

**PROJECT: "VENEZUELA RELIEF"**  
**JULY 2020 REPORT**  
**(7th shipment)**

**Medicines arrive in Venezuela in spite of roadblocks due to the pandemic**

*by Elianeth Pineda*

*translation: Liisa Tino*

"Praise the Lord, God is good" - wrote Abel Garcia, pastor of "Christ is the Way" Lutheran church and the one in charge of the distribution of medicines in his congregation - when he heard that there would be another shipment, because the pandemic had dimmed his hopes of receiving treatment through the Venezuela Relief project.

The restrictions in Chile - primarily the quarantine - did complicate the logistics of our program. However, we know that we cannot restrict our commitment to supply necessary medications to patients with chronic diseases who live in this Caribbean nation.

Testimonies that we receive from Barcelona, the capital of Anzoátegui state and the location of pastor Abel's ministry, confirm for us that we continue to be the only option for many people to obtain the pills needed to ease their condition.

"The pills are very expensive and hard to find, and it is a great relief to receive this assistance", says Iremar Rojas, who suffers from thyroid problems.

Ana Olivares, herself a diabetic, thanks us for supplying her tablets as well as those for her grandson, Angel Canelon. Angel, who is only 15 years old, suffers from convulsions due to the extraction of his cerebellum.



**Iremar Rojas and Irene Olivares, members of "Christ is the Way", show what they received through Venezuela Relief. Barcelona, Anzoátegui**

**Little by little**

The arrival of Covid-19 to Venezuela has compounded the already difficult conditions for daily life in this country, once considered the "Promised Land" of South America.

In an attempt to slow down the virus, the government established a 7 + 7 plan; meaning 7 days of strict quarantine followed by 7 days of flexible mobility.

Due to these new conditions and the difficulty of finding gasoline for vehicles, it has been a challenge to deliver the medicine. The process has been slow, but still successful.

Kevin Guevara, Social Work coordinator at “Fountain of Life” Lutheran Church in Puerto Ordaz, informs us that despite these new challenges they been able to help a large number of people in his region. “Many of the medications were delivered directly to the homes of church members. Many times these homes were the drop-off spots for other brothers and sisters to pick up their medicine.”



**Omaira Chacón, protected by her face mask, picks up her medicine from a church member's vehicle.  
Puerto Ordaz, Bolívar.**



**Isealí García smiles for the driver of the vehicle who brought her father's medication to her home in  
Puerto Ordaz, Bolívar**

In other regions, the scarcity of gasoline leaves no other option than to walk in the hot sun, sweat dripping in the eyes and facemask stuck to perspiring face, to deliver to those who are impatiently awaiting their long-expected medications from Santiago, Chile.



**An older woman who is helped by our sister congregation "La Fortaleza" in Maracay, Aragua, poses with her medication.**



**Alcides Franco, pastor at "Reformation" Lutheran church in San Félix, Bolívar, is accompanied by church members, Rigoberta Blanco y Dina Morales.**

As the situation in Venezuela becomes more desperate every day, the local coordinators of the project have had to re-invent their strategies to deliver the pharmaceuticals to needy who anxiously await the dosage required to treat their conditions:

“I am so grateful because I suffer from high blood pressure and kidney problems. Since I no longer work, my small pension is not enough to buy my medication.”

Daysi Fabián, “*Cristo es Amor*”. Barquisimeto, Lara.

“This operation that your organization is conducting during the difficult times in our country is invaluable. May you be doubly blessed as you continue this important work.”

Daira Majano, “*Cristo es Amor*”. Barquisimeto, Lara.

“Thank you for your great efforts and assistance. Because you are supplying this medication that I need, I am able to use my resources to buy food for my family...at least for this month.”

Esteban Lozada, “*Santa Trinidad*”. Caracas, Distrito Capital.

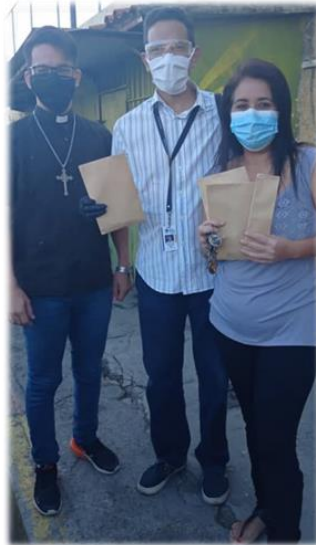
“Among those benefited by this project is a 12 year old boy named Jose Leonardo. He suffers from chronic migraines which produce convulsions. His doctor has prescribed acido valproico. The family of this boy has a very low income and is unable to provide this treatment without your help.” Belkys Castellanos, a volunteer at “*La Fortaleza*”, Maracay, Aragua.



