

# **Recommended Guidelines for Sister Churches which promote Education for Life Through Scholarship Programs**

Developed by the Greater Milwaukee Synod El Salvador Committee based on conversations during the Encuentro 2009, the Chicago Summit 2012, and conversations with Milwaukee Synod and Salvadoran churches with scholarship programs. The Synod Committee asks that sister churches within the Greater Milwaukee Synod, in conversation with their companions, follow these guidelines.

## **The Scholarship Directiva/Committee and Program Guidelines**

It is recommended that each scholarship program be developed jointly and administered jointly by a directiva or committee which consists of the local Salvadoran pastor, pastoral teams and lay leaders and the sister church (US) pastor, pastoral teams and/or lay leaders. Specific participation requirements for the students, families and communities in El Salvador should be developed by the local Salvadoran teams which know best what will work in their settings.

Examples of requirements for program participation and guidelines for families include the following criteria: good grades, participation in Sunday School or Youth Group, parent meetings, daily reading record, service hours. The local guidelines should be shared with the US sister churches.

The Scholarship Directiva/Committee should decide whether relationships between scholarship recipients and sponsors should be developed. If sponsors provide scholarships for individual students and write letters to the students, guidelines for letters and gift-giving should be developed. Sponsors should never send money directly to a student or the student's family

## **Setting the Rules**

### **What the Scholarship Program Covers**

Each local scholarship committee and pastor will develop guidelines which fit the local community. Typically, a scholarship program will include the following for a list of students who have been approved for the program:

- Transportation costs (ranges in amount from zero for communities which have local schools to 25 cents per bus one way; most expensive for university students)
- Registration costs (only for students in private schools and university)
- Materials fees (more for high school and university students; students in K4 through grade 9 receive 6 notebooks, pens, pencils and some other basics from the government; students need to provide their own backpacks and specialty supplies)
- Food allowance (students in K4 to grade 9 should receive breakfast or lunch in school; food for university students is important because they have to leave early and are gone all day)
- Uniforms and shoes (high school students only; some elementary schools provide gym uniforms and some require students to purchase them)

It is recommended that scholarship programs consider including coverage of:

- Funds for graduation ceremonies (grades K, 9 and 12)
- Funds to support group gatherings, parent meetings, transportation to micro-region events

Some local committees have asked for:

- Funds for vitamins for the children
- Funds to cover some basic needs of families in the community
- Funds to support the local church

*It is important for the Salvadoran members and North American members of the scholarship committees to be clear about what the program will cover and what the program will not cover and to communicate this information with the scholarship recipients and community at large.*

### **Setting Limits on the Program**

To promote the welfare of the community, scholarship program committees may wish to set limits on their programs. Suggested limits include:

- A maximum number of 4 scholarship students will be allowed per family (and define “family” in your context)
- A maximum number of years allowed for study in the university – suggested amount is 6 years
- Focus on the priorities for your context – if the priority is to get kids to go to school in the first place, then scholarships for young children may be warranted. If the focus is on keeping kids in school during adolescence, then a focus on middle and high school is appropriate. University costs are the highest and open discussion should be held regarding students who graduate from high school with expectations for university. Many different models of programs exist.

### **Finances**

#### **When to Send the Funds**

Although in the US we tend to think about the annual cost of a scholarship program, in El Salvador the money is generally paid to the schools and families on a monthly basis. Monthly payments are safer for the pastor who needs to withdraw the money from the bank, the couriers to take the money into the community, and the families who receive the money.

The largest payment is made at the beginning of January, which includes the initial school registration fees and start-up materials. Equal payments are then made from February through November. Graduation fees (Kindergarten, Grade 9 and Grade 12) are paid in November. The local scholarship team should provide the sister church with details regarding the dollar amount for each scholarship and the payment schedule.

Salvadoran Lutheran Church leaders generally recommend that scholarship program money be sent **quarterly**, with the first payment arriving at least one week before the Christmas holidays or during the first week in January. They also recommend that money **not be sent** in one lump sum because it is hard for them to keep track of it for the whole year and it is difficult not to spend it if an urgent need arises.

#### **Where to Send the Funds**

In the Greater Milwaukee Synod, we route all funds from US sister churches to their Salvadoran companions through the synod office. This allows us to have an accurate record of all funds which travel from our synod to the Salvadoran Lutheran Church which can be compared to Salvadoran Lutheran Church records and ELCA reports. This also allows money to be efficiently wire transferred directly to the Sister Parish Account.

