

LATIN AMERICAN SOCIO-RELIGIOUS STUDIES PROGRAM -  
PROGRAMA LATINOAMERICANO DE ESTUDIOS SOCIORRELIGIOSOS  
(PROLADES)

**ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN  
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN:  
RELIGION IN GUATEMALA**

**SECOND EDITION**

By Clifton L. Holland, Director of PROLADES

Last revised on 30 March 2020

**REVIEW COPY – NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

**PROLADES**

Apartado 86-5000, Liberia, Guanacaste, Costa Rica  
Telephone (506) 8820-7023; E-Mail: [prolades1@gmail.com](mailto:prolades1@gmail.com)  
Internet: <http://www.prolades.com/>

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# RELIGION IN GUATEMALA

## Country Overview

The Republic of Guatemala is the most populous country in Central America, bordered by the Pacific Ocean to the west and the Caribbean Sea to the east, and adjacent to Mexico (west and north), Belize (northeast), Honduras (east), and El Salvador (southeast). The total population of Guatemala was estimated at 14.6 million in 2010, and 16.9 million in 2017. Most of Guatemala's population is rural, although urbanization is accelerating in the departmental capitals and in the national capital of Guatemala City. The Guatemala City metropolitan area of 2.7 million people (2015) includes Guatemala City plus seven surrounding municipalities: Amatitlán, Chinautla, Mixco, San Miguel Petapa, Santa Catarina Pinula, Villa Canales and Villa Nueva, which covers a land area of 184.6 miles (478 square km).

The country is divided geographically by the Central Highlands that stretch east and west. The magnificent scenery includes black-sand beaches and rolling hills and farmland along the Pacific coast; majestic smoking volcanoes, forested mountain ridges, dark-blue lakes, terraced hillsides, and green-carpeted valleys with coffee bushes in the Central Highlands; tropical rainforests in the northern lowlands; and large lakes and swamps in the Caribbean coastal region.

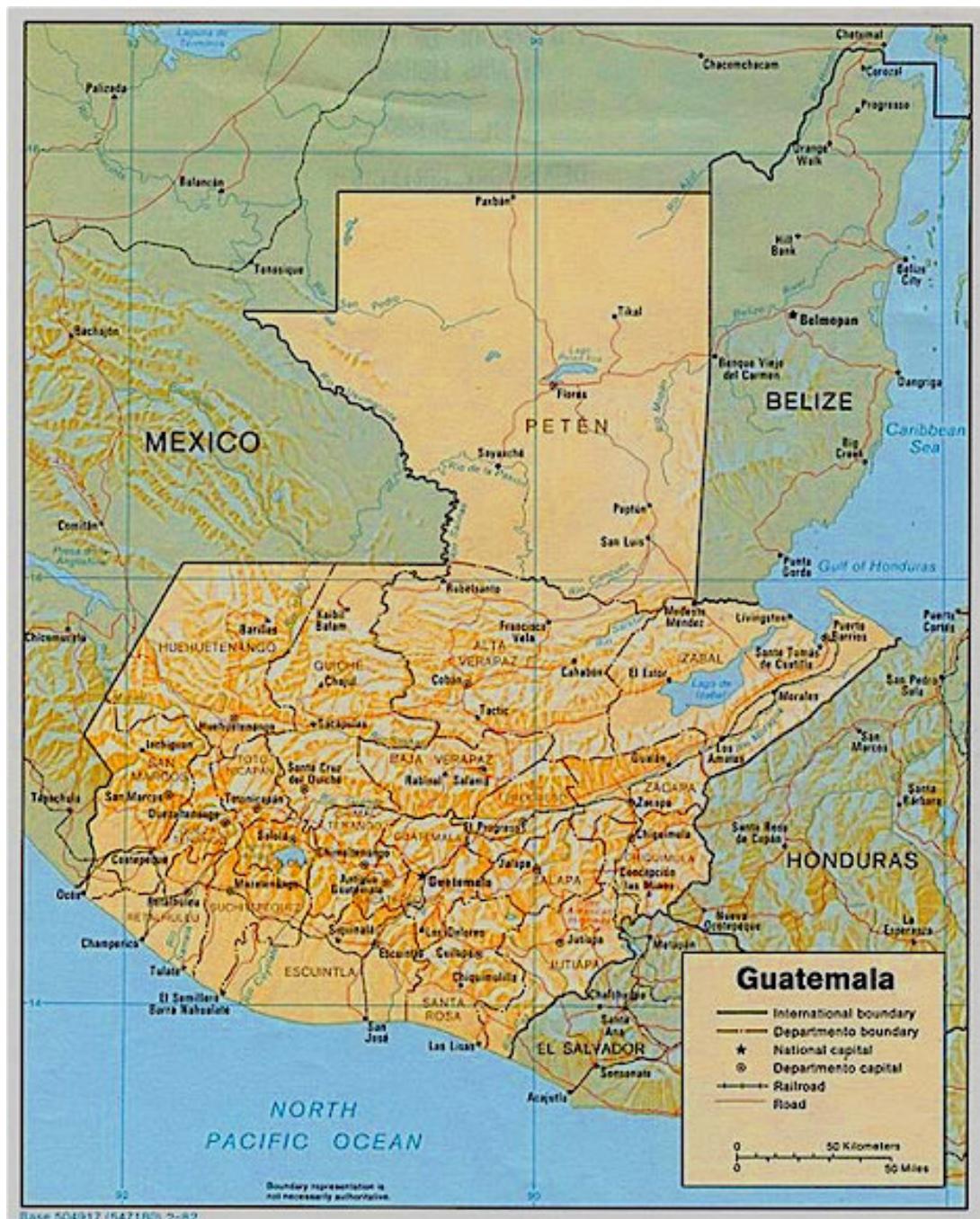
Known as the “Land of Trees” and the “Land of Eternal Spring,” Guatemala has been steadily losing much of its animal and plant life, particularly since the 1950s, due to the process of economic modernization. Environmental deterioration is now threatening human society and the economy, but the flora and fauna have long suffered from human activities. This process began with the early hunter and gatherer groups of Amerindians that first arrived about 2,500 BCE. It increased with the sophisticated Mayan civilization of 400-900 C.E. in the Guatemalan highlands and lowlands (as well as in adjacent areas of Mexico, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador), where more than a million inhabitants depended on large-scale agricultural production to sustain their dominance in the region. It continued during the Spanish colonial period (1492-1832) and has accelerated during the modern period (1832 to date).

Guatemalan society is divided into two main ethnic categories: Amerindian and *ladino*. More than half of Guatemalans are descendants of Indigenous Mayan peoples. Hispanicized Mayans and *mestizos* (Spanish-speaking people of mixed Spanish and Amerindian ancestry) are known as *ladinos*. However, the major factors for determining the size of the Amerindian population by the government have been language and dress, rather than race, which tends to underestimate the strength of the Amerindian population. The Council of Mayan Organizations (COMG) claimed that about 65 percent of the Guatemalan population was Amerindian in 1990. However, *ladino* control the nation's political and economic life, as well as determining its social standards: "to be accepted outside one's own Indian community one has to look, act, and talk like a *ladino*," according to Tom Barry in *Inside Guatemala* (1992). Ethnic discrimination permeates Guatemalan life, and Indians must shed their traditional dress and language and assume a *ladino* cultural identity to achieve social acceptance and to succeed in the dominant society.

According to Wycliffe Bible Translators' *Ethnologue* (2005), the population of Guatemala was 55 percent Amerindian, 44 percent *mestizo*, and about one percent other races. Fifty-four living languages are spoken in Guatemala (not including those spoken by immigrant groups) among 23 ethnolinguistic groups, with Spanish being the dominant language (about 44 percent, followed by the principal Mayan languages of Quiché, Mam, Cakchiquel and Kekchí. Spanish is

the major trade language because most of the Amerindian languages are linguistically distinct, which hampers communication outside one's own ethnic group. There are an estimated 100,000 "Black Caribs" (Afro-Amerindians who speak Garifuna) in Central America, but only about 16,700 live in Guatemala, predominantly on the Caribbean coast at Livingston and Puerto Barrios.

Additional ethnic components of the Guatemalan population include Afro-American West Indians (who speak English or English Creole) on the Caribbean coast, Middle Easterners (mainly Lebanese and Jews), Europeans (mainly Germans and North Americans), Chinese and Koreans.



## Current Religious Situation

The Guatemalan Constitution provides for freedom of religion, including freedom of worship and the free expression of all beliefs. The Constitution recognizes the distinct legal personality of the Catholic Church. Non-Catholic religious groups must register with the Ministry of Government in order to enter into contracts or receive tax-exempt status.

Christianity remains a strong and vital force in Guatemalan society, but its composition has changed during generations of political and social unrest. Historically, the dominant religion has been Roman Catholicism. In 1980, 84.2 percent of the population was reported to be Roman Catholic; 13.8 percent was Protestant (most of whom identified as Evangelicals); and about two percent was identified with “other religious groups” (including traditional Mayan religions) or had “no religious affiliation.” However, by 1990, the Catholic population had declined to 60.4 percent (a decline of 24 percentage points), while the Protestant population increased to 26.4 percent (an increase of 12.6 percentage points); 2.1 percent were adherents of “other religions,” and 11.1 percent had “no religious affiliation” (CID-Gallup Poll, June 1990).

Surprisingly, during the decade of the 1990s, a series of public opinion polls revealed little change in religious affiliation between 1990 and 2001. However, between 2001 and 2006, the size of the Protestant population increased from about 30 percent to 34 percent in 2006, while the Catholic population remained relatively constant at 54-57 percent. Those affiliated with “other religions” also remained steady at two to three percent, while those with “no religious affiliation” declined from 15.6 percent in 1999 to about 10 percent in 2006.

A series of more recent public opinion polls has confirmed that the size of the Protestant population in Guatemala remained about the same between 2010 and 2018: 39 percent in 2010 (Latinobarómetro, 2010), 38 percent in 2012 (CID-Gallup, 2012), 41.4 percent in 2013 (Latinobarómetro, 2014), 41 percent in 2014 (Pew Research, 2014), and 39.5 percent in 2017 (Latinobarómetro, 2018). The Catholic population declined from 51.4 percent in 2010 to 41.7 percent in 2018, according to the same sources listed below. In addition, the size of the population claiming affiliation with “other religions” remained stable at two to three percent between 2010 and 2018, while the “nones” (no religious affiliation or no response) increased from 10 percent in 2010 to 16.7 percent in 2018.

The average size of the Protestant population was 40.2 percent between 2010 and 2018, which means that the growth curve was basically flat during that eight-year period. Possible reasons for this could be a decline in Guatemala’s population growth rate, emigration of Protestants (mainly to the USA), and a change in religious affiliation (a return to Catholicism, joining a new religion: Eastern Orthodox, marginal Christian groups or non-Christian religions), or a loss of faith (becoming agnostic, atheist or having no religious affiliation = “nones”).

An August-September 2008 public opinion poll by *Sistemas de Información de Mercadotécnico* (SIMER) reported that the Catholic population of the Guatemala City metro area (zones 1-20 only) was 47.8 percent, compared to 31.7 percent for Protestants, 2.4 percent “other religions,” and 18.3 percent with “no religious affiliation.” This shows that the nation’s largest metropolitan area had a much larger population of “nones” and fewer Protestants than at the national level in 2008. Nationally, Protestants were reported to be 34% of the nation’s population in 2006 and 39 percent in 2010, according to Latinobarómetro.

Sources:

PROLADES: [http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/gte/guat\\_polls\\_1990-2018.pdf](http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/gte/guat_polls_1990-2018.pdf)

SIMER, 2008: [http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/polls\\_cam2008\\_simer.pdf](http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/polls_cam2008_simer.pdf)

Pew Research, November 2014: <http://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2014/11/Religion-in-Latin-America-11-12-PM-full-PDF.pdf>  
Latinobarómetro, 1996-2018: <http://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp>

According to a 2015 national survey by ProDatos, published in Guatemala's *Prensa Libre* (31 May 2015), approximately 45 percent of the population was Catholic and 42 percent was Protestant and other Christian groups; the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses are often included in the Protestant-Evangelical category. The Eastern Orthodox Christian denominations were not mentioned by name and were probably included under "other religious groups," which constituted about two percent of the population, including adherents of Amerindian and African-derived religions. Approximately 11 percent of the population professed "no religious affiliation." However, the distribution of the Catholic and Protestant populations in Guatemala varies: in rural areas of the country, Protestants were reported to be 43 percent compared to 42 percent for Catholics, while in metropolitan areas Catholics were 46 percent compared to 41 percent for Protestants.

Source: <https://www.prenslibre.com/guatemala/comunitario/catolicos-evangelicos-cifras-encuesta/>

A characteristic of most cities, towns and villages in Guatemala is the presence of a Catholic church situated on the central square or plaza. The Metropolitan Cathedral (original construction between 1782–1815) in Guatemala City is a visible sign of the historical presence of the Catholic Church in the life of the nation.

The *mestizo* population of Guatemala has strong ties to traditional Roman Catholicism brought to the Americas by Spanish missionaries, who themselves carried the cultural baggage of their Iberian homeland with its pre-Christian Celtic spirituality and Medieval Roman Catholic beliefs and practices. Consequently, the general religiosity of the *ladinos* of Guatemala contains elements of European as well as Amerindian "popular Catholicism" (syncretism).

Catholics and Protestants are almost equally distributed throughout the country, with adherents among all major ethnic groups. According to leaders of Maya spiritual organizations, as well as Catholic and Protestant clergy, many Indigenous Catholics and some Indigenous Protestants practice some form of syncretism with Indigenous spiritual rituals, mainly the Amerindian population in certain regions of the country. Also, there is syncretism among the African-derived religions present in the eastern Department of Izabal among the Garifuna and English-speaking "creole" populations on the Caribbean coast.

Source: *International Religious Freedom Report for 2017*, U. S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/281320.pdf>

## **Historical Overview of Early Social, Political and Religious Development**

The Classic Maya civilization was dominated by large city-states in the Valley of Guatemala (where Guatemala City is now located), at Tikal in the lowlands of the Petén, at Copán in northwestern Honduras, and at Palanque in the Chiapas foothills of Mexico. This civilization rapidly declined after 900 CE due to environmental changes (mainly drought), over-population, internal social and political disintegration, and competition with rival Amerindian empires (Toltec and Mixtec), according to many scholars. The center of Maya civilization shifted from the previous city-states to new ceremonial centers in the central and northern Yucatán Peninsula in present-day Mexico, such as Chichen Itza and Mayapan, during the period 600-1500 CE.

**By the time the Spanish *conquistadores*, colonists and Roman Catholic priests arrived in the early 1500s**, the Maya civilization in Guatemala was in disarray and engaged in bitter rivalry with other major Amerindian groups, which facilitated Spanish domination. By 1650, a combination of disease, war and exploitation had greatly reduced the size of the Amerindian population in Guatemala, from about one million in 1500 CE to only about 200,000 in 1650. The Spanish and Spanish creole (American-born of pure Spanish blood) elite ruled over the growing *mestizo* population (mixed Spanish and Indian blood) and the dwindling Amerindian population, which declined from 80 percent of the total population in 1778 to 65 percent in 1893. In 1973, Amerindians were less than half of the nation's population, according to government authorities.

Politically, Guatemala achieved its independence from Spain in 1821-1823, after nearly 300 years of Spanish colonial rule under the Captaincy General of Guatemala, which governed the Spanish territories of Central America and the modern Mexican state of Chiapas.

The first Spanish colonial capital, Santiago de Guatemala, was destroyed by floods and an earthquake in 1542. Survivors founded a second capital, now known as La Antigua Guatemala, in 1543. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Antigua Guatemala became one of the richest capitals in the New World. Always vulnerable to volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, Antigua was destroyed by two earthquakes in 1773, but the remnants of its Spanish colonial architecture have been preserved as a national monument. The third capital, modern Guatemala City, was founded in 1776, in the "Valle de Nuestra Señora de la Ermita."

**After the independence of Central America from Spain in 1821** and its later separation from the independent Mexican Empire in 1823, Guatemala became part of the United Provinces of Central America (later called the Federal Republic of Central America), comprised of the modern states of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica – Panama was a province of Colombia until November 1903. **General José Francisco Morazán Quezada**, born in Honduras in 1792, was one of the principal leaders of the Liberal Party. His first term as President of the Federation was from 1830 to 1834. In 1834, Morazán oversaw the relocation of the Central American Federal Capital from Guatemala City to San Salvador. Morazán was re-elected as the Federation's president in 1835 and served until 1839. He also served as the Head of State of Honduras (1827-1830), Guatemala (1829), El Salvador (1839-1840) and Costa Rica (1842).

As President of the Federation, Morazán enacted many reforms, including freedom of speech, the press and religion; equality of people of all classes before the law; and trial by jury. All of these reforms were opposed, with extreme prejudice, by the Conservatives who wanted to maintain the old class system. The Liberals approved the separation of Church and State, secular marriage and divorce, and an end to government-enforced tithing to the Catholic Church, which

made most all of the Catholic clergy enemies of Morazán and his Liberal allies. General Morazán was further denounced when he ordered all the Catholic clergy out of the country, and told them never to return or face certain death.

The Liberal democratic project was strongly opposed by Conservative factions allied with the Roman Catholic clergy and the wealthy landowners. Local conservative factions wanted to retain the old Spanish Roman Catholic system of caste titles and privileges, so they pressured Liberal rebel leader **José Rafael Carrera Turcios** (1814-1865) to join their cause. He turned his back on the Liberals and sided with the Conservatives.

During the period of 1838–1840, the Federation experienced a civil war between the Conservatives and Liberals. Without a strong sense of national identity, the various political factions were unable to overcome their ideological differences, and the Federation dissolved after a series of bloody conflicts. By 1838, Carrera became the *de facto* ruler of much of Guatemala, after using religious fanaticism to motivate his troops in battle with the cry, "*;Viva la religión y muerte a los extranjeros!*" (Long live religion and death to foreigners!). Morazán repeatedly chased Carrera's forces out of cities and towns, but Carrera would simply retreat to the mountains and retake the area as soon as Morazán's military forces left the area. The union effectively dissolved in 1840, by which time four of its five states had declared their independence.

**The Republic of Guatemala** was created in 1838 under Carrera and his Conservative political allies. Carrera, known as "an illiterate but shrewd and charismatic leader," was President of Guatemala on two occasions: from December 1844 to August 1848, and from November 1851 to April 1865. His government signed a Concordat with the Vatican in 1852, repealed the anti-clerical legislation established under the rule of Gen. Morazán (1829-1838), reinstated the Catholic religious orders, and allowed the Catholic clergy to operate the nation's few public schools.

However, after Carrera's death in 1865, the Conservatives were wrested from power by a coalition of Liberal forces. In July 1871, **Justo Rufino Barrios** (1835-1885), together with other Liberal generals and dissidents, issued the "Plan for the Fatherland" that proposed to overthrow Guatemala's long entrenched Conservative leadership, from 1838 to 1871. They succeeded in doing so when **General Miguel García Granados** (1809-1878) was declared president for the term 1871-1873 and Barrios became commander of the armed forces. After Barrios himself became President (1873-1885), the Catholic Church was again subjected to harsh legislation, the Jesuits and other foreign clergy were expelled, the archbishop and bishops were exiled, tithes were eliminated, convents and monasteries were prohibited and closed, church property was confiscated, priests were prohibited from wearing clerical garb and were barred from teaching, religious processions were proscribed, and civil marriage was required of all citizens. These anti-clerical laws so crippled the Catholic Church in Guatemala that it has never fully recovered its former influence. Also, during the Barrios' administration, the railroad from the capital to the Pacific coast was completed in 1880.

The decline of *cochineal* production – a natural pigment of a bright red color obtained from the carminic acid produced by some small, plant-sucking homopterous insects that live on cacti, feeding on moisture and nutrients in the cacti, was widely used as a dye for fabrics, pottery, food coloring and other industrial uses prior to the invention of synthetic pigments and dyes in the late-19<sup>th</sup> century – caused some economic dislocation in Guatemala by the 1860s. However, Guatemala's porous volcanic soil, constant temperature, and single rainy season made its highlands ideally suited for coffee production, following the lead of Costa Rica. Guatemala began to produce significant amounts of coffee during the Conservative era (1838-1865), but it was

under subsequent Liberal regimes that coffee production and exports led to the modernization and economic growth of the country prior to 1900. Coffee farms (*fincas*) sprang up around Cobán, Antigua and Amatitlán, and then spread to the western highlands and the Pacific coastal slopes. By 1870, coffee production rose to 44 percent of all Guatemala's exports, and became the largest single export commodity, a position that it has held ever since.

**Manuel José Estrada Cabrera** was President of Guatemala from 1898 to 1920 (22 years), the longest uninterrupted presidency in the nation's history. He became president after the 1898 assassination of **President José María Reyna Barrios** (1892-1898). Estrada, a lawyer, was a moderate within the Liberal Party, who worked to solidify the less controversial reforms of President Barrios; he was the first civilian Guatemalan head of state in over 50 years. He was able to retain power by controlling elections in 1904, 1910 and 1916. One Guatemalan historian suggested that the extreme despotic character of Estrada did not emerge until after an attempt on his life in 1907.

Estrada encouraged development of the nation's infrastructure: highways, railroads and sea ports. The long-delayed railway from the Caribbean coast to Guatemala City was completed in 1908 with assistance from the International Railways of Central America, a subsidiary of the U.S. multinational corporation **United Fruit Company (UFCO)**, founded in 1899. UFCO became an important economic and political force in Guatemala during his presidency. *Banana and coffee production and export dominated the nation's economy during this period.* Unlike coffee, which was grown mostly by individual producers on small farms, bananas became a giant foreign-controlled plantation crop. Estrada cultivated friendly relations with the U.S. Government. He supported U.S. policy during the Panamanian revolution of 1903, when the Colombian Department of Panama declared its independence and its new leaders immediately signed an agreement with the U.S. to build the Panama Canal and create the U.S.-controlled Panama Canal Zone.

*Estrada's regime became infamous for its brutality and corruption.* In 1906, Estrada faced serious revolts against his rule from rebel forces that were supported by governments of some other Central American countries, but Estrada succeeded in defeating them. His achievements were overshadowed by growing repression and blatant corruption, including bribes given to the president. The condition of workers was little better than peonage, and officials of the Estrada administration created a spy system to report subversive activities. Internationally, Estrada was frequently concerned about plots by Guatemalan exiles in neighboring countries to overthrow him. After the National Assembly (legislature) declared that he was mentally incompetent to serve as President, but he refused to leave office and was forced to resign after a civil uprising took place the week 8-14 April 1920, led by the Unionists Party and student leaders.

Estrada's most curious legacy was his attempt to foster a **Cult of Minerva** (the Roman name of Greek goddess Athena) in Guatemala: in 1899 he initiated feasts of Minerva to celebrate the accomplishments of students and teachers, and he ordered a number of Hellenic-style "Temples of Minerva" to be built in the country's major cities.

**Carlos Herrera y Luna** served as the acting president of Guatemala between April and September 1920, and was president of Guatemala from September 1920 to December 1921. Herrera was a powerful businessman in the sugar industry who owned and developed Pantaleón Sugar Mill; he invested wisely in land, crops and machinery. Pantaleón Sugar Holdings is today one of the top 10 sugar companies in the Americas, with mills in Central and South America. Herrera was deposed in a coup, led by **Gen. José María Orellana Pinto** (1873-1921), in July 1921, and he fled to exile in El Salvador. Orellana served as the *de facto* president from December 1921 until his death in September 1926. **Lázaro Chacón González** (1873-1931)

served as acting president between September and December 1926 and as president from September 1926 to January 1931, when he resigned after suffering a stroke.

At that time, Guatemala was in the midst of the Great Depression and nearly bankrupt. The Liberal Party joined with the Political Progressive Party to nominate **Gen. Jorge Ubico y Castañeda** (1878-1946) as Chacón's successor as President of the Republic. In his inaugural address, he pledged a "march toward civilization." However, after taking office, he began a campaign of efficiency that included assuming dictatorial power. His nickname became the "Little Napoleon of the Tropics." Ubico focused on stimulating coffee exports and improved prices. He built an extensive network of roads and modernized local administrations, including health and school facilities. Ubico also abolished debt slavery and peonage, and oversaw the enforcement of the vagrancy law, which issued identification cards to all Guatemalans for the purpose of enforcing employment. His methods, however, were authoritarian; he harshly suppressed opposition through press censorship and police control. He also engineered constitutional changes (twice) in order to extend his term as president. While his main focus was the nation's economic development, his efforts mainly benefited the upper-class of large landholders, which generated criticism from the middle and lower classes. He also stressed the importance of the military through the "educational mission of the barracks." Ubico was a strong opponent of communism and associated it with criminality and political opposition.

In addition, Ubico expressed a concern for the nation's Amerindian population and extended government services in an effort to improve their lifestyle. Under his regime, the majority Mayans underwent a legal revolution that permitted them to freely move about the country and seek employment. However, this freedom was mainly an illusion as the improvements created a paternalism that extended government control over the largely rural population. In reality, Ubico merely transferred their dependency from landowners to the national government.

In order to promote economic development and recovery from the Great Depression, Ubico adopted a pro-American stance, and the UFCO became the most important company in Guatemala. UFCO was granted import duty and real estate tax exemptions by the government, and it soon controlled more land than any other individual or group in the nation, along with the nation's only railroad; it also controlled electricity production and distribution, along with the port facilities at Puerto Barrios on the Caribbean coast, the nation's principal port in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Active opposition to Ubico began in 1941, when university students and legislatures opposed another extension of the President's tenure until 1949. Despite Ubico's pro-German sentiments (Germans controlled nearly two-thirds of Guatemala's exports), he joined neighboring Central American countries in declaring war against Germany and its allies in 1941. Ubico's government collaborated with the U.S. Government in detaining suspected Nazi sympathizers in Guatemala, confiscating their property and other assets, and removing them to detention camps in Texas, where they remained until war's end in 1945. These actions in Guatemala and other Central American countries successfully reduced German influence and economic power in the region. Due to growing opposition against Ubico's regime from university students and labor organizations, the dictator suspended constitutional guarantees and tightened the military grip over the country. This action led to a series of strikes, which ended in Ubico's resignation and exile in June 1944 (Woodward 1999:234-235).

