

**“VENEZUELA RELIEF” PROJECT
REPORT: FEBRUARY 2021
(8th Shipment)**

More than 1000 people received medication in this 8th shipment of “Venezuela relief”!

By Elianeth Pineda

translation: Liisa Tino

“Once again, thanks a million for your priceless help! May the Lord repay you in blessings and in health for this valuable labor and may He prosper it to continue for a long time,” writes Daira Majano from Barquisimeto, Lara State. She is thankful for the recent arrival of 90 pills which represent 3 types of medication prescribed for her high blood pressure problem.

Daira is one of the 707 women who benefited from a variety of medications that were sent in the latest installment of the mercy project, “Venezuela relief”. With 340 male recipients as well, there was a total of 1047 patients who received aid in this eighth shipment.



Members of “Christ is Love” Lutheran Church participate in worship before distributing medication.

Barquisimeto, Lara State

ALMOST 100,000 PILLS!

During December 2020 and January 2021, we were able to send 97,330 pills in response to requests made from 21 sister congregations in this Caribbean country. The project was able to reach not only the congregations, but also family, friends and neighbors of the members.

In reality, the delivery of the medicines provides relief for both body and soul because all those who participate in the program – whether they are church members or not - receive the spiritual aid through the sharing of the Gospel.

Luz María Ernst, national coordinator for “Venezuela relief”, is also a deaconess at Epiphany Lutheran Church, in Barinas, Venezuela. She explains that a majority of those helped are elderly people with chronic illnesses whose children have emigrated to other countries in hopes of finding a better future.

For Luz Maria and her husband, Rev. David Ernst, the commitment they have to the elderly under their care gives special meaning to the ministry that they lead. Together, this couple has become the “family of support” for people like Sotera Zapata, a widow who was never able to have children and is beginning to feel the aches and pains of old age.



**Deaconess Luz María Ernst with Sotera Zapata.
“Epiphany” Lutheran Church, La Caramuca, Barinas State**

Sotera has problems with her vision and high blood pressure. Because of her age, she is not able to work, thus, she has no money to purchase medication. She depends on the generosity of “Venezuela relief” to obtain her daily pills.

Enormous Support

Venezuela’s political, economical and social problems categorize it as one of the most depressed countries in the world.

Minimum wage is about 92 cents a month (in Venezuelan currency, 1,200,000 bolivars!). According to the Center for Social Analysis and Documentation, a family of 5 would need 300 minimum wage salaries to provide basic food for a month!

Because of this, Venezuelans are forced to “sacrifice” anything related to health care even though this aggravates their condition, because their priority is to feed the family. This is the reality that gives birth to excited gratitude whenever a church receives news that the next shipment of medication is on its way from Santiago, Chile!

“It’s impossible for us to purchase the treatments prescribed for our illnesses. We pray as a Church that the Lord would continue providing and sustaining us through this project,” writes Andrea Malpa, who suffers from depression and insomnia. *Cristo es el Camino*, Barcelona, Azoategui



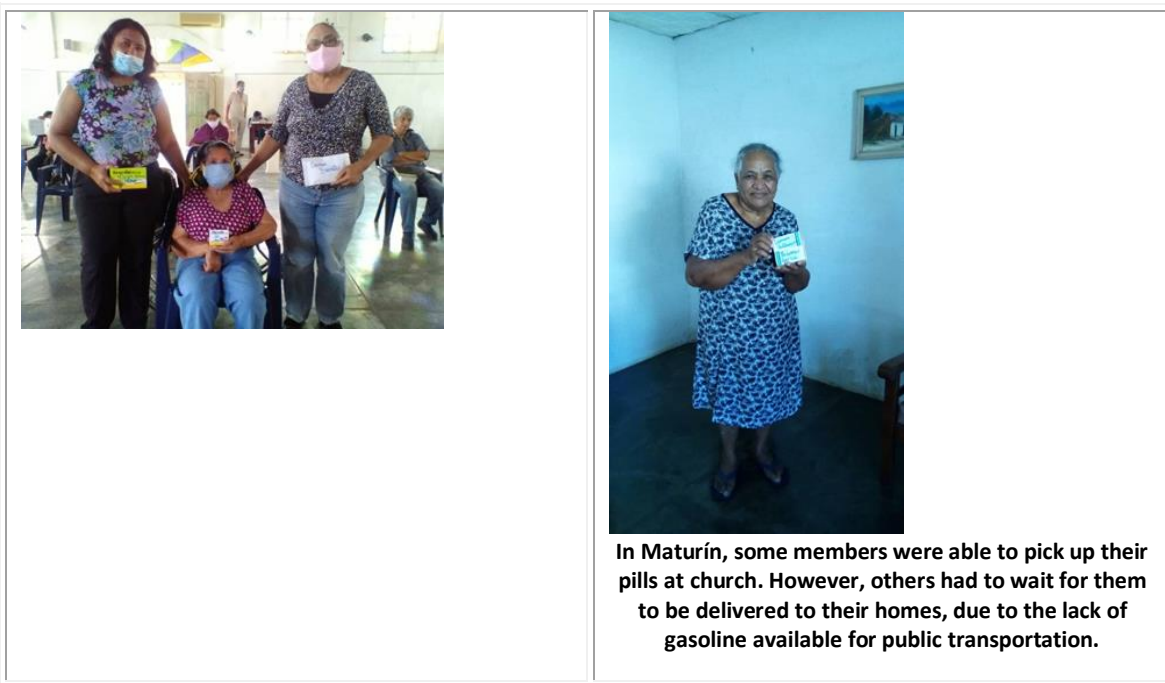
Pastor Abel García with some of those who benefit from “Venezuela relief” in his congregation. “Christ is the Way” Lutheran Church, Barcelona, Anzoátegui State

