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Hot Springs Village. AR

December 2020

Usually in our last newsletter of the year, we are in good spirits, having celebrated Thanksgiving Day again, and looking forward to celebrating the birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ. We like to give you a summary of what has been accomplished during the year, and what we are looking forward to doing next year.

However, our hearts are heavy this year because of the devastation that hurricanes Eta and Iota had on the area of Guatemala where we work. Hurricane Eta slammed into eastern Honduras early in November, and with Guatemala on the rainy side of it, Guatemala got soaked. In the area of Cunén, there were many landslides, and five people were killed. Two weeks later, Hurricane Iota slammed into eastern Nicaragua causing much devastation there, and again, Guatemala was on the rainy side of it, and since the ground had very little time to dry out, many more landslides occurred that caused a lot of damage. Though we haven't heard of more deaths being reported, many people are homeless, many are without food and water and clothing and blankets, and are struggling to survive, totally dependent on other people.



For instance, an extended family of 35 people in the village of Xobor where we have contacts, lost everything. They are staying on their land in order to care for their sheep and living under a canopy. Food is being carried up the mountain by volunteers from a church, a 2 ½ hour hike – one way.

We spoke at this church on the left one year ago in the village of Los Trigales not far from Rosa's house, and were well received. The mud-slide a month ago is pushing against the side wall of their building and trying to go through the windows.



Two bridges and the road on the major highway to the east of Cunén also very hard hit.



Even though this was a very well-built bridge, it couldn't stand when the accumulated water from downpours that occurred 2,000 feet above crashed into it. The other bridge a couple of miles away suffered a similar fate.

The next picture shows a mountainside road that was washed away. Knowing the whole county as well as I do, I'm sure that there are many other places where this happened. Rebuilding such roads is

a huge challenge, because more of the mountain above will have to be removed in order to make a new bed for the roads.



If you are on Facebook, the following URL address will take you to Cunén TV, and it will give you a better understanding of the devastation there.

<https://www.facebook.com/103204038140192/posts/176112810849314/?vh=e&d=n>

As you can see from the pictures and videos contained in that link, many people are in desperate condition. Not only have many of them lost their homes, but their crops and tools also. Most of the people are farmers, so some of them have undoubtedly lost their mountainside land. This will have a terrible affect not only on these people, but on the local economy.

These two hurricanes were very different than Hurricane Mitch in 1998 where it rained 24/7 for eight straight days. Then, the ground had time to absorb the moisture before it ran off and caused mudslides. These hurricanes this year dumped a great amount of rain one week, causing many mudslides, and two weeks later the same thing happened again, which made the situation this year much worse. After Hurricane Mitch, due to generosity of our supporters then, we were able to build or repair over 60 houses, for which we thank God. We are attempting to get a list of the housing needs of people now, and as after Hurricane Mitch, we will put the widows and the elderly, those who cannot help themselves, at the top of our list.

The enclosed donor page and envelope are available for you to help if the Holy Spirit moves you to do so. I would love to go down to Guatemala now to assess the situation and determine how we can help, but we happen to be short of funds at the moment. In the meantime, we are attempting to

gather as much information as we can. For instance, we know that Rosa's house has been damaged, but we don't know the details yet. After Hurricane Mitch, the mayor of Cunén, who governs the whole county, had auxiliary mayors in each village who helped him. They compiled a list in each village of those with housing needs, and we worked from that list. We assume that they will do the same this time, which will be a big help to us.

As we our neighbors having put up their Christmas lights already, we also will put up our Christmas tree and lights after we get this newsletter in the mail. Our Christmas celebration will be somewhat different this year because of the Covid-19 restrictions. The poor people in Guatemala who have been severely affected by Hurricanes Eta and Iota may only be able to celebrate Christmas in their hearts, because they have lost their homes and possessions.

But one very important difference now than after Hurricane Mitch in 1998 is that the Cuenteco people now have the New Testament in their own language, they have the audio recording of it in their own language, they have seen the *Jesus* film in their own language, and they have hymns and some Christmas carols in their own language, thanks to our partnership together in this Bible translation project that you support with your prayers and gifts.

At this time of year, we focus on "Immanuel, God with us." And the emphasis in that quote is on the prepositional phrase "with us." That's what God wants us to take great comfort and strength in, that He is with us, no matter what the circumstances. We also have the promise "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Let's pray for the people of Cunén and the other victims of Hurricanes Eta and Iota, that these truths will be more real to them than ever before.

We not only wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, but pray that you will be drawn closer to our Lord Jesus Christ during this special time of the year.



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For contributions:

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Hot Springs Village, AR 71909
Designate: Guatemala Project

JESUS IS THE GREATEST GIFT

December 2020

For nearly 30 years God has blessed the Cuenteco Bible Translation project of which you have been a part. We pray that God will bless it now with support for the project which is very short of funds, and to support hurricane relief efforts. Please prayerfully consider supporting one or both of these projects with your prayers and gifts.

JESUS IS THE GREATEST GIFT

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(Please detach this portion and mail with your check)

MY CHRISTMAS GIFT FOR THE PROJECT:



\$ _____

MY GIFT FOR HURRICANE RELIEF:

\$ _____

(Make checks payable to Faith Lutheran Church – Guatemala Project)

Mail to: Faith Lutheran Church – Guatemala Project
1196 Desoto Blvd.
Hot Springs Village, AR 71909

Your name: _____

Your address: _____