Following the dictatorship of **Gen. Jorge Ubico y Castañeda** between 1931 and 1944, liberalizing trends began under the nation's democratically-elected, reformist civilian governments during the period 1944-1954. **President Juan José Arévalo Bermejo**, who was in office

between 1944 and 1949, was an idealistic university professor who proclaimed his belief in “spiritual socialism,” and his progressive policies angered Conservatives and Catholic Church authorities. Arévalo sponsored a new Constitution in 1945, modeled in part after the Mexican Constitution of 1917; he encouraged workers and peasants to organize themselves to achieve greater social equity, and he pushed education, social welfare and other reforms.

In 1950, **Colonel Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán** (governed from 1950 to 1954), won the presidency with support from a center-left coalition of political parties; he accepted support from the clandestine Guatemalan Communist Party before and after the election. The new president convinced the legislature to approve the country’s first income tax; he expanded public works and the exploitation of energy resources; he pushed a program of agrarian reform that led to the expropriation of the uncultivated portions of large, private plantations (including vast holdings of the U.S.-owned UFCO), and the redistribution of 1.5 million acres to 100,000 landless peasants; and he promoted the legalization of the Communist Party. Conservatives and officials of the Catholic Church used anti-Communist rhetoric to attack the Arbenz administration, which contributed to his loss of popular support among the general public and the triumph of the CIA-engineered, rightwing military *coup d'etat* led by **Coronel Carlos Castillo Armas** in 1954.

The clandestine CIA-instigated *coup d'etat* was championed by U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, whose brother Allen was Director of the CIA and was a primary stakeholder in UFCO, which owned significant portions of the rural land subject to Arbenz’ agrarian reforms. However, the pretext for supporting Arbenz’ overthrow was “fighting Communism” in Central America, the U.S.’ backyard, in the context of the Cold War in the post-World War II period.

**Coronel Castillo Armas**, who ruled Guatemala as president until his assassination in 1957, moved swiftly to eliminate all Communist influence from the country. A National Committee for Defense against Communism was quickly established to supervise a repressive purge of government institutions, labor unions, student organizations, political parties, and other social organizations. A decree replaced the Constitution of 1945, authorized Castillo’s military rule of the country, outlawed the Communist Party, and banned all subversive books and propaganda. This began a wave of brutal repression under successive military governments for the next 30 years.

During the first phase of the conflict, mainly the 1960s, the “insurrection” was led by middle-class intellectuals and university students with mostly an urban base of support. In response to the increasingly autocratic rule of **General José Miguel Ramón Ydígoras Fuentes**, who took power in 1958 following the murder of Col. Castillo Armas, a group of junior military officers from the military academy revolted in 1960. When they failed, several went into hiding and established close ties with the Cuban Government. This group became the nucleus of the forces that were in armed insurrection against the government for the next 36 years. The guerrilla organization was known as the **13th of November Revolutionary Movement (MR-13)**, named after the day of the insurrection. The MR-13 based its operations in the countryside, deep in the mountainous southeastern region of the country.

Shortly after **President Julio César Méndez Montenegro** took office in 1966, the army launched a major counterinsurgency campaign that largely broke up the guerrilla movement in the countryside. The guerrilla forces then concentrated their attacks in Guatemala City, where they assassinated many leading figures, including U.S. Ambassador John Gordon Mein in 1968. The third phase of the civil war took place during the 1970s when old and new organizations joined the insurgent’s armed struggle against a succession of military governments that by then were the rule. The war, at this stage, was fought on both urban and rural fronts, especially in the Mayan Highlands. The civil war evolved into the brutal repression by military forces of

dissidents (including Catholic priests, nuns and lay leaders), *campesinos* (rural peasants) and Indigenous communities that were suspected of collaborating with the leftist insurgents.

The **Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity** (URNG) was formed as a guerrilla umbrella organization in February 1982 by four revolutionary groups active in Guatemala: the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), the Revolutionary Organization of the People in Arms (ORPA), the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), and the National Directing Nucleus of the Guatemalan Labor Party (PGT-NDN).

In March 1982, retired **General Efraín Ríos Montt** came to power as the chairman of a military junta that took over the government and began a violent "scorched-earth" counter-insurgency campaign in the Indigenous highlands against the URNG and its supporters until he was toppled the following year. By the time a civilian government returned to office in 1986, the URNG recognized that coming to power through armed struggle was out of the question, and they took initiatives to negotiate a political solution. Gradually, between 1986 and 1996, the army and government were drawn into a peace process that was moderated and verified by the United Nations and included other international actors as key players. Both sides made major concessions. Obligations were imposed on the government, including significant constitutional reforms, which were internationally binding and would be verified by the UN.

On 29 December 1996, a formal peace agreement was signed by the Guatemalan Government and the URNG in the presence of U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali that officially ended the 36-year civil war (1960-1996), the longest civil war in Latin American history. The Secretary-General of the URNG, Commander Rolando Morán, and President Álvaro Arzú jointly received the UNESCO Peace Prize for their efforts to end the civil war and achieve the peace agreement. Afterward, the URNG became a legitimate political party with the support of other leftist organizations; it later won several legislative seats in national elections in 2003 and 2007.

**Gen. Ríos Montt** took over the reins of government as part of a three-man junta in 1982 with the support of the Guatemalan armed forces, and quickly identified himself as a "born-again" Christian and a member since 1979 of a local Evangelical church in Guatemala City, known as *Iglesia Cristiana Verbo* (The Word Christian Church, related to a US-based missionary organization from Eureka, California, called Gospel Outreach).

For about 18 months, Guatemala was ruled by this Protestant military dictator who gave orders for the army to brutally suppress the nation's guerrilla movement and its sympathizers, who in growing numbers were Mayans living in rural villages in the Central Highlands. The government formed local **Civilian Defense Patrols (PACs)** to counteract the insurgency in the countryside. Participation was in theory voluntary but, in practice, many people, especially in the rural northwest, had no choice but to join either the PACs or the guerrillas. Ríos Montt's conscript army and PACs recaptured essentially all guerrilla-held territory; consequently, guerrilla activity lessened and was largely limited to hit-and-run operations. However, Ríos Montt won this partial victory only at an enormous cost in civilian deaths, mainly within Mayan villages.

Ríos Montt was deposed in August 1983 by his Minister of Defense, **General Óscar Humberto Mejía Victores**. Mejía became *de facto* president and justified the coup, saying that "religious fanatics" were abusing their positions in the government and also because of "official corruption." However, Ríos Montt remained in politics, founded the Guatemalan Republican Front party (FRG), and was elected President of Congress in 1995 and 2000. **Mejía Victores** served as president of Guatemala from August 1983 to January 1986, during a time of increased repression and death squad activity by government forces against the rebels and their supporters.

**Marco Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo** of the Christian Democratic Party served as president from January 1986 to January 1991. He was followed by **Jorge Antonio Serrano Elías** (of Lebanese descent), who was president from January 1991 to May 1993, under the banner of the Solidarity Action Movement. *Serrano ran against the popular Jorge Carpio who unsuccessfully tried to use Serrano's fundamentalist Protestant beliefs against him as a campaign issue. Serrano was the second Protestant to become a Head of State in Latin America, after Ríos Montt.*

The Serrano administration's record was mixed. It had some success in consolidating civilian control over the army, replacing a number of senior officers and persuading the military to participate in peace talks with the URNG. He took the politically unpopular step of recognizing the sovereignty of Belize, which until then had been officially, although unsuccessfully, claimed by Guatemala as a province. Although the Serrano administration reversed the economic slump it inherited by reducing inflation and boosting real economic growth, in May 1993 Serrano illegally suspended the Constitution, dissolved Congress and the Supreme Court, imposed censorship and attempted to restrict civil freedoms, allegedly in a campaign to fight corruption.

However, the attempted self-coup by Serrano against his own government was met with strong protests by broad sectors of Guatemalan society. This, combined with international pressure and the army's enforcement of the decisions of the Constitutional Court that ruled against Serrano's actions, forced him to resign as president on 1 June 1993 and to flee the country. He remained in exile in Panama, where the Guatemalan government made numerous unsuccessful attempts to have him extradited to face charges of corruption.

**Ramiro de León Carpio** was president of Guatemala from June 1993 to January 1996. De León promised to defend public freedoms and the rule of law, as well as to make progress in the negotiations with the guerrillas, and to purge the armed forces of corrupt elements. On 26 August, he demanded that all the deputies in the National Congress and all the members of the Supreme Court resign. This created a crisis that was not resolved until 16 November, resulting in 43 amendments to the 1985 Constitution that were approved in a referendum on 30 January 1994. On 6 January, negotiations began with the main guerrilla group, the URNG, but this time under the auspices of both the United Nations and the Organization of American States, and with a reduced role of the Guatemalan military in comparison with the previous negotiations. On 29 March, he signed the **Global Accord on Human Rights**, which among other things demanded the disbandment of the PACs that had been accused of perpetrating massacres during the civil war.

**Álvaro Enrique Arzú Yrigoyen** was president from January 1996 to January 2000, under the banner of the National Advancement Party (PAN). The main achievement of his presidency was to sign a final peace agreement with the URNG that ended Guatemala's 36-year-long civil war in December 1996. In April 1998, the assistant Archbishop of Guatemala City, Bishop Juan José Gerardi, was murdered two days after publishing a report on the suspected involvement of the military in atrocities during the civil war. With suspicions that the President's own security guard had been behind the murder, and amidst mounting national and international pressure, he formed a commission with his most trusted collaborators and members of the Catholic Church to fully investigate the crime.

**The Truth Commission** (Historical Clarification Commission, created by the Oslo Accords of 1994) stated that Guatemalan military influence over the government passed through different stages during the years of the armed confrontation. It began during the 1960s and 1970s with the Army's domination of the structures of the executive branch. The Army subsequently assumed almost absolute power for half a decade during the 1980s, by penetrating all of the

country's institutions, as well as its political, social and ideological spheres. During the later, final stage of the confrontation, it developed a parallel, semi-visible, low profile, but high impact, control of national life. In the military itself, the Guatemalan military intelligence system became the driving force, to control the population, the society, the State and the Army itself.

The Commission's final report, entitled *Guatemala: Memory of Silence*, was published in February 1999. The report identified a total of 42,275 named victims; of these, 23,671 were victims of arbitrary executions, and 6,159 were victims of forced disappearances. It found that Mayans accounted for 83 percent of the victims, and that 93 percent of the atrocities committed during the civil war were attributed to the nation's armed forces and PACs.

**Alfonso Antonio Portillo Cabrera** served as the nation's President from 2000 to 2004 in representation of the FRG, the party led former military dictator Efraín Ríos Montt. *Portillo, also, was a professed Evangelical.* On the day of his investiture Portillo said that Guatemala was "on the edge of collapse," and promised a thorough government investigation into corruption. On 9 August 2000, he declared that the governments of the previous two decades had been involved in human rights abuses. While he showed determination to see through his regenerative and progressive program, his government soon became overwhelmed by the reality of the political and mafia corruption in the country. During 2001, his government faced a continuous wave of protests that sapped the credibility of his government. The FRG was accused of bringing corruption on an unprecedented scale to the country. His government has been tainted by accusations of theft, money laundering, money transfers to the Army, and the creation of bank accounts in Panama, Mexico and the USA by many members of his staff, which totaled more than \$1 billion.

**After the FRG lost to Óscar Berger's GANA party and the new president was sworn in to replace Portillo in January 2004,** the Berger administration (2004-2008) proceeded to revoke Portillo's political immunity from prosecution in February and Portillo immediately fled to Mexico. From 2004 to 2006, Portillo lived in Mexico City in a luxury apartment in one of the city's most exclusive neighborhoods. Portillo has been accused of authorizing \$15 million in transfers to the Guatemalan Ministry of Department, after which government authorities believe he made several transfers of public funds to bank accounts held in his own name, or in those of his relatives and even some of his friends. After a long legal process, Mexico's foreign ministry approved Portillo's extradition to Guatemala in October 2006.

Upon his return to Guatemala in October 2008, he was arrested and held on a series of fraud and corruption charges, but was soon freed on bail (Q1 million or about US\$130,000). While awaiting trial, he worked on appeals and other legal resources to stall the process and avoid going to trial. In early January 2010, media reports stated that the U.S. government was looking for Portillo in relation to money laundering charges, and Portillo was apprehended by local authorities in Guatemala on 26 January 2010. However, Portillo and his associates were absolved of all embezzlement charges on 9 May 2011 by a Guatemalan court that determined that government prosecutors did not present sufficient evidence to convict the former president. The Public Ministry (Justice Department) disagreed with the court's decision and announced plans to appeal the ruling.

In 2013, Portillo was arrested again in Guatemala and was extradited to the U.S., where Federal prosecutors accused him of using U.S. financial institutions to launder money. At his trial in 2014, he pleaded guilty to attempting to launder \$2.5 million in U.S. banks. Portillo said he had taken the money from Taiwan officials in exchange for a promise that Guatemala would continue to recognize Taiwan before the United Nations rather than China. He was ordered to return the \$2.5 million he received illegally from Taiwan and was sent to a minimum-security

prison in Denver, Colorado, where he remained until his release on 25 February 2015, whereupon he returned to Guatemala City to live with his family.

Sources: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfonso\\_Portillo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfonso_Portillo)  
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-31633785>

**Alvaro Colom Caballeros of the Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza (UNE)** served as President of Guatemala from 2008 to 2012. He is a center-left politician, industrial engineer and Mayan priest who studied traditional Mayan cosmology under the guidance of priest Cirilo Pérez Oxjal, a respected Quiché leader and former president of the *Consejo Continental de Ancianos de América*. Colom was elected president in November 2007 due to the strong support he received from the politically-mobilized Amerindian population that had grown tired of being marginalized by *ladinos* within Guatemalan society and was resentful of *ladino* dominance in national politics. During his campaign, candidate Colom was strongly supported by Rigoberta Manchú, an internationally respected human rights activist, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992. The campaign was centered on a major issue: the crime and corruption that have characterized Guatemala's democratic institutions under civilian rule. Support for Colom was strong in provincial Guatemala and among Mayans who responded to his promise to improve healthcare and schools for the poor, rural and Indigenous population.

**Otto Fernando Pérez Molina** (born 1950) is a politician and retired military officer, who was President of Guatemala from January 2012 to September 2015, under the banner of the Patriotic Party (*Partido Patriota*). Although he lost the 2007 presidential election, he prevailed in the November 2011 presidential election with 54 percent of the vote, and took office on 14 January 2012. Pérez was the first former military official to be elected to the presidency since Guatemala's return to democratic elections in 1986. During the 1990s, before entering politics, Pérez Molina served as Director of Military Intelligence, Presidential Chief of Staff under President Ramiro de León Carpio, and as chief representative of the military for the Guatemalan Peace Accords.

In April 2015, international prosecutors, with help from the UN, presented evidence of a customs corruption ring ("*La Línea*") in which discounted tariffs were exchanged for bribes from importers; prosecutors learned of the ring through wiretaps and financial statements. Vice President Roxana Baldetti resigned on 8 May 2015, and was arrested for her involvement on 21 August. Also on 21 August, Guatemalan prosecutors presented evidence of Pérez's involvement in the corruption ring. Congress, in a 132–0 vote, stripped Pérez of prosecutorial immunity on 1 September 2015, and on 2 September President Pérez presented his resignation. On 3 September, after a court hearing in which charges and evidence against him were presented, he was arrested and sent to the Matamoros prison in Guatemala City. **Vice-President Alejandro Maldonado Aguirre** was appointed to serve the remainder of Pérez' 4-year term in office (ending on 14 January 2016).

**Jimmy Morales** (born James Ernesto Morales Cabrera, 18 March 1969), a Guatemalan actor, screenwriter, director and politician, won the 2015 Guatemalan presidential run-off election and served as President during 2016-2020. He joined the National Convergence Front (*Frente de Convergencia Nacional*, FCN) in 2013 and became its Secretary-General.

Just five months after he'd been sworn in as president of Guatemala, Jimmy Morales – a self-described Evangelical Christian – was in trouble. On 5 May 2016, an auditor appointed by the country's top electoral body had concluded that Morales' political party had broken many of the rules regulating campaign financing. Perhaps the biggest red flag for the auditor from the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (*Tribunal Supremo Electoral* – TSE) was that Morales' party had

"spent a paltry amount of money, much less than the other campaigns." This was not an infraction, of course, but it hinted at something larger. "Historically, presidential campaigns cost between \$7 million and \$12 million, but as of May 2016, FCN had only reported spending \$640,000 on its victorious and stunning march to the presidential palace."

The TSE auditor also found that FCN failed to provide all its monthly and bimonthly financial reports to the regulatory agency, a legal requirement for any political party, and the reports the party did turn in were incomplete. In fact, during Guatemala's 2015 presidential elections, FCN did not deliver any financial reports to the tribunal in September during the first round of elections, in October during the second round, and in November during the traditional accounting roundup period. Morales' political party simply stopped reporting its income.

In January 2017, Morales' older brother and close adviser Samuel "Sammy" Morales, as well as one of Morales' sons, José Manuel Morales, were arrested on corruption and money laundering charges. According to media reports, the arrests prompted several large protests of up to 15,000 people demanding President Morales' removal. Morales, whose campaign slogan was "neither corrupt, nor a crook," refused to step down.

In August 2017, the Attorney General's Office and its special assistant prosecutor, the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (*Comisión Internacional Contra la Impunidad en Guatemala* – CICIG), concluded their first investigation against Morales and his party for alleged illicit campaign financing. And, on 25 August, they presented Congress with their first of several petitions to remove the president's shield of immunity against criminal prosecution, so they could subpoena him and continue digging into his direct involvement in the crimes.

Also, in August 2017, Morales ordered the expulsion of the Colombian Iván Velásquez, commissioner of CICIG, after it began "investigating claims that his party took illegal donations, including from drug-traffickers" and asked "congress to strip him of immunity from prosecution." The Constitutional Court of Guatemala blocked the move. Minister of Foreign Affairs Carlos Raul Morales had refused to sign the executive order, and was removed from office along with vice-minister Carlos Ramiro Martínez, and vice-minister Anamaría Diéguez resigned. Velásquez confirmed that he would continue as CICIG commissioner following the Constitutional Court's decision to block his expulsion. In September 2017, the Guatemalan Congress refused to strip Morales of his immunity, thereby rejecting commissioner Velásquez' recommendation.

In September 2017, it was revealed that the Ministry of Defense, headed by Williams Mansilla, had been paying President Morales a \$7,300 per month bonus since December 2016, in addition to his regular salary. The payments from the defense ministry were referred to as a "Bonus for Extraordinary Responsibility." Mansilla resigned from office soon after the payments were revealed to the public. He was later arrested and charged with corruption in January 2018, related to the special bonus to Morales. President Morales denied the bonuses were illegal, but did return approximately \$60,000 to the government.

In January 2019, President Morales faced international condemnation after announcing the expulsion of CICIG – the United Nations-backed anti-corruption mission – in what some critics suspect is a calculated bid to shield the country's ruling elite – and himself – from investigation. Morales claimed the decision to eject members of the corruption-busting Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) group was a result of its "severe violation" of national and international laws. "CICIG has put at risk the security of the nation, public order, governance, respect for human rights and above all the sovereignty of the state of Guatemala," stated Morales who was elected partly thanks to a populist pledge to root out corruption.

However, regional specialists believe Morales's move – which follows a long-running effort to neuter the anti-crime initiative – is in fact intended to help corrupt members of Guatemala's ruling economic and political elite escape scrutiny. "What's driving this is the fact that the person sitting in the president's office is himself corrupt and is surrounded by a series of other corrupt individuals for whom the CICIG represents an existential threat," said Jo-Marie Burt, a Guatemala expert from the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) advocacy group.

Morales rose to power promising to battle corruption after a multimillion-dollar corruption scandal that CICIG had itself helped uncover. That scandal toppled former president General Otto Pérez Molina and paved the way for Morales' landslide victory in October 2015.

Sources: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/08/guatemalan-president-condemned-after-ejecting-un-anti-corruption-group> - <https://www.insightcrime.org/investigations/president-jimmy-morales-guatemalas-original-sin/> - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jimmy\\_Morales](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jimmy_Morales)

## Guatemala's top presidential contenders face expulsion from race

2 April 2019

**Guatemala City** - Guatemala's elections are just two and a half months away, but whether the leading presidential contenders will end up on the ballot, disqualified, or even behind bars is still up in the air.

"There is so much uncertainty," Iduvina Hernandez Batres, the director of the Association for the Study and Promotion of Security in Democracy, told Al Jazeera.

"Two weeks after the campaign began, at this stage there is no clarity as to who overall will be candidates for the presidency," she said.

The official campaign period for the June 16 general elections kicked off on March 18. Of the 27 political parties in the Central American nation, 24 declared presidential candidates. An August 11 presidential runoff is expected.

The three individuals expected to lead the presidential race are the runner-up from the previous election, a former attorney general, and the daughter of an ex-dictator who stood trial for genocide. But all three are mired in controversy and legal battles that could exclude them from the ballot.

On Monday, the electoral tribunal ruled to annul the registration of former Attorney General and Semilla party presidential hopeful Thelma Aldana as a candidate, upholding challenges by political rivals. The major setback comes on the heels of a warrant for Aldana's arrest.

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/guatemala-top-presidential-contenders-face-expulsion-race-190402151350957.html>

## Guatemala elects right-wing president amid dismal turnout

12 August 2019

**Guatemala City** — Guatemalans on Sunday elected **Alejandro Giammattei** as their next president. When he takes office Jan. 14, he will inherit a nation plagued by years of political scandal, where a recent surge in migration has laid bare the monumental challenges ahead. Giammattei, the right-wing **Vamos party** candidate who is a former prisons director, beat out

former first lady Sandra Torres for the next four-year term. The presidential runoff election came at a crucial moment — as Guatemala prepares for the possible implementation of a “safe third country” agreement with the United States, a plan touted by the Trump administration but with potentially grave consequences for a country whose own citizens are fleeing in droves. Guatemala is the leading country of origin of migrants and asylum seekers apprehended at the U.S. southern border. Source: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/guatemala-awaits-presidential-election-results/2019/08/11/f8d70034-bc3a-11e9-a8b0-7ed8a0d5dc5d\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/guatemala-awaits-presidential-election-results/2019/08/11/f8d70034-bc3a-11e9-a8b0-7ed8a0d5dc5d_story.html)

**Alejandro Eduardo Giammattei Falla** (age 64), the incumbent president of Guatemala (2020-2024), is a former director of the Guatemalan penitentiary system (2006-2008) and participated in Guatemala's presidential elections in 2007, 2011, and 2015. He won in the 2019 election with 58 percent of the votes cast in the second round and assumed office on 14 January 2020 as leader of **Vamos** (officially “*Vamos por una Guatemala Diferente*” = *We are going for a Different Guatemala*), a Conservative political party, which was founded and registered by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal in 2017. Giammattei has vowed to bring back the death penalty and pledged to “crush violent gangs, fight poverty to stop migration and end disgusting corruption.” He is against same-sex marriage and abortion, and supports using the military for civilian security.

**Guatemala's economy.** Guatemala is the most populous country in Central America with a GDP per capita roughly half the average for Latin America and the Caribbean. The agricultural sector accounts for 13.5 percent of GDP and 31 percent of the labor force; key agricultural exports include sugar, coffee, bananas and vegetables. *Guatemala is the top remittance recipient in Central America as a result of Guatemala's large expatriate community in the USA.* These inflows are a primary source of foreign income, equivalent to over one-half of the country's exports and one-tenth of its GDP.

The 1996 peace accords, which ended 36 years of civil war, removed a major obstacle to foreign investment, and Guatemala has since pursued important reforms and macroeconomic stabilization. **The Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement** (CAFTA-DR) entered into force in July 2006, which spurred increased investment and diversification of exports, with the largest increases in ethanol and non-traditional agricultural exports. While CAFTA-DR has helped improve the investment climate, concerns over security, the lack of skilled workers, and poor infrastructure continue to hamper foreign direct investment.

The distribution of income remains highly unequal with the richest 20 percent of the population accounting for more than 51 percent of Guatemala's overall consumption. More than half of the population lives below the national poverty line, and 23 percent of the population lives in extreme poverty. Poverty among indigenous groups, which make up more than 40 percent of the population, averages 79 percent, with 40 percent of the Indigenous population living in extreme poverty. Nearly one-half of Guatemala's children under age five are chronically malnourished, which is one of the highest malnutrition rates in the world.

Guatemala is facing growing fiscal pressures, exacerbated by multiple corruption scandals that led to the resignation of the president, vice president, and numerous high-level economic officials in 2015.

Adapted from: [https://www.indexmundi.com/guatemala/economy\\_profile.html](https://www.indexmundi.com/guatemala/economy_profile.html)

Nevertheless, according to the **World Bank** (October 2018), thanks to prudent macroeconomic management, Guatemala has been one of the strongest economic performers in Latin America in recent years, with a GDP growth rate of 3.0 percent since 2012 and 4.1 percent in 2015. In 2017,

the country's economy grew by 2.8 percent, according to the latest estimates, and is expected to grow by 2.6 percent in 2018.

Source: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/guatemala/overview>

**Refugees from Guatemala.** The Mexican Commission for Aid to Refugees (COMAR) estimates that over 45,000 Guatemalan people fled to Mexico in the 1980s, mainly from villages and cantons of Guatemala's Huehuetenango and Quetzaltenango regions. A report from December 1983 in *Cultural Survival Magazine* stated:

No one knows how many refugees there are in Chiapas. COMAR and the UNHCR observer say 37,000, while the church estimates about 45,000 for the approximately 70 camps that are located in the jungle and the Comalapa areas, and another 50,000 in the Tapachula region (up from less than 20,000 at the beginning of the year). These figures do not include those who are in small settlements or hiding in Mexican settlements, nor does it calculate the large numbers who have left the border area, many precisely because of the lack of sufficient food and work opportunities.

These displaced people have created other problems outside of the scope of this report, and along with other Central Americans have become the new Mexican "wetbacks," without proper documentation and in constant danger of deportation. One recent report indicates that between 80 and 100 Guatemalans are deported each day at the two Tapachula border crossings, Talisman and Tecun Uman. Complaints by local residents about the large quantity of bodies in the border river indicate that many of these deportees are killed soon after they enter Guatemala. Tapachula is a difficult area for refugee information, because many cross the border posing as agricultural workers seeking employment in the Soconusco coffee plantations. Overall, however, it would seem conservative to estimate that there are 100,000 border refugees in the state of Chiapas, that is, within 50 km of Guatemala.

Source: <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/guatemalan-refugees-mexico>

**The Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH)** in Guatemala is a U.N.-supported truth commission responsible for investigating the events of more than three decades of war, from 1960 to 1996. After almost a year of investigation that included interviews with 11,000 people, the independent commission concluded that military and paramilitary groups were responsible for 93 percent of the more than 200,000 war-related deaths.

