

# Food Crisis Due to Stay-at-Home Order in Guatemala

Dear Church Family,

The Missions Team had planned for Rev. Dr. Luke Rhyee, MD to visit our church on April 5, 2020 to share his medical and feeding program ministry in Guatemala. Of course, that had to be cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic. A few days ago, Pastor Luke sent an urgent email request for help to feed people who are starving because they are not allowed to work at this time. That letter is attached below.

The Missions Team is sending the money that had been set aside for Pastor Luke's visit here. We had also planned to collect a Love Offering from the congregation. If you are financially able, please consider sending a contribution to St. James UMC and write in the memo line "Healing Guatemala Covid-19." All your donations will be sent together.

Bless you for helping to care for our Guatemalan "sisters and brothers" in Christ,

Kathy Roys and Libby Murdock  
Missions Team Co-chairs

## Urgent request from Rev. Dr. Luke Rhyee

(rhyeemt@gmail.com)



*(A white flag hung at the entrance of a house: Dona Lucia put this white flag outside of her house with a desperate hope that somebody could help her with her depleting food supplies.*

*Picture courtesy of Prensa Libre.)*

There was a news article in Prensa Libre, one of the main Guatemalan news medias, about "white flags" which were hung at the entrance of some houses in a Guatemalan village. The habitants of these houses put out these white flags, hoping that they could get some help with their depleting food supplies which were caused by more than a month long governmental restrictive measures to slow down the spread of covid 19. According to this news article, Dona Lucia, a single mom with five children used to earn 3-4 dollars a day by providing a laundry or cleaning service for neighbors. With this little money, she could manage to feed her children some basic grains. However, due to the measures of the Guatemalan government, there have been no jobs, and even if there were, she could not get out of her house, due to a "stay-in-home" order by the government. She had not made any

money for the last month. On top of this, her food was running out. With a desperate hope that somebody could help her, she put this white flag outside of her house.



*(A Guatemalan man with a mask made of a plastic bottle top. He does not have any other options to comply the governmental mandatory wearing mask order other than this, for he does not have resources. Picture courtesy of Prensa Libre.)*

This article focused on people living in El Tejar (one hour from Guatemala City). However, this desperate situation in which people have been dragged to the verge of starvation is not unique to this area; moreover, it is the general situation of the poor families in Guatemala. So, it is with the people in Chuisajcaba Uno and Dos where we have a feeding ministry. Even without covid 19, the people in Chuisajcaba can hardly manage to feed their children with their small incomes from working at nearby coffee or sugar cane plantations. The only option for them to feed their children has been corn, which has been the cheapest and principal grain in Guatemala. However, due to the restrictive preventive covid 19 measures, there is simply no available job. The prices of grains have been going up. Already, the price of corn has risen two or three times higher depending upon the area. Since they live in extreme poverty, they did not have any stored food or savings in the bank. (Most of them do not even have a bank account.)



*(Extreme poverty even before covid 19 crisis in Chuisajcaba)*

Usually the poor family, when it is short on food, eat tortillas with salt. If the family doesn't have enough grains to eat three times a day, they have a late breakfast and early dinner. Then they go to bed early and endure hunger. Many of our children whom we had served and loved have this life style now. People outside would not often see this extreme situation because the display of their desperation to

others is not an accepted part of their culture. I cannot imagine how painful it is for these parents to watch their children going to bed with hungry stomachs. Lord, have mercy on them.



*(In Chuisajbaba where we have a feeding ministry, there are more than 200 families living in this extreme poverty.)*

Currently there are about 250 covid 19 positive patients in Guatemala. Since Guatemala is such a poor country, the government cannot manage the overwhelming spread and treatments if covid 19 spreads more rigorously. The government has put serious measures in place. From March 15, “Stay at Home Order,” “Shut down of public, private transportation,” and even air space, “Shut down of non-essential business,” “Curfew,” and etc have been effective. The Guatemalan government began to support the poor by sending food and money, but the amount of the support is too small. Also, it is hard to expect that this support will go to the most needy. It is a sad reality; but, most of the mayors in Guatemala would most likely send this support food and money to their own supporters of their election as a reward rather than to the poorest of the poor. This is why the people who live in remote areas, just like ones in Chuisajcaba will have a slim chance of receiving any of these governmental supports.



*(Don Manuel has so heavy heart these days.)*

In prayers, we would like to provide basic grains, such as corn and beans to the poor families who are facing the running out of their food. First of all, this Friday we want to provide 50 pounds of corn and 20 pounds of beans to each family in Chuisajcaba Uno and Dos where there are about 200 families. With this amount of grains, one family with 8 members can survive 15 days. This amount of grains costs about 35 dollars. After this, in prayers, we want to expand the provision to the poor families living in the communities close to Chuisajcaba and to Bethesda Mission Center. We don't know when the government will lift the measures against covid 19; but, we want to continue to provide the basic food to the poor families for at least the next three months.

It is a hard decision to make for us, whose finances are small and unstable. Also we have fixed expenses to operate the ministry and Bethesda Medical Center. We have ten staff members at Bethesda Medical Center. We have 13 medical/dental scholarship students, and 70 middle school scholarship students. Also, we need to pay for the maintenance of the Mission Center. In our Bethesda Medical Center, we are attending to only emergency cases since the covid 19 outbreak, which is only 10 percent of the number of our previous patient load. Our dental and ophthalmologic clinic do not have any patients, which reduced our revenue drastically. However, since the Lord has placed his distressed heart for the poor people in Guatemala on me, we are just following his will. What we can provide is very small. However, we confess before the Lord that what we are to provide is “the five loaves and two fishes” offered before the Lord. We believe that He will take it and bless it and make a miracle out of it, so that all the people will be satisfied. Amen. Please in prayers, consider donations of grains.

The best way that you can reach out is sending us a check, payable to Healing Guatemala. We have 501c (3) status; so, any monetary contribution is tax exempt. The address is PO Box 1835 Duluth, GA 30096. Please write “covid emergency fund” in the memo blank. If you want to make a direct deposit to our bank account, here is the info. The name of the bank: Wells Fargo. The name of the account: Healing Guatemala. The number of the account: 7092709398 (routing number: 053207766) This is a business, checking account. If you make a deposit, please email me at [rhyeemt@gmail.com](mailto:rhyeemt@gmail.com) so that I can send you a donation receipt.

Grace and peace. Pastor Luke Rhyee from Guatemala.

**"Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace." Luke 8:48**

***To get more information;***

[healingguatemala.org](http://healingguatemala.org)

[facebook.com/luke.rhyee](https://facebook.com/luke.rhyee)

***To support the mission;***

Payable to Healing Guatemala

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