



March 2021

Greetings from Guatemala!

We are just beginning Semana Santa or Holy Week, an important time in the calendar for Christians world wide as we reflect on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Historic, nearby Antigua typically has religious processions several times per day for the entire week, with many thousand visitors from Guatemala, and from all over the world. Smaller villages celebrate Semana Santa with their own meaningful processions and activities. Many of this year's events have once again been cancelled due to COVID but this hasn't stopped businesses and neighbours from displaying purple cloth decorations in doorways and windows to signify the suffering and royalty of Jesus. One of our neighbours has a display filling their front yard depicting Jesus washing his disciple's feet! Can you imagine seeing that in your neighbourhood! We hear criticism of those who celebrate these days while having no outward signs of being Christ followers. However, we are thankful for the openness of people to talk about faith and their own spiritual journey especially during Semana Santa. May we live in this world as ones who offer evidence of God's glory.



We are grateful for good health and meaningful work from home, connecting regularly with CBM partners (through Zoom, Messenger, WhatsApp, etc.). We have visited some of the church work in Guatemala but must be extra cautious. As our friends here often remind us, ***if God wills it***, we hope to travel to El Salvador later this year.

We are encouraged to see almost all of our churches moving into the community to **be the neighbour** to the most vulnerable. The story of the Good Samaritan is being implemented in a way that often speaks louder than words, as in *Luke 10:36-37 Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers? The expert in the law replied, The one who had mercy on him. Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."*

COVID vaccinations (March 20, 2021)

While access to vaccination Canada may be slower than you might like, vaccination is another thing altogether in most of the Southern world. As you know, COVID is a world-wide issue – it is not enough for everyone in Canada to be vaccinated. Most of the world must be vaccinated for us to overcome this pandemic. Access to vaccines is a question of justice as well as wealth. In Latin America, only a very small % of the population has been vaccinated and no one has received the 2nd dose (fully vaccinated) except a small number in Bolivia https://github.com/owid/covid-19-data/tree/master/public/data/vaccinations/country_data

CBM is a signatory to a letter from several Canadian Faith-based organizations urging our government to honour commitments to COVAX, ensuring that everyone has access to vaccines regardless of their wealth or lack of it. https://www.cbmin.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Letter-of-Support_Canadian-Contributions-to-Equitable-Vaccine-Distribution.pdf

Cuba update

In recent conversations with the leaders of our partner FIBAC we are hearing of especially challenging times brought on by COVID restrictions, and Monetary reform, where the currency (CUC) used by most of you who have visited Cuba, is being eliminated so that there will be only one currency, the Cuban Peso, pegged to the \$USD. This has caused great hardship for most people as prices rise without a corresponding rise in income. CBM has been able to encourage our friends by adjusting or reducing the expectations of program results due to the increased costs and travel restrictions which at present make it impossible to move between provinces to support programs. The church is largely “off the radar” of the government so not receiving any effort to restore their work. Since 80% of FIBAC churches meet in pastors’ residences the high cost of utilities and operations is a great burden to them, especially since there are no in-person gatherings, and therefore little income for the church.

Dominican Republic Update

Our friends at IBAREDO are coping with the challenges of COVID with most churches holding in-person services, with protocols around distancing and masks. A serious challenge is the 7 pm curfew which means business must close earlier than normal, and workers must find their way home often without public transportation. Our good friend Pastor Miguel Bonnet of Bethel Church in La Romana tells us that their children’s afternoon homework club is operating again, and 148 people received treatment at a recent medical clinic outreach. They are beginning a children and youth outreach in the community, aptly named *The Great Adventure*.

Gratitude and Prayer Requests

Please pray:

- For our partners in all 5 Latin America / Caribbean countries where CBM works – for health, and wisdom as each local church seeks to hold in-person services in a safe and meaningful manner. While the context is somewhat different than for Canadian churches, meeting online remains a challenge as each local church and denomination looks for effective ways to engage with their community and develop a meaningful sense of community for those who engage online.

- For CBM partner programming to have impact in the lives of people during this second year of the pandemic.
- For CBM colleagues around the world, where pre-existing challenges around poverty and justice, are now much more acute because of COVID.
- That the vaccines get to Latin America / Caribbean and to the people who need them the most as soon as possible.
- For the leaders in CBM partner churches to have energy and vision as they support the local church to be present and active in their communities.
- For us, that we can continue to be effective in encouraging our partner church leaders, learning from them, and strengthening new partnerships.

Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ Matthew 25:34-40

As Reinhold Niebuhr said, may you “Comfort the afflicted, and afflict the comfortable”

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. You can also check out a few new resources on the CBM website <https://www.cbmin.org/your-story/go-deeper/www.cbmin.org> including the latest Mosaic <https://www.cbmin.org/mosaic/>

Blessings!

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