The commission's conclusion that the violence was almost entirely carried out by state forces countered the popular narrative that an ideological battle between communism and capitalism had split the country in two. This narrative held that the war entailed insurgents, or guerrillas, on one side fighting for land redistribution and counter-insurgents on the other purportedly defending the rule of law. The CEH instead found convincing evidence of genocide. Of the 42,275 killings it documented, 83 percent of the victims were Maya.

The truth commission concluded that acts of violence "were not only an attempt to destroy the social base of the guerrillas, but above all, to destroy the cultural values that ensured cohesion and collective action in Mayan communities." Indeed, Benito Ramírez, a prominent Maya-Mam community leader ... warned us not to call the war a "civil war," which would imply that the country was torn in half. Many newspapers and government sources had framed the war in such a

way. However, the destruction was one-sided: Maya people were the main target of violence. The conflict was a racial war with a primary objective of killing Indigenous peoples.



The communities of San Juan Ostuncalco lie in the Central Highlands of Guatemala, about a six-hour drive from Guatemala City. Catherine Gilman/SAPIENS

More than two decades after the signing of the peace agreement, the same “racist prejudices” that the truth commission found were a driver in the war against highland people remain strong. In May 2018, the **U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights** issued a statement expressing concern about the assassination of Indigenous community leaders. So far that year (January to October), 21 human and environmental rights defenders had been killed in Guatemala. Human rights organizations and activists say the government has not investigated these crimes or protected those who are targeted. Observers have pointed out how justice is being eroded by connections between U.S. and Guatemalan politicians.

Adapted from: <https://www.sapiens.org/culture/guatemala-migrants-united-states/>

During the decades of Guatemala’s “civil war,” along with the massive loss of life (an estimated 200,000 people), there was massive destruction of rural villages and farmlands in the Central Highlands, mainly among the Mayan population. In the 1996 peace accords, there was a free exchange of civilian land to favor the rise of corporate agribusinesses with a resulting drop of prices of local agricultural products. This strongly affected farm workers and inhabitants of the countryside, which forced many to migrate to the USA through Mexican territory with the hope of improving their living conditions.

Official U.S. Government statistics on Guatemalan (foreign-born) migrants residing in the U.S. show that the largest increase took place between 1980 and 1990: from 63,073 in 1980 to

225,739 in 1990. This was the result of political, social and economic unrest in Guatemala during this period, which caused many migrants to flee their country.

Currently, many Guatemalans are still trying to immigrate to the USA for economic and political asylum. The current driving forces leading to migration are crime, violence, poverty and climate change. **Crime** is a big issue for those living in Guatemala because, statistically, 84-87 percent of **violence** is attributed to gang and domestic violence and drug trafficking. The other attribute leading to these migrations is **poverty**: of Guatemala's population of 16.9 million, about 59 percent live below the poverty line, which is about 9,971,000 people, while 23 percent live in extreme poverty (about 3,887,000 people). **Climate change** has been one of the largest contributing factors that has affected the Guatemalan economy; the economy of the western highlands is based on its coffee industry, which has been seriously affected by climate change and the “coffee rust” fungus. The decline in coffee production further cripples the families in these already impoverished communities who have relied on the coffee industry for their livelihood for generations. Since 2014, 95 percent of Guatemalans have been affected by droughts, which have reduced agricultural production in both commercial as well as in subsistence farming. These factors have led to increased poverty and child malnutrition.

Adapted from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Guatemalan\\_migrants\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Guatemalan_migrants_in_the_United_States)

Recent troubles with the coffee industry are causing many Guatemalans to migrate north to the USA. The *roya* coffee fungus outbreak in 2011 decimated about 20 percent of the coffee crop, which had a particularly devastating effect on higher-end Arabica varieties. The leaf rust outbreak has only been exacerbated by climate change, with “warmer temperatures spreading the disease to higher altitudes” and also “increasing the frequency of droughts, floods, and cold shocks, which can decrease, or at times completely destroy, production.”

At the same time, countries like Brazil, Vietnam, and Honduras had particularly good coffee yields, which led to a decline in the price of Guatemalan coffees. Whereas producers were at one time able to get \$170-180 per 100 pounds of coffee, prices today (July 2018) stand around \$110, which is lower than the cost of investment it takes to produce the coffee.

With no money to be made in the coffee industry, many Guatemalans are forced to migrate elsewhere. And whereas many would head for Guatemala City, low wages and gang violence have made the journey to the USA much more appealing.

Source: <https://sprudge.com/a-guatemalan-coffee-crisis-is-leading-to-greater-rates-of-migration-135133.html>

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the Guatemalan-born population totaled 1,044,209 people, which comprised 2.1 percent of the overall immigrant population of the U.S. and made Guatemala the 10<sup>th</sup> highest sender of immigrants. Until the 1960s, Guatemalan immigration to the USA was negligible. The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of Immigration Statistics reports that the first trickles of Guatemalan immigration occurred during the 1940s and 1950s, but the volume of Guatemala immigration increased during the period 1960-1990. By the 1990s, more than 100,000 Guatemalan migrants were coming into the USA legally by means of “green cards” each decade and then that number slightly dipped in the early 2000s. The U.S. Census of 2000 reported 372,487 Guatemalans in the U.S. and by 2010 the number of Guatemalan residents had reached over one million, which was a 183 percent increase during the decade. This reveals that even though legal migration may have slowed, illegal immigration is on the increase. In 2015, an estimated 56 percent of Guatemalans in the USA were illegals.

Adapted from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guatemalan\\_immigration\\_to\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guatemalan_immigration_to_the_United_States)

## The Roman Catholic Church

**Conquistador Pedro de Alvarado y Contreras** (1495-1541) and his army invaded Guatemala during 1523-1527 and subjugated many of the Amerindian peoples with even more than the customary atrocities. The Amerindians rapidly declined under the imposed system of slavery and heavy tribute. Alvarado was subsequently appointed governor of Guatemala by Charles I of Spain and remained its governor until his death.

Even before the conquest was complete, the **Dominican friars Pontaz** and **de Torres** had taken up residence among the Quiché – in Quetzaltenango (an important Quiché center) and Patinamit (the capital city of the Cakchiquel kingdom), respectively – and had begun the difficult task of converting the Mayans to the Catholic Faith. In 1530, **Father Francisco Marroquín** (1535- 1563) arrived from Spain to organize the Catholic Church in Guatemala, and in 1533 he was confirmed as the country's first bishop. He gave special attention to the indigenous people and their languages, becoming particularly proficient in Quiché, into which language he translated the catechism. These early Catholic missionaries were reinforced two years later by priests Zambrano and Dardon of the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy (Mercedarians), who established a convent of that order in Santiago de Guatemala, which became the capital city of the Spanish province.

Beginning in 1536-1537, **Spanish friar Bartolomé de las Casas** (1484-1566) established a Dominican convent at Santiago de Guatemala for the conversion of the natives, and applied methods of peaceful evangelization in the region of Vera Paz. Las Casas became well-known for his advocacy of the rights of Amerindian peoples of the Americas, whose cultures he described with great care. His descriptions of the *caciques* (chiefs or princes), *bohiques* (shamans or clerics), *ni-taínos* (noblemen), and *naborias* (common folk) in the Caribbean clearly showed a feudal structure. His book, *A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (original title in Spanish: *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*), was published in 1552. He gave a vivid description of the atrocities committed by the conquistadors in the Americas – particularly in the Caribbean, Central America and what is now Mexico – including many events to which he was a witness, as well as some events he includes from others' eyewitness accounts.

Under these two religious orders, working in harmony with the Franciscans who entered the territory in 1541, the general “conversion of the Indians” was gradually accomplished. By 1545, these religious orders had implemented a program of instruction and conversion in which the Indians were forcibly gathered into towns and around their respective mission compounds. Priests visited a few outlying areas at different times, but the geography prevented extensive contact with remote Amerindian groups.

In the early years of Spanish colonization, the Catholic clergy protected indigenous peoples who lived near the missions. Laws were passed in 1542 at the instigation of Catholic missionaries that attempted to eliminate some of the harsher practices of exploitation that had been imposed on Amerindians living in remote areas by Spanish authorities.

During the colonial period the Catholic Church was an agency of the Spanish Crown, although the friar's evangelization methods sometimes occasioned conflict with the civil authorities. Catholicism in Guatemala developed around the veneration of the saints; local lay religious associations, called *cofradías*, were charged with caring for the saint's images in local communities. *Cofradías* in Guatemala are a mix of Spanish and Amerindian practices.

Santiago de Guatemala was made a diocese by Pope Paul III on December 18, 1534. The Diocese of Guatemala was raised to Metropolitan See by Pope Benedict XIV on December 16, 1743, with the Dioceses of Nicaragua and Comayagua (Honduras) being subordinate to it. By

1750, more than 424 Catholic churches and 23 missions had been established in the territory of Guatemala.

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, **Dominican friar Francisco Ximénez** (1666–1729) discovered a copy of the *Popol Vuh*, the sacred book of the Quiché Maya—sometimes referred to as the Mayan Bible—in the town of Chichicastenango in the Central Highlands. The manuscript, a compendium of ancient Mayan traditions handed down from before the Spanish Conquest, was evidently a copy from an older record; it was written in the Quiché language, apparently shortly after the Conquest. Ximénez made a copy of the manuscript and then translated it into Spanish about 1725.

Cuban-born **Bishop Luis Ignatius Peñalver y Cárdenas** (1749–1810), formerly Bishop of New Orleans (Louisiana), was promoted to the Archiepiscopal See of Guatemala in 1801. Archbishop Peñalver soon attained prominence through the interest he had in questions concerning education and the public good. At his own expense he built a hospital and various schools. He resigned his Episcopal See in March 1806, returned to Havana and devoted the last years of his life to charitable works. At his death he bequeathed an estimated \$200,000 to the poor and established several important legacies for educational institutions.

The Diocese of San Salvador, erected by Pope Gregory XVI in September 1842, and the Diocese of San José de Costa Rica, erected in 1850, also became part of the **Metropolitan Church of Santiago de Guatemala**. Together with the Archdiocese of Guatemala, these four subordinate dioceses (Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica) constituted the **ecclesiastical Province of Central America**.

By 1908, the Archdiocese of Guatemala included communities of Dominicans, Minor Observantines of St. Francis (Franciscans), Recollect and Capuchin Missionaries, Society of Jesus (Jesuits), the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, and priests of the Mission of St. Vincent de Paul. There were also religious communities of various female orders: Poor Clares, Capuchins, Conceptionists, Catarinas, Belemites, Rosas, and Dominicans. The Religious of the Institute of St. Vincent de Paul serviced in hospitals and taught poor children; these Sisters were employed in the hospitals of the city of Guatemala, Quetzaltenango and Antigua Guatemala.

*Historically, the Roman Catholic Church has had a strong popular base among ladinos and Europeans but has met with more resistance in predominantly Amerindian areas of the country where indigenous beliefs and practices are maintained.* Spanish missionaries played a critical role by establishing new religious, social and economic structures in the colony; building monasteries, churches and schools with forced Indian labor; and helping to organize the Mayan labor force for the new cacao and indigo plantations.

Until after Independence from Spain in the early 1800s, the Catholic Church had no competition from Protestant groups, although there was a constant struggle to maintain its dominance in the Mayan communities where the ancient religious traditions prevailed. The resulting syncretism of Catholic and Mayan beliefs and practices produced the Guatemalan-brand of “popular religiosity” that prevails today among the Amerindian population.

Independence from Spain in the 1820s and the emergence of a new economic class of coffee growers in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, which included many German immigrants, weakened the hegemony of the Catholic Church. Politically, Guatemala achieved its independence from Spain in 1821–1823, after nearly 300 years of Spanish colonial rule when the Captaincy-General of Guatemala became the United Provinces of Central America.

In 1838, the independent Republic of Guatemala was created under rebel leader **Rafael Carrera** (1814–1865). In 1852, Carrera's government signed a Concordat with the Vatican,

repealed the anti-clerical legislation established under the rule of Francisco Morazán (1829 to 1838), reinstated the Catholic religious orders, and allowed the Catholic clergy to operate the nation's few schools.

However, after the death of Carrera in 1865, the Liberal **Justo Rufino Barrios** came to power (ruled from 1873 to 1885) and the Catholic Church was again subjected to harsh legislation, the Jesuits were again expelled, the archbishop and bishops were exiled, tithes were eliminated, convents and monasteries were closed, church property was confiscated, priests were prohibited from wearing clerical garb and were barred from teaching, religious processions were proscribed, and civil marriage was declared obligatory. *These anti-clerical laws so crippled the Catholic Church in Guatemala that it has never recovered its former influence.*

In addition, President Barrios declared "religious freedom" and invited Protestant denominations to establish churches and schools in his country in an effort to counteract the dominance of the Roman Catholic clergy and their political influence. Also, in the 1870s, President Barrios invited German immigrants to help develop the country.

In 1872, an official census of Catholic clergy provided information regarding 119 expatriate priests in Guatemala. Although the national population more than doubled in the 75 years following this census, the number of priests remained about the same; in 1946, there were only 126 priests (28 religious and 98 secular), most of whom were stationed in Guatemala City. This shortage of Catholic priests limited the extent of church ministries to people who lived in remote villages. Huehuetenango only had one priest per 88,000 inhabitants, and Quetzaltenango had one priest per 45,000.

**It was not until the 1930s that the Roman Catholic Church began to recover some of its former power and prestige in Guatemalan society.** Under the dictatorship of **General Jorge Ubico** (ruled from 1931-1944), the Catholic Church was able to exercise more political influence, but when Ubico was overthrown in 1944 by a coalition of progressive army officers and civilians who were intent on modernizing Guatemala, the Catholic Church felt that its own social and political power was being attacked.

During the 1940s and 1950s, the Catholic hierarchy and its lay organizations – the **Society for the Propagation of the Faith** and **Catholic Action** – joined forces with the Anti-Communist Party (PUA) and other rightwing organizations to counteract the liberalizing trends of the nation's democratically-elected, reformist civilian governments during the period 1944-1954. **President Juan José Arévalo Bermejo** (1944-1949) was an idealistic university professor who proclaimed his belief in "spiritual socialism," and his progressive policies angered Catholic Church authorities. Arévalo sponsored a new Constitution in 1945, modeled in part after the Mexican charter of 1917; he encouraged workers and peasants to organize themselves to achieve greater social equity, and he pushed education, social welfare and other reforms.

Author Mary Holleran (Coke 1978:203-204) described the Roman Catholic Church in Guatemala in 1946 and expounded on six major obstacles to an effective ministry: (1) The shortage of priests was so severe that many rural parishes were abandoned; (2) the majority of the clergy were foreigners (Spaniards, Italians, Germans, Mexicans, Costa Ricans and North Americans in that order) and the few native clergy were "often berated as being ignorant, or dirty, or greedy;" (3) the bishop and most of the priests only spoke Spanish and communication in Indian areas was ineffective; (4) the foreign priests failed to appreciate the basic psychology of the Mayans; (5) the mountainous terrain and a lack of suitable transportation made travel very difficult; and (6) the physical deterioration of church property symbolized the general

deterioration of the Catholic Church's social, spiritual and political influence in Guatemalan society.

Around 1949, a new Catholic reform movement began in Guatemala, called *Acción Católica* (Catholic Action, also known as the *catequista* movement because it used trained laymen to spread Catholic teaching through the use of a catechism), which was a militant lay Catholic organization engaged in the “re-conversion of Guatemalan Indians,” among other things. Whereas the Catholic Church had long ago accommodated itself to “Christo-Paganism,” according to Coke (1978:205), “the reform movement embraced a new iconoclasm that aimed at destroying the saints and idols worshipped in Indian churches.” These tactics caused deep resentment in the traditional Mayan communities. This reform movement also produced renewed attacks by Catholics on the Protestants and on Bible reading.

Under **President Castillo Armas** (1955-1957), the expropriated lands were returned to their former owners, all unions were disbanded, and thousands of people were killed in a purge of Communists and radical nationalists. Also, in 1955, the **Guatemalan Christian Democratic Party** was established with strong support from the Catholic Church. The new government removed restrictions on the Catholic Church by allowing ownership of property, the entrance of foreign clergy and religious workers, public schools could offer Catholic religious instruction, and priests were granted authority to officiate at weddings. In turn, the Catholic hierarchy “blessed the military government” and supported its anti-Communist ideology and “cold-war” tactics.

According to Skidmore and Smith (1984:319), “The 1954 coup [against Arbenz] marked a turning point in Guatemalan history. It virtually eliminated the forces of the political center (as represented by Arévalo and Arbenz). So, the country had only a left and a right, and the right was in control. Coffee planters, other landowners, and foreign investors and their subsidiaries regained their power under the protection of neo-conservative military regimes.”

One characteristic of this entire modern period, especially after the mid-1960s, was the frightful abuse of human rights by repressive, rightwing military dictatorships with the tacit support of the Conservative, anti-Communist elements within the Catholic hierarchy. Military and paramilitary counterinsurgency operations, mostly in the countryside against the Amerindian population, led to the killing of tens of thousands of alleged “political dissidents and their supporters” between 1966 and 1982.

During the 1950s, the Catholic Church was revitalized by the arrival of many new foreign priests, nuns and other religious workers (mostly with a conservative political orientation), which provided needed resources for establishing new churches and schools and for expanded its social assistance efforts throughout the country.

Historically, reform within the Roman Catholic Church structure in Guatemala has been slow, and many nominal Mayan Catholics have chosen to participate in revitalization movements of Mayan spirituality. Some Catholics have chosen to ignore formal religion altogether, while others have become involved in recent reform movements within the Catholic Church.

Since the 1960s, a new emphasis on individual and small group Bible study, coupled with the availability of the Scriptures in native languages, has provided impetus for the revitalization of Catholicism in Guatemala, following the decrees of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Some of the reforms introduced by Vatican II had a significant impact on the Mayans because the language of the liturgy was changed from Latin to vernacular languages; the change to Spanish was immediate, but increasingly the Mayan languages were used in indigenous areas.

In December 1973, the **Catholic Charismatic Renewal** (CCR) was established in Guatemala as a “laymen’s apostolic organization” authorized by the hierarchy of the Roman

Catholic Church. At that time, the Archdiocese of Guatemala sponsored two retreats with the participation of Father Harold Cohen of the Archdiocese of New Orleans as the featured speaker. The first retreat was held on December 7-9 with the participation of 38 priests; the second was held on 10-12 with the participation of 150 male and female religious workers. One of the results of these retreats was the organization of the first CCR prayer group in the *Parroquia de La Asunción*, Zona 2, of Guatemala City. By August 1975, 63 CCR prayer groups had been formed in the whole country.

The CCR grew remarkably during the early-to-mid 1970s after Father Francis McNutt and laywoman Ruth Stapleton from the USA spoke at a spiritual retreat for Catholics, where 35 people were reported to have “spoken in tongues.” The CCR gained popularity among middle- and upper-class Guatemalans until certain restrictions were implemented by Catholic authorities beginning in June 1974 under the supervision of a Pastoral Service Team, led by Monseñor Ramiro Pellecer. As a result, many “spirit-filled” Catholics chose to leave the Catholic Church and join Evangelical churches, especially in Guatemala City. By September 1979, the CCR had grown strong enough to fill the National Stadium during a rally led by Father McNutt.

After adequate ecclesiastical controls were implemented, the CCR received the strong support of Monseñor Próspero Penados del Barrio, bishop emeritus of the Archdiocese. Land was donated to build a large CCR conference center, *Auditorio P. Juan Pedro Pini*, with a capacity of 5,000 people. This effort had the blessing and support of Archbishop Monseñor Rodolfo Quezada Toruño, the Metropolitan Archbishop and president of the Episcopal Conference of Guatemala (CEG). The CCR headquarters are at **Centro Carismático Católico**, 5 calle 0-16, Zona 1, Guatemala 01001, Guatemala.

**During the 1970s, the Catholic Church in Guatemala underwent a significant social and political revolution within its ranks.** Propagation of “Liberation Theology” has polarized reformists from conservatives and has created a new group of progressives with a strong social consciousness under the banner of “the preferential option for the poor.” The military-dominated government of Guatemala viewed activist priests and nuns as “subversives” and treated them as such, along with lay-members of Catholic organizations that were involved with the urban poor, destitute rural peasants and victims of repression. Some observers believe that Evangelical churches, because they tend to be more apolitical than many Mayan Catholic communities, became an attractive alternative for many Mayans who were seeking to escape from military repression against suspected guerrilla sympathizers (Berryman 1984[1]: Chapter 6).

The Catholic voice in Guatemala is often discordant as Catholics respond to a variety of social concerns. Individual Catholics frequently hold opinions that diverge from the hierarchy, and the hierarchy itself is not always unified. Within the Catholic Church in Guatemala social stances on issues such as abortion, ordination of women and divorce tend to mirror those of the Vatican. Abortion is illegal in the Guatemalan Penal Code, but family planning is available in much of the country.

**Stung by the loss of hundreds of thousands of mainly nominal Catholics to Protestant churches since the 1960s,** the Catholic Church began waging an intensive campaign to win back its “lost sheep” to the Catholic fold by denouncing Evangelical pastors and missionaries of being “false shepherds” and of being funded by a “conspiracy” of the U.S. government, the CIA and U.S. multinational corporations to keep Guatemala and other Central American countries out of the hands of Marxist revolutionaries so that the U.S. government would not lose its political and economic hold on the region.

The modernization of the Catholic Church that came with the **Second Vatican Council (1962–1965)** dove-tailed with aspects of the older Catholic Action movement's agenda; there was a push for more direct pastoral involvement with social concerns. In Guatemala, this resulted in a wave of cooperative and social organizing. **Catholic Action's "Christian Base Communities"** stressed education and consciousness-raising, and cooperated with one another throughout the highlands. They presented an alternative to both the guerrillas and the government, and, in many cases, peacefully supported the political goals of the guerrillas. This movement was attacked in the late 1960s and again in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when many priests and religious workers were killed or threatened. All religious workers were pulled from the Diocese of El Quiché in 1980 due to the widespread violence in which 13 priests had been killed. Some exiled priests and nuns formed the “Guatemalan Church in Exile” and continued to try to draw international attention to the bloody civil conflict between repressive government armed forces and the “popular insurrection” led by leftist guerrilla rebels.

During the 1970s, the Catholic religious orders began an intensive missionary effort in isolated areas where Indigenous groups practice Mayan spirituality. A school was established to train expatriate missionaries in the cultural practices of the Indigenous groups, and in language acquisition, politics and social concerns. According to Bonar L. Hernández Sandoval in *Guatemala's Catholic Revolution* (2018):

By the late 1960s, an increasing number of Mayan peasants had emerged as religious and social leaders in rural Guatemala. They assumed central roles within the Catholic Church: teaching the catechism, preaching the Gospel, and promoting Church-directed social projects. Influenced by their daily religious and social realities, the development initiatives of the Cold War, and the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), they became part of Latin America’s burgeoning progressive Catholic spirit.

Beginning in the 1920s and 1930s, the Guatemalan Catholic Church began to resurface as an institutional force after being greatly diminished by the anti-clerical reforms of the nineteenth century. This revival, fueled by papal power, an increase in church-sponsored lay organizations, and the immigration of missionaries from the United States, prompted seismic changes within the rural church by the 1950s. The projects begun and developed by the missionaries with the support of Mayan parishioners, originally meant to expand sacramentalism, eventually became part of a national and international program of development that uplifted underdeveloped rural communities. Thus, by the end of the 1960s, these rural Catholic communities had become part of a “Catholic revolution,” a reformist, or progressive, trajectory whose proponents promoted rural development and the formation of a new generation of Mayan community leaders.

Source:

[https://books.google.co.cr/books?id=AyNWDwAAQBAJ&dq=%22popular+religiosity%22+guatemala&source=gb\\_s\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.co.cr/books?id=AyNWDwAAQBAJ&dq=%22popular+religiosity%22+guatemala&source=gb_s_navlinks_s)

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Catholic Church, as an institution, supported the *status quo* fostered by Conservative government policies that favored *Ladino* society over Amerindian groups and that defend “national security” over human rights. However, a minority of Roman Catholic leaders (including bishops, priests and lay brothers and nuns) opted to defend the interests of “the poor and oppressed” rather than support a series of repressive governments and a submissive Catholic Church. Some of these priests and religious workers became martyrs for their faith during the Guatemalan civil war (1960-1996) as well as in the aftermath.

**Assistant Bishop Juan Gerardi** was murdered on the night of 26 April 1998 at his residence in Guatemala City, only 300 yards from the presidential palace. He was bludgeoned to death by unknown assailants in his garage. Cardinal Rodolfo Quezada Toruño of Guatemala City said, eleven years after the still unresolved murder, that there were still unhealed wounds in the Catholic Church and Guatemalan society as a whole. The cardinal recalled Bishop Gerardi as a “notable promoter of peace and human rights and an exemplary pastor of the poorest and most needy.” Bishop Gerardi’s murder, despite investigations conducted in cooperation with European and U.S. experts, has not yet been clarified.

The majority of the members of male Catholic religious orders in Guatemala have always been expatriates, primarily from Spain, Italy and North America. Indigenous leaders were seldom trained. Native languages, values and music were usually ignored and sometimes repudiated.

According to Stahlke (1966:81-87), Roman Catholic sources reported 459 priests – 128 diocesan priests and 331 religious priests – of which 346 were foreign-born, serving in 213 parishes throughout the country in 1966 under Archbishop Monsignor Mario Casariego. In addition, there were 417 male religious and 604 female religious serving in their respective religious orders in a variety of ministries. Catholic institutions included three seminaries for preparing local clergy, 115 primary schools, 47 secondary schools, six agricultural schools, one university, seven hospitals, 50 medical clinics and 18 dental clinics.

*In 1970, less than 15 percent of all Catholic clergy and religious workers in Guatemala were nationals.* At that time, there were 650 male religious and 850 female religious workers in the nation. According to a 1971 study by CLAR (*Confederación Latinoamericana de Religiosos*), only 13 percent of members of male religious orders in Guatemala were native-born, six percent were born in other Latin American countries, and 81 percent were foreign-born (outside of Latin America). Regarding members of female religious orders, 14 percent were native-born, 66 percent were born in other Latin American countries, and 22 percent were foreign-born (CLAR 1971).

