

June 5, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

My name is Mauricio, I am a church planter Pastor, a regional coordinator of Latino churches (NWC), and a member of the board of the National Association of Latino Pastors (ALIPE). Destino Covenant Church is a multigenerational, multicultural, immigrant community with more than 15 Latino nationalities represented. We are located one mile from the 3rd precinct that burned to the ground last week. Many church members live in the surrounding neighborhoods and some families just a few blocks from where George Floyd was killed. In these days of turmoil, our hearts overflow with compassion and empathy for our African American community as we mourn and lament together in solidarity.

## **Our Pain**

The events following Mr. Floyd's death, riots, arson, and looting have had devastating effects on the Immigrant, Native American, African American, and other minority communities here in Minneapolis. We write this letter as an update on the *Latino experience* here in Minneapolis during this tragic time.

As an immigrant myself, serving an immigrant community, as we watched our neighborhoods burn last week, I can say there have been emotions of absolute terror as traumas from similar experiences in our native countries, experiences many fled to the United States to escape, were triggered as our city transformed into what in aftermath appears to be a 'war zone'.

In our neighborhoods many spent sleepless nights on high alert, praying their homes would not catch fire or be vandalized as nearby businesses were ablaze and looted. Grocery stores, a center for Native American youth, an affordable housing complex under construction, pharmacies, libraries, and restaurants, etc... along Lake Street and throughout Minneapolis, many immigrants and minority-owned businesses have been destroyed. Last week, a church member walked 3 hours to get home from work, due to the suspension of public transportation only to find the stores where he normally would pick up dinner were on fire and absolute chaos ensued a block from his apartment. In terror, he watched as a man who had been shot as a result of the rioting violence, died in the street.

Our hearts break for our community. To date, at least 379 businesses across the Twin Cities were vandalized, looted, or had doors and windows smashed. Some have been reduced to rubble, and at least 65 have been destroyed completely by fire. Now our ethnically diverse neighborhoods are grappling with the loss of jobs, services, and investments.

As we continue to experience the devastating effects of COVID-19 and now the destruction of our city, the physical, emotional and spiritual exhaustion is all too real. There is pain, fear, anger, sadness, frustration, and anxiety.

## **Our Response**

The needs of our community at this time are three-fold: Spiritual, Emotional, and Physical. If we focus our efforts to provide for only the physical needs at this time we miss a huge opportunity to make an eternal impact on the lives of our immigrant community.

Since the onset of COVID-19, each week during our online service we have seen 3-10 people make a commitment to follow Jesus. We are able to follow-up with our "on-line guests" when they fill out a virtual connection card. At the same time, as a church, we have doubled the number of small groups via zoom and continue to grow these groups and prepare leaders. Our Destino Institute (CHET) will continue to be offered this summer via zoom providing training and high-level education to Spanish speaking people.

Our networks of small groups provide connection and fellowship during the week, helping to meet the emotional needs of our community. There is an additional need for trauma and grief counseling based on current and/or previous life events that outside resources could help provide.

To meet the physical needs of our community our leaders are helping to identify the needs within our congregation and community and we are working to provide more personalized attention to these needs. In collaboration with Bethlehem Covenant Church and other churches and community members in the area, we have been able to provide a "market" where leaders and church members are able to come and pick up donations that specifically meet the needs for diapers, food, paper products, cleaning supplies, etc.. and deliver these items to those in need. In addition, we recently sent out "boxes of hope" to children in our community providing healthy snacks/food, notes of encouragement, and interactive family devotional materials.

## Our Invitation

There are many more needs in our community that we are unable to meet at this time. Many have lost their jobs during the last few months. Some were about to return to work as the economy was beginning to re-open and then the riots and destruction of our city caused businesses to close up once again both temporarily and permanently. The same businesses where our community members work and shop.

Many members of the immigrant community, for various reasons, do not qualify for the stimulus checks most Americans received. They also do not qualify for some unemployment benefits or other resources the typical American population has received during this time. The need is great and has been exasperated due to immigration status. For many the rent is due or household bills and the means to pay have vanished.

We love this city and believe that God brought us here, as immigrants, with a purpose. We desire to impact our city with God's love, justice, and mercy. Our efforts cannot take effect, however, unless we have the support and solidarity of the larger community. That is where you come in!

- 1) **PRAY.** In addition to the solidarity with the African American community, please include in your prayers the immigrant community who also suffers racial injustice, discrimination, and fear.
- 2) **DONATE.** Bring food, supplies, and gift cards to Destino Covenant Church, 3141 43rd Ave S, Minneapolis MN 55406. For a complete list of drop-off times and list of items please see this online document: [Donations to Destino.Church \(https://bit.ly/donate2destino\)](https://bit.ly/donate2destino)
- 3) **GIVE.** Make a donation to our [Community Needs Crisis Fund](#). These gifts will go directly to the relief our community so desperately needs right now, including Financial Aid, Legal Aid, Counseling, and more. Go online at <https://www.destino.church>

Sincerely,



Mauricio Dell  
Lead Pastor