

Chile

Our Golden Treasures

by Mario Gálvez

Pastor of "Familia de Dios" and "Unidos por la Fe" in Chile

"Religion that is pure and undefiled in the sight of God the Father is this: to take care of orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (James 1:27).

In our evangelizing work in Chile, especially in the city of Linares, we prioritize the care of our golden treasures—our beautiful old men and women, who unfortunately suffer shortages of many things, not only economic, but also a lack of love and lack of faith. These, unfortunately, have increased considerably in this time of pandemic where many elderly, for fear of becoming infected, remained at home for a long time without having contact, even with their brothers in faith within their church. In our church "Unidos por la Fe" in Linares, we organize the delivery of boxes containing basic products to reinforce their diet.

Food is difficult to afford because of the low pensions of many older persons and the high cost of basic supplies in Chile. Prices have doubled due to the pandemic and inflation in Chile caused by poor economic management. The price of a kilo of bread (2.2 pounds), a food that is not only basic, but also very common and desired in Chile, today far exceeds \$2.50, something that is barely enough for a day in a common family where the minimum wage is \$432 per month.

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Mission News & Helping Hands
Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Board for World Outreach
Sharing the Gospel in
South America and Asia

• Linares



From the Editor

Rev. Thomas Heyn
Board for World Outreach
Administrator



Jesus said, "For I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was lacking clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you took care of me....Just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me" (Matt 25:35, 36, 40).

Providing compassionate, Christian humanitarian aid has always been part of the Church's work. In our ELS world mission fields that need has increased in recent months. In the *Thoughts of Faith* newsletter, the latest issue highlighted the Ukraine Crisis Fund established to help, via the Gift of Life program, many Ukrainians suffering in this time of war.

In this month's story, Pastor Mario Gálvez writes about the needs of the elderly to whom he ministers in Chile.

Despite Chile being one of the wealthier countries in South America, nonetheless, extreme poverty exists there and is experienced by a number of the people whom Pastor Gálvez serves. Your gifts help provide the aid that he is able to offer as he carries out his gospel outreach. We hope you enjoy the story and learn about some of the challenges of ministry in this world field.

We always appreciate your prayers for the work in our world fields and your financial support that makes this work possible.

Pastor Mario visiting members by bicycle ▶



“Our Golden Treasures” continued

Therefore, out of their meager monthly budget, they would spend \$75 per month in bread alone. But if you really want to understand the reality of the elderly in Chile, let’s compare the minimum wage of \$432 per month with an average pension that is less than \$100 per month. This reflects the harsh reality that the elderly face, in their so-called golden years— a retirement which is not joyful, but rather full of sorrow, pain and hunger.

Not only do they suffer from hunger, but also cold. Thanks to God and special offerings, we installed a water heater in the field where an elderly couple of 70 years lives, she with osteoarthritis, he with terminal cancer. Now they can take a bath with hot water, where previously they did not enjoy that simple pleasure and privilege.

Thanks to God and special offerings... now they can take a bath with hot water, where previously they did not enjoy that simple pleasure and privilege.

“Sing to God. Make music to his name. Lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts. His name is the Lord. Celebrate before him. In his holy dwelling, God is a father for the fatherless and a judge who defends widows” (Ps 68:4, 5).

So, accompanied by these aids, and with great love, we deliver the Word of God to feed the spirit and give them strength to look with eyes fixed on the Author and Finisher of our faith—the One who lived a humble life, who knew from his childhood the shortages, pain and suffering of life, who freed us from what we deserved for our sin.

These shortages can produce anger and hatred in some of the elderly. So, accompanied by these aids, and with great love, we deliver the Word of God to feed the spirit and give them strength to look with eyes fixed on the Author and Finisher of our faith—the One who lived a humble life, who knew from his childhood the shortages, pain and suffering of life, who freed us from what we deserved for our sin. Hearing of Jesus’ love for us, an ineffable and immeasurable love, does so much good for our elderly and makes them happy after so many difficult years. Hearing that Jesus loves them and that he is always with them

Maria’s husband José where the water heater was installed ▼



Unidos por la Fe chapel ▲

(sometimes making up for the indifference of his family) is a balm that gives the elderly peace of mind. At the end of their lives, their child-like faith in Jesus as their way to eternal life produces a peace and tranquility that is inspirational. For this reason, it is so pleasant to attend to the elderly and give them the necessary spiritual food of tenderness, through the gospel, to fill their lives.

