



Sept 2020

## Greetings from Guatemala!

*The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.*  
*Exodus 14:14*

These words were spoken to the Israelites by Moses as they had escaped Egypt and faced uncertainty in what lay ahead. Through our weekly chapel time with our CBM colleagues, we have also been challenged to enter into this stillness, to practice being in the presence of God and to “hear” how and what He may be speaking into our present situation. This past 6 months of living with a pandemic has created challenges way beyond our ability to manage on our own. During this time, we want to focus on the fact that God is in control and that he has not left us on our own.

While we may be physically separated from our supporting churches and friends, from our colleagues, and global partners, we have experienced very close connections as we share struggles or losses and brainstorm together on how to provide immediate support while re-evaluating future plans during these uncertain times.

To bring you into our Latin America (LA) context, we share some of the present challenges, how our partners are managing and adapting and what we are collectively learning during the reality of the pandemic.

## Dealing with food insecurity

Much of LA is facing food insecurity mostly due to prolonged restrictions on transportation and business. While food is available, not everyone has access. Malnutrition and hunger have been present for years, but the pandemic has caused the most vulnerable to be much worse off. Our partners initially have been supporting those most affected with food basics, water and sometimes cash for several months and are now shifting to consider how they can promote agricultural activities as well as help revive small businesses (70-80% of people live from small enterprises in the informal economy). CBM has been able to augment the

local churches’ resources to provide immediate assistance and we are now working alongside our partners to prioritize activities, and develop strategic thinking and flexibility around project activities. In all the LA countries where we partner, COVID cases continue to increase even while the lock downs and restrictions are being relaxed to start up economies. Our partners are shifting priorities, for example in El Salvador, our partner FEBES has shifted some CBM funds to purchase video equipment to allow the churches to continue to communicate when there is no access to the internet. Our Cuban and Bolivian partners are in the process of looking at all their programming to see where they can adapt and be better prepared to support the recovery from the pandemic in 2021.

## Lessons learned

CBM takes a long-term approach to partnership and programming, working at the invitation of the local church. We have seen the power of the local church being close to the most needy, providing a volunteer base in the community, connecting with local authorities and as a result being able to do good work and be a very present witness of God’s love for all people. We are privileged to be a trusted partner in some of these initiatives.

We are thankful that our Canadian churches continue to be faithful supporters, allowing CBM to support partner efforts to be salt and light in their communities.

**Going forward** we are focusing on communicating regularly with our partners, walking with them to re-assess their projects and build capacity, and to move from **Relief to Recovery**. As we have the privilege of knowing partners in 5 LA countries, we are also looking at how to **connect** partners with one another to share their experience and encourage each other. We so look forward to when we can once again host Canadian church teams to experience SENT opportunities for mutual learning and engagement with the LA Church.

In a recent conversation with the Gladys Ortiz, president of ABES, El Salvador, we asked specifically how she sees Canadian Baptist Women being engaged with our Salvadoran partner. I have taken liberty with her response to include all Canadian Baptists, *“I see Canadian Baptists contextualizing the reality of the Salvadoran people, getting involved in the work of the Integral Mission of the church and in the midst of despair showing that God has plans **with** them and that they have a lot of work to do from their trench. I see the presence of Canadian Baptists bringing hope to the hearts of men, women, children and adolescents.”*



ABES COVID food assistance

*Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy. Prov 31:8-9*

### Gratitude and Prayer Requests

A silver lining of this COVID challenge has been that many churches that have had very limited connections with community members outside of their church family, have stepped up and out, serving the most vulnerable, regardless of their church membership. We pray that this will continue even when life returns to “normal”!

Please pray:

- That we will be able to safely host SENT team from Canadian churches in 2021 (we have made plans, but are holding them loosely)
- For the sick and bereaved families in all our partner communities.
- For wisdom and integrity on the part of government leaders as restrictions lift even while COVID continues.
- For our CBM colleagues in Bolivia, who continue to face significant restrictions, and political unrest while trying to respond to the daily physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of those who come to them often in desperate need. Unofficially, as much as 50% of Bolivia’s population has contracted COVID and over 100 evangelical pastors working on the front lines have lost their lives.
- For the two of us, that we remember to claim the verses, *Be still, and know that I am God (Ps 46:10)* and that He has us in His hands, *I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you. (Is 46:4)*

**Thank you!** To all those who support us and the work of CBM, many of you since we started this work 14+ years ago, helping local churches reach the most vulnerable. Follow CBM work weekly through CBM Calling live on Facebook and YouTube, Tuesdays @ 12:30 pm EST You can also check out a few new resources on the CBM website [www.cbmin.org](http://www.cbmin.org) including Build your Own Sunday <https://www.cbmin.org/buildyourownsunday/> And the latest Mosaic is available online. While this issue has been in the works for almost one year it is very appropriate for today:

<https://indd.adobe.com/view/6f6346e9-08d5-434e-9da4-ff2dcd381ff0>

Blessings!

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