

San Lucas Mission  
1400 6<sup>th</sup> Street North  
New Ulm, MN 56073 – 2099



## SAN LUCAS MISSION URGENT UPDATE

May 31, 2010  
San Lucas Tolimán, Sololá, Guatemala

Dear Friends,

We at the San Lucas Mission hope that this letter finds you and your family well, and regret that we must be in touch with unfortunate tidings. We write you today to inform you about the grave circumstances in which the San Lucas community finds itself in the wake of Tropical Storm Agatha, which rocked all of Guatemala as well as other parts of Central America on Saturday, May 29 2010.

Heavy rains began to fall last Friday afternoon, and did not cease until Sunday morning. The rain was so heavy and so relentless that the rudimentary drainage system in town could not keep up. The streets became small rivers, and many homes were inundated. Worse still, the hillsides surrounding the town and the communities gave way, and dozens of mudslides swept through various areas in the municipality.



*The brown swaths show where the mudslides came barreling down towards town. Photo courtesy of Byron Maldonado.*



*One house is half-filled with sludge and branches washed in. This window previously stood four feet off the ground.*

At this point, we are still gathering information, and news is trickling in as families dig their way out and communicate with relatives and neighbors. However, it is now known that many homes have been heavily damaged or completely lost, that several people have lost their lives, and more are still missing.

In just one neighborhood, El Relleno, some twenty homes that once stood in a picturesque area at the bottom of the hillside simply no longer exist. What was once a vibrant community is now a field of mud and rock, with portions of roof poking through the earth here and there. The force of the mudslide was so powerful that it bulldozed entire houses, and blew through the doors and windows of others, filling homes nearly to the roof with mud and debris. Teams of friends and family are digging to salvage what little they can of their home and belongings. Even homes that were not destroyed may no longer be inhabitable; they stand in the way of what may once again become a river of mud and rock with the next heavy rainfall.

To donate, visit [www.sanlucasmision.org](http://www.sanlucasmision.org) or send a check made out to “San Lucas Mission”:  
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*These telephone poles mark the former edge of the south-bound road out of San Lucas. Trees, mud, and rock swept through on Saturday afternoon. Either side of the road were coffee fields, now completely buried.*

In addition to the immediate effects of the weekend's storm, many crops have been washed away. Coffee, corn, and bean farmers – many of our people – have seen their recently planted crop damaged and in some cases utterly destroyed. Others who plant tomatoes, onions, squash, or cucumbers to sell in the local market will struggle for months to get by as their primary source of income has disappeared with the rains.

Furthermore, the coastal road out of town has been completely washed away just outside of San Lucas proper. In its place is a canyon – a gaping wound in the earth that will take months to repair and threatens to get wider. Just beyond the washout is a field of enormous boulders that were carried along with the mudslide. As such, the arrival of provisions and resources (including food and potable water) has been at least partially choked off, and travel to other parts of the country is severely restricted.

We want to emphasize the fact that all North American visitors are safe and sound, and that plans are being made to ensure their safe passage home. Additionally, all visiting group trips are cancelled through at least Sunday June 6<sup>th</sup> – a decision that we will revisit in a week's time. While we regret the cancellation or postponement of trips, and the inconvenience that this may cause for our friends, we want to be able to make sure our resources are concentrated on the community at this time, and that we do not invite visitors into a situation in which there may be any danger at all.

In response to this situation, the Parish is assessing the way in which to appropriately and most effectively proceed to bring some measure of relief to the community. As we take account of the damage that has been done and how best to move forward, we want to emphasize your role in our efforts. All of our work is done with the help of donated funds, and **as we begin the recovery and renovation process in the following days and months, these resources will be sorely needed.** There is much work to be done to get the community back on its feet. Your support is greatly appreciated now more than ever.

Updates and more news about the aftermath of Tropical Storm Agatha will follow in our seasonal newsletter next month. We thank you for your gracious support, and ask that you keep us in your thoughts prayers during this difficult time.

Peace and Blessings,

## **San Lucas Mission**

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*Women carry food supplies away from San Lucas to their nearby community. Some may walk up to four hours.*