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Dear Friends,

When I am in the United States, I go to the quiet of libraries to write. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, finding a library, like almost everything else, hasn't been easy. Our local university libraries are closed to the public, and the Mandan library is being renovated. I feel grateful to be sitting here in the Bismarck Public Library writing this. The stark contrast of this state-of-the-art U.S. library to our Ixcán Ministries cramped one-room library in Santiago Ixcán speaks volumes of the disparities between my two worlds. Granted, the coronavirus treats us the same; inside we are all wearing masks and library hours and days of operation are reduced both here and there.

In March, the Guatemala government suspended schools throughout the country because of the pandemic. The library was closed along with Santiago Ixcán's elementary and junior high schools. In May, Ixcán Ministries Board of Directors encouraged Santiago Ixcán's library committee to open the library for book lending and take-home work. The village authorities, coronavirus-conscious, initially said, "no" but in June gave the go-ahead! Our one librarian, Rolando Imul, felt thrilled to return to work! Rolando, a licensed teacher, has worked at the library for five years.

The library committee implemented COVID protocol and reduced the days of library operation to Tuesdays and Fridays. Plus, mask-wearing in public places and social distancing is required. Instead of a room crowded with 35 or more children, Rolando sees them one by one wearing masks. The children stand distanced apart outside of the library, waiting for their turn. "It's like a line-up for the doctor's office," said Javier Gonzalez, our on-site administer.



When we realized that some children could not afford masks, Javier contracted a local seamstress to make some. Rolando gives a cloth mask to those who don't have one.

Before opening the library, Rolando prepared take-home packets to be given to the children. These included crayons (4 given to everyone, but 8 to the poorest children who can't buy any) and a pencil, plus coloring, reading, writing, and arithmetic pages according to grade and age.

Then Rolando announced the library's opening over the community loudspeaker. We wondered what the response would be?

The children came.

Rolando reports that anywhere from 45 to 75 children come to borrow books and to receive or turn in their take-home assignments. "It's the children who want to learn who come to the library," he said. "Plus, I like to help the children reinforce their learning. It is important for them!"



Parents have told him, "Thank you for the library! My child (five- and six-year-olds) are learning to read, add, and subtract!" Javier confirmed this report. Javier told me he had spoken with Tona, our recent housing project recipient, and a single mother of six-year-old Alicia. Tona said, "Alicia ya puede sumar." Alicia can now add (due to her participation in the library program).

We are happy to help and work with Rolando, the library committee, and Javier in providing this simple learning opportunity for children in these challenging times.

Thank you for your prayers and generosity that allows us to continue our ministry in the Ixcán with creativity and commitment in this new reality we all are living in.

May God bless, provide, and heal you and yours. Know that we hold you in our prayers.

Sincerely,



Kathy Snider

Mission Update from the Board of Directors:

Like many other non-profit organizations, Ixcán Ministries is striving to continue serving the poor amidst COVID-19 restrictions. Here is a brief update of our ministries in the Ixcán, Guatemala:

Kathy is in North Dakota doing reverse-mission activities. She hopes to return to Santiago Ixcán pending COVID-19 international travel regulations to Guatemala.

Our **Outreach Ministry** to the sick and needy continues in Santiago Ixcán through Javier Gonzalez and Carmen Jimenez. **The White Flag** ministry is helping the poorest of the poor in Guatemala City through our representative- Francisco Vi Sambrano.

Our **Scholarship Program** committee has awarded scholarships to those students who have continued to study on-line and have met the program's criteria.

The **Library** continues as described.

Our U.S. committee for **Ixcán Creations Micro-business** is implementing a platform for product online sales of the women jewelers and weavers in Santiago Ixcán.

Note- Help Needed:

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Ixcán Ministries is a Christian lay mission serving as a ministry of presence with the Maya people in the Ixcán jungle of Guatemala. We act as a bridge between cultures for the exchange of gifts to transform lives and society.

Our programs include- Scholarships, Community Library, Women's Micro-business, Medical, Housing, and Food Assistance, Spiritual and Pastoral Accompaniment, and Promotion of Peace and Justice.

Ixcán Ministries is a 501(c) 3 organization. Your contributions are tax deductible.

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