

El Salvador Report – March 2021

Friends;

Everything in El Salvador, as well as at the Lutheran Church, has been affected by Covid 19. At this time, the country, which is about the size of Massachusetts, has had a total of 52,088 cases of the virus and 1950 deaths. Now there are 42 patients that are in critical condition and 178 more in serious condition, who are hospitalized. The virus is decreasing and they have finally received some vaccine, but the wealthy people, so far, have received most of it. These figures are only of the people they can count. Many of the very poor, who live in corrugated tin houses, never get to see a doctor and probably have not been counted. This is the living condition for many in El Salvador.

The Resurrection Lutheran church is now meeting in person but livestreams their services to those who have computers. The church still supports a soup kitchen, a clinic, and one school with classes for children from kindergarten through seventh grade. The church has another satellite church in an area that used to be a refugee area during their civil war. Bishop Gomez's wife is the pastor of that church. This church's name is Fe y Esperanza which means Faith and Hope.

Christian's church is high in a mountain region in the village of Calderitas. This church is thriving with Pastor Christian's leadership. Their services are held on Thursdays, which is his regular day to travel there. He sometimes goes there on other days for additional services and other reasons. Note: He lives in San Salvador, the capital city, about two hours from Calderitas. Their membership is thriving and getting stronger all the time with his leadership. They have a brand new beautiful church. It's amazing to see the many young people and children who attend the services, along with the adults. The membership has done most of the labor for the building. Support also came from many NWOA people and especially one very generous person who bought most of the building materials.

The government just had their parliamentary election several weeks ago and the president's party now has a 64 to 20 majority so that the president can now do whatever he wants. Their presidential election occurs next year. The country now elects a new president every five years and that person can only serve one term. With his super majority, many people think that he might change their constitution so that he can stay in office indefinitely.

Our El Salvador Coordinating Team has not met for over a year since everything has been closed and we had to cancel our trip for 2020. We will gather again in late summer or early fall. We hope we can get back to El Salvador and greet our friends yet this year or early next year. We will again take clothing, medical supplies, school supplies, soccer balls, and many other items to give to the people. We would love to take members of the cabinet or anyone who wants a life changing experience along on our next trip. The people welcome us and treat us like old friends and always welcome us with enthusiasm.

Thank you all for serving as cabinet members to keep our great United Church of Christ thriving.

El Salvador Coordinating Team Chair

Peace, John Gilberg