During the pandemic we shared this gospel in our worship services, devotionals, or meditations on flash drive, using edited video or audio recordings to keep their faith alive, hearing the Word of God. We took these recordings directly to their homes, week after week. Today, thank God, we can now make in-person visits to their homes, where we happily share with them, sometimes an “oncecita” as we call tea in Chile, with a marraqueta (beaten bread) at 5 p.m. We also join together with a reverent prayer to our heavenly Father, in Jesus’ love for us. We are also going to visit them at their homes, to share our Sunday services in person, which truly encourages them in their lives.

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One of our old ladies is very sick, so I ask you to pray in Jesus Christ for all our “golden treasures”, but especially for Maria who is suffering a lot of pain and has not even been able to come to share our worship. That is why we take the worship to her house and share with her and her husband José, the Holy Supper, the Word and the faith, so that only through the work of Jesus for us, we can keep ourselves “unstained by the world”. ■

▼ Grandma Chira



▲ Pastor Mario with 97-year-old Diego, blind for 3 months



▲ “Oncecita” with José and Maria (who is quite sick)

News From Other Mission Fields

PERU—Jesus Redentor School had to close for this school year due to certain government requirements not being fulfilled by the previous administrator (no longer with the Peru synod). Students are being educated online at Martín Lutero school until Jesus Redentor re-opens next year. The Peru synod pastors anticipate increased enrollment when the situation returns to normal.

INDIA—The Covid situation seems to be easing and life is becoming more normal. The Lutheran Mission of Salvation-India is having more in-person events such as worship, classes, and visitation.

KOREA—The three pastors continue their work of reaching out in various places in the greater Seoul area. Rev. Samuel Choi will visit the U.S. in May for his daughter's graduation. While here, he plans to meet with members of the Board for World Outreach to discuss future plans for the Korean church.

LATVIA—The pastors and members of the Latvian church have been busy providing humanitarian help for their Christian brothers and sisters suffering the consequences of the war in Ukraine. Some of them have opened their homes to provide shelter in these troubling times. The Latvian pastors report favorably about the three men learning the biblical languages and studying in the seminary.

CZECHIA—Instruction at Martin Luther School is underway. These Czech Lutherans are also involved with providing humanitarian aid and housing for refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine.

UKRAINE—The Kyiv counseling centers are closed due to the dangers caused by the Russian invasion. The remaining counseling centers and medical clinics are functioning and providing much needed help to their fellow Ukrainians. The ELS Ukraine Crisis Fund has been receiving gifts and has been able to get much needed relief to our contacts in Ukraine as well as others who need help. Through this fund, many pallets of food and other aid is being sent about every two weeks. We are especially grateful for all the generous offerings. See the note below to see how you can help.

How Can You Help?

DONATE—Perhaps you can help provide for one of the needs described in this issue's articles. Please prayerfully consider a gift or regular donation for the work in the various fields. You may designate a gift to a particular field or project on the memo line of a check. You may also go to els.org and click on "Donate" in the top banner on the right-hand side.

PRAY—Pray for each of the mission fields, for the national pastors of these churches as well as for the members of their congregations to remain faithful in their homelands as they hear and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. May the Lord continue to care for them and strengthen their faith as he works all things for the good of his people, as he has promised.

CONTACT INFO—

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Remittance Envelopes

We regret that, due to supply chain issues and the availability of paper, we are unable to provide remittance envelopes for your use. If you wish to make a gift for the work of world missions, we ask that you provide your own envelope or use the online option. We hope to solve this problem by the next issue.

Want to help with aid to Ukraine and Gift of Life?

The ELS Board for Christian Service has established the **Ukraine Crisis Fund** to gather offerings for humanitarian aid to be distributed in Ukraine by the **Gift of Life** program. You may send checks to the Ukraine Crisis Fund, Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 6 Browns Ct, Mankato, MN 56001. Checks should state "Ukraine Crisis Fund" on the memo line of the check. You can also go to els.org, or tof.org, click on the "Donate" tab (and click the "Donate" button again at tof.org). When you arrive at the Donation page, enter your support at the space for "Ukraine Crisis Fund". **Thank you for your help!**

