



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

October 7, 2020

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
925 Balour Dr
Encinitas, CA 92024-3946

Dear Friends at Bethlehem Lutheran Church,

As you all know, some of your congregation's Mission Quilts were in the port of Beirut awaiting customs clearance when the devastating August 4 explosion took place. As that situation has continued to evolve, I want to make sure you have the full picture of the situation to share with those in your congregation who are involved in this critical ministry of love.

Six days before the blast, a shipment of three containers containing 22,500 Mission Quilts, 3,500 School Kits, 19,500 Personal Care Kits, and 2,250 Baby Care Kits arrived in the port of Beirut. Immediate reports from the port authority following the explosion indicated that the containers could not have survived.

A fourth container had been separated at the port in the United States and was still on the water at the time of the explosion. It was rerouted to the port in Tripoli.

News of the destruction of the three containers generated our first call to you, as we wanted to be able to personally share the news. As we joined in our shared lament, we were deeply inspired and humbled by the determination of all of our quilters and kit-makers to keep going, keep creating, keep serving, keep sharing your love with our neighbors all over the world.

On the morning of August 26, LWR staff received an urgent update from our partner, Anera: they had been given access to the port, and against all odds, the containers appeared to be intact! LWR staff continued to raise concerns that the quilts and kits would need to be assessed for damage and chemical contamination. This incredible news spurred our second call to you, even as we awaited final information about the status of the items.

Finally, we learned on September 22 that, upon closer inspection and despite the magnitude of the blast, the seal of the container containing the LWR Mission Quilts and Kits was not broken. The placement in the port, inside a concrete storage building and surrounded by other shipping containers, protected the containers enough to even prevent chemical contamination.

As we awaited this last piece of information, the fourth container cleared customs in Tripoli and travelled over land to join the other three in Anera's Beirut warehouse, once again bringing the full shipment together.

We give thanks to God that the love of hundreds of Lutheran congregations contained in this shipment will be able to be shared with more than 24,000 of our neighbors in Beirut and across the country of Lebanon – many refugees from across the region, and now also those affected by the blast in the heart of Beirut. From the ashes rises a beautiful ray of hope: your love, intact and powerful, in just the right place, at just the right time.

I continue to be inspired by your love, faithfulness and brilliant witness, in countless ways. May God continue to bless your ministry in your community and around the world.

In gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Daniel Speckhard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

Ambassador Daniel V. Speckhard
President and CEO

PS: Please take a look at the newly designed congregational section of our website at lwr.org/congregations. We have beautiful resources that we hope will make your ministry a little bit easier, and help your congregation see how far their love is reaching!