News

EarthBeat



A priest prays with rescue workers and volunteers as they try to rescue a person trapped beneath the rubble after the earthquakes struck Catia La Mar, Venezuela, Monday, June 29, 2026. (AP/Fernando Vergara)



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The day after twin earthquakes rocked northern Venezuela, Presbyterian Pastor Ricardo Corzo Moreno was doing two jobs at once: calming his family through the aftershocks and helping launch a 24-hour prayer and collection center for survivors. For days after the June 24 quakes, as aftershocks rocked Caracas, his family took turns staying awake in case they needed to flee their building. Eight-year-old Miranda didn't sleep through the night until Tuesday (June 30), when the family brought the children to relatives in Barquisimeto, more than 200 miles away.

"Not even in my worst nightmares did I imagine a situation as apocalyptic as the current one," Corzo Moreno said in Spanish.

The official death toll is 2,295, likely an underestimate — more than 46,000 people have been reported missing on a website where families can share details, and it's unclear how many have been found. Across Venezuela, faith leaders who are themselves impacted by the disaster have become its first responders. Corzo Moreno is working with Bishop Keison Carrillo of the Emanuel federation — some 300 evangelical churches with roughly 20,000 congregants in Venezuela — whose collection effort has so far run entirely on donations from Venezuelans themselves.

"There's been an impressive internal solidarity, like nothing we've seen before," said Carrillo, who spoke in Spanish. They've learned that the most necessary items are medications, diapers, drinking water, food, tents, mattresses and bedding. They've also worked to respond to specific needs, like preparing breakfast and lunches for

sixty doctors working in emergency response.

Corzo Moreno, director of public and institutional relations for the Fundación Todas las Cosas en Común (All Things in Common Foundation), met Friday on Zoom with nearly 100 Christian leaders from Latin America, North America and Spain to pray together and begin to discuss coordinating aid.

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Bishop Angel Marcial, who leads the Church of God throughout Latin America, including 155 churches in Venezuela, was among the leaders who joined the call from Florida, and he expressed enthusiasm about the possibility of collaboration among Christian leaders. "Everything we have to do in unity to bless Venezuela, we're all ready to do it," he said, speaking in Spanish.

So far, his church's fundraising and relief efforts have remained within Church of God networks. Marcial envisions three phases of recovery — the current phase focused on food and water, a phase focused on counseling and trauma that taps psychologists within their networks and a phase focused on rebuilding.

On Tuesday, the Rev. Berla Andrade de Vargas, moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Venezuela, went with a team of two engineers to do a safety inspection of eight houses in Guarenas and Guatire, in the suburbs of Caracas. "We went to tell the people that they weren't alone — to tell them the Presbyterian church of Venezuela is present in the midst of the disaster," said Andrade, speaking in Spanish.

Those inspections, along with pastoral and practical accompaniment, will form the backbone of the Presbyterian church's response in Venezuela, according to a plan laid out by Andrade. The plan also calls for international assistance: prayer, as well as medications, drinking water, food and financing for reconstruction.

"The sovereignty and loving paternity and maternity of God reveals itself today through the hands of God's local church, converting each congregation into a space of refuge and community solidarity," Andrade wrote in a letter to Venezuela's Presbyterians.

Venezuelans are already stretched from years of economic crisis, and Carrillo and Corzo Moreno both told RNS they worry that there will not be enough sustained international attention for the medium and long-term impacts of the earthquakes.

So far, international Christian organizations are beginning to set their aid in motion. A La Guaira emergency hospital run by Samaritan's Purse, the evangelical relief organization led by the Rev. Franklin Graham, began accepting its first patients Tuesday. The organization also said it had sent 98 tons of critical relief supplies to Venezuela and was distributing shelter materials, blankets, hygiene kits and water filtration units.

U.S.-based Catholic Relief Services also said that it is partnering with Caritas Venezuela, the humanitarian organization of the Catholic Church in Venezuela, to provide food, water and sanitation, essential household items, emergency shelter, health care and trauma support. CRS also said that Catholic parishes are opening their doors to displaced families for shelter and other assistance.

The global charity World Vision, which has been working in Venezuela since 2019, activated its network of about 2,000 churches in order to work with pastors to address local needs and distribute food in partnership with the World Food Programme. The organization also plans to provide psychological aid, organize shelters and pray with people, said Claudia Gonzalez Pacheco, a spokesperson for World Vision in Venezuela.

Gonzalez, who lives outside of Caracas in Guarenas and is sheltering her own family from La Guaira, said prayer and staff devotionals have been a balm. " I have received every day the notice of a dead friend or a dead neighbor," she said. " When you pray and when you understand that even though we have a calamity, God is still there, it will make you feel better and it will make you feel secure."

World Vision is also partnering with the US-based National Latino Evangelical Coalition and Latino Evangelical Alliance (AEL), which unites evangelical groups across Latin America.

Pastor Luis Ascanio, who leads both Iglesia El Camino (The Way Church) and Movimiento Caracas, the local branch of a Latin American movement linking churches and city leaders, expects to receive help from World Vision eventually. But he also is encouraging U.S. donors to give to its Venezuela campaign. For now, the movement's collection center relies on local volunteers, less than 200 of them drawn

from 10 churches, who make sure donations get to earthquake victims.

Ascanio and the Rev. José Durán, the founder of Movimiento America Latina, said they extended their hands over the ruins of the fallen buildings to pray. They are also working to accompany survivors asking themselves, "What did I do wrong to deserve all this harm?" and "Why does God punish me?"

The Caracas pastor said he tells his volunteers that they should respond first with empathy and only discuss the theology behind those questions when asked directly. He also said he advises volunteers to ask people before praying for them.

"Here there are no words," said Ascanio in Spanish. "Here, what there is is a hug, being beside the person, crying with those who cry, hugging them, accompanying them, because sometimes there are moments when the pain is so big … there are no words that can bring comfort."