

**FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT
CONVENTION OF BAPTIST CHURCHES OF THE CHILEAN MISSION
SECOND ASSESSMENT POST-EARTHQUAKE IN CHILE**

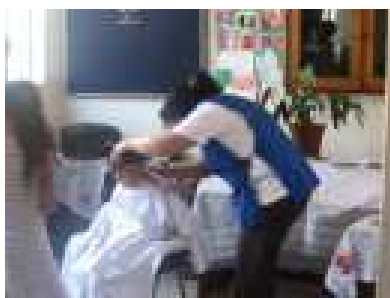
On Saturday, March 13, 2010, our journey began at 5:30 a.m. toward the Eighth Region in Chile, one of the most affected areas after the Earthquake last Saturday, February 27, 2010. This time more brethren accompanied us in order to be in those places, comforting our people in the churches, as well as the many other people we were able to reach out to with what we were bringing from the Ninth Region. Our goal was to gather among the churches in the Southern District 1.000 kilos (2,200 lbs.) of flour, yet by God's grace and the generosity of our brothers and sisters we gathered 2.500 kilos (5,500 lbs.), plus 500 kilos (1,100 lbs.) from our people in the Lakes District in the Tenth Region, which include our churches in our Convention's Mapuche area. Besides those 3.000 kilos (6,600 lbs.) of flour, we were able to get with Convention resources, salt, yeast, rice, noodles, milk, sugar, diapers, clothing gathered in the churches, and toys for the children.



On our previous trip (on Saturday, March 6), after sharing with a group of women that were not from the church (they were from the neighborhood where the sanctuary of the Baptist Church in *Cerro Verde* stands), we committed ourselves to return.



Mrs. María told us of her needs as well as her neighbors' needs. Most of them are wives of fishermen that have lost everything. One of their most needed items was the flour and hence that was what we requested to our churches which once again responded with abundant generosity. We had committed ourselves with those women, children, and their families; we could not fail them and thanks to God we delivered. Watching their faces as they received what we brought confirmed that they were hungry for some food, and that is what we gave them. Besides distributing food supplies, we brought ingredients almost ready for lunch and shared a meal with all of them. It was of great joy to see my brothers and sisters willing to serve them and making them feel a bit of joy in the midst of so much sorrow.



Sister Wilma, from Baptist Church “El Salitre” in Temuco, brought her hair cut equipment and took care of children, adults, and women that needed a haircut. What a nice gesture from our sister! We brought 60 bags ready for distribution to people outside the church; families that had been contacted through those who visited the first time. To God be the glory! We were able to fulfill our commitment, yet there is still so much more that we need to do for them and that is what we wish to do with all of our hearts.



When we left Temuco, we organized two teams of cars: four traveled directly to Cerro Verde, in the Vicinity of Penco, and two traveled to Coronel.



This area of Coronel was very important for their coal mining, but in the 90s almost 100% of the mines were shut down due to the risk to the miners working in extremely dangerous conditions. Today the city is one of the poorest in Chile with high alcoholism rates. Driving through their neighborhoods we saw a lot of destruction, especially their main silo in the city that is now completely destroyed. Water service is just being restored and a lot of people are still in the hills fearing the sea. We left some provisions again and talked to some of the brethren at church that said: "Brothers and sisters, we give thanks to God for the provisions you have given us so far. As you can see, most of us are well; the sanctuary has some minor cracks that need evaluation to assess the severity (though at first sight it doesn't seem severe), so this help is enough for now. So, please concentrate on those that are most affected..." These words speak volumes of these brothers and sisters and their hearts as children of God. We will continue to labor and assist with God's help.

Also that day a team of brethren traveled from our country's capital, Santiago. Those churches had gathered food, clothes, and money to help in another very affected area of our nation, the Maule Region. This team left on the night of Friday, March 12, led by Pastor José Marín from the Baptist Church "Cóncores de Chile" joined by 10 members of our churches. They began in Chillán to end in Curicó. This is a summary of what they were able to achieve based on the phone testimony by Pastor Marín.

