DEAR PARTNER IN MINISTRY,

Crisis upon crises. As I’ve noted with partners around the U.S. lately, this is the best way I can describe the reality so many of our neighbors are forced to live through.

Fears of COVID-19 infection for those already experiencing mounting poverty and food insecurity in the African Sahel.

Children going to bed hungry in Uganda because families lack the necessary tools and training to farm the land.

Thousands of neighbors living on the streets of Haiti after a 7.2-magnitude earthquake struck the country already dealing with political unrest and a nagging coral bleaching crisis.

Our neighbors with the very least are facing unimaginable need. On any given day, it is difficult to know where or how we might be able to make a difference. And yet God calls us together as the body of Christ, each with our individual gifts and passions, to share our love with the world.

In this edition, we’re inviting you to respond to a variety of gifts and passions, whose needs come across your desk. But you know your neighbors. You know their stories and their need. As a pastor, I know you can’t care for all the people in need—yet you are motivated to ensure that children don’t go to bed hungry, or that those already experiencing crushing poverty and food insecurity in the African Sahel.

In deep gratitude for your compassionate generosity.

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Suzan Nzabake toils on her farm, day in and day out, trying to grow coffee and vanilla the best ways she knows how. But the flowers keep dropping off her plants before the fruit has a chance to develop, and her yields are always small. Suzan’s family lives in extreme poverty in Kasese, Uganda. They sleep on the floor of a tiny mud hut, and they have very little to eat. Her children are sick “all the time,” she says, and she has to make frequent visits to the hospital with them. “They don’t play,” she laments. “The little ones just spend time crying and dozing off.” At school, the older ones fall asleep in class because they’re hungry and have no energy.

Suzan often eats just once a day so there’s enough food for her children to eat twice. Her stomach rumbles and she feels light-headed while she digs the soil by hand, but there’s nothing else to eat to keep her going. She says when she came down with malaria recently, it took a long time to recover because she was so weak from hunger.

“Our family and I survive, but life isn’t good,” she says. Still, Suzan prays fervently for a better future. “The Bible says you should ask God what you desire, and I pray that he blesses me through my land and that what is within it should uplift me.”

Lutheran World Relief visited Suzan’s farm to see how we could share God’s love with her family. Soil tests showed that there were very little nutrients to sustain her crops, and she had no access to fertilizer or basic farming tools. That means no matter how hard she works, Suzan will labor in vain unless she receives training and tools to improve her yields and her income. No matter how many times her children visit the hospital, they won’t thrive — and they may not survive at all — if they don’t have enough to eat.

Suzan, her children and so many others have done everything they can to help themselves. But they are poor, hungry and exhausted. As followers of Christ, will your congregation extend your hand to these precious neighbors — to feed them when they are hungry? To provide what they need so they can learn to provide for themselves? Your congregation’s love can be the answer to their prayers.

...for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me...

Matthew 25:35

Visit lwrcg.org/congregations to download publicity tools for sharing Suzan’s story or to give online.