

NEWS POSTED ON JUNE 21, 2018

IM Responds to a Destructive Volcanic Eruption in Guatemala and Political Unrest in Nicaragua



CATHERINE NOLD

International Ministries (IM) has received an emergency relief grant of \$8,500 from One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) to respond to the critical needs in Latin America following the deadly volcanic eruption in Guatemala and the violence in Nicaragua.

IM thanks God that the Rev. Ricardo Mayol Bracero, IM regional consultant for Iberoamerica and the Caribbean, who resides in Guatemala is safe. Drs. David and Laura Parajón, IM missionaries currently serving and residing in Nicaragua, have not been directly impacted. However, a report from the Parajóns said that their staff at AMOS is dealing with inner conflicts related to the political crisis.

Volcanic eruption in Guatemala

On June 2, Guatemala's 3,763-meter-tall Volcán de Fuego erupted, blackening the local landscape and sending clouds of hot gas and ash drifting across the country for miles. Multiple smaller eruptions have followed, much less devastating than the first, but nonetheless hampering relief efforts in the areas closest to the volcano.

According to Mayol, "Volcán de Fuego began to expel ashes (grit or burning fine dust) continuously. Later that day, it furiously thundered and expelled volcanic gases and burning rocks and burning ashes." This powerful eruption "filled Guatemala with mourning . . . with 33 dead, 1,701,956 people affected, 46 injured, people and villages buried."

In the face of this tragedy, the Ecumenical Christian Council of Guatemala and other partners have assessed the situation and have proposed an intervention. "The initial challenge is to give direct assistance to the victims," Mayol said, "However, we envision a next stage of solidarity providing means to guarantee the food security of our suffering brothers."



Protests in Managua, Nicaragua, 2018
photo by Voice of America

Political unrest in Nicaragua

After two months of chaos and political unrest in Nicaragua, , according to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The Rev. Dr. Lee Spitzer, general secretary of the American Baptist Churches USA, in consultation with the Rev. Sharon Koh, CEO / executive director of IM, and IM global servants, [Dr. Spitzer sent a letter](#) to the consulate general of Nicaragua in Washington DC expressing American Baptists' deep concern over recent events in Nicaragua.

Mayol addressed this letter in a recent email: "Nicaragua is suffering vivid violence. . . . In such a confusing environment, it is urgent to be present as our sisters and brothers' keepers. Therefore, in your voice, there are our voices."

Of the initial \$8,500 OGHS emergency relief grant, \$2,000 has been provided to IM partner UPOLI (Polytechnic University of Nicaragua), \$4,000 to the Baptist Convention of Nicaragua and \$2,500 to the Ecumenical Christian Council of Guatemala.

Baptists throughout the world are showing their concern by their prayers and donations. "It is through IM's extensive network of ecumenical and national partners that we as American Baptists are able to provide relief in these areas. Your financial support is requested, as these recent events have brought devastation to thousands," said Lisa Rothenberger, American Baptist world relief officer.

Support Relief Efforts

American Baptists wishing to support relief efforts can do so through their church's monthly report of mission support or by sending a check directly to IM. Those wishing to support needs in either of these two regions should designate their contributions "OGHS-Nicaragua" or "OGHS-Guatemala."

Checks sent directly to IM should be made payable to International Ministries and sent to IM's new address:

International Ministries
Attn: Gift Processing
1003 W 9th Avenue, Ste A
King of Prussia, PA 19406

[One Great Hour of Sharing](#) is administered by the World Relief Committee of the Board of General Ministries of American Baptist Churches USA. The Committee facilitates American Baptist emergency relief, disaster rehabilitation, refugee work and development assistance by establishing policy guidelines and overseeing distribution of the annual OGHS offering received by churches.