Chillán: There are serious structure problems in the parsonage and sanctuary; the pastor and his family (wife and 4 daughters) are living under a tent in the church's lot until things become normal since the house is at risk and the aftershocks continue (there have been 316 registered aftershocks in the first 14 days post-earthquake). The main structures of the sanctuary are seriously damaged. This is to be evaluated by experts to see what needs to be done to it. Most likely it will need to be demolished. It will depend on such report. Also, two families in the church completely lost their houses. There will be need to help rebuild from scratch for these families. The team from Santiago left 30 boxes of food, clothing, and a love offering with the Pastors Isaac Venegas and his wife Nidia Alvarado, at Baptist Church New Hope in Chillán.

San Carlos: Here the situation was a bit calmer. The families from the church are safe after the Earthquake, yet live in an area of marked poverty hence needing our continued support. The sanctuary did not suffer any damages. This new building (built with the financial support and labor of brothers and sisters from the American Baptist Churches who worked hand in hand with the members and neighbors of the local Church) resisted the Earthquake much better. The team that visited the Baptist Church New Hope in San Carlos (daughter of Chillán) also left 30 boxes of food and a love offering for the church members.

Linares: Even though the city suffered a lot of destruction, since their houses are made of sun-dried clay brick (adobe), the church members are doing well. We do not have a sanctuary as the members meet in a school where Brother Jorge Durán works. They expect to begin construction this year in a lot they bought with help from the Convention. Likewise, 30 boxes of food, clothes, and a love offering were left with Pastor Ricardo Alfaro. When the team arrived to Linares they were getting ready to go in relief of Constitución, another of the damaged areas in Chile. So, part of the supplies they received, they shared in Constitución with those that lost everything.

Talca: This is another city in the Maule area that was widely shaken by the Earthquake and very close to the epicenter. The sanctuary was split. The members are not meeting in the building because of its dangers. Most likely it will need to be demolished for safety reasons. As in the previous churches, 30 boxes of food, clothes, and a love offering was left with the Pastor Isaías Sánchez Neveu and his wife Flor Vasquez.

Curicó: Also a very distressed area after the Earthquake. Here the pastor's house was severely damaged, as well as the sanctuary that sits in the same lot as the pastor's. The damages are internal; therefore, at first sight or from the street they cannot be appreciated, but inside damages are more evident. Just like in all previously described church visits, 30 boxes of food, clothes, and a love offering was left with their Pastor Vicente Montero. The long journey of our brothers in Santiago finished here after such great labor of relief and comfort of our brothers and sisters.

I would like to share a message sent to me by Pastor Vicky Machuca, from Baptist Church in Llo-Lleo, Vicinity of San Antonio, in the Fifth Region in Chile:

"Dear Mario: Thank you so much for your concern. The team came bringing help and were such a blessing. Our people was very happy; besides they really needed it. Ernesto will tell you more. They also helped to clean and remove debris and rebuild a fence. There is yet a lot to be done, but they said they'd return. Ernesto is very, very efficient; and a very hard worker... Hammer in hand, removing huge rubbles, guiding the reconstruction process; I mean, I was really impressed for he looks very office-like, but he's not so. God bless him and all who gave. On top of everything, my brothers and sisters really saw that we are more than what it looks on the surface. They always hear me talk of the Convention, their greetings, but now they could meet other people and see of their love for us. Thank you so much. God bless you."

As I was finishing this report, I got a call from Pastor Héctor Cisternas of the Baptist Church in Traiguén, Vicinity of the Ninth Region in Chile. Two walls of this sanctuary fell and must be demolished as they are within the limits of a school and the Municipality Authorities have said they cannot remain in such state. Therefore, they too need of our support.



As you can see, this Earthquake shook many regions in our country; in each of them there are damages. Yet, the Seventh and Eighth Regions are the more severely affected of our long and narrow land. May God help us with wisdom to be good stewards of the resources that will become available so that we can support each one of our brothers and sisters and country people that has lost everything. May God bless each of you that read these lines and will be moved to compassion.

"I will lift up my eyes to the hills... from whence comes my help? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth." Psalms 121:1-2

Un abrazo,

Mario Ramos E.

Presidente

Convención de Iglesias Bautistas M. Ch.