Money from sister churches, for scholarship programs and all other ministries, is deposited into one account, The Sister Parish Account. The wire transfer is made out to Sínodo Luterano Salvadoreño. The synod treasurer sends an email to the following personnel:

- + The local pastor (if he or she has email) or designated members of the pastoral team
- + The administrators of the program in the local community (lay leader if he or she has email)
- + Pastor Norma Castillo de Menjivar, Sister Parish Coordinator ([sisterparish@gmail.com](mailto:sisterparish@gmail.com))
- + The local Micro-Region Coordinator
- + Aracely Ventura, Administration ([a.ventura@sls.org.sv](mailto:a.ventura@sls.org.sv))
- + Bishop Gómez (optional) ([lutomg@sls.org.sv](mailto:lutomg@sls.org.sv))
- + The Companion Synod Chairperson
- + The designated representative from the US sister church

*Example of email: On 27 November 2012, a wire transfer has been made to your account in the amount of (\$\$\$). This money is for the Scholarship Program at Cordero de Dios in Soyapango for the period January 2012 through March 2012. The pastor who coordinates this program is Pastor Norma Castillo.*

### **How the Money Gets to the Pastors**

In order to withdraw money from the Sister Parish Account, the local pastor must put in a request with Aracely Ventura or Pastor Norma Castillo. There is a form which requires a signature from Pastor Norma or Aracely and from the local pastor. The form includes a place in which the pastor needs to describe the purpose for which the money is being withdrawn. (Example: Cordero de Dios Scholarship Program, January payments). This is why it is very important to communicate with the local pastor whenever money is sent, because the request for the money must come from him or her. It is advisable that the local pastor phone the business office (Aracely) to make an appointment to sign for the funds, especially if the pastor needs to travel a long distance.

The bank in El Salvador does charge a fee for receiving the wire transfer. The committee should talk about who should pay this fee and how much it is. (In 2012, it seemed to be a flat fee of about \$10.)

### **How the Money Gets Distributed to the Families**

Each local scholarship committee will have its own set of guidelines regarding the administration of the local program. It is recommend that each adult family representative or adult student sign and date a form or a list which indicates that he or she is receiving a payment and what the amount of that payment is. If the US sister church, the Sister Parish office, or the Salvadoran Lutheran Church administration requests to see these records, the local scholarship program team/local pastor should be able to provide them.

Some scholarship programs include penalties or probationary guidelines for students who do not follow the requirements or are entering a trial period prior to fully participating in the program. The local scholarship team should have a record-keeper and be able to produce a report at the end of the year which indicates what partial payments were made, what students were penalized, and what happened to unpaid funds.

### **Paying an Administrator for a Scholarship Program**

While the pastor is an important person at the center of the program and is ultimately responsible for disbursement and monitoring of funds, he or she should not be running the program alone. For safety and accountability, the pastor should be accompanied by a team and possibly by a paid administrator.

The local scholarship team may consist of a treasurer/book-keeper, a parent/guardian liaison and other leaders. The team or parents/guardians may elect or delegate leaders to coordinate aspects of the program (examples: pastor assistant, Day-of-the-Child coordinator, sports event chairperson, fund-raiser, Bible Study coordinator, graduation coordinator).

The local Salvadoran team and US sister church team may decide that a scholarship program administrator is needed. This may especially be true for large programs with weekly parent or youth meetings. The annual stipend for an administrator is recommended to be equal to 5% of the total value of the program. (Example: Annual funds of \$20,000 disseminated to students would call for an administrator salary not to exceed \$1000. In addition, if the administrator has more than 2 children in the scholarship program, the monetary value of the third (and possibly fourth) scholarships shall be deducted from the administrator stipend. A minimum stipend amount may be set.

### **Transparency and Communication**

#### **Managing the Student List and Transparency between Sister Churches**

Some local Salvadoran communities have more than one US or international sister church. The Salvadoran Lutheran Church administration has identified that increased communication between the US and international sister churches will help with transparency issues in scholarship programs. This is one of the goals of the Encuentro and Chicago Summit gatherings.

The issue of “double dipping” has been discussed, with the understanding that the lack of transparency on the part of some local Salvadoran scholarship committees or local pastors is a mechanism for survival. If 10 students are receiving scholarships from California, and the same 10 are receiving scholarships from Wisconsin, it is likely that the California funds might be paying for school and the Wisconsin funds might be paying for food for those same children or for the administrative costs of the program. The Salvadoran Lutheran Church administration recommends that student lists be shared freely among sister churches, and that “double-dipping” be brought out from under the table. Local Salvadoran churches and sister churches are encouraged to work together to create honest and transparent programs.

#### **Managing the Sponsors and Transparency of Gifts**

It is important for the US sister church scholarship committees to have good guidelines and management of funds. Promises which are made should be kept and quarterly or other payments should be made in time to meet the schedule provided by the Salvadoran scholarship team.

Monetary gifts outside of the official program should not be given to individual students or families because it undermines the local Salvadoran rules and guidelines for their programs. Sponsors should be told not to slip cash into letters which they send to their students.