In 1976, official Roman Catholic publications claimed that 88 percent of Guatemala’s population was at least nominally Catholic. The hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church consisted of one archdiocese with eight dioceses. One archbishop, 15 bishops, 641 priests and 1,104 nuns served in 341 parishes. In 1975, there were 177 Catholic religious workers in Guatemala from the USA and Canada (Coke 1978:203). In 1979, 95 priests and nuns from the USA were serving in Guatemala, in addition to 38 priests and nuns from Canada. These missionaries represented approximately 35 different Catholic religious orders from North America.

In March 2019, the Guatemalan Catholic Church administered two archdioceses: the Ecclesiastical Province of Guatemala was led by Mons. Oscar Julio Vián Morales (Salesians of Don Bosco, SDB) (1947-2018), who was elected Metropolitan Archbishop of Santiago de Guatemala on 2 October 2010; he took possession on 4 December 2010 and he died on 24 February 2018. Currently, this position (seat) is vacant. The Archdiocese of Santiago de Guatemala was erected in 1743. The Ecclesiastical Province of Los Altos Quetzaltenango-Totonicapán (erected in 1996) is led by Metropolitan Archbishop Mons. Mario Alberto Molina Palma (Order of Augustinian Recollects, OAR), appointed in September 2011.

In April 2018, the Catholic Church in Guatemala had two ecclesiastical provinces (each headed by a Metropolitan Archbishop), with a total of 11 suffragan dioceses, three missionary pre-diocesan jurisdictions: one territorial prelature and two Apostolic vicariates. There was a total of 188 parishes, which were served by 244 diocesan priests and 391 religious priests (for a

total of 635), 748 male religious and 967 female religious workers (for a total of 1,715 religious workers). Source: <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/country/dgt2.html>

### Provincia Eclesiástica de Guatemala

- [Arquidiócesis de Santiago de Guatemala](#)
- [Diócesis de La Verapaz](#)
- [Diócesis de Zacapa y Santo Cristo de Esquipulas](#)
- [Diócesis de Jalapa](#)
- [Diócesis de Escuintla](#)
- [Diócesis de Santa Rosa de Lima](#)
- [Diócesis de San Francisco de Asís de Jutiapa](#)
- [Vicariato Apostólico de Petén](#)
- [Vicariato Apostólico de Izabal](#)
- [Prelatura de Esquipulas](#)

### Provincia Eclesiástica de Los Altos

- [Arquidiócesis de Los Altos, Quetzaltenango-Totonicapán](#)
- [Diócesis de Suchitepéquez-Retalhuleu](#)
- [Diócesis de Sololá-Chimaltenango](#)
- [Diócesis de San Marcos](#)
- [Diócesis de Quiché](#)
- [Diócesis de Huehuetenango](#)



For information about the Guatemalan Episcopal Conference / *Conferencia Episcopal de Guatemala* see: <http://www.iglesiacatolica.org.gt/>

**Sacredness for Guatemalan Catholics revolves around the sacraments and images of the saints, the Virgin Mary and Christ on the Cross.** The country's Patron Saints are: St. James Major (aka, St. James the Greater) and Our Lady of the Rosary. People often maintain personal connections to particular saints in their home community or elsewhere, and some saints are considered to have healing powers or the ability to intervene in human affairs.

Throughout the year many Guatemalan Catholics make pilgrimages to certain sacred images, where they burn candles (the colors of which signify special needs), say prayers, and make vows and promises. Major townships throughout Guatemala have patron saints. Each year festivals are held for a week or so to commemorate the saint's day.

Besides the Mass and other rituals related to the liturgical calendar, the most important Catholic rituals in Guatemala are those related to the celebration of Holy Week (*Semana Santa*, the week before Easter) and to the annual pilgrimage to the shrine of the "Black Christ of Esquipulas" (also known as "El Señor de Esquipulas"), in the city of Esquipulas, located near the Honduran border. This pilgrimage takes place around January 15, but the season extends through Holy Week. Images of the "Lord of Esquipulas" are found in many local sanctuaries as well as in other Central American countries.

[Guatemala's] biggest tourism attraction is located in the municipality of Esquipulas, in the department of Chiquimula. The main church, which the Vatican upgraded to the category of

Basilica in 1968, is the home of the “Cristo Negro de Esquipulas” or “Black Christ of Esquipulas,” in English. It is one of the most popular images of the Catholic faith, because of the many miracles attributed to it; devotees all over the country pray to the Black Christ for personal petitions...

The sculpture of the Black Christ dates back to 1595 and is made of cedar wood. It inspires one of the most important Catholic pilgrimages, topped only by the Virgin of Guadeloupe in Mexico. Quirio Cataño sculpted the dramatic art piece in March 1595. Nine years later, in 1603, it had already performed at least one miracle. In 1736, the Bishop of Guatemala XV and first metropolitan Archbishop Fray Pedro Pardo de Figueroa began the process of the construction of a grand Baroque temple to house the Santo Cristo de Esquipulas. On 4 November 1758, the church was inaugurated, that now shelters the venerated image. The Basilica de Esquipulas is the second most important religious site in the Americas, after the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadeloupe in Mexico.

Source: <https://themixedculture.com/2013/11/28/esquipulas/>

*During the Spanish Colonial Period, the Catholic Church in Guatemala had no competition from outside religious groups, although there was a constant struggle to maintain its dominance in the Indigenous (predominantly Mayan) communities where the ancient religious traditions prevailed. The resulting syncretism of Catholic and Indigenous beliefs and practices produced the Guatemalan-brand of “popular religiosity” that prevails today among the Amerindian population.*

Each of the municipalities of Guatemala celebrate a particular “fiesta patronal” or patron saint festival. This takes place during the week of the veneration of the Patron Saint of each municipality and culminates in a special celebration. The “Semana Santa” or Holy Week is a festival of great artistic value, in addition to its religious fervor. The largest processions are held in the city of Antigua Guatemala (the colonial capital) and in Guatemala City. In these processions, besides the beauty of the platforms that carry images of the Patron Saint and other Biblical figures, the villagers organize themselves in groups to make “alfombras” or carpets composed of sawdust, fruits, seeds, flowers and other materials that are laid out in creative designs in the cobblestone streets, as an expression of their faith.

In most towns, elected groups known as *cofradias* are responsible for the care of religious icons and the staging of holiday celebrations. Some of these groups trace their origins to 16<sup>th</sup>-century Franciscan missionaries, a heritage that is still evident in holiday events.

Sources: <https://landedtravel.com/destinations/festivals-celebrations/> - <https://www.transitionsabroad.com/listings/travel/articles/festival-in-antigua-guatemala-semana-santa.shtml>

## Independent Western Roman Catholic-derived groups

The **Eastern Catholic Churches** or **Oriental Catholic Churches**, also called the **Eastern-rite Catholic Churches**, include twenty-three autonomous (non-Latin rite) Eastern Christian bodies in the Catholic Church, in full communion with the pope in Rome. The largest six churches based on membership are: the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (Byzantine Rite), the Syro-Malabar Church (East Syriac Rite), the Maronite Church (West Syriac Rite), the Melkite Catholic Church (Byzantine Rite), the Chaldean Catholic Church (East Syriac Rite), and the Armenian Catholic Church (Armenian Rite). Because of immigration from Middle-Eastern countries, some members of these Eastern Catholic Churches may currently reside in Guatemala and congregate to celebrate their respective religious rituals.

## The Protestant Movement

**General Overview.** At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, there were signs of general unrest against the growing power, corruption and abuse of authority by the Papacy. The Roman Catholic Church was beset from within by centuries of frustrated attempts at reform, and without by the rise of strong nation states along the northern border of the Old Roman Empire that were tired of bondage to civil and religious authorities in Rome. What started out as a symbolic protest by a rebellious monk in (East) Germany in 1517, against perceived abuses by his superior officials in Rome, turned out to be the spark that ignited strong movements of religious and civil disobedience (protests) against “the powers that be.” This led to the birth of the Protestant Reformation and the civil independence of Northern Europe from Roman Catholic jurisdiction. Martin Luther, a friar of the Augustinian Order, a Bible scholar and professor at the University of Wittenberg, began his “symbolic protest” by nailing a document known as “Ninety-five Thesis” to the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg. See: <http://www.carm.org/creeds/95theses.htm>

**Fundamental Doctrines of Protestantism.** All denominations and independent churches that are part of the Protestant movement share certain basic beliefs that are clearly stated in *The Apostles Creed* [1<sup>st</sup> century] and *The Nicene Creed* [325 AD], which are shared with other branches of Christianity. However, the Protestant reformers all had a firm conviction in *sola fide* (faith alone), *sola gratia* (grace alone), *sola scriptura* (scripture alone), a simple formula to remember the basic tenets of the Protestant Reformation: *justification by faith alone, salvation by God's grace alone and not by human merit, and the supreme authority of the Word of God as the only rule of faith and practice*. Other basic concepts include the *priesthood of all believers* and the *lordship of Jesus Christ* (His divinity and power) as the only Savior of mankind.

Any religious group that does not share these convictions cannot be considered part of the Protestant movement, which is formed by church bodies, whether denominations or independent congregations, that are an integral part of the Universal Body of Christ, composed of “all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.” Conversely, no single church body (denomination, independent church or any other organization) represents the totality of the Church of Jesus Christ on planet Earth. The concept of “denominationalism” means that each church body constituted of “born-again believers” forms part of the invisible Universal Body of Christ, and that those believers have received the gift of the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of their spiritual heritage as members of the Family of God. Those who seek to obey the Lord Jesus Christ as His disciples meet regularly in congregations of believers to share their common faith, study the Holy Scriptures, share the Lord’s Supper, worship together, and support and encourage one another in the endeavors of the Christian life, in obedience to the Great Commandment and in fulfilment of the Great Commission.

The various congregations and denominations of the Protestant movement are related to each other as a “family of believers,” but may have different forms of church government: the basic types are episcopal, presbyterian and congregational. Individual congregations of believers may be affiliated with other congregations in associations of churches (typically called “denominations”) whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally. Each of these denominational organizations is self-governing and usually have legal status before their respective civil governments. The various congregations and denominations may have some *historical, doctrinal and life-style affinity* so as to be grouped into Families of Denominations and Major Traditions within the Protestant movement such as those listed below in this document. The categories shown below are based largely on Dr. J. Melton Gordon’s *Encyclopedia of*

*American Religion* (Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1996, Fifth Edition); see the following links for basic definitions:

- <http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/profiles/listmelton.htm>
- <http://www.kentaurus.com/domine/protestant.HTM>
- [http://bpc.org/reading\\_room/books/wylie/protestantism.html](http://bpc.org/reading_room/books/wylie/protestantism.html)

**Prior to 1900**, only nine Protestant organizations had begun some work in Guatemala; between 1900 and 1919, 10 new groups had arrived; and between 1920 and 1939, seven additional groups had begun mission work in the country.

- 1824 - Belizean Baptist Missionary Society (affiliated with Baptist Missionary Society of London) begins an outreach in eastern Guatemala.
- 1824 - Belizean Bible Society (1818) - Joseph Bourne visited Port Izabal on the Caribbean coast.
- 1827 - Henry Dunn, an Anglican priest, lived in Guatemala City for 12 months where he distributed bibles and Protestant literature and established a Lancastrian school with government approval.
- 1839 - Rev. Rudolf Krause, a German Lutheran chaplain, served in the British commercial agricultural colony of Abbottsville in Alta Verapaz for less than a year.
- 1843 - Frederick Crowe was a school teacher and chaplain in the Abbottsville colony until 1843 when he travelled to Salamá, Baja Verapaz, and Guatemala City as a colporteur of the British Honduran Bible Society; he became a school teacher to support himself and his French wife, and was expelled by the Government in 1846.
- 1882 - Presbyterian Church (USA) (merged 1983 = PCUSA + PCUS) - National Presbyterian Church of Guatemala; this was the first Protestant Mission to become permanently established in Guatemala by the Rev. John C. Hill after receiving an invitation from the President of Guatemala.
- 1892 - \*The Rev. F. de P. Castells, an agent of the British & Foreign Bible Society (1804, London) opened an office for Central America in Guatemala City until 1912.
- 1893 - The Central American office of the American Bible Society was located in Guatemala City for 13 years with the Rev. Francisco G. Penzotti as its agent.
- 1899 - Central American Mission (Dallas, TX) - Association of Central American Evangelical Churches

Source: <http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/gte/guate-chron-2018.pdf>

The first pioneer efforts were made by **English Baptist missionaries and laymen in the British colony of Belize** to distribute the Scriptures in the Spanish territory of Guatemala. The first known effort took place in 1824 when **Joseph Bourne**, an English Baptist missionary stationed in Belize Town and affiliated with the Belizean Baptist Missionary Society and the Belize Bible Society, visited the ports of Izabal in Guatemala and Omoa in Honduras (Crowe 1850:327-328). In 1825, **two English Baptist laymen, R. J. Andrew and James Wilson** (representatives of G. F. Angas & Company based on Jeffrey's Square, London), travelled from Belize City to Guatemala City on company business for four months, which “by their conduct and conversation probably bore the first living testimony of the Gospel [that] had ever penetrated that dark land [the interior of Guatemala],” according to Crowe (1850:328-329).

According to **Henry Dunn** (an Anglican priest) in his book, *Guatemala: Or, the Republic of Central America, in 1827-1828: Being Sketches and Memorandums Made During a Twelve-Months' Residence* (9 editions published between 1828 and 1829 in English and reprinted in 1981 by Blaine Ethridge-Books), he lived in Guatemala for 12 months where he distributed bibles and Protestant literature and established a Lancastrian school with Government approval.

In 1834, the “Eastern Coast of Central America Commercial and Agricultural Company” (henceforth the Company) signed a contract with the Guatemalan government for a land grant to

allow for the establishment of a British agricultural colony in Alta Verapaz Department for the extraction of mahogany logs. This concession was granted during the Liberal administration of Dr. José Felipe Mariano Gálvez (1831-1838), chief of state of Guatemala within the Federal Republic of Central America (1823-1840). Beginning in 1834, this enterprise attracted an odd assortment of international settlers to the Alta Verapaz colony of New Liverpool in the fertile and well-watered Polochic Valley, at the junction of the Polochic and Cahabón rivers, to the west of Lake Isabel (Lago de Izabal). In 1839, the Company began to establish a second agricultural colony, named Abbottsville, located to the west of New Liverpool at a higher elevation in the modern municipality of Panzós on the Río Boca Nueva in the Department of Alta Verapaz. However, the older settlement at New Liverpool had numerous problems and had been abandoned by most of the 80 colonists by September 1839.

**Frederick Crowe** (born in Belgium in 1819 of English parents), a young seaman who had become a Baptist in Belize City in 1837 at age 18, accepted an offer from the Company to move to the new settlement of Abbottsville in January 1841 where he worked as a school teacher and served as a voluntary chaplain, despite the dismal living conditions and immorality that he encountered. He was a replacement for the **Rev. Rudolf Krause**, a German Lutheran chaplain, who arrived in Abbottsville with his family in early 1839 and left the settlement before the end of the year due to poor health and opposition from the degenerate settlers.

While residing in Abbottsville with his French wife, Crowe began to make plans to make an arduous journey from Abbottsville to Guatemala City by way of Salamá, Baja Verapaz, as a missionary and Bible salesman (colporteur). Crowe set out for Salamá in 1843 with a mule-cargo of Bibles and other Evangelical literature provided by the Belize Baptist Mission and the British Honduran Bible Society in Belize City. After he was prohibited from selling his assortment of literature in Salamá, Crowe continued his journey to Guatemala City with the hope of receiving government permission to reclaim his confiscated cargo in Salamá and to freely sell and distribute his literature in Guatemala City and elsewhere in the country.

However, Crowe encountered further opposition from government officials in the nation's capital, and he was forced by his circumstances to remain there for some time. He decided to support himself by teaching English and French to children of Liberal families, who supported his efforts to open a private school for boys and later another school for girls.

Although Crowe was supported in his educational and missionary efforts in Guatemala City by a few Liberal families, he was strongly opposed by the Catholic clergy and Conservative politicians who forced his expulsion from Guatemala in April 1846. Although no permanent organizational structure was established by Crowe, the English Baptists of Belize have the distinction of being the first known Protestants to work among *ladinos* in the Republic of Guatemala. Sources: Crowe (1850),

It was **Liberal President Justo Rufino Barrios** (1873-1875) who finally established freedom of speech and worship in Guatemala. Barrios was responsible for the official introduction of Protestantism into the country by inviting the **Presbyterian Church of New York City** – now an integral part of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) – to send missionaries to Guatemala in 1882, allegedly "to counteract the influence of the Catholic clergy" in its opposition to Liberal reforms.

The **Rev. John Clark Hill** arrived in late 1882 to begin Presbyterian work in Guatemala City, although Hill did not speak Spanish upon his arrival and his first activities were among 30-40 distinguished English-speaking foreigners who were already Protestants. Nevertheless, Hill and his successors were successful in establishing many Presbyterian churches and schools in the country.

By late 1885, Hill and his assistant Luis Canales had begun to preach and teach in Spanish, and had initiated a process that led to the formal establishment of the Central Presbyterian Church, under the ministry of the **Rev. Edward M. Haymaker**, in 1888. The first Presbyterian sanctuary at the present site was not built until 1894, adjacent to the National Palace. Haymaker's ministry in Guatemala began in 1887 and did not end with his retirement in 1936 but with his death in 1944, at age 89. By 1935, there were 22 organized Presbyterian churches and 198 preaching points with 2,805 baptized members in Guatemala.

The English worship services in Guatemala City, begun by Hill in 1882, were continued by James R. Hosmer and a succession of other pastors. Today, the nondenominational **Union Church**, located in Plazuela España, traces its founding to that date. This is the oldest Protestant church in Guatemala.

In addition to planting churches, the Presbyterians founded the American School in 1883, a bulletin called *El Mensajero Evangélico* in 1889, a medical ministry in 1889, a hospital (*Hospital Americano*) and nursing school in 1912, a boy's school called *Colegio La Patria* in 1912, a bookstore (*Librería Evangélico*) in 1915, a girl's school in 1918, and an industrial training center in 1919.

Young **Paul Burgess** (1886-1958) – university and seminary educated in the USA and Germany – and his wife Dora (also a university graduate) arrived in Guatemala in 1913 and began their missionary career in remote Quetzaltenango, with a population of an estimated 20,000 (about 12,000 Quiché Indians and 8,000 Spanish-speaking *ladinos*), located in the western highlands. The Presbyterian mission station, located next to Bethel Presbyterian Church, had been opened by Haymaker in 1898 but abandoned in 1902 after a strong earthquake and the eruption of Volcano Santa María, which dominates the skyline of this Spanish colonial city, surrounded by lush green coffee plantations – many of which were owned by some of the 400 German immigrants who “keep the Indians in virtual slavery” (Dahlquist 1985:53).

During the early years of his missionary work, Paul Burgess walked or rode on horseback from village to village to share the gospel and preach in Spanish among the *ladinos* and some German families; by August 1914, Burgess had organized a German congregation in Quetzaltenango. By 1916, Paul was preaching up to 12 times a week in Spanish, overseeing growing congregations (25 churches and missions), baptizing new converts, managing the bookstore he set up in a corner of Bethel Church, and editing *El Noticiero Evangélico*. Soon he had acquired a small printing press to publish needed Christian literature (books, tracts and Sunday school lessons) that was sold in the bookstore, and the profits were used to support local evangelists and Bible colporteurs (Dahlquist 1985:58-59).

Dora Burgess engaged in visitation and itineration work and cared for those who were sick; she also taught and served as principal of *Colegio La Patria*, the Presbyterian girls' school in Quetzaltenango. Paul Burgess served as pastor of the Bethel Presbyterian Church in addition to his itineration work in the mountain villages.

Persecution against Protestants was strong in those days from both Roman Catholics and Mayan priests who believed that it was their duty to defend their religion and culture from foreign preachers (called “Protestant devils” by some), as well as from some of the German ranchers who did not want the American preacher stirring up trouble among their native workers.

The **Protestant Indian League** was established, in principal, on 22 January 1921, in Chichicastenango for the purpose of planning an interdenominational strategy for reaching the Mayans with the Gospel of Christ. The participants in this planning conference were: Paul and Dora Burgess of the Presbyterian Mission; Cameron and Elvira Townsend, W. E. Robinson and Mrs. and Mrs. A. B. Treichler of the Central American Mission (CAM); along with two guest

speakers, the Rev. Howard Dinwiddie (a Baptist pastor from Virginia) and the Rev. Leonard L. Legters (a former Dutch Reformed Church missionary to the Indians of Oklahoma and California and at that time the pastor of a Southern Presbyterian Church in South Carolina), who shared their thoughts about the “Victorious Life in Christ.” Dinwiddie and Legters took on the task of raising support for the newly-organized Protestant Indian League from people in the USA, while Burgess, Townsend and Robinson were commissioned to begin translation work in several Mayan languages, Townsend-Robinson in Cakchiquel and Burgess in Quiché. In early 1922, Burgess began the task of learning the Quiché language while walking the trails between villages and talking with local informants. Meanwhile, CAM missionaries Townsend and Robinson were making progress in learning the Cakchiquel language.

Despite periodic health problems and furloughs as well as two arrests (the charges were dropped), Paul Burgess supported Dora and a team of Quiché assistants (including Patricio Xec Cuc, Abelino Suchí and Francisco Abel Matul) on the translation of the New Testament from Greek and Hebrew into Quiché, starting with the Gospel of John (followed by the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel of Matthew), the compilation of a Quiché dictionary and the composition of Quiché hymns.

By 1925, Burgess reported 124 congregations (churches, missions and preaching points) under his supervision, with new evangelists and pastors assuming more leadership than ever before. In 1941, the **Quiché Bible Institute** opened its doors, near the City of Quetzaltenango, to train Indigenous leaders for the growing number of Quiché churches and related ministries as a joint project of the Presbyterian Mission and the Primitive Methodist Church; since 1947, it has been located in San Cristóbal, Totonicapán. However, it was not until 1943 that the Quiché New Testament was finally completed, revised and published by the American Bible Society in New York. Presbyterian missionary **Stanley Wick** became the director of the Quiché Bible Institute in 1951, and he was joined by **Loren and Helen Anderson** of the Primitive Methodist Church in 1960.

As Presbyterian work grew, the territory of Guatemala was organized into separate presbyteries: the Western Presbytery in 1923 (Ciudad de Quetzaltenango), the Central Presbytery in 1927 (Ciudad de Guatemala), the Suchitepéquez Presbytery in 1939 (Ciudad de Mazatenango), the Pacific Presbytery in 1946 (Ciudad de Retalhuleu), and the North-Central Presbytery in 1950 (Ciudad de El Progreso).

In 1959, a separate presbytery was formed among the Maya-Quiché, with headquarters in Quetzaltenango. Previously, the Mam Center was opened in 1922 at San Juan Ostuncalco to provide training in industrial arts, health, education and literacy. The Mam New Testament was published in 1939 after 17 years of translation work by a number of missionaries who represented different mission agencies.

In 1921, Burgess reported he was in charge of 70 Spanish-speaking congregations (churches and missions), nine schools and six *ladino* evangelists, in addition to 12 Mayan congregations and two Mayan evangelists: Pedro Poz and Marcelino Vásquez (Dahlquist 1985). However, in 1935, the Presbyterian Mission reported only 22 organized churches (?) and 198 preaching points (maybe some of the previously reported “congregations” were now considered to be “preaching points”) with 2,805 baptized members in Guatemala. Total Presbyterian membership totaled 4,702 in 1951, 8,001 in 1960 and 11,500 in 1967. The National Presbyterian Church reported 131 churches, 164 missions and 16,263 communicant members in 1980, which made it the sixth largest Protestant denomination in Guatemala. The average annual growth rate for membership between 1951 and 1978 was only 4.5 percent, which was much lower than other major denominations.

Eventually, it was recognized that displacing Indigenous leaders for higher education was detrimental to the welfare of the community fellowship. Therefore, a program of **Theological Education by Extension (TEE)** was developed by Presbyterian missionaries James Emery and Ralph D. Winter during the early 1960s, based at the **Presbyterian Theological Seminary** (founded in 1940 in Guatemala City), located now in San Felipe, Retalhuleu. Missionary F. Ross Kinsler was added to the staff of the seminary shortly after TEE's inception and became one of the movement's leading apologists. Out of these modest beginnings the TEE concept developed.

Since the 1960s, the Presbyterian Church of Guatemala was the first Protestant denomination in Central America to become an autonomous national body, independent of missionary control. Full integration of the Presbyterian Mission and the National Presbyteries was accomplished in 1961-1962. Since then, all expatriates have served under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the **National Presbyterian Church** as "fraternal workers" at the invitation of the national church. In the process of nationalization, some Presbyterian property was sold so that most of the existing ministries would be self-supporting. Close cooperation has been maintained with the **Program Agency of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA**.

However, several local churches separated from the National Presbytery during the 1960s and 1970s and became independent denominations. The **Horeb Conservative Presbyterian Church** was formed in 1962 with six congregations and 180 members. The **Evangelical Church of the Holy Spirit, Sanctuaries of Mount Zion** (Pentecostal, unclassified) also was founded in 1962, when a group led by **Noé Ildefonso Reyes del Aguila** left the National Presbyterian Church in Quetzaltenango and established an independent movement. Its central church, called the "Sanctuary of the Holy Spirit," is located on Calzada La Pradera. In 1982, this denomination reported 107 churches, 35 missions and 35 preaching points, with a total membership of about 14,000 according to Zapata (1982), located in the departments of Quetzaltenango, Suchitepéquez, El Quiché, Huehuetenango, San Marcos, Totonicapán and Retalhuleu, in addition to 12 churches in the Mexican State of Chiapas. Attempts have been made by this denomination to evangelize and plant churches among the Mam, Quiché, Aguacateco, Kanjobal and Kekchí.

The **Bethlehem Bible Presbyterian Church** in Guatemala City, under the **Rev. Antonio Sandoval**, became independent in 1962. Also, in 1962, the **Fundamentalist Bible Presbyterian Church** founded by Dr. Carl McIntire in New Jersey, USA, sent the **Rev. Harold Ricker** and his wife to Guatemala. This denomination is well-known for its extreme Fundamentalist and anti-ecumenical stance, which created problems among Presbyterians in Guatemala after Ricker began to denounce other Protestant denominations as being "ecumenical" and "inclusive," according to his own doctrinal perspective. This was a rehash of the Fundamentalist vs. Modernist debate of the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the USA.

