours paid Williams' tuition expenses and now Williams can provide for his family.

IN HONDURAS, Dilcia (above, right), 21, learned the basics of coffee cultivation and is working on her family's farm, hoping to become part of the next generation of agricultural entrepreneurs. Dilcia watched many of her peers leave for urban areas in search of more stable income opportunities, but because of congregations like yours, Dilcia is able to attend technical trainings and learn the skills she needs to remain home and be successful.

Both Williams and Dilcia felt compelled to leave everything they had and knew in search of a better life, but the love and generosity of congregations like yours is restoring their hope for a future where they are now — a future where migration isn't their only option.



Oscar Leiva Martinez for LWR



Thousands of young adults across Central America lack these kinds of economic opportunities. But your love can make a real difference. **Your congregation can reach our neighbors before they leave home by giving the gift of hope through education for young adults like Williams and Dilcia.** ■



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Baltimore, MD 21297-1061

or give online at lwr.org/congregations.

📍 In El Salvador, I SEE HOPE

a Reflection by Carolyn Barker-Villena, Senior Regional Director, Latin America

Whenever I return from visiting our neighbors in Central America, I can't stop thinking about the places I visited and the people I met — **people not despairing but filled with hope and working to improve their lives and their communities.**

In their faces I see so much hope for a life that would sustain them and their families. The same hope I see in the eyes of children, women and men attempting to cross the border into the US, seeking asylum. **All the young people I meet in El Salvador, one of three countries that make up the Northern Triangle, are clear that they want to remain in their homes and avoid the treacherous journey north.** But a history of gang violence, weak government presence, corruption and limited job opportunities makes that desire to stay in their country all the more challenging.

No matter what you believe about the border crisis, we can all agree that Salvadorans should have a real chance to thrive in their home country. And that the youth of El Salvador, with their hope and desire to grow old at home, are worth investing in.

This is not an easy task and not one that can be done alone. It takes congregations like yours working in partnership with organizations like Lutheran World Relief, alongside local and international governments. It is through these partnerships that we have seen the social fabric of communities strengthened and thousands more Central Americans earning enough income to support their families.

Yes, people continue to migrate. And yes, there is still a long way to go until El Salvador and its neighboring countries in

the Northern Triangle, Honduras and Guatemala, are stable enough to ensure their own people's future. **But your love — our love — must persist in the Northern Triangle as we address the root causes of migration. Real change takes time and commitment.**

We all have the same hope for our children: a future.

By supporting Lutheran World Relief, your congregation's love can invest in making your neighbors' hope for a future at home a real possibility. ■



Carolyn Barker-Villena congratulates a new graduate in El Salvador who earned a diploma in cocoa management. The education program teaches the basics of cocoa cultivation, export and entrepreneurship.

UPDATE

HOW YOUR GENEROSITY IS REACHING OUR NEIGHBORS IN TÜRKIYE



Lutheran World Relief staff members Fred McCray and Emily Grose were on the ground in central Antakya days after the Feb. 6 earthquake.

Thanks to the generosity of congregations and compassionate Lutherans working together, your love was on the ground in Türkiye and providing hope for our neighbors almost immediately after the devastating earthquakes.

You are delivering necessities including tents, tarps, winter clothing and solar lights. The first shipment from Lutheran World Relief arrived in Türkiye in February. We are also coordinating with partners to distribute ready-to-eat food and hot meals, sleeping bags, sleeping mats and winter clothing, and are working to ship LWR Quilts, Baby Care Kits and Personal Care Kits.

Members of our Humanitarian Action team deployed to Türkiye within days of the earthquakes to support response operations, and are coordinating with local organizations, UN agencies and other international humanitarian organizations to ensure aid is delivered effectively, without duplication, and meeting most urgent needs.



11,000+ aftershocks
in the month following
the earthquakes



530,000+
people have been forced
to evacuate their homes



73,000+ buildings
have been recorded as
collapsed or severely damaged



1.9 million+
people living in
temporary shelter



20 million+
people in Türkiye affected
by the earthquakes

\$5,300 will provide safety and shelter
for a family for up to three years.

Our team is working with local partners to build a prefabricated container housing community in Kirikhan, a district in Türkiye extremely hard hit by the quakes. The community will consist of containers that will be able to house up to six people and include two rooms, a bathroom with a shower and toilet, a cooking area with a small sink, and a small garden plot. Each container costs \$5,300 and will provide safety and shelter for a family for up to three years.



Can your congregation support the cost of this important temporary housing for a family?

All gifts will directly support earthquake survivors. Gifts can be made at lwr.org/quake or mailed to **Lutheran World Relief, PO Box 17061, Baltimore, MD 21297-1061. Please write "quake" in the memo.**

Visit lwr.org/congregations for links to our most recent videos and earthquake response updates.



Many families like Onur and Feride's are living in tent cities with little access to essential supplies and services. This area is also home to many Syrian refugees who have already had to flee their homes at least once because of danger.

'GOD BLESS YOU ALL'

Onur and Feride Aaıkgöz and their children — whose home in Kirikhan collapsed on February 6 — now rely on the kindness of strangers.

"It was like the apocalypse. The shouting, screams, buildings collapsed, the children were covered in blood. We didn't know what to do," Onur said, recalling the moment the earthquake struck.

Their family now lives in a 10-by-10 tent in a camp outside their city. Unable to retrieve any belongings from their home, they struggle to find what they need. Entire market systems have collapsed, and shops have been looted. And while there are showers and bathrooms in the camp, there are not

nearly enough. The available electric supply isn't sufficient to even run their stove.

Their 12-year-old daughter Azra remembers the fear she felt when the shaking started. **"At that moment, it was as if life was over for me."** Many members of their extended family did not survive and are still in the rubble.

Your congregation's love can help families like Onur and Feride's find safe, longer-term housing by supporting the construction costs of a container home.

Feride asked us to tell you, **"God bless you all ... and everyone who thinks of us, those who aim to help us, support us from outside."** ■



Feride and Onur Aaıkgöz sit with their 5-year-old son Onur Asaf and 12-year-old daughter Azra and their cat, Duman, in the family's tent in Kirikhan.



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emergencies
happen**

LWR.ORG/CONGREGATIONS

Sign up for our congregational leader email list today and receive current updates when disasters happen around the world. Know how your congregation can be at the front lines and sharing God's love with our neighbors when they need it most.



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

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700 LIGHT ST
BALTIMORE, MD 21230



The love of congregations who have closed their doors has left a lasting impact on communities along the banks of the Gandak River in northern India. The introduction of flood safety practices allows fathers like Rajendra to keep his family safe. New farming techniques — like rooftop farming and hanging mushroom crops — mean that Annu and her sisters will have healthy meals year-round.



FROM DEATH TO NEW LIFE: How Funding From Closing Congregations Provides New Life to Our Neighbors

The decision to close a church is never made easily and is always accompanied by deep grief. And yet as Christians we cling closely to the resurrection promise that from death comes new life. In recent years, Lutheran World Relief has received more than \$1 million in gifts from congregations that have closed their doors and turned the death of their congregation into new life for our neighbors in need around the world.

To learn more about how a closing congregation can provide lasting hope into the future, please contact us at congregations@lwr.org.

We give thanks to God for the faith communities whose love and compassion is reaching beyond grief to provide hope for our neighbors around the world.

HONOR YOUR CONGREGATION'S QUILTERS

For decades, Lutheran World Relief quilters have been a part of the fabric of countless congregations. **Many closing congregations have considered a final gift to Lutheran World Relief as an important way to honor the love that the congregation's quilters shared throughout their ministry.**