



*Internet classroom in the landfill*



## Reaching the Poorest of the Poor

BY LINDA TAPE, HOLY CROSS GUATEMALA COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN WITH CHERI FISH, MISSION EDITOR

Guatemala struggles to address the needs of its people, especially of those who are the poorest of the poor. In Zacapa, people who have lost jobs or do not have the means to support themselves live in the local landfill and try to meet their needs by rummaging through the waste.

Divine Savior Lutheran Church in Zacapa, Guatemala, is partnering with Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Wichita, Kansas, to help the children who live there. Six years ago, the two congregations developed the Lights for Christ program. Divine Savior has a tuition-based Lutheran school and, through donations from Holy Cross, 14 elementary-aged children (up to grade six) are receiving a Christ centered education — free of charge.

Many of the students begin their day early in the morning, traveling by bus to school where they receive breakfast before attending classes. They are also given lunch and then spend their afternoons with a tutor who helps them with homework. During this time, the children receive additional Christian love and education.

Last year, five of the Lights for Christ children graduated and proceeded to middle school. Thanks to an LWML grant, these children will be able to continue their education. The grant, so lovingly approved, will pay many of the costs associated with their education. Without a middle school education, these five have little chance of escaping the landfill.

Schools in Guatemala have been closed since March 2020 because of COVID-19. The Lutheran school in Zacapa sends lessons to students via text or email or by providing hard copies when families have no electronic devices. Because the children in the landfill have no electronic access, they, of course, receive the paper copies. The Director of the Lights for Christ Program, Cory Vargas, has been traveling to the landfill, taking lessons to the children, working with them, and helping the tutor who meets with them.

Having to work on lessons in the landfill has been a challenge for the students, but, through the love and commitment of Ms. Cory and the program's volunteers in Zacapa, the students have continued to learn. Recently, Holy Cross sent more

monetary donations to purchase a computer which is located at the tutor's home in the landfill. This grant also pays for internet access.

Because of the loving and committed work of friends in Zacapa, the children in the landfill continue to learn! The Wichita Lutheran Women in Mission are thrilled to know that the five students who started with the program graduated at the end of 2020!

Thank you, LWML, for helping Holy Cross work with these children and our friends in Zacapa to provide them with a Christian education. The program is reaching them, sometimes one child at a time! We pray and hope each one will continue to learn and grow in their faith, so that, one day, they can, in turn, help their community in the landfill. *Q*