For a few years, Sandoval and Ricker joined forces in the **Fundamentalist Bible Presbyterian Church**, and they were joined by a few other Presbyterian pastors who previously belonged to the **National Presbyterian Church**. In 1981, this new denomination reported 3,115 members in 13 congregations and five missions.

After Sandoval and Ricker separated, the **Bible Presbyterian Church Independent Board for Foreign Missions** (with headquarters in Philadelphia, PA) continued to support Ricker, who became the overseer of five churches and about 225 members. This denomination is also strongly anti-Pentecostal.

In 1972, the **Bethania Presbyterian Church** in Quetzaltenango became involved in the Pentecostal movement, through the preaching of **Dr. Othoniel Ríos Paredes** of the Elim Christian Mission, and broke away from the National Presbytery. In 1979, an independent Bethania Church, pastored by **Rev. Efraín Avelar (now called Apostle)**, reported 33 affiliated

churches and missions with 1,435 baptized members. In 1981, this organization reported 29 churches and more than a dozen missions, with a total of 3,100 members; the central church in Quetzaltenango alone has about 1,000 members, which made it the largest Protestant church in that departmental capital.

Sources: Holland 1982 and Zapata 1982.

In 1892, the **Rev. Francisco G. Penzotti** (1851-1925) was designated by the **American Bible Society** as its agent for Central America. He was born in Italy and lived there until 1864. At the age of 13, Penzotti was invited by his sister-in-law to immigrate to Montevideo, Uruguay, where he learned Spanish and carpentry and soon had his own workshop. At age 19, he fell in love with a young girl named Josefa, whom he married in 1870. Penzotti, along with his wife, was converted to Protestantism in 1875 (at age 24) with the help of American Methodist missionaries as they were establishing a foothold in Montevideo. He became a Methodist pastor in 1879 and was sent soon thereafter on numerous assignments across South America for the Methodist Church to Uruguay, Argentina, Bolivia and Chile. In 1887, the American Bible Society appointed Penzotti as its agent on the Pacific coast of South America, which included Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru and Chile.

Later, Penzotti was sent to Central America and arrived in Guatemala City in 1893, where it remained for 13 years. He collaborated with Protestant missionaries and laymen in the distribution of the Scriptures throughout the region but not without widespread opposition from Roman Catholic authorities. He was aided by 10 or more colporteurs who traveled continuously throughout the Central American region. In 1906, Penzotti left Guatemala to become the Executive Secretary of the Bible Society of Río de la Plata, with headquarters in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Source: <https://logoi.org/es/resource/gp-biografia-2-francisco-penzotti/>

Also, in 1892, the **British & Foreign Bible Society** (BFBS, founded in London, 1804) sent the **Rev. F. de P. Castells** (a Spaniard) to Guatemala City as its agent for Central America, where he remained until 1912. This would seem to be an unnecessary duplication of efforts but the two Bible society agents collaborated with each other while conducting their respective ministries. Castells became very interested in the translation of the Scriptures into Indigenous languages at a time when that was not a very popular idea because most of the Indigenous people could not read or write in their own languages or in Spanish. Nevertheless, Castells commissioned the translation of Scripture portions into several Mayan languages, with encouragement from Edward Haymaker of the Presbyterian Mission. The distribution of the Scriptures in Guatemala took on new impetus after 1897, when the BFBS presented an impressive display of Bible versions in 200 languages at the International Exhibition in Guatemala City. Between 1897 and 1902, several editions of the Gospel of Mark were translated and published in Quiché and Cakchiquel and distributed by colporteurs, missionaries and local pastors. In 1912, the BFBS decided to withdraw from Central America and turned over all of its work to the American Bible Society (Dahlquist 1995:4-5).

**The second Protestant organization to begin permanent work in Guatemala was the Central American Mission** (later known as CAM International, with headquarters in Dallas, TX), which sent **Mr. & Mrs. A. Edward Bishop** to Guatemala City in 1899, a city of about 70,000 inhabitants in 1900. The first CAM church established was located at a major intersection in the capital city and named the "Cinco Calles" Evangelical Church, built in 1903 and pastored by Bishop, which became the "mother church" to hundreds of CAM congregations throughout the country. By the end of 1925, there were 31 CAM missionaries in Guatemala. By 1935, there

were 63 organized churches and 185 preaching points with 4,031 baptized members and 13,224 adherents in CAM-supported work.

During the 1920s and 1930s, CAM began to develop ministries both among *ladinos* and among the Mayan peoples, particularly in the Central Highlands. Evangelization of the Mayans began in earnest in 1919 when Colegio Nimayá was founded in Sacatepéquez for Amerindian students. Indigenous languages and dialects were utilized, and training of Indigenous pastors and teachers was initiated when the Robinson Bible Institute was established in Panajachel in 1923. By 1978, CAM-related churches had the largest number of Amerindian members of any Protestant denomination in Guatemala, according to Milton Coke (1978). In 1937, Kenneth G. Grubb, in *Religion in Central America*, reported the following about the work of the Central American Mission (page 64):

A school was opened in Guatemala City in 1914, and a property was acquired for the establishment of an orphanage which gives shelter to-day to nearly 30 children. Dispensary work is carried on at Antonio and Huehuetenango, and a doctor resides at Patzicia. The post-war years saw a considerable development of the work in three directions. Firstly, the definite evangelization of the Indians through the use of their own languages was taken up in 1919, and the Robinson Bible Institute for training Indian evangelists was opened at Panajachel on Lake Atitlán in 1923. Secondly, the general training of Spanish-speaking workers was undertaken at Guatemala City by the opening in 1929 of the Central Bible Institute which took over the less systematized activities of the Bible School at Huehuetenango. Finally, during recent years increased attention has been given to the whole question of devolving greater responsibility upon the Church and encouraging it to achieve self-support. The work of the Central American Mission has been evangelistic rather than educational, and to-day there are some 14,000 believers in touch with the Churches. The departments where the mission is engaged in active evangelism are those of Huehuetenango, San Marcos, Jutiapa, Jalapa, Guatemala, Escuintla, Sacatepéquez, Chimaltenango, Sololá and Sta. Rosa.

CAM-related membership growth between 1935 and 1980 was significant. In 1935, CAM reported 63 churches and 185 preaching points with 3,200 members, and by 1960 the total membership had increased to 10,500. The country-wide Evangelism-in-Depth program initiated in 1961-1962, sponsored by the Latin America Mission of Costa Rica under the leadership of an interdenominational group of local Evangelical leaders, inspired growth and vitality among many CAM churches, according to the personal testimonies of many CAM leaders. Church growth among CAM-related churches increased to 7.3 percent (average annual growth rate, or AAGR) during 1960-1967 and to 9.5 percent during 1967-1980. Whereas the total membership only increased from 10,500 in 1960 to about 13,000 in 1970, between 1970 and 1980 the total membership nearly tripled to 38,480 members in 333 churches, 474 missions (called "congregations" by CAM) and 989 preaching points, which made this Protestant denomination the

largest in Guatemala in 1980. In 1973, approximately 43 percent of CAM-related church members were *ladinos* and 57 percent were Mayans (Holland 1982:59).

Not only has the **Central American Evangelical Church Association** (CAM-related), founded in 1927, become one of the largest Protestant denominations in Guatemala, but CAM also has had an important role in training pastors and lay leaders for the non-Pentecostal Evangelical movement, originally through its Central American Bible Institute (founded in 1926) and later through the Central American Theological Seminary (known as SETECA), created in 1965 by upgrading the Bible Institute program to a university-level program.

The Central American Mission and its affiliated churches in Central America and Mexico have a very strong emphasis on maintaining doctrinal purity based on its adherence to Plymouth Brethren Bible teacher John Nelson Darby's doctrine of Dispensationalism and the Scofield Reference Bible, which includes the marginal notes of Dr. Cyrus I. Scofield, a Congregationalist and supporter of Evangelist Dwight L. Moody. Scofield founded CAM in 1890 with a small group of Christian businessmen in Dallas, Texas. Doctrinally, CAM's theology is similar to the teaching of the "Open Brethren" branch of the Plymouth Brethren, which distanced itself from the "Exclusive Brethren" in 1848 under the leadership of the Prussian George Müller in Bristol, England. Whereas the "Open Brethren" use the terms "Gospel Chapel," "Gospel Hall," "Bible Chapel," "Christian Assembly," or other similar terms, the CAM-related local churches are usually called "Iglesias Evangélicas Centroamericanas."

In Guatemala, the CAM-affiliated churches were organized nationally in 1951 under a General Council, although since 1934 the country had been divided into eight districts and led by a council composed of representatives from churches in each district, with or without the participation of CAM missionaries. Since 1992, this national body has been called *Consejo Evangélico Central de las Iglesias Centroamericanas de Guatemala* (CECIC), which functions very much like any other Protestant "free church" (non-liturgical with congregational church polity) denomination in the country. In 1999, CECIC reported an estimated 130,000 members in 1,000 affiliated churches (note: congregations = missions were not mentioned), up from 49,584 members in 377 churches and 481 congregations (missions), a total of 858 churches and missions, in December 1983 (Comisión de Historia del Centenario 1999:108-109). NOTE: this needs clarification!

For a general history of CAM in Guatemala, see: Mildred W. Spain, "*And In Samaria*" – A Story of More Than Sixty Years' Missionary Witness in Central America, 1890-1954 (Dallas, TX: The Central American Mission, 1954); "Guatemala" (pp. 151-210). Also, *Portadores del Evangelio: Historia de la Iglesia Evangélica Centroamerica en Guatemala, 1899-1999*, produced by the Comisión de Historia del Centenario / History Commission of the Centennial (Guatemala City 1999.)

### **Between 1900 and 1919, the following Protestant organizations and individuals began mission work in Guatemala:**

- 1900 - Dr. & Mrs. Charles F. Secord, independent Plymouth Brethren missionaries (1900-1920) in Chichicastenango.
- 1901 - The Pentecostal Mission (founded by the Rev. J. O. McClurkan in Nashville, TN) - merged with the Church of the Nazarene in 1915.
- 1902 - California Yearly Meeting of Friends in Chiquimula, Thomas J. Kelly and Clark J. Buckley.
- 1908 - Seventh-Day Adventist Church begins work in Guatemala City.
- 1910 - Independent Holiness missionaries, the Rev. and Mrs. Christopher Albert Hines, 1910-1922.
- 1913 - Pentecostal Holiness Church, the Rev. & Mrs. Amos Bradley, 1913-1918.
- 1915 - Church of the Nazarene (Kansas City, Kansas) – the Rev. and Mrs. Richard Anderson

- 1916 - United Free Gospel and Missionary Society (Turtle Creek, PA): Thomas A. Pullin and Charles T. Furman (1916-1922; both later joined the Church of God-Cleveland, TN)
- 1916 - Primitive Methodist Church (Lebanon, PA; founded in 1812 in Great Britain); the PMC merged in 1932 with the Wesleyan Methodist Church.
- 1917 - William Cameron Townsend (1896-1982) arrived in Guatemala in 1917 to sell Spanish Bibles near Antigua; after two years he joined the Central American Mission (CAM).
- 1917 - Pilgrim Holiness Church (organized in 1897 in Cincinnati, Ohio); merged with the Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1968 to form The Wesleyan Church.
- 1917 - Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Higgs arrived as independent Holiness missionaries and began work in the departments of Izabal and El Progreso,

**Dr. Clayton F. Secord** (1874-1955) was an independent Plymouth Brethren missionary, born in Nebraska of Canadian parents, who established a few small congregations in the central highlands after his arrival with his wife, Susan Hazel James (married in 1898), in 1900. Dr. Secord was the first medical missionary to serve among the Mayan Indians, beginning in 1900 in Chichicastenango and ending in 1928. Between 1910-1912, Secord published a short-lived newspaper out of Chichicastenango, called *El Protestante*, that was dedicated to lambasting the Catholic Faith in his weekly publication (Garrard-Burnett 1998:55-56). After his first wife was murdered as revenge against the Secords for being Protestant, he married Maria Cristina and had five children. He sold his property to the Primitive Methodist Church (PMC) upon his “retirement,” after he was “arrested, accused of espionage and spying for foreign powers and deported from Guatemala” in 1920 following the civil uprising led by the Unionist Party that took place in April, which forced President Manuel Estrada Cabrera of the Liberal Party to resign from office on 15 April.

Source: <https://guatemalachronicle.wordpress.com/2015/09/08/how-did-the-brethren-get-to-guatemala/>

**The Church of the Nazarene** claims 1904 as the official year it began work in Guatemala. The **Rev. & Mrs. Richard S. Anderson** – affiliated with **The Pentecostal Mission (TPM)**, an independent Holiness organization founded in 1901 by the Rev. J. O. McClurkan with headquarters in Nashville, TN – arrived at Puerto Barrios on 10 November 1904. They lived in the Department of Zacapa for a short time before moving to the town of Livingston in Izabal Department, where they started an English-speaking church. In 1905, they relocated to Cobán in Alta Verapaz and began working with another TPM missionary couple, the **Rev. & Mrs. John Thomas Butler**, who had arrived in Guatemala as early as 1901. Together they sold Bibles, New Testaments and distributed other Evangelical literature. They celebrated services wherever they were permitted to do so. During the period 1901-1915, 13 TPM-supported missionaries served in Guatemala.

When the TPM merged with the **Church of the Nazarene** in 1915, the **Rev. and Mrs. Richard Anderson** joined the Church of the Nazarene, while the Butlers joined the Central American Mission. However, nine other TPM workers left Guatemala, while three additional Church of the Nazarene missionaries arrived in 1917: **Eugenia Phillips** (Cobán) and **Mr. and Mrs. John D. Franklin** (Salamá). Thomas Butler had bought some land in Cobán in 1910, where a church building was constructed in 1916. It was in Cobán, on 10 August 1919, that missionary John D. Franklin organized the first Church of the Nazarene in Guatemalan territory.

During the 1920s, eight addition missionaries arrived, although the Franklins left Guatemala in 1921. The Nazarene Health Clinic was established in Cobán in 1926 by Miss Bessie Branstine. There was a growth plateau in the Nazarene work during the 1930s, which was

probably due to a general entrenchment during the Great Depression when funds and missionary personnel were difficult to obtain.

TPM's work in the area of secular education began when Miss Fay Watson founded the "The Evangelical School" in Cobán in 1912, which later changed its name to "Nazarene College for Young Ladies" under director Eugenia Phillips. On 15 January 1921, the "Nazarene College for Men" was inaugurated under the direction of Sara M. Cox. Theological education emerged in an informal manner when Miss Cox opened the Nazarene Bible Institute in 1923; Alfredo Chacón and Manuel Buenafé were the first graduates. In 1953, William Dannemann founded the K'ekchí Education Center in San Juan Chamelco, and later organized the Education Center Rabinal Achí in San Miguel Chicaj, Baja Verapaz. In 1976, the Nazarene Theological Institute was founded in Guatemala City, which is now known as the Nazarene Theological Seminary.

Source: <http://didache.nazarene.org/index.php/filedownload/regional-theology-conferences/ibero-amer-theo-conf/490-iberoam04-eng-7-guatemala/file>

In 1937, Kenneth G. Grubb, in *Religion in Central America*, wrote the following (p. 65):

Twenty-one different missionaries have served the Nazarene Church in Guatemala since 1915. The monthly paper, *El Cristiano*, has been published regularly at Cobán since 1905. To the school for girls, one for boys was added in 1921, and a Bible Training School, which to-day has 37 students, was opened in 1923. A small hospital, served by missionary nurses, was started in 1926. The Church has continued to grow and to-day there are nearly seven hundred full members and a still larger Christian community. An encouraging feature of the work in Petén is the fact that almost from the beginning it has been self-supporting.

In 1944, the Nazarenes organized the National Assembly of pastors and workers to govern church affairs, with the missionaries having the right to speak but not to vote, thereby laying the foundation for the development of the national church. During the 1940s and 1950s, Dr. William Sadat and his wife dedicated themselves to translating the Bible into several Mayan languages, mainly Kekchi and Pokomchi. In 1963, pastor Federico Guillermo became the first Guatemalan district superintendent, under the leadership of the general superintendent, Dr. Hardy C. Powers. In 1965, the Nazarenes reported 17 missionaries and 30 national workers in Guatemala.

By 1980, the Church of the Nazarene had become the seventh-largest Protestant denomination in Guatemala. Beginning with only 417 church members in 1920, the Nazarenes grew to 774 members in 1935; 893 in 1950; 2,123 members in 38 congregations in 1960; 2,700 members in 1970; and 11,349 members in 1980 among 75 congregations. The average annual growth rate for Nazarene membership between 1950 and 1980 was 8.3 percent. Of the 3,000 church members reported in 1973, 61.8 percent were Mayans and 38.2 percent were *ladinos* (Holland 1982:60-61).

According to official Nazarene Church statistics for 2018 (year 2017), there were 86,033 church members in 662 local churches in Guatemala (an average of 130 members per church): <http://www.nazarene.org/sites/default/files/docs/GenSec/Statistics/Annual%20Church%20Statistical%20Reports%202018.pdf>

In 1902, the **California Friends Mission (Quakers)** began its ministry in the southeastern part of Guatemala, near the border with Honduras and El Salvador, with headquarters in the Department

of Chiquimula. In 1901, two students, Thomas J. Kelly and Clark J. Buckley, at the **Training School for Christian Workers** in Whittier, California, were the first Quakers to respond to the call to share the Gospel in Guatemala. They sailed to Guatemala as Bible colporteurs in December 1901 and arrived in Guatemala City in January 1902. There they studied Spanish for several months before deciding to focus their ministry on the Department of Chiquimula. They went out as representatives of the Training School for Christian Workers, but within a few years the support of the mission was taken up by the **California Yearly Meeting of Friends** (now EFCI-Southwest). Three other missions had preceded the Friends in Guatemala: the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., the Central American Mission, and The Pentecostal Mission (which later merged with the Church of the Nazarene). Two other missions would follow in short order, and the Friends joined in a comity arrangement with them to avoid overlap. Paul Enyart reports in his book, *Friends in Central America* (1970:48), that “although they made Chiquimula their headquarters, they spent most of their time traveling to the surrounding towns and villages, distributing literature and selling Bibles.” By September 1902, they reported having sold nearly half a ton of Bibles.

Source: “Friends in Central America” by D. Gene Pickard, George Fox University (2014); available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/51125764.pdf>  
Also, see: <http://www.institutoalma.org/Literatura/Amigos/07VLosAmigosenCentroamericaI.pdf>

**The Seventh-Day Adventists** arrived in 1908 and began work in Guatemala City where an English-language school was purchased as a missionary enterprise by E. L. Cardey and C. A. Nowlen. The Guatemalan Mission was organized in 1913 with J. B. Stuyvesant as its first president with ministries in Guatemala City and Quetzaltenango, the nation's second-largest city. According to Peter Simpson (2005:78-79),

For 1913, the report of the Central American Union (76: 1986) tells us, Pr. J. B. Stuyvesant came to work at the school and with him his whole family. From the work that was done in the Central Church in Guatemala City [2da. Avenida No. 22], work was established in places like Jalapa, Genoa, San Diego, Zacapa and San Antonio Suchitepéquez, as well as another congregation in what is now Zone 7 of Guatemala City. The growth of the work allowed then to organize the Adventist Mission of Guatemala in 1927. Before this date, the work in Guatemala and El Salvador were organized as a single mission. The offices of the new mission were established in the same building as the Central Church [in Guatemala City]. The missions of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama formed the Central American Union, officially organized with these territories, in 1926.

Work among the Indigenous Quiché was begun in 1940, and by 1964 there were six churches and 16 organized groups or preaching points among the Indigenous peoples. By 1965, the Adventists had established several educational and medical ministries, including three primary schools (locations unknown) and a large medical clinic in San Cristóbal Totonicapán, as well as several other clinics in the Department of Huehuetenango (Stahlke 1966:19-20).

*However, the Adventists, historically, have set themselves apart from other Protestant denominations because of their particular doctrinal beliefs, which include Sabbath (Saturday) worship and other doctrines that many Evangelicals have considered to be “sectarian” and out of the Protestant mainstream.*

An overview of Adventist church growth reveals 296 members in six churches and 18 preaching points in 1934. By 1960, there were 21 churches, 48 preaching points, and 2,950

communicant members among a community of 5,624 adherents. Membership increased rapidly to 4,597 in 1965 (with 30 churches and 80 preaching points), and to 17,207 in 1980 among 68 churches and 148 preaching points. In 1980, this was the fifth largest Protestant denomination in Guatemala. Between 1960 and 1980, the average annual growth rate for membership was 10.3 percent (Holland 1982:62).

In 2015, the Adventist Church in Guatemala reported 242,503 church members, 1,151 churches and congregations (missions), 28 primary and secondary schools, three clinics, a drug rehabilitation center and a nursing home. The Adventist Church has operated its main radio station, "Union Radio," for 37 years. Since 2010, two additional radio stations have joined together and seven repeaters have been added that have the potential of reaching some nine million people, or 60 percent of the country including the capital city, the north, eastern, western and central regions and even across the borders. Part of the south region is also covered by the radio stations.

Source: <https://www.interamerica.org/2015/07/in-guatemala-church-sees-dramatic-growth-in-adventist-communication/>

In 1910, the **Rev. and Mrs. Christopher Albert Hines**, independent Holiness missionaries, arrived in Guatemala and began working in Totonicapán among the Indigenous Quiché. In 1916, young missionaries Thomas A. Pullin and Charles T. Furman of the **United Free Gospel and Missionary Society** arrived in Guatemala to work with them in Totonicapán and El Quiché. At first, Pullin and Furman began to learn Spanish and Quiché under Hines, and later they organized a system of preaching circuits to evangelize the region. Despite strong opposition, they established 14 local congregations. In 1920, Pullin and Furman returned to the USA on furlough; in 1922, the Hines retired and returned to Texas. In May 1922, the **Primitive Methodist Church** (PMC) absorbed the work begun by the Hines in Totonicapán, which was supervised by the Rev. Amos Bradley who served with the PMC in Guatemala from 1922 to 1928. These churches became affiliated with the **Full Gospel Church of God** in 1934 under the leadership of Furman.

**Independent Holiness missionaries Amos Bradley** (1883-1955) from Alabama and **Effie May Glover** (1883-1959) of Arkansas agreed to serve the Lord together in Guatemala while attending Holmes' Bible and Missionary Training Institute in Altamont, SC. Amos went to Guatemala in 1908 (supported by Mrs. Frank Nabors, a physician's wife in Birmingham, Alabama) and established missions in San Jerónimo and Salamá in northern Guatemala, while evangelizing the surrounding territory. Amos married Miss Glover in Zacapa, Guatemala (field headquarters of **The Pentecostal Mission** where Glover was stationed), in June 1909; and they settled down in San Jerónimo, Department of El Progreso, for three years where their first child was born in April 1910. They returned to the USA in 1912 on furlough and settled in Greenville, SC.

In 1912, while on furlough in the USA, the Bradleys became Pentecostals – they were baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues – as a result of the Pentecostal revival taking place at Holmes' Bible and Missionary Training School (where both had studied previously). They joined the newly-organized **Pentecostal Holiness Church** (PHC, organized in 1911 in North Carolina) in 1912 and returned to Central America in 1913 as that denomination's first missionaries to Guatemala. After only a few months in Guatemala, the Bradleys were reassigned to El Salvador by the Foreign Mission Board of the PHC. The Central American field of the Pentecostal Holiness Church was opened by Amos Bradley in 1913, and he was stationed in El Salvador until 1916: [http://arc.iphc.org/history/hisdev\\_prn.html](http://arc.iphc.org/history/hisdev_prn.html)

In 1916, the Bradleys were appointed to care for the PHC work in Zacapa, which had been without a missionary since **Charles G. Anderson** had become ill and had to return to the USA

for treatment (he died later of malaria). Because the climate in Zacapa was extremely hot and unhealthy, the Bradleys relocated in Guatemala City and he commuted by train to Zacapa for ministry. While in Zacapa on Christmas Eve 1917, Guatemala City was hit by a series of strong earthquakes that demolished their living quarters; in the spring of 1918, the Bradleys left Guatemala for a furlough in the USA.

A strong earthquake and aftershocks struck Guatemala City and the surrounding area during December 1917 and January 1918. The quakes gradually increased in intensity until they almost completely destroyed Guatemala City and severely damaged the ruins in Antigua Guatemala that had survived a series of the earthquakes in 1773.

The Bradleys were on an extended furlough for four years (1918-1921) and settled in Atlanta, Georgia. While there Amos was disassociated from the **Pentecostal Holiness Church** in 1919 due to a dispute with an influential PHC pastor, F. M. Britton, who accused Amos of “being wrong in doctrine” because Amos had recommended to him another pastor who was not a Pentecostal to speak at the Annual Camp Meeting in Franklin Springs, Georgia. However, Mrs. Bradley’s membership remained with the PHC and she raised her family in the Pentecostal Holiness Church.

During 1922-1928, the Bradleys served with the **Primitive Methodist Church**, which had invited Amos to supervise their new mission station in Totonicapán that was begun by the **Rev. and Mrs. Albert Hines** in 1910 and who retired in 1922. Amos and his family arrived in Totonicapán in May 1922 where they had a fruitful ministry for the next four years, including evangelizing among the Mayan Indians in the surrounding territory and participating in the translation of the Scriptures into the Quiché language (Gospels of John and Matthew) in collaboration with the **Rev. Paul Burgess** of the Presbyterian Mission in Quetzaltenango.

After being on furlough in the USA during 1926-1928, the Bradleys returned to Guatemala in late 1928 and were assigned by the **Primitive Methodist Church** to work in Chichicastenango to succeed **Dr. Clayton F. Secord** (an independent Plymouth Brethren missionary) who had sold his property to the PMC upon his retirement. Mrs. Bradley’s health was seriously affected by the climate and the family had to return to the USA on a medical furlough in 1928.

Amos Bradley was in the USA during part of 1930 before returning to Guatemala (without his family who remained in the USA due to his wife’s poor health) as an independent missionary to continue his evangelistic and pastoral work among the Mayan Indians in the central highlands. He found a plow company in the USA that was willing to hire him as their representative in Guatemala “to introduce modern agricultural methods” to farmers. Although there were plenty of potential customers, most had no money to purchase a plow, so most of Amos’ time was spent in pioneer mission work among the Amerindians, where he evangelized, trained native church leaders, translated portions of the Scriptures into their various languages, and also taught the native workers to read and write.