“Thank you for your wonderful help and work which have supplied the health needs of my husband and myself. With the money we would have spent on medication, we were able to buy food. For the next month or so we will have peace in our home.” Gladys Peroza, high blood pressure patient. “Holy Trinity” Lutheran Church, Caracas.



At “Holy Trinity” Lutheran Church they are only able to worship twice a month because of the protocol set by the government of a “rotating” 7 day quarantine. Caracas, Venezuela

“I thank God and the whole team who made this medicine available for me.” Maria Salazar, recently diagnosed with a brain tumor. “Christ the King” Lutheran Church, Maturín.



Pastor Félix Zamora visits various members of his congregation as he delivers the medication.

La Pica, Monagas State

Delivering Mercy and Relief to families since 2017

For those who struggle to stay hopeful in a country where survival becomes more difficult each day, the support we send from Chile is like a balm for the weary soul.

In July 2017, when Rev. James Tino first had the idea of sending relief from Chile to brothers and sisters in Venezuela, we were able to help 118 people who suffer from chronic illnesses. With this eighth shipment reaching more than 1000 souls, it is clear that God had a large mercy project in mind!

Oriana Rios is a 20 year-old girl who suffers from Down Syndrome and has a thyroid deficiency. One of her prescribed medicines is "T-4 Bago". Her parents are her only form of support. Not only Oriana has been blessed through "Venezuela relief" providing this medication, but the whole family nucleus claims that they feel relief from the crisis that surrounds them. They are part of "Peace" Lutheran Church in Los Teques, Miranda State.



With public transportation being difficult, brothers and sisters from "Peace" Lutheran Church work together to distribute the medicine. Los Teques, Miranda

Luis Jiménez is 55 years old and suffers from consequences of a cerebralvascular event years back. Joyfully, he made his way to "Corpus Christi" Lutheran Church in Barinas to pick up 3 different types of pills which "keep him going" despite the pain.

Also in Barinas, Susana Hernández, a 71 year-old high blood pressure patient, looked for any way possible to get to church and receive her medication, which is impossible for her to acquire otherwise.



Without the help of many church members, it would be impossible to deliver each patient his/her medicine. Barinas, Barinas, Barinas State

New Procedures

There are many challenges in this worthwhile mission of sending medication to a country where poverty, insecurity, inflation and now, COVID-19 cause delays and interruptions. We decided to develop an automated system in attempt to reduce the time delay between each shipment of medication.

During the last trimester of 2020, we sent the coordinator of each congregation in Venezuela an on-line link to specific forms where they could register their requests.

Yenny Gamboa, coordinator for Mission Cagua in Aragua State, applauded our efforts and said the process was easy, quick and even fun!

This automatic system allows each individual to enter his/her information and choose up to 3 different medicines from the 18 regular medications that we have available.



This map shows how many communities are helped in each state. The congregations in Lara State, travel to neighboring Carabobo and Zulia States to deliver their shipments of medication, since the courier service does not cover that area.

How to pack 100,000 pills!

Besides the specific requests from the 18 medications available, each church also receives medicines to stock a local dispensary which consists of eight medications used to treat common ailments such as headaches, allergies, the common cold, etc. The local dispensary allows each church to lend a helping hand to their neighbors, which in turn increases by an unknown quantity the total number of people who benefit by the Venezuela Relief.



97.330 pills were sent to Venezuela between December 2020 to January 2021

Preparing these packages is a huge logistical challenge. We do not want to spend our whole budget on shipping costs. For this reason, we have developed a technique of taking the medication out of the box, trimming off the extra packaging without obscuring the name of the medication, then re-packing the individual pills so that the highest quantity possible goes into each pill box. Since most medicines come in boxes of 10 -30 tablets, this is a valuable step to maximize our shipping.

Members from “Divine Providence” Lutheran Church, motivated by Christ’s love, volunteer their time in this tedious process.



The actual number of pills



Re-packaged into medicine boxes



Multiple medicine boxes are packed into shipping boxes, with the first aid medicine and several personal hygiene items



Members of "Divina Providencia" cutting and trimming pills for Venezuela



Many volunteers help to make this overwhelming job possible.



A willing spirit and an opportunity for fellowship help to get the job done.

Covid-19, unemployment, political unrest, financing....If we let the challenges of these difficult times interrupt the project of "Venezuela Relief", hundreds of families in Venezuela would be affected. Lord, have mercy.