These envelopes provide peace of mind for many homes. “*Cristo es amor*”, Barquisimeto, Lara



Zueimar Aranguren (black sweater) Distributing medicine at “*Cristo es amor*”, Lutheran church, Barquisimeto, Lara



**Eduard Flores, pastor at “Santa Trinidad”, explains that with restrictions prohibiting him from going from one municipality to the next in Caracas, he is unable to meet with each recipient of medication. However, many other brothers and sisters in the capital have volunteered to make sure each pill arrives in the hands of the correct person.**



**A member of “La Fortaleza” Lutheran church gives us a smile from Maracay, Aragua**



**In Cagua, Aragua, many miles are travelled to make sure everyone receives their medication at their home.**

### **Above all, Solidarity**

The rural areas of Venezuela have not been affected as severely by the corona virus. In contrast to the urban congregations, most rural churches have been able to continue worship services, “observing the precaution of social distancing and eliminating the sharing of the peace”, adds deaconess Luz María de Ernst, of “Epiphany” Lutheran Church in La Caramuca, Barinas. Luz Maria is also the national coordinator of the project “Venezuela relief”.

In this family of faith, Luz Maria is joined by many older members who are in need of extra attention. Most of them live alone because their children have emigrated to another country to find resources.

That is the case with Francisca Rivas, who was in tears after church on Sunday when she received her prescription. In November of 2019, after both of her two daughters had moved to Peru, she suffered a heart attack.



**Francisca Rivas (White dress) with several other members of Epiphany Lutheran church, La Caramuca, Barinas**

On the other hand, during these complicated times, the people of La Caramuca focus on working the land and have been planting small gardens in their yards. As a sign of their gratitude, they offer some of the best fruits of their harvests for the gift of medicine.



**Luz María de Ernst (in glasses) receives a bag of vegetables from the garden of this woman in thanks for the medication.**



**Pastor David Ernst, shares some medications with this member, as well as blessing her with fruit from his garden.**

Another church which has continued to meet, although not with the same frequency as earlier, is “Christ the Victor” in La Pica, Monagas. There, Pastor Félix Zamora and his wife, Haymer, face a number of obstacles in order to get to church or to their members’ homes to give them the medication. Lack of public transportation can lengthen their journey to several hours, sometimes on foot! However, “God’s mercy strengthens us and encourages us to help our neighbor, just as you do for us”, they write in a letter.



**At “Cristo the Victor” Lutheran church they give thanks to God for this 7<sup>th</sup> shipment of medication through “Venezuela relief”. La Pica, Monagas**

### More and more testimonies

As our efforts reach more and more regions of Venezuela, the amount of letters we receive increase as many tell us about the peace they feel not having to decide if they will buy medication or food.

One of these letters comes from Yenny Piñango, a single mother, of very humble means, who has two children diagnosed with complicated special needs. Both of her sons summarize what this project means to them in hand-written letters:

“I really want to say, that with everything going on in the world, your help is a light in my life.” Jhesed Gudiño Piñango, high school student with learning handicaps including cerebral arrhythmia and an arachnoid cyst. ILUVE, Barquisimeto, Lara.

“I thank God for all of you and for the donation of my medication, without expecting anything in return,” writes Yerick Aguilar Piñango, also a high school student with learning and social handicaps, epilepsy and a personality disorder. He is Jhesed’s brother. ILUVE, Barquisimeto, Lara.



**Juan Vielma and his wife, Heny, organize pills for distribution. ILUVE, Barquisimeto, Lara**

Over 560 miles away, in San Félix, Bolívar State we find Antonio Fajardo, another individual who benefits from “Venezuela relief”. Antonio lost a leg due to diabetes some time ago. In his condition, it is impossible to find a job in a country that is falling apart.





Antonio Fajardo, an 83 year old Chilean who left his country 50 years ago to make a better life in Venezuela.  
"La Ascensión", San Félix, Bolívar

### Almost 62,000 pills to pack!

In just this seventh shipment of medicine, we received requests from 839 people in Venezuela; 579 women, 260 men. A total of 61.810 pills were sent to Venezuela.





The map shows how many communities receive assistance per state.

In spite of the prohibitions created by the Chilean government to control the spread of Covid-19, we managed to complete shipment of medicine to Venezuela. These volunteers in Chile needed to acquire a sanitary pass and permission to travel the streets of Santiago and help package pills at the mission.



Every week these volunteers needed to request permission to follow protocol and participate in our project of mercy for Venezuela. Their help was indispensable.



**Brothers and sisters at the Lutheran Church “Divina Providencia” are committed to the project.**



**Preparing the medicine for Venezuela allows for times of fellowship and relationship building.**



**Without these volunteers, the project would take much more time to complete.**

Many of those benefitting from “Venezuela relief” have received strict diagnoses and treatment plans from health professionals in their country. However, reality demands that they must first feed their stomach. No money is left for the luxury of medication.

Our goal is to reduce the time needed to collect the information, purchase the medication, and package it to individual congregations. For this reason, we have developed an automated system for our brothers and sisters to place their requests on-line.

We will put this new modality into practice for our next medicine shipment.