However, despite these setbacks, the work of the PMC continued in Guatemala, mainly among the Quiché and Ixil Mayan groups in the western highlands. Several PMC missionaries cooperated with the Presbyterians in the Quiché Bible Institute (near Quetzaltenango) and in the production of the Quiché New Testament in 1946. However, most of the PMC’s activities were conducted in Spanish and most of their pastors were *ladinos*.

In 1980, the Primitive Methodists were responsible for five clinics, a hospital, a primary school, a secondary school, two literacy centers and five weekly radio programs. Their total membership was about 7,000 among 33 churches in 1980.

**The Pentecostal movement** actually had its origin in Guatemala under the ministry of the **Rev. and Mrs. Amos Bradley**, who served in Guatemala while affiliated with the **Pentecostal Holiness Church** from 1912-1918, and later with the **Primitive Methodist Church** in Guatemala, from 1922-1928. Then Amos Bradley served in Guatemala alone as an independent Pentecostal missionary from 1930 to 1936, and in Costa Rica from 1936 until his death in 1955.

**Sources:** *The Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, "Veteran Missionary Passes," Volume 39, Number 7 (16 June 1955, pg. 8); and Pruitt, Mrs. T. A. (Lutie Bradley Pruitt, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Amos Bradley), "Biography of Rev. and Mrs. Amos Bradley," no date, typewritten (composed by Mrs. Pruitt in Atlanta, Georgia, prior to her mother's death in 1959). A copy of the document written by Pruitt was obtained from Erica Rutland at the IPHC Archives & Research Center in Oklahoma City, OK (received via e-mail by the author on 15 August 2008).

In 1916, young Thomas A. Pullin and Charles T. Furman of the **United Free Gospel and Missionary Society** (an independent Holiness organization, founded in Turtle Creek, PA, which became identified with the Pentecostal movement in 1916; its name was changed to "Free Gospel Church, Inc." in 1957) arrived in Guatemala to begin an itinerant evangelistic ministry in El Quiché and San Cristobal, Totonicapán, respectively, under the leadership of independent Holiness missionary Albert Hines. In 1920, both couples returned to the USA to strengthen their base of support.

When Furman and his family returned to Guatemala in 1922, they were affiliated with the **Primitive Methodist Church** and remained so until 1934 when doctrinal differences (Holiness vs. Pentecostal) forced them to resign. On 13 April 1932, it was reported that the "Pentecostal Fire" descended on the members of a small Primitive Methodist Church in Totonicapán while the Furmans and Pullins were in the USA on furlough. From Totonicapán, it was reported that the flames of the Pentecostal revival spread throughout the countryside and into nearby towns and villages (Conn 1959:134-135).

In October 1934, Mr. and Mrs. Charles T. Furman joined the **Church of God (Cleveland, TN)** at the invitation of James Henry Ingram (1893-1981) of the Church of God Foreign Mission Board and returned to Guatemala as that denomination's first missionaries in the country. Furman proceeded to visit PMC churches in Totonicapán and El Quiché and encouraged the leaders to join him in the ranks of the Church of God, which resulted in 14 PMC churches switching their affiliation to the Church of God.

The **Full Gospel Church of God** (COGCT) marks its founding date as 1932, the year when Furman's Guatemalan co-workers experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In the spring of 1935, Furman reported 16 organized churches with 672 members. In 1934, Mr. and Mrs. Pullin left the PMC and became missionaries with the Church of God in Guatemala. Pullin served as the first National Supervisor, from 1935-1955. In 1945, the COGCT reported 48 churches with 2,016 baptized members nationally.

COGCT ministry in Guatemala City began in 1941-1942 as the result of a Pentecostal revival in the **National Evangelical Mission (NEM)**, founded in 1923. Several COGCT missionaries participated in activities sponsored by the NEM, until such time that they founded their own church in "El Cerrito de Carmen" in Guatemala City.

The Church of God Mission Board responded to the increasing need for more missionaries in Guatemala and began to send new workers to work exclusively in the field of evangelism and church planting. National leaders also began to emerge who were directly responsible for the rapid growth experienced during the period 1945-1955.

In 1955, 123 churches and 36 missions had been organized nationally, with 5,045 baptized members, which made it difficult to supervise the work from one central office. Consequently, three distinct and administratively autonomous regional divisions – Central, Western and Northern – were created, each with its own missionary overseer. By 1965, there were 217 churches and 231 missions with a total of 6,923 baptized members, which is evidence of significant church growth between 1955 and 1965.

In 1966, the General Superintendent for Central America was the Rev. William R. McCall, with offices in Guatemala City; the territorial supervisors for Guatemala were the Rev. Denzell Teague in Guatemala City, Central District; the Rev. Oscar R. Castillo in El Quiché, Northern District (mainly Mayan believers); and the Rev. Vergil E. Wolf in Quezaltenango, Western District.

In 1970, the three districts reported a combined membership of 10,816 among 275 churches and 278 missions. By 1980, this Pentecostal denomination had grown to 664 churches and 234 missions with 34,451 members, which made it the third largest Protestant denomination in Guatemala. According to Richard Waldrop (1981), the periods with the greatest decadal membership growth rates were 1930-1940 (473.25%) and 1970-1980 (217.9%). The average annual growth rate for membership between 1950 and 1978 was 12.5 percent.

Sources: Conn (1959), PROCADES-SEPAL (1981:32).

In 1917, **Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Higgs** came to Guatemala as independent Holiness missionaries and began work in the departments of Izabal and El Progreso, but in 1940 they became affiliated with the **Emanuel Association** of Colorado Springs, CO (founded by Ralph G. Finch in 1937, a former member of the Pilgrim Holiness Church). The Emanuel Association, assisted by the Higgs, entered Guatemala in 1941 and established a mission station at La Colina, Valle de Ermita, near Guatemala City (now part of Zone 8), under the leadership of the Roy Trotzke family. By 1965, their work had expanded to the departments of El Progreso and Sacatepéquez and included 12 churches with about 800 members. At their headquarters in Zone 8, this denomination established a Bible Institute for the preparation of pastors and workers, as well as a primary and secondary school.

When the Higgs returned to Guatemala in 1945, they began a new ministry in Jalapa that became known as the **Emanuel National Evangelical Church (or Emanuel Mission)** in 1967. In 1950, the Higgs returned to the USA for retirement, leaving the Rev. Dionisio Reiff in charge of the work. Since 1960, this denomination has been associated with the **Evangelistic Faith Mission of Bedford, Indiana**, of the Wesleyan Holiness tradition. The Bible Institute and primary school in Jalapa was administered by this Mission, along with a bookstore and print shop. In 1980, this denomination reported 17 churches and 20 missions with 1,078 members located in the departments of Guatemala, Jalapa, Jutiapa, Retalhuleu and El Progreso.

In 1960, the **Emanuel Foundation** was established in Zone 9 of Guatemala City by Christian businessman Fautso Ceveira, but this foundation is unrelated to the other Emanuel groups. Emanuel Foundation sponsors Colegio Alfa y Omega in Colonia La Florida, Zone 19, which provides primary and secondary education for poor families. In 1980, this denomination reported five churches and 225 members; in 1982, there were 11 churches and 400 members, mainly located in the metropolitan area of Guatemala City (Zapata 1982).

**William Cameron Townsend** (1896-1982), who worked under the auspices of the Los Angeles Bible House, arrived in Guatemala in 1917 to sell Spanish Bibles near Antigua. After two years he joined the Central American Mission (CAM), and for 14 years he lived in a Kaqchikel com-

munity on the coast called Santa Catarina, where he learned the native language to the point where he could translate the Bible. Later in life, Townsend founded the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) in 1934 in Mexico and Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT) in 1942 in the USA. For a general history of Townsend, SIL and WBT, see: Fredrick A. Aldridge Jr., "The Development of the Wycliffe Bible Translators and the Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1934-1982," a Ph.D. dissertation in the Department of History and Politics, School of Arts and Humanities, University of Stirling, UK (28 November 2012); available at:

[https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/bitstream/1893/10058/1/Thesis\\_v121204.pdf](https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/bitstream/1893/10058/1/Thesis_v121204.pdf)

**Between 1920 and 1939, the following Protestant organizations and individuals began mission work in Guatemala:**

1922	Missionary George Russell Collmer and his wife Constance begin independent Baptist work in Zacapa.
1922	The Rev. and Mrs. Amos Bradley served with the Primitive Methodist Church until 1928.
1923	National Evangelical Mission – a split from “Cinco Calles” Central American Evangelical Church; became affiliated with the Church of God of Prophecy in 1951.
1923	Plymouth Brethren / “Gospel Halls” (founded by Carlos W. Kramer in Quetzaltenango)
1926	Association of Baptist Churches of Zacapa - National Guatemalan Association of Baptist Churches (George R. Collmer)
1928	Twenty members of the "Cinco Calles" Evangelical Church (CAM-related) in Guatemala City were expelled because of their adherence to Baptist church polity and organized themselves as the Guatemalan Fraternal Convention, which in 1939 restructured and constituted the Convention of Independent Evangelical Churches and adopted Baptist church polity and doctrine.
1929	German Lutheran Church established in Guatemala City.
1934	Full Gospel Church of God (COGCT-Cleveland, TN) – Rev. & Mrs. Charles Furman were its first missionaries, who formerly were associated with the United and Free Gospel Missionary Society (1916-1922) and with the Primitive Methodist Church (1922-1934).
1937	National Council of the Assemblies of God (Springfield, Missouri); missionaries from El Salvador began work in 1927 in Jutiapa, near the Salvadoran border; the first Assemblies of God churches were organized in 1937-1938 by missionary Ralph Williams.
1940	Emanuel Evangelical Church Association (Eugenio Trotzky)
1942	A magnitude 7.9 earthquake hit Western Guatemala and caused widespread damage in the west-central highlands, at least 38 deaths, many injured, and widespread material damage.
1946	Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention – Baptist Convention of Guatemala / Convención Bautista de Guatemala; it became affiliated with the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1948.
1947	Continental Missionary Crusade - Norman Parish, Sr. (Asociación de Iglesias El Calvario)
1947	Galilee Church of God (Church of God: Anderson, Indiana) – Isaí Calderón
1947	Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (St. Louis, MO, 1847) established in Guatemala City.
1948	Independent Evangelical Mission (Mardoqueo Mejía Noriega)
1948	A division in the CAM churches resulted in the founding of Filadelfia Church Interdenominational Christian Mission.

**Baptist missionary activity had its beginning in Guatemala in 1922**, when George R. Collmer and his wife Constance (formerly with the Central American Mission) settled in the city of Zacapa, from where they directed their missionary activity, expanding it to Puerto Barrios and Chiquimula. In 1926, Collmer and pastor José Cordón Vargas organized the **Association of Baptist Churches of Zacapa**.

In 1928, twenty members of the "Cinco Calles" Evangelical Church (CAM-related) in Guatemala City were expelled because of their adherence to Baptist church polity and organized themselves as the **Guatemalan Fraternal Convention**. In 1939, this organization was restructured and renamed the **Convention of Independent Evangelical Churches**, which adopted Baptist church polity and doctrine. Nine of these congregations organized the **Baptist Convention of Guatemala** in 1946, which became affiliated with the **Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention** (HMBSC) in the USA. Later, it became affiliated with the **Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention** (FMBSC) in 1948 when FMBSC missionary William Webb moved from Mexico City to Guatemala City to provide guidance and leadership to emerging national Baptist movements in Guatemala and Honduras. With the financial support of the SBFMB, several new ministries were developed: the Baptist Bookstore (1948), the Baptist Theological Institute (1948, which later became the Baptist Seminary of Guatemala), the Pablo C. Bell Bible Institute in Santiago Atitlán (1961), and the construction of many new church buildings.

In 1965, the Baptist churches affiliated with Collmer and his associates, from Puerto Barrios to Chiquimula (mainly in rural areas), organized themselves as the **Guatemalan National Association of Baptist Churches** (known as ANGIB = *Asociación Nacional Guatemalteca de Iglesias Bautistas*), with headquarters in Zacapa. In 1976, ANGIB reported a total of 25 churches and missions with 1,125 members; in 1978, there were 13 churches and missions with 650 members; in 1982, there were 15 churches and five missions with approximately 800 baptized members and a total community of about 2,800 adherents. This decline was because some of the ANGIB-related churches and missions had become affiliated with the **Convention of Baptist Churches of Guatemala**, or with another church association, between 1976 and 1982.

In 1960, the **Convention of Baptist Churches of Guatemala / Convención de Iglesias Bautistas de Guatemala** (CIBG) reported 20 churches and 40 missions (includes preaching points) with 1,745 baptized members; by 1965 there were 28 churches and 35 missions with 2,239 members. The 1970 annual report shows 37 churches and 72 missions, with 3,123 members; in 1975, there were 54 churches and 83 missions with 4,453 members; and, in 1980, 69 churches and 161 missions with a total of 7,178 members were reported. Between 1960 and 1980, the number of FMBSC missionaries in Guatemala increased from eight to 32.

The annual report of the CIBG for 2017 revealed 425 churches and 264 missions for a total of 689 congregations nationally (up from 615 in 2014 = +74) with a total membership of 51,056 for 2016. The largest number of congregations (churches and missions) were located in the Departments of Alta Verapaz (374), Guatemala (65), El Petén (60) and El Quiché (44):

[https://issuu.com/convencionbautistaguatemala/docs/carpeta\\_asamblea\\_cibg\\_2017](https://issuu.com/convencionbautistaguatemala/docs/carpeta_asamblea_cibg_2017)

**The Christian Brethren** (the “closed communion” branch of the Plymouth Brethren, originally from Plymouth, England, and founded in 1831) began work in Guatemala in April 1923 through the ministry of Carlos W. Kramer (1894-1960) in Quetzaltenango, a German-heritage Guatemalan and former Presbyterian. He was raised by his German Lutheran father and Salvadoran Presbyterian mother in Quetzaltenango. Despite the piety of his mother and sisters, Kramer

refused to associate with the Protestant church until his conversion experience in 1912 at age eighteen.

Kramer went from mocking Protestants to being trained as a preacher almost overnight. His first assignment was to pastor the Presbyterian Ladino congregation in nearby San Juan Ostuncalco. Around 1914, he joined the **American Bible Society** as a colporteur in Honduras where he began working with **Alfred Hocking** who was an English missionary with the Plymouth Brethren, a Fundamentalist group from England that rejected denominationalism and theological labels as being divisive and unbiblical. In a short time, Hocking convinced Kramer that the Presbyterians had taught him a corrupted form of Christianity.

In early 1919, at age 25, Kramer went to Venezuela, where he met three more English Plymouth Brethren missionaries – John Lamb, George Frazer and James Ford – in the city of Caracas. They baptized him by immersion and incorporated him into their fellowship with full rights; for a time, he regularly held services in Petare, Los Palos Grandes and Los Dos Caminos.

After returning to Guatemala in late 1919, Kramer began consulting with **Dr. Clayton F. Secord**, an independent Plymouth Brethren medical missionary in Chichicastenango, who convinced Kramer to seek theological training at a Plymouth Brethren Bible school in the USA. While studying with the Plymouth Brethren, Kramer came to believe that the Presbyterians, and in fact most U.S. Protestant denominations and mission agencies, were apostates who were corrupting the truth of the New Testament just as much as the Roman Catholic priests.

In early 1923, after returning to Guatemala, Kramer began to evangelize and establish local assemblies in many parts of the country as an independent, self-supporting Plymouth Brethren missionary. Generally, the Plymouth Brethren (both the Open and Exclusive Brethren groups) view themselves as a network of like-minded free churches, not as a Christian denomination. Kramer established more than 100 local churches, known as "Gospel Halls," during a 30-year period (1924-1954) and "ruled them as his own fiefdom" until the arrival from New Zealand of **Gray Ewing Russell** (1916-1999) and his family in 1953. Russell became one of the leaders of the so-called "Kramerite Brethren" in Guatemala, from 1954 to 1977. Together with Kramer, he established dozens of additional "Gospel Halls," and for 23 years (1961-1984) he edited the magazine "Contendor Por La Fe" (dedicated to the "Defense of Sound Doctrine"), founded by and originally produced by Kramer, which was published from 1924 to 1990 (66 years). Between 1984 and 1990, Graham John Falconer was the editor and publisher.

Sources: <http://blog.asambleaschristianasevangelicas.org/?p=124> -  
<http://www.asambleaschristianasevangelicas.org/B1.html>

For a detailed description of Kramer and Russell, see the account written by Russel's son, John L. Russell: "How did the Brethren get to Guatemala," published at:  
<https://guatemalachronicle.wordpress.com/2015/09/08/how-did-the-brethren-get-to-guatemala/>

*There were several divisions among the Plymouth Brethren in Guatemala.* The first schism occurred immediately after the death Carlos Kramer (November 1961) in the first assembly established in the city of Quetzaltenango by Kramer, which at that time was led by **Moisés and Leonidas Cifuentes**. They objected to Gray Russell (a foreigner from New Zealander) being placed in charge of the editing, printing and distribution of the magazine "Contendor Por La Fe," and this was the main reason they had "to interrupt the communion between the Assemblies already established" at that time. This schism has been called the Cifuentes Division of 1961. The next division occurred in 1968, led by **J. Moisés Cifuentes**; and the third happened in 1993, led by **Marco Antonio Reyes**. Source: <http://www.asambleaschristianasevangelicas.org/A3.html>

Kramer and Russell both condemned other Protestants for being doctrinally apostate, while teaching that only the Brethren had the correct biblical interpretation based on the "doctrine of

dispensationalism” elaborated by John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), one of the movement’s principal Bible teachers in England. The “Kramerite Brethren,” because of their practices, structure and theology, are representatives of the “**Exclusive Brethren**,” particularly those of the **Darbyite faction** that refuse to have fellowship with anyone outside their own group and claim to be “*the sole representatives of the true Church of Christ.*”

“Although he targeted Presbyterians at first, Kramer’s reach extended quickly as his followers spread their rigid interpretation of [Biblical] doctrine into other mission territories, and soon the *Salas Evangélicas* began attacking the entire Christian establishment including Protestants, Catholics, and even marginal sects with little presence in Guatemala” (Dove 2012:165).

The current situation of the Brethren Assemblies of Guatemala can be described as a time of stagnation, far removed from the decades of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s when the earlier believers were “dedicated to establishing new missions and the love for souls was their main priority.” Starting from the unfortunate ruptures of the unity of the Brethren, the misnamed “divisions” and the constant local struggles, which are not precisely about Biblical doctrine but about very particular and personal interests, they now seem to have dedicated themselves to the construction of new buildings and to having constant divisions at the micro level.

In July 2014, the Plymouth Brethren Assemblies / Christian Assemblies of Guatemala were composed of several “denominations” (associations of churches), which together had approximately 600 “Salas Evangélicas” that were organized into four groups, of which the “United Christian Assemblies” / *Asambleas Cristianas Unidas*, and the Brethren of “Column and Support of the Truth” / *Sala Evangélica de la Sana Doctrina Columna y Apoyo de la Verdad* were the major groups. Source: <http://www.asambleascristianasevangelicas.org/A3.html>

By 1967, the total estimated membership of the Plymouth Brethren in Guatemala was 3,500 among at least 140 local congregations (average size = 25 members per assembly), according to Read, Monterroso and Johnson (1969:158), and by 1980 there were about 250 local congregations with an estimated 12,500 members (average size = 50 members per assembly), as reported in the national study conducted by PROCADES-SEPAL (1981:19). If there were 600 local assemblies in 2014, then we can estimate about 30,000 members of Plymouth Brethren assemblies in Guatemala for that date (PROLADES).

**The National Evangelical Mission (NEM)** was founded in 1923 by a group of families who left the “**Cinco Calles**” **Central American Evangelical Church** (founded in 1903 by missionary Edward Bishop and affiliated with the Central American Mission), allegedly due to squabbles regarding missionary paternalism. Prior to the NEM’s founding, there were only two Protestant churches in Guatemala City: the Central Presbyterian Church and the CAM-related “Cinco Calles” Church. The NEM was founded by Guatemalan leaders who wanted to be their own bosses without any missionary involvement.

According to Zapata (1982:116), it was through the ministry of **Phineas D. Hoggatt** that the Pentecostal doctrine was introduced to Guatemala City in 1941-1942, which was the first time that the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” and “speaking in tongues” had occurred in the capital. Consequently, the NEM became part of the early Pentecostal movement in Guatemala.

One of the principal NEM pastors during the 1930s-1940s was Ramón Ruano Peña, who began to lead the NEM into fraternal relationships with the **Church of God of Prophecy-COGP** (with headquarters in Cleveland, TN), because of the need for international support for his new denomination. In 1951, the NEM officially united with the COGP and changed its name to **Universal Church of God of Prophecy (UCGP)**. Pastor Ruano served as the national supervisor

of this denomination from 1950 to 1967, with assistance provided by the COGP in terms of missionary personnel and financial support.

By 1965, the UCGP (part of the Pentecostal Holiness Family of Churches) had established 38 churches in different locations – principally in the departments of Guatemala, Escuintla, Retalhuleu, Santa Rosa, Jutiapa, Quiché, Zacapa and Izabal – with a total church community of about 3,000 adherents. In 1980, the UCGP had grown to 99 churches and 75 missions, with a baptized membership of 3,901 and a church community of about 12,000 adherents, under the supervision of Bishop Jorge Marrero.

In 1975, the elderly Ruano decided to discontinue his affiliation with the COGP and to establish a new church, named **National Church of God of Prophecy**, without any support from the international body. After the death of Ruano in 1977, this small church ceased to exist, according to Zapata (1982:117).

During the 1990s, there is a schism in the **Church of God of Prophecy** in the USA that had repercussions on the national **Church of God of Prophecy in Guatemala**. At the end of the 1990s, representatives of that new organization, called "**The Church of God of the Bible**" / *La Iglesia de Dios de La Biblia* (headquarters at Bible Place, Nashville, TN - Nathan J. Bonilla is the International General Overseer for 2018-2019) arrived in Guatemala. They begin their work in the southern part of the country. Among its main leaders were the Paúl Ramírez Lepe and Noemí López, among others. Currently the national supervisor for Guatemala is Pastor Manuel Castro Silva of Nicaragua: <https://www.facebook.com/tcogbible#> - <https://thechurchofgod.home.blog/> - <http://www.iglesiadediosdelabiblia.com/historia.html>

While Mario Galindo was the national supervisor of the UCGP for Guatemala, two schisms occurred in Guatemala: one was led by Ovidio Sánchez Pérez, who became affiliated with "La Iglesia de Dios Adonai" / **Church of God "Adonai"** in Norfolk, VA: <https://www.iglesiadediosadonai.com/>

The other schism was the product of nonconformists in the USA, who founded "Iglesia de Dios Asamblea de Sion" / **Zion Assembly Church of God** (Wade Phillips, General Overseer in Cleveland, TN), that is under the leadership of Ricardo Valenzuela Chávez, the national supervisor for Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras: <http://zionassemblychurchofgod.com/>

**Statistics on the GOGP for Guatemala for 2018:** 414 churches and 186 missions with 19,408 members: <https://globalcogop.org/countries/guatemala/>

For a general history of the **Church of God of Prophecy** in Guatemala, see: <https://www.canalesoterismo.com/historia-de-la-iglesia-de-dios-de-la-profecia-en-guatemala/>

Pastors and missionaries of the **Assemblies of God – AOG** (Finished Work of Christ Pentecostal Family) in El Salvador began work in the Department of Jutiapa, Guatemala, in 1927, as an extension of their ministry in El Salvador. In 1932 and 1933, missionary Ralph D. Williams, superintendent of the AOG work in El Salvador, made several trips to Guatemala to encourage the brethren in the few congregations that had been founded near the border in Atescatempa, El Adelanto, Horcones, Tiucal and El Progreso in the Department of Jutiapa.

However, it was not until 1937 that missionaries Williams and John Franklin were successful in organizing the first six churches in Guatemala, which held their organizational conference in Atescatempa, Jutiapa, from 31 December 1937 to 2 January 1938. **The Rev. and Mrs. John Franklin** became the first Assemblies of God missionaries to be stationed in Guatemala, beginning in March 1937. By 1940, 20 churches had been organized and work had begun in 36 additional towns (Jeter 1990:122-128).

The Central Bible Institute was established in Jutiapa in 1944 by Franklin but was relocated to Guatemala City in 1950. The Assemblies of God of Guatemala was officially recognized by the Government of the Republic of Guatemala on 26 June 1958.

The Central Assembly of God was established in Guatemala City during 1939-1940 by pastor José Ibarra from Mexico. Assisting him was young José María Muñoz, who later left the Assemblies of God and founded his own denomination, the **Prince of Peace Evangelical Churches**, in 1956 in Guatemala City.

Following a healing campaign by Pentecostal evangelist T. L. Osborn in Guatemala City in 1953, the work began to grow more rapidly in the Central Highlands, and by 1980 churches and local radio broadcasts had been established throughout Guatemala. The John Franklin Bible Institute was established in Panajachel to train leaders to minister among the Amerindian groups, specifically the Cakchiquel, Tzutujil and Quiché. In 1975, Mayan believers comprised about 14 percent of the total Assembly of God constituency in Guatemala. Later, additional Bible Institutes were founded in El Petén and Alta Verapaz (Cobán) for training local Christian workers.

By 1980 there were Assembly of God fellowships in nearly every department of the country. The official name of this denomination is **National Council of the Assemblies of God in Guatemala** (Zapata 1982:133).

Starting with three churches and four preaching points with 100 members in 1937, the Assemblies of God grew to 95 churches and 3,300 members in 1960; in 1970, there were 315 churches and 11,000 members; and by 1980, there were 674 churches and 74 missions with a total of 35,909 baptized members, which made the AOG the second largest Protestant denomination in Guatemala. The average annual growth rate for membership between 1960 and 1978 was 13.4 percent, which is higher than most major denominations. In 1990, Luisa Jeter de Walker reported 1,385 churches, 2,329 missions and preaching points, 1,630 ordained pastors, 2,379 lay pastors, eight Bible institutes and 224,751 adherents (Jeter 1990:117). Total baptized membership was estimated to be about 127,500 in 1990 and 188,000 in 2001 (estimates by PROLADES).

At the beginning of 2012, the year of the celebration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary (1937-2012) of the Assemblies of God in Guatemala, the country was divided into six regions: Intermediate, North, West and East; the total membership nationally was 333,917 among 2,634 churches and a total of 3,409 credentialed ministers, including ministerial wives, incumbents, assistant pastors and retired. Source: <http://asambleasdedios.org.gt/historia>

**The Church of God (Anderson, Indiana)** began its ministry in Guatemala in 1947. This denomination, which is part of the Wesleyan Holiness tradition, is known in Guatemala as the **Galilee Church of God**. In 1965, its leaders reported 10 churches, four of which are in the Department of Guatemala and the rest in Chimaltenango and Quetzaltenango, with five ordained pastors and about 1,500 adherents. It has a ministry among the Cakchiquel in Tecpán in the Department of Guatemala. In 1980, this denomination reported 72 churches and 144 missions with about 5,000 members.

