

Venezuelan Christians Call for Prayer After Chávez's Death

As Venezuelans mourn the death of President Hugo Chávez and face an uncertain future, the nation's evangelical community urges Christians around the world to be in **prayer** for their country.

Chávez, 58, died March 5, after battling cancer. The leader had served as Venezuela's president for 14 years.

"Wednesday, scores of people came into the street [in Caracas] to view his funeral procession and show their respect for the fallen leader," said a Christian worker in Venezuela. "Leaders from many countries around the world have also gathered for the funeral service on Friday."

The country has declared seven days of mourning for their president.

Consejo Evangélico de Venezuela (The Evangelical Council of Venezuela), a Venezuelan organization of evangelicals including the National Baptist Convention of Venezuela, issued a statement Tuesday on their website and Facebook page, offering condolences to the president's family and all Venezuelans, and calling for Christians to **pray** for peace and unity in their nation.

The statement urged Venezuelans to "avoid hatred, damaging language and confrontational attitudes" during this time of national grief and to "look to God as our only giver of grace and truth."

Alluding to political divisions and tensions that have plagued Venezuela during the Chávez administration, the statement

encouraged Venezuelans to “live together in the midst of differences” and to “maintain a heart free of bad feelings so that we may see the hand of God acting in our country.”

Citing several verses from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), the statement also challenged Venezuelans to be peacemakers—“be a country that constructs peace and rejects confrontation.”

The Christian worker explained, “Venezuela plays a critical role in influencing the affairs of Latin America and has one of the largest petroleum reserves of any country in the world.

“The capital, Caracas, is one of the least evangelized cities in Latin America,” the Christian worker added. “Thus, the death of the president behooves Christians everywhere to pray not only for the peace and unity of the nation, but that its citizens will use the death of their fallen leader to reflect upon the frailty of life and seek eternal security in the person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Laura Fielding is an IMB writer. Maria Elena Baseler, IMB writer/editor, contributed to this story.