**Lutheran Churches.** The first known German Lutheran to work in Guatemala was the Rev. Rudolph W. Krause, who served as chaplain to the small English agricultural colony of Abbotsville (located in the Polochic valley of Verapaz department) in 1840, according to Frederick Crowe; Krause left Abbotsville at the end of 1840 and Crowe took his place in 1841 (Crowe 1850:355, 525).

The first wave of German immigration to Guatemala dates from 1834, the year in which the Eastern Coast of Central America Commercial and Agricultural Company of London obtained a

concession to colonize Verapaz, Livingston, and Santo Tomás. A second wave of German immigration took place in the 1870s, which was centered in Guatemala City and the northern and southwestern regions of the country.

Lutheran immigrants from Germany began arriving in Guatemala after the Liberal reforms of 1875. According to Zapata (1982:151), when Presbyterian missionary Edward M. Haymaker arrived in Guatemala in 1887, he found a large colony of German immigrants; he was subsequently requested to officiate at baptisms, weddings and funerals for Lutheran families because they had no pastor (1887-1920).

Although attempts were made as early as 1907 to establish a Lutheran congregation in Guatemala City, it was not until 1929 that the German-speaking **“La Epifanía” Lutheran Church** was organized. The first German Lutheran pastor, the Rev. Otto Laugman, arrived in 1930 and served the congregation until 1935 (Zapata 1982:151).

Since this church depended upon pastors from Germany, the small congregation ceased meeting in 1942 during World War II because of a lack of pastoral leadership. This was due to a round-up of German civilians by Guatemala authorities at the request of the U.S. government, who detained an estimated 4,000 German immigrants and their families (called non-combatant "enemy" aliens) who were living in Latin America and held them without hearings or legal recourse in detention camps in Texas, Louisiana and elsewhere during the war due to national and hemispheric security concerns.

The **Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS)** responded to requests from English, German and Spanish-speaking groups in 1947 to begin work in Guatemala by sending the Rev. Robert F. Gussick, who organized a central church in Guatemala City, *Iglesia Luterana de Cristo Rey* (with services in English, Spanish and German) in Zone 1, and outreach ministries were directed to Zacapa and Puerto Barrios. By 1960, there were four organized churches and nine preaching points with 813 members, under the auspices of the **Lutheran Church of Guatemala**, administered by German missionary Jorge Kuechle. In 1965, under the missionary leadership of the Rev. Leonard E. Stahlke, Lutheran work had grown to 1,157 baptized members (adults and children), with 478 communicant members (adults); there was one church (*Cristo Rey*, in a new building in Zone 9) and two preaching points in Guatemala City, one in Antigua at the Lutheran Center (used for business meetings, retreats and theological education classes), one church and four preaching points in Zacapa, and one church and six preaching points in Puerto Barrios (Stahlke 1966:49-52).

In 1977, six Lutheran churches and 15 preaching points were reported nationally, with a total of 1,040 communicant members; however, by 1980, there were 1,481 members among 16 churches and several preaching points. At that time, the Rev. John G. Durkovic was the missionary pastor of *Iglesia Luterana de Cristo Rey* (with services in English, Spanish and German) in Guatemala City, and he served as the regional coordinator for Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador of the PROCADES study of the Protestant Movement in Central America, from 1977-1981 (Holland 1982).

In 1976, after a destructive earthquake struck the country, the LCMS began supporting mercy work in Guatemala with grants for housing, agricultural development and consultation, paramedic training, and building/reconstructing mission properties. Most recently, a grant provided food and roofing materials for Guatemalans affected by a tornado.

The LCMS supports theological education in Guatemala to build up the future church leaders and provide ongoing equipping to its pastors and lay leaders. The Lutheran Church of Guatemala is focused on training leaders, Bible translation and literacy work. Additional emphases include media broadcasting over six radio stations and one television station. Every

month, more than 300 people respond to radio and television ministries and more than 300 are enrolled in Bible correspondence courses.

Other LCMS organizations that have worked in Guatemala include: Lutheran Hour Ministries, Children's Christian Concern Society and Central America Lutheran Mission Society.

The Lutheran Church of Guatemala (LCG) has grown to a baptized membership of approximately 4,000 in 40 congregations and preaching stations and a national staff of 20 including pastors, evangelists, deacons and lay preachers. The LCG operates one seminary, two preschools, two primary schools and one secondary school.

Source: <https://www.lcms.org/worldwide-regions/latin-america/guatemala>

**The Augustinian Lutheran Church** (affiliated with the Lutheran Church in America) began mission work in Guatemala in 1991 under the leadership of Bishop Horacio and the Rev. Esther Castillo and their family. The members come from the margins of the Guatemalan society, people of few resources and are predominantly indigenous. There are currently 16 churches in Guatemala and one elementary school.

The Augustinian Lutheran Church of Guatemala / *Iglesia Luterana Augustiana de Guatemala* (ILAG) has about 3,000 members in the Mayan communities of El Quiché, Alta Verapaz and El Petén, as well as in Guatemala City. Its work in the empowerment of young leaders, especially the native speakers of Maya Quiché, is central to the mission and integration into society as part of its sustainability. Their programs focus on leadership training: training of ministers: pastors who provide services in rural areas. They promote women's leadership, education, entrepreneurship and women's health. It has two schools and literate people offering scholarships. Its task in health is to train health promoters, sixteen volunteers in support of primary health. Youth work in camps, musical training, education of young women to leadership. The ILAG has walked with the ELCA through the Companion Synods promoting respectful and mutual learning: [https://www.facebook.com/pg/iladeguatemala/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/iladeguatemala/about/?ref=page_internal) - <https://americalatinaocaribe.lutheranworld.org/es/content/iglesias-luteranas-de-guatemala-y-cuba-sion-miembros-plenos-en-la-fim-4>

**The Interdenominational Evangelical Mission (IEM)** was founded in 1948 by Miss Bessie Estella Zimmerman Hormel and her associates in Guatemala City, who saw the need to establish an interdenominational association of churches where Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals could work together to further the cause of Christ in Guatemala. Previously, Miss Zimmerman had been a missionary with CAM from 1913 to 1944 and worked in Huehuetenango, San Marcos, Guatemala City and Chiquimula in a variety of educational and evangelistic pursuits with her CAM-colleague Amelia Firm Haussler.

Following the devastating earthquakes in 1917-1918 that seriously damaged many buildings in Guatemala City and elsewhere, Zimmerman and her associates, in 1920, reestablished their orphanage and educational ministries in Zone 8 of Guatemala City, on property that became known as "The Garden of Roses," thanks to an inheritance that Miss Zimmerman received from her parents in Pennsylvania.

Because of her financial independence and entrepreneurial abilities, Miss Zimmerman gained the respect and support of many missionaries of different denominations in Guatemala City, including John Franklin of the Assemblies of God with whom she cooperated in many evangelistic and church planting activities, which were often financed by Miss Zimmerman. However, due to her close cooperation with "Pentecostals," which was contrary to established CAM policies (based on Fundamentalist and Dispensational thinking that rejected Pentecostalism

as “demonic”), the leadership of CAM asked her to resign, which she refused to do. Consequently, in 1944, she was dismissed from CAM and prohibited from participating in CAM-related ministries.

Due to her financial independence, Miss Zimmerman was able to continue as an independent missionary in Guatemala and to work with Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals alike, with her base of operations at “The Garden of Roses.” To further her work, she organized the Council of Interdenominational Evangelical Churches, which in 1948 became the Interdenominational Evangelical Mission, with the support of a local group of pastors and laymen. Prior to her death in 1958, the IEM had established at least 33 churches in the departments of Guatemala, Chimaltenango, Sacatepéquez, Escuintla, Santa Rosa, Sololá, Suchitepéquez, Jutiapa and Jalapa, according to Zapata (1982:140-142).

After the death of Zimmerman, the IEM went through several years of organizational uncertainty, which eventually led to the formation of four new denominations under former IEM leaders:

- (1) **World Missions of Guatemala** under the leadership of Pastor Manuel Macal Marroquín, founded in 1962, which reported 30 churches and 30 missions (mainly in rural areas) with 1,710 baptized members in 1980. This denomination was affiliated with the nondenominational Worldwide Missions of California from 1962 to 1978, but it is now independent.
- (2) **Interdenominational Filadelfia Evangelical Association**, founded in 1969. In 1980, this group, led by Juan González, reported with two churches and two preaching points with 330 members.
- (3) **The Christian and Missionary Alliance** (Wesleyan Holiness tradition), founded in 1970 by Pastor Felipe Ibáñez and affiliated with a denomination of the same name in Nyack, New York. In 1980, the Guatemala field included 37 churches and four missions with 3,200 members and a church community of about 10,000 adherents under the leadership of Marco A. Rodríguez.
- (4) **The Mission of the Interdenominational Evangelical Churches of Guatemala**, under the leadership of Pastor Bernardo Salazar Méndez, reported six churches and 20 preaching points with 410 baptized members in 1980. This denomination was incorporated in 1971.

**Between 1950 and 1959, at least 15 Protestant Missions and church associations began to minister in Guatemala, compared to 42 between 1960 and 1969, and 55 between 1970 and 1979, including the following groups.**

Source: <http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/gte/guate-chron-2018.pdf>

**During the 1950s, the following Protestant denominations/mission agencies and church associations were established in Guatemala:** United World Mission (1952), Defenders of the Faith (1952), Bethesda Church of God (1952), Apostolic Church of Faith in Jesus Christ (1953), International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (1956), Prince of Peace Evangelical Church (1956), Palestine Pentecostal Church (1956), the Missionary Church of God (1957), and the independent Christian churches / churches of Christ (1959).

Although **Mr. & Mrs. Herman Turner** arrived in Guatemala in 1949 as independent workers, they soon began working with Norman Parish, Sr., in the Calvary Church Association for three years until taking a furlough in 1952. In order to strengthen their base of support, the Turners joined the **United World Mission (UWM)** – a nondenominational mission of Baptist tendencies founded in 1946 in St. Petersburg, Florida) – and they returned to Guatemala in 1953. The first church they established was “El Eden” in Quinta Samayoa in Zone 7 of Guatemala City, which became the central church of this new denomination with Fundamentalist-Dispensationalist beliefs (similar to those espoused by CAM and its related churches). In 1965, Turner reported 10 congregations in the departments of Guatemala, Santa Rosa and Escuintla, under the direction of three missionaries, six national pastors and various lay-workers (Stahlke 1966:73). In 1969, an evening Bible institute program was launched for training pastors and lay-workers at the central church. By 1980, this denomination reported 14 churches and missions with about 700 members and about 2,800 adherents. However, one of the churches, pastored by the Rev. Rodemiro Escobar, became independent in 1979 due to the Charismatic emphasis of Escobar and his congregation, which violated the doctrinal position of United World Mission (Zapata 1982:152-153).

**The Salvation Army** (founded in London in 1865 in the Holiness Tradition) began its work in Guatemala City in 1951 with the arrival of Lt. Ildefonso Granados. This organization works with the homeless and provides a shelter for the rehabilitation of alcoholics, along with vocational training. It provided disaster assistance after the 1976 earthquake and has done the same for other disaster victims of earthquakes, floods, landslides and volcanic eruptions. In 1980, Capitan Stanley Melton reported two Salvation Army congregations with about 80 members.

During June 2018, the Salvation Army helped hundreds of people affected by the eruption of the Fuego Volcano (located on the borders of Chimaltenango, Escuintla and Sacatepéquez departments), which claimed at least 200 lives and forced thousands of people in surrounding villages to evacuate. Thousands of people were living in temporary shelters when President Jimmy Morales declared three days of national mourning. As soon as it became clear that a disaster was unfolding, Salvation Army emergency teams travelled to the affected area to assess the situation and offer assistance. That first contact made it possible to establish a strategic alliance with CONRED (the National Committee for Emergencies and Disasters) and the team moved to the Escuintla and Alotenango shelters, which were in the areas of direct impact. Working with CONRED, Salvation Army teams conducted need assessments, prepared food and distributed food, drinking water and clothes, and provided support to the CONRED emergency response logistics plan. A vital part of the response was the provision of spiritual and emotional support. Another eruption of Fuego Volcano happened in November 2018, which again spread toxic ash over the surrounding countryside and forced residents to evacuate.

Source: <https://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/news/inr060618>

**The Bethesda Church of God** (Pentecostal Holiness Family) was founded as an independent church in 1952 by Pastor Felipe Muñoz in El Tejar, department of Chimaltenango. Previously, a preaching point had been established there by the evangelistic efforts of Victorio Castillo, pastor of the Central American Evangelical Church (CAM-related) in the city of Chimalenango, and one of the first families to be converted was the Muñoz. However, Castillo and members of his church stopped visiting El Tejar at some point, and two other denominations worked in this small town: Emmanuel Mission and the Full Gospel Church of God (Cleveland, TN). However, under the pastoral leadership of Muñoz, beginning in 1952, this church began to establish preaching

points in various parts of the department of Chimaltenango, as well as in Escuintla and Sacatepéquez. By 1982, 28 affiliated churches with a total membership of about 3,000 had been established, according to Zapata (1982): <https://www.facebook.com/Iglesia-De-Dios-Bethesda-Central-El-Tejar-Chimaltenango-626285194126175/>

**The Defenders of the Faith Mission** (an interdenominational mission with headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri) began its ministry in Guatemala in 1956 under the leadership of Pastor Gonzalo Dávila. In 1964, Dávila reported four churches in the department of Guatemala, two in El Progreso, two in Quetzaltenango and one in Retalhuleu, each with its own pastor. Stahlke (1966:31) estimated that this Mission had about 1,500 adherents in Guatemala. It also operated two private schools, in Guatemala City and Villa Nueva, and had its own radio program, called “The Voice in the Desert” on Radio Quetzal. In 1979, this denomination reported 12 churches with approximately 625 members (Holland 1982:75).

**The Apostolic Church of Faith in Jesus Christ** (Oneness Pentecostal Family) from Mexico sent its first missionaries to Guatemala in 1953 and established his headquarters in Zone 6 of Guatemala City. This Pentecostal denomination is part of the “Jesus Only” tradition that disavows the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, rather affirming that there is only One God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and only baptizing believers in the Name of Jesus Christ. In 1965, there were five churches and 10 preaching points in the departments of Guatemala, Escuintla, San Marcos, Zacapa and Izabal, with a total membership of about 225 persons (Stahlke 1966:21). In 1980, this denomination reported 35 churches, six missions and 45 preaching points with 2,422 members (Holland 1982).

**The Missionary Church of God** (Pentecostal Holiness Family) was founded in 1957 by Víctor Hugo Matta Rivas, who had been associated previously with the **National Evangelical Mission** and with an independent Church of God that left the NEM under the leadership of Ramón Ruano Peña who became associated with the **Church of God of Prophecy** in 1951. However, Matta was not in agreement with this decision and disassociated himself with Ruano's church and decided to go to the USA. When he returned to Guatemala in 1957, Matta established the **Missionary Church of God** (incorporated in 1968) in Colonia Landívar, Zone 7, of Guatemala City. In 1965, this denomination reported 32 churches in most of the national territory, with the exception of the departments of Alta and Baja Verapaz. Also, by 1965, it had a fraternal relationship with the Missionary Church of God in Houston, Texas (Stahlke 1966:39). By 1980, 58 churches and 55 preaching points had been established with 3,758 baptized members (Holland 1982).

**The Prince of Peace Evangelical Church Association** (Finished Work of Christ Pentecostal Family) was formed in 1956 by José María (“Chema”) Muñoz Domínguez (1918-1979) in Guatemala City with the support of a group of believers who left the Central Assembly of God. Many of the early members of this new denomination had been members of other evangelical churches (mainly non-Pentecostal groups), but were drawn to Muñoz' ministry because of his popular radio ministry on several commercial stations (covering most of Guatemala and part of El Salvador, Honduras and southern Mexico) and his powerful Pentecostal preaching.

As a child Muñoz attended the Central Presbyterian Church in Guatemala City with his parents, and as a young person he attended “Cinco Calles” Central American Evangelical Church where he made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. There he felt a call to prepare himself to

become an evangelical minister. After graduating with a diploma in primary school education, Muñoz became a teacher at the Garden of Roses School (established by Miss Estella Zimmerman) and began his studies at the Central American Bible Institute.

Under the spiritual and educational guidance of Miss Zimmerman, Muñoz began his pastoral career in 1940. However, he never finished his program of studies at the Central American Bible Institute because he became enamored with Pentecostalism and decided to join the Assemblies of God in Guatemala City, where he became the pastor of that denomination's first congregation in the capital. After pastoring the Central Assembly of God for 14 years, which by that time had grown to over 1,000 members, Muñoz was transferred by his superiors (for some unexplained reason!) to Quetzaltenango in 1955, where he served for about one year.

However, Muñoz was beseeched by a group of 60 unhappy members of his former congregation in Guatemala City to return and led them as their pastor and form a new, independent church, which he did. The Prince of Peace Evangelical Church was founded in 1956 with about 100 members who met in a private home. Within a few years, Muñoz was able to construct his own church building with a seating capacity for 1,500 people, thanks to the sacrificial contributions of his growing congregation. Not only were new churches founded, but also Muñoz established his own Bible institute program in 1960 with 20 students. Theologically, this denomination has a doctrinal statement similar to that of the Assemblies of God.

From a group of 100 in 1956, the membership grew to about 4,500 in 1965 among 111 churches and missions (Stahlke 1966:15-16); in 1980 there were an estimated 29,130 members in 462 congregations (churches and missions), which made it the fourth largest Protestant denomination in Guatemala (Holland 1982:75-76). The average annual growth rate for membership between 1967 and 1980 was 16.8 percent, which is higher than most major denominations. Upon "Chema" Muñoz' death in November of 1979, his oldest son Josué became the president of the board of directors and the denomination's chief administrator.

This denomination has gradually developed social programs in response to human need: the women's society has established 26 literacy centers that have taught about 200 people to read and write yearly; also, the church members have organized a nutrition center that serves about 300 people, as well as an orphanage that cares for 87 children. In addition, the denomination has its own bookstore and publishes two newspapers quarterly with a circulation of 2,000 copies.

\*\*Source: Holland 1982:75-76.

**The Protestant Episcopal Church (USA)** arrived in Guatemala in 1956 to work among the English-speaking Creole population living in Izabal department along the Caribbean coast, where they established three churches and seven missions between 1960 and 1964. Previously, chaplains and missionaries of the Anglican Church had worked on the Caribbean coast of Central America, beginning in the late 1700s, including Puerto Barrios and Livingston in Guatemala. During the early 1960s, the Episcopal Church established St. George's Parish in Guatemala City for English-speakers, but later a Spanish-speaking congregation also was organized in the same building. In 1964, a new Spanish-speaking congregation was begun in the western highland's city of Quetzaltenango. By 1965, there were four congregations in Guatemala, one in English and three in Spanish, under the leadership of Bishop Dr. Adrián D. Cáceres (Stahlke 1966:43). In 1980, this denomination reported only two churches and 18 missions in Guatemala, with a total of 1,056 communicant members, under the supervision of Bishop Armando Román Guerra (Holland 1982:74).

**The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel** (Finished Work of Christ Pentecostal Family) of Los Angeles, California, arrived in October 1956 and established its headquarters in Zona 11 of Guatemala City, where it built a large tabernacle (“El Tabernáculo Cuadrangular”) and began to conduct “healing campaigns” in various parts of the country under the leadership of missionary Claude Updike (1956-1969). In 1965, this denomination reported 11 churches, most of which were in Guatemala City, with approximately 2,000 adherents – 1,200 of which attended the “Foursquare Tabernacle.” The denominations educational ministries included a Bible institute and a primary school in Guatemala City (Stahlke 1966:47-48). In 1980, there were 26 churches and six preaching points with 2,729 members. However, a division occurred in 1978 when one of the pastors, Delfino Barrera Navas, left the denomination with about 200 members from the Tabernacle to start his own independent church, called **Faith, Hope and Love Evangelistic Center**, allegedly in reaction to missionary paternalism (Zapata 1982:145). This congregation is located in Santo Tomás La Unión, Suchitepequez.

**The Palestine Evangelical Pentecostal Mission / Mision Evangélica Pentecostés Palestina** was founded in 1956 (its website states that it was founded in June 1962) by three laymen – Leonzo Pauque, Jerónimo Méndez Lara and Alejandro Yol – in Colonia La Joyita Villa Nueva, Zone 5 of Guatemala City. As this church grew and expanded into new neighborhoods in other towns and cities, it took on the characteristics of a new denomination. In March 1974, this denomination was officially registered with the Government by pastor Tereso de Jesús Paredes who pastored the Mission’s mother church for 13 years. By 1981, this Mission reported 60 churches and missions with an estimated 3,000 members (Zapata 1982:157). The current General Pastor is Ebby Adolfo Tenas Delgado. Its website lists 166 affiliated churches with an estimated 13,280 members (average church size = 80) in Guatemala and two in Miami, Florida; however, this denomination does not appear on Roger Grossman’s or Virgilio Zapata’s list of the larger groups: [http://www.mepalestina.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=51&Itemid=27](http://www.mepalestina.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=51&Itemid=27) - [http://www.mepalestina.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=54&Itemid=66](http://www.mepalestina.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=54&Itemid=66)

**The independent Churches of Christ** began its ministry in Guatemala in 1959 under the leadership of missionaries Jerry Hill, Carl James, Ignacio Huerta and Floyd Hill families from the USA, who established five local churches during their first year of ministry. Dan and Elise Coker joined the team in July 1963. The missionaries used Bible correspondence courses and evangelistic campaigns as their primary means of outreach to attract new members (Foster, *et al*, 2004:463).

The religious tradition known as “Churches of Christ” (including “instrumental” and “non-instrumental” [*a capella*] groups) are part of the **Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement of Christianity**, founded in the USA during the early 1800s; they constitute fellowships of autonomous local congregations (congregational church polity). For further information about the Restoration Movement and its related denominations and independent groups, see Holland 2018 (pp. 117-119) and Foster, *et al.* (2004).

By 1965, this group of five U.S. missionary families had established 28 churches, seven of which were in Guatemala City, and the others in the departments of Suchitepéquez, Escuintla, Quetzaltenango, San Marcos, Totonicapán, Chimaltenango, Zacapa and El Petén (Stahlke 1966:29-30).

A four-family team composed of missionaries Ralph and Susie McCluggage, Richard and Karen Reinhold, Roger and May Beth McCown, and Pat and Carol Hile arrived in the Central Highlands to work among the Maya Quiché in 1970. The team learned both Spanish and Quiché,

helped translate the New Testament into Quiché, planted new churches and assisted in community healthcare (Foster, *et al*, 2004:463).

The expansion and development of these independent “churches of Christ” was rapid: by 1973, there were 2,211 baptized members; in 1980, church officials reported 140 churches with about 4,870 baptized members. Also, two medical clinics had been established in Tierra Colorado, Quetzaltenango, and in Las Cruces de La Libertad, El Petén (Holland 1982:76). Webpage directory: [http://www.editoriallapaz.org/directorio\\_Guatemala.htm](http://www.editoriallapaz.org/directorio_Guatemala.htm)

**During the 1960s (39 groups) and 1970s (44 groups), at least 81 Protestant groups began work in Guatemala, including the following.** However, during the 1980s and 1990s, fewer Protestant denominations and mission agencies began work in Guatemala: only seven during the 1980s and 14 during the 1990s.

Source: <http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/gte/guate-chron-2018.pdf>

**The New Jerusalem Church of God** (Pentecostal Holiness Family) was founded in June 1960 in Santa María Chiquimula, Department of Totonicapán, by Gabriel de León Tun, Mariano de León and Cristóbal Chávez Togual. This independent denomination reported 51 churches and 140 preaching points with a total of 4,591 members in 1981 in the Departments of Quetzaltenango and Totonicapán, mainly among Mayan groups (Holland 1982:76). Its website is located at: <https://www.facebook.com/Iglesia-de-Dios-Nueva-Jerusalem-Central-401330986629990/>

**The Continental Missionary Crusade** (Webb City, Missouri) began work in Guatemala City in 1947 under the leadership of the Rev. Norman Parish, Sr. (d. 1972), and his wife Leyla, as an independent Baptist mission. The work of this mission was organized under the name **Calvary Evangelical Churches / Iglesias Evangélicas El Calvario** in 1948. In 1972, the Rev. Norman Parish, Jr. (1932-2017), became the General Director of the Mission.

During 1963-1964, this denomination experienced a Pentecostal revival that began during a spiritual retreat of adults and young people, which was the precursor of the **Charismatic Renewal Movement** in Guatemala. By 1965, 30 churches and 35 preaching points had been established throughout the country, with between 3,000-4,000 adherents. In 1980, Superintendent Abraham Castillo reported 91 churches and 57 missions with 6,450 members.

However, some of the original Calvary churches did not approve of the new Charismatic-Pentecostal emphasis espoused by denominational leaders, which led to the separation of this group of churches in 1964 in order to retain their Baptist heritage. The name of this new association was the **Hispanic-American Mission** (*Misión Hispanoamericano*), now affiliated with the **Spanish-American Inland Mission** of Erie, PA. In 1980, this denomination reported 20 churches and missions with about 1,022 baptized members. Many of these churches (15 of 20) are located in the departments of El Petén, Izabal and Santa Rosa and still use the name *Iglesia El Calvario*. In 1980, the superintendent was the Rev. Rubén Valladares Tolico with headquarters in Colonia La Florida, Zone 19, of Guatemala City.

Meanwhile, **Calvary Evangelical Churches** trained hundreds of Christian leaders in its Bible training center (*Centro de Estudios Bíblicos El Calvario - CEBEC*) at the central church in Zone 9 of Guatemala City during the 1960s and 1970s, which prepared them to evangelize and plant churches in Guatemala and other countries as part of the growth of the **Charismatic Renewal Movement**.

Several members of their own leadership team were sent out with the blessing of senior officials to begin home Bible studies among Roman Catholics for the purpose of winning them to

Christ and forming new congregations of Charismatic believers, where Evangelicals and Roman Catholics could worship together freely in a neutral setting.

One such leader was Jorge H. López (age 28), who founded the **Christian Fraternity of Guatemala** (*Fraternidad Cristiana de Guatemala*) in 1978 with 22 members from *Iglesias Evangélicas El Calvario* who were “sent out” to begin this new ministry. In January 1979, this group began to meet for Sunday services in a banquet room at a downtown hotel in Guatemala City, Hotel Guatemala Fiesta, where the attendance continued to grow. Then, in December 1981, the church moved to another hotel, El Camino Real, which had larger facilities to accommodate 800-1,000 people for Sunday services. Six months later, the church rented a movie theater, *Cine Reforma*, to accommodate larger audiences and remained there for two and a half years. In 1985, the church purchased a large lot on Calzada Roosevelt (one of Guatemala City’s major highways) and moved in to a remodeled auditorium that seated 750 people. A new church facility was built at that site during 1990-1991, which had a 3,500-seat auditorium, inaugurated in February 1991. During the next few years, church officials were forced by increased attendance to add a second Sunday morning service; later, a third worship service was added: 7:00 am, 9:30 am and 12:00 pm. Due to its continued growth, church officials decided to purchase another property in Zone 3 of Mixco, a suburb of Guatemala City, where the Christian Fraternity built a new 12,200 seat auditorium, which was inaugurated in May 2007. Another example is Gamaliel Duarte who founded the **“Jesus Christ is Lord” Church** in Zone 13 of Guatemala City in 1980, with an average Sunday attendance of about 300 persons.

In 1978, **El Calvario Central Church** relocated from Zone 9 to Zone 8 in Guatemala City and moved into a temple with capacity for 600 people. At that time, **Job Eliú Castillo Zan** was elected as its pastor and his brother, **Abraham Castillo Zan**, was the General Superintendent.

In 1980, its numerical growth began with more worship services on Sunday. By 1990, where the denomination had achieved its greatest missionary reach by opening churches in different countries, from Canada to Chile and later in Spain and China. Currently, the **Calvary Evangelical Churches** are known as Calvary Christian Mission / *Misión Cristiana El Calvario* and is led by Apostle Abraham Castillo Zan. During its first 60 years (1948-2008), this denomination is reported to have established more than 850 churches with 140,000 members around the world.  
Source: <http://misioncristianaelcalvario.org/>

In 2003, the two Castillo Zan brothers fought a legal battle over ownership of the denomination’s properties, with Apostle Job Eliú Castillo Zan claiming ownership of the **El Calvario Central Church** in Zone 8, while his brother Abraham claimed ownership of some of the denomination’s local church properties elsewhere in behalf of *Misión Cristiana El Calvario*, affiliated with the **Continental Missionary Crusade** led by Norman Parish, Jr. This legal battle was reported to the public in *El Periódico* (22 January 2006) under the title “Los calvarios de Abraham y Eliú,” which is now available on the PROLADES website at:

[http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/gte/Los\\_calvarios\\_de\\_Abraham\\_y\\_Eliu.pdf](http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/gte/Los_calvarios_de_Abraham_y_Eliu.pdf)

In 2010, Virgilio Zapata listed **Calvary Evangelical Churches** / *Misión Cristiana El Calvario* (led by Apostle Abraham Castillo Zan) with 160,000 church members in about 800 churches and missions; and **Calvary Ministries International** (led by Apostle Job Eliú Castillo Zan) with 106,000 church members in 350 churches and missions: <https://www.ministerioselcalvariocentral.org/>

The leaders of these two denominations, along with Norman Parish, Jr., and his son Dario Parish, became involved in the **New Apostolic Reformation** among Deliverance and Shepherding Pentecostals and added the title “Apostle” to their names. In 1980, Normal Parish, Jr., decided to leave the leadership of *Iglesias Evangélicas El Calvario* to Guatemalan pastors who were trained in the denomination’s Bible institute. According to his personal testimony in March 2012 for *Revista Actitud*:

When I left *El Calvario*, I waited a year and then I founded a new church, called *Cristo Centro*, in a shopping center in Zona 4 of Guatemala City. It was a time of transition, because people were used to another type of church, so we started there with new people, with a strong emphasis on the Word and in the supernatural power of God. There were cases of liberation and healing, God did wonderful things and many came out of there to serve God. How was the growth? It started slowly but then took hold, spreading to other countries. For example, in São Paulo, Brazil, there is a large church that is influencing the country, also in Tijuana, Mexico. *Cristo Centro* is not a mega-church, but it has influence in Latin America, from the United States to the Southern Cone. In each church the vision of each pastor is respected; we have not formed clones, I fight for the unity of the church, not for division. In 1998, I handed over the direction of the work of *Cristo Centro* to my son Dario, who is also an apostle; he has a church in Houston, Texas, called the Community of Grace, which has several affiliated branches, and he currently holds the position of General Director of the work. I am still involved in the work but now in an apostolic network called "Heirs of the Kingdom," which is composed of 16 servants of God. We meet twice a month to study the Word with pastors who were independent but wanted to be under our apostolic coverage. The pastor of *Cristo Centro* in Guatemala is Francisco Chacón.

Source: <http://revistaactitud.com/norman-parish-celebramos-su-trayectoria-ministerial/>

In addition, Norman Parish, Jr., was a member (he died in 2017) of the **International Spiritual Warfare Team** led by Pastor Jim Landry (chairman), Pastor Alberta Landry, and Pastor Ed Johnson in Beaumont, Texas: <http://www.spiritualwarfareteam.com/page/page/4703530.htm>

Darío and Cindy Parish are Directors of **Grace International / Gracia Internacional**, an organization that includes more than 800 churches and ministries in 26 nations around the world, from its headquarters in Houston, Texas: <https://www.iglesiagracia.tv/copy-of-quienes-somos>

The **Charismatic Renewal Movement (CRM)** is reported to have begun in Guatemala during 1969-1970 with small group meetings among both Catholics and Protestants, some of which were led by Tim Rovenstine of World MAP. Rovenstine was instrumental in bringing Catholics and Protestants together in the beginnings of the CRM in the early 1970s, aided by visiting members of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship (FGBMF), members of the Word of God Community in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Father Francis MacNutt and his team of Charismatic leaders that included Methodist pastors Joe Petree and Tommy Tyson.

**Tim Rovenstine** was ordained as a Wesleyan minister in Houston, Texas, in 1968, but that same year he was relieved of his pastoral duties for having received the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" at a Full Gospel Businessmen's Meeting in Corpus Christi, Texas. Later, while attending Spanish language school in Mexico, he became involved with Charismatic Catholics. Still later, he hosted three Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship airlifts to Mexico and Guatemala. Tim served the "church at large" in Guatemala with 16mm films and cassette duplicating equipment between 1970 and 1976.

**One of the main ecumenical bridges between Catholics and Protestants during the 1970s and 1980s was the John 17:21 Fellowship**, which was associated with David du Plessis in the USA and Europe. However, the Latin American branch of the John 17:21 Fellowship was established by U.S. Charismatic pastors Robert Thomas, Paul Northrup and Bill Finke (all former missionaries in Latin America), together with local leaders, in Guatemala City after the destructive 1976 earthquake, which resulted in massive relief and development operations by local and international service organizations. The Latin American branch of the **John 17:21 Fellowship** was coordinated by Robert Thomas (a pastor in Los Altos, California), who worked closely

with Friar Alfonzo Navarro and the Catholic Missionaries of the Holy Spirit in Mexico City. Navarro, together with Catholic and Protestant Charismatic leaders, formed **UCELAM, the Christian Union for Evangelizing Latin America**, with annual conferences in Mexico City. Some of the UCELAM teams included Bob Thomas, Paul Northrup, Bill Finke and Juan Carlos Ortiz (a former leader in the Argentine Renewal movement) who spoke to many ecumenical audiences in the USA and Latin America during the 1980s.

**The Elim Christian Mission** (Divine Healing and Deliverance Pentecostal Family of Churches), now one of the fastest growing denominations in Central America, began as a house church in 1962 with four families in Zone 1 of Guatemala City, under the leadership of pastor Moisés Ríos Vásquez and his wife, Antolina Paredes de Ríos, who previously had been affiliated with the CAM-related churches.

In 1964, their son, a well-known medical doctor and radio personality, Dr. Othoniel Ríos Paredes, was baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues, which resulted in this house church becoming part of the Pentecostal movement. Dr. Ríos Paredes, although raised in a Christian home, was converted to Christ during the Evangelism-in-Depth campaign in 1962 at the Olympic Stadium and began to serve the Lord publicly in a variety of ways. In 1964, Ríos began to utilize local radio stations to broadcast his particular brand of the Gospel message, which included the offer of divine healing and the “baptism in the Holy Spirit” as evidenced by “speaking in tongues.” He also began an active ministry as an evangelist throughout the country and spoke in many different churches, both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal, including the **Bethania Presbyterian Church in Quetzaltenango** in 1966. This congregation largely adopted the Pentecostal message and later withdrew from the National Presbyterian Church to become an independent Pentecostal church in 1972 under the leadership of Pastor Efraín Aguilar, who was ordained to the ministry by Dr. Ríos Paredes.

In 1973, Ríos decided to terminate his medical practice and devote himself to a full-time pastoral ministry and building up a large central church, which grew from 500 to 1,000 members in a short period of time. In 1979, after this congregation moved into a new 6,500-seat auditorium (called Elim Central Church) in Barrio Rosario, the daily attendance (Monday-Saturday) grew to an average of 3,000. The combined Sunday services (at least two) reached an average of more than 5,000, and on many occasions totaled more than 9,000 (with three or more services). At this time, the Elim Central Church is the largest single congregation in Central America.

During 1980-1981, the Elim Central Church baptized 150-200 new members monthly, mainly new converts from nominal Catholicism, which included many people from the middle and upper classes, according to Dr. Ríos. By 1981, the national ministry of Elim included 38 churches and 109 missions with a total membership of about 15,290, in addition to a growing association of Elim sister churches in El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico and Los Angeles, California. Few denominations in Central America have experienced such rapid growth in a similar time frame (Holland 1982:76-77).

**The Assembly of Christian Churches** (Finished Work of Christ Pentecostal Family) was founded in Guatemala in 1963 by Félix Ramos. It is affiliated with a church of the same name in New York City. In 1980, this denomination reported 22 churches with 1,103 baptized members in Guatemala (Holland 1982:77).

**The Door to Heaven (“Puerto al Cielo”) Pentecostal Church** (Divine Healing and Deliverance Pentecostal Family of Churches) was founded in 1963 by pastor Manuel Romero Melgar

Gallegos, who also has been president of the board of directors of Radio VEA and has served on the boards of other interdenominational organizations and movements. From one congregation in Tikal II of Guatemala City in 1963, this denomination has grown to 18 churches and seven congregations, with a total of 2,535 members in 1980 (Holland 1982:77).

According to Zapata (1982), this movement preaches a strong “divine healing and deliverance” message and does not allow its members to use traditional doctors and medicine, rather to trust God for healing and deliverance from any affliction or disease. They also practice the “casting out of demons” (exorcism) and tend to blame “demons” for every evil, sickness and affliction. This very strict form of Pentecostalism prohibits women from using makeup and slacks, and publicly denounces any member who violates their doctrinal and ethical codes.

**The Christian and Missionary Alliance of Guatemala** (Holiness Tradition) has been present in Guatemala since 1970. In 1980, the Guatemala field included 37 churches and four missions with 3,200 members and a church community of about 10,000 adherents under the leadership of Marco A. Rodríguez. In 2016, it had grown to more than 65 churches and preaching points, where 9,000 members and adherents congregate weekly:

<https://www.hungryforlife.org/partners/christian-and-missionary-alliance-in-guatemala>

**The Pentecostal Church of God of America** (Joplin, Missouri) began work in Guatemala in 1965, under missionary T. Glenn Millholon who had already established several churches in Belize. From his mission base in the town of Ontario, Belize, Millholon began a new church plant in the Guatemalan border town of Melchor de Mencos in preparation for launching a new evangelistic outreach into El Petén. Millholon came into contact with the Rev. José Francisco Solórzano, who had established four independent churches in El Petén, and invited him to work with the Pentecostal Church of God of America (PCGA), which represents the Finished Work of Christ Pentecostal Family of Churches.

Consequently, Solórzano, with the financial and logistical support of Millholon, began to expand his evangelistic efforts to new towns in the vast El Petén region of Guatemala. In addition, by 1973, another 40 independent Pentecostal churches had joined the PCGA from all parts of Guatemala.

In 1975, Solórzano and his wife founded the Pentecostal Bible Institute to train Christian workers, and they were soon joined by the Rev. Paul Dilts who became its director. The numerical growth and geographical expansion of PCGA work led to the organization of four new districts – West, South, East and Central – each with their respective supervisors. Solórzano continued as supervisor of the Northern District, which in 1981 reported 20 churches and 42 preaching points in El Petén. Within these five districts, the PCGA has 85 affiliated lay preachers who are actively expanding the work of this Mission. In 1980, the PCGA reported a total of 71 churches and 115 preaching points, with about 3,100 baptized members, in Guatemala.

During 1980 and 1981, Francisco (a personal friend of Miguel Angel Suazo, director of the Guatemalan Bible Society) served as a member of the steering committee for the PROCADES-SEPAL study of Guatemala and helped us with a dozen or so interviews with denominational leaders who lived in the northern regions of Guatemala.

In 1981, Solórzano was living in San Miguel Petapa, department of Guatemala, where he directed PCGA work not only in Guatemala but also in Honduras. Beginning in 1979, Solórzano and fellow evangelist Mario Mendoza had planted eight churches and five preaching points in Honduras (Solórzano 1981).

In 1968, the **Rev. and Mrs. Humberto Galindo** founded a small church with 12 members in Guatemala City that originally was related to the Primitive Methodist Church. However, in 1973, this group became independent, changed its name to **Mt. Bashan Pentecostal Church** (Pentecostal Holiness Family), and began to plant new churches. As a direct result of an interdenominational city-wide evangelistic campaign in Guatemala City with Yiye Avila in October 1979, Galindo and his associates baptized 200 new believers, which caused his central church to grow to 614 members very quickly. Soon, a radio ministry was added, called “The Good Samaritan,” which led to the channeling of new human and financial resources toward those in need by providing medicine, food and clothing, wheelchairs, construction and roofing materials, employment opportunities, etc. By 1980, this denomination reported 4,049 members. In 1982, Galindo was elected president of the interdenominational Evangelical Alliance of Guatemala (Holland 1982:78).

**The Association Voice of God Evangelical Mission** (Pentecostal, unclassified) was established in 1968 by pastors Ricardo Elías Duarte and Luciano Duque in Zone 11 of Guatemala City. In 1981, this organization reported 29 churches in the departments of Jutiapa, Escuintla, Chimaltenango and Guatemala with 5,320 members, according to Zapata (1982:169).

**The Springs of Living Water Evangelical Church Association** (Pentecostal, unclassified) was founded in 1972 by Artemio Hernández Castillo, Ricardo de Paz Monzón and Julio Isperry, with its headquarters in Zone 6 of Guatemala City. In 1982, this independent denomination reported 25 churches and 15 preaching points with a total of 1,200 members, located in the departments of Guatemala, Sacatepéquez, Chimaltenango, Zacapa, San Marcos, Santa Rosa and Baja Verapaz (Zapata 1982:169).

**Additional Evangelical denominations that began work in Guatemala during the 1960s and 1970s were:** Evangelical Mission of the Holy Spirit (1962), Worldwide Missions (1962), Baptist Missionary Association of America (1964), Evangelical Mennonite Church (1964), Conservative Mennonite Fellowship (1964), Church of God Seventh-Day (1964), Pentecostal Church of God Mission Board ((1967), World Baptist Fellowship (1968), Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities (1968), Baptist International Missions (1969), Missionary Church of Christ (1969), Pentecostal Freewill Baptist Church (1970), Pentecostal Church of God International Movement of Puerto Rico (1972), Latin American Council of the Pentecostal Church of God of New York (1972), Baptist Bible Fellowship (1975), Congregational Holiness Church (1975), Open Bible Standard Churches (1975), The Word (“Verbo”) Christian Church (Gospel Outreach from Eureka, CA) (1976), United Pentecostal Church (1976), and Church of God in Christ-Mennonite (1976).

**United Protestant Efforts.** Despite differences of tradition, doctrine and practice, many of the leaders of the respective Protestant denominations in Guatemala met together periodically, although informally, to discuss common problems and resolve conflicts during the period 1909-1935. However, a formal structure was organized in 1935 to facilitate interdenominational cooperation, the **Synod of the Evangelical Church in Guatemala**, although it was not until 1937 that member organizations formally ratified the agreement. In 1951, the Evangelical Synod was restructured and its name changed to the **Federation of Evangelical Churches / Federación de Iglesias Evangélicas de Guatemala**, when it became more representative of the national church bodies rather than of foreign mission agencies. The Federation was weak administratively

due to its limited powers, but it did provide a platform for dialogue and for united efforts in evangelism, literacy, and other areas of mutual interest. The Federation sponsored a series of activities nationally in 1958 related to evangelist Billy Graham's Caribbean Crusade.

In 1960, the **Evangelical Alliance of Guatemala / Alianza Evangélica de Guatemala** (AEG) was established with a broad base of support among the principal denominations, building on the spirit of fraternal unity that existed in the Federation. The AEG officially sponsored the year-long Evangelism-in-Depth Campaign in 1962 and a National Campaign of Evangelism in 1968 patterned after the 1962 campaign. However, several original members of the AEG withdrew their membership in 1963 due to previous internal tensions within the organization caused by strong denominational rivalries between some national church bodies and their respective foreign mission field committees, by an anti-ecumenical spirit among some evangelical leaders, and by those who opposed the growing participation of Pentecostal denominations in the AEG. These tensions led to a weakening of the AEG, which then entered a period of inactivity and ineffectiveness. The AEG recovered somewhat during 1968 when many denominations joined forces to support the National Campaign of Evangelism, patterned after Evangelism-in-Depth.

The **Evangelical Committee for Social and Cultural Service / Junta Evangélica de Servicio Social y Cultural** (JESSYC) was formed in 1962 at the initiative of Church World Service, the social service arm of the National Council of Churches (NCC) in the USA. Reaction against NCC-related activities in Guatemala provoked conflicts within the AEG, and resulted in the formation of several new organizations that represented an anti-ecumenical stance: the **Association of Evangelical Ministers and Workers (AMPOC)** and the **National Association of Fundamentalist and Anti-Ecumenical Pastors (ANPFAC)**.

It was under the auspices of AEG that a vast interdenominational evangelistic campaign was conducted in 1961-1962 throughout the country, under the banner of "Evangelism-in-Depth" (EVAF), a program designed by missionary and national leaders of the **Latin America Mission (LAM)** in Costa Rica. Led by the LAM's Kenneth Strachan, EVAF was hailed as a great success by the AEG and missionary leaders. More than 20,000 "professions of faith" were reported during the citywide campaigns and house-to-house visitation efforts.

During the week of 23-27 January 1962, an interdenominational leadership retreat was held in Guatemala City, sponsored by AEG and **World Vision International** (based in Monrovia, CA), with the participation of about 1,500 pastors and missionaries from throughout Central America. During the opening ceremony for this event, on January 23, the **President of Guatemala, Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes**, and the **Mayor of Guatemala City, Dr. Luis Fernando Galich**, addressed the audience of about 3,000 and welcomed the participants. This was the first time in history that a Guatemalan president had participated in a Protestant rally. *This singular event and the two-year EVAF program were a symbolic turning point for Evangelicals in Guatemala, who lost their fear of being known as Evangelicals in public and began to openly evangelize their communities and aggressively plant new churches throughout the country.*

**Between January and May 1962, the political situation in Guatemala City became tense and unsettled**, with a government-imposed curfew beginning at 8:00 pm or 9:00 pm that totally eliminated any evening meetings during the campaign. Other program activities were somewhat affected due to turmoil in the streets of Guatemala City during March and April – with heavily-armed soldiers patrolling the streets, tear gas attacks by riot police against massive protests by university students and their supporters (mainly armed with rocks and clubs), incendiary fires set by a few protestors who threw “Molotov Cocktails” at the police, hundreds of people arrested, a dozen or more students killed by security forces – because of manifestations against the Ydígoras

Fuentes government due to its alleged corruption, electoral fraud and repression of dissidents (Isáis 1962).

On 25 November 1962, Guatemala City suffered the effects of an abortive coup by disgruntled military officers against President Ydígoras Fuentes, who survived an armed attack on the presidential palace by fighter planes and ground troops during the morning. Surprisingly, he even attended the final EVAF crusade meeting that evening in Mateo Flores National Olympic Gymnasium, along with a group of other public officials, all of whom were surrounded by heavily-armed soldiers. Despite the turmoil during the day and intermittent rain showers during the afternoon, a crowd of about 30,000 attended the evening meeting (Roberts 1969).

The final results of the year-long effort can be summarized as follows: the LAM provided 13 full-time coordinators who worked with the national Executive Committee and 32 regional committees; more than 6,000 prayer cells were organized nationwide “to saturate Guatemala with fervent prayer,” which involved between 25,000-30,000 believers; training courses were provided to more than 40,000 Christian workers who were mobilized to conduct house-to-house visitation (230,000 homes were visited); more than one million gospel tracts were distributed and about 500,000 Gospels of John; during the month of September, 33 regional evangelistic crusades were celebrated in important cities of the nation, which resulted in 1,400 “professions of faith in Jesus Christ”; a massive parade of more than 10,000 evangelicals and 25 decorated vehicles was conducted through the streets of Guatemala City, with members of local congregations holding up signs with scripture verses and banners identifying the name of their church; the final month-long crusade (October 29 to November 25) in Guatemala City was attended by more than 30,000 people nightly, who were inspired by a 1,000 voice choir of singers from many local churches and the preaching of Dr. Eleazar Guerra from Mexico; and more than 20,000 “decisions for Christ” were recorded in all the different activities celebrated throughout the year (Roberts 1969; Zapata 1982).

**The Evangelical University Group (GEU)** was organized in 1963 as an interdenominational effort, led by David Mendieta, Isaías Ponciano and Paul Sywulka. The principal student promoters were Enrique Fernández and Marco Tulio Cajas. The GEU first met in the installations of the Central American Theological Seminary (CETECA), later in a neutral location rented by the GEU administrative committee. Meetings were held on Saturdays for student and faculty leaders, and during the week the leaders held Bible studies in various educational departments of the public San Carlos University in Guatemala City and in a few private universities. By 1981, weekly Bible studies were being held in every educational faculty of San Carlos University under the direction of professor Israel Ortiz. The GEU is supported by voluntary contributions of its members and friends; the administrative and advisory officials are elected by the members. The GEU also has supported various social programs: medical, dental and literacy programs in poor neighborhoods, etc. In addition, other groups of university students meet in their respective churches and hold Bible studies and other activities to nurture Christian growth among believers and to win “unconverted” students to Christ. Zapata (1982) mentions two denominations in particular as exemplary in university student ministry: the Prince of Peace Evangelical Church (Pentecostal) and the Baptist Convention (Southern Baptist-related churches).

In 1964, **Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC)** was founded in Guatemala by medical student Guillermo Luna, a movement affiliated with the international **Student and Profession Crusade for Christ** founded by Dr. Bill Bright in southern California in the 1950s. The organization became widely known as “Alfa y Omega” in Guatemala and in many other Latin American

countries during the 1960s and 1970s. Its purpose is to win university students to Christ and to help the Evangelical Church “fulfill the Great Commission in the whole world in our generation.” Its main activities on university campuses is to evangelize and disciple students, faculty members and professionals and to encourage them to become active in a local church.

CCC ministered to Guatemalans through Bible study programs, special conferences, evangelistic activities (including luncheons, dinners and special meetings), retreats, evangelistic and business publications, and courses and seminars covering areas such as administration, communications, the family, human relations, sexual orientation, prayer, the role of women today, Christian professional ethics, etc. Many of these activities are offered at the Christian Center for Professional Development in Guatemala City.

One of CCC's related activities during 1980 was to work interdenominationally for “The Total Christianization of Guatemala” using various methods, such as the evangelistic campaigns entitled “New Life for Guatemala” and “I Found It!” that are part of the organization’s international strategy. Specific campaigns of this nature were held in the urban areas of Quetzaltenango, Sololá, Totonicapán, San Marcos, Chimaltenango, Chiquimula, Zacapa and Antigua Guatemala using radio, TV, billboards, sound-trucks with recorded messages, flyers and other printed literature, stickers, identification buttons, etc.

The results, according to Zapata (1982), were that 16 cities were saturated with the Gospel message, 302 local churches participated nationally, 13,510 Christian workers were trained and participated in the campaigns, approximately 350,000 homes were visited where Christian workers verbally shared the Gospel message and handed out free literature, 24,576 people “prayed to receive Jesus Christ,” and 3,049 nominal Christians were “reconciled with the Lord.” The CCC national director for Guatemala in 1982 was Ismael Morales.

In 1968, Guatemala became the first country to repeat a year-long **National Evangelistic Campaign** patterned after EVAF, with 11,007 recorded “first-time decisions to receive Christ” and 15,137 “reconciliations with Christ.”<sup>41</sup> The National Coordinator was the Rev. Miguel Angel Suazo (later, Executive Director of the Guatemalan Bible Society from 1969 to the present) and the president of the Steering Committee was none other than the Rev. Virgilio Zapata A. This effort was supported financially and logically by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA), the Latin America Mission (LAM), Christian Nationals Evangelism Commission (CNEC), Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF), and hundreds of evangelical pastors and their churches. However, only 11 of 30 denominations official cooperated with the Campaign, 10 only partially cooperated, five did not cooperate at all, and four denominations were strongly opposed to the Campaign. No foreign mission agencies working in Guatemala officially sponsored the campaign or made contributions to cover its expenses, according to Suazo and Zapata (based on a report by Virgilio Zapata, entitled “Campaña Nacional de Evangelismo-Guatemala 1968: Apreciaciones varias” – typewritten, no date). Nevertheless, Suazo (1969) reported that a total of 402 persons from local churches representing 23 denominations participated in the three pastoral retreats held during 1968 as complementary activities associated with the Campaign.

The team of preachers who participated in the departmental crusades, celebrated prior to the Final Campaign in Guatemala City, included Gilberto Catañeda (Guatemalan), Francisco Rodríguez (Puerto Rican), Héctor Valay (Mexican), Pedro Salazar (Venezuelan) and Juan Vergara (Cuban). The Final Crusade was held from November 24 to December 1 at the “The Open-Air Theater” at the Ciudad Olímpica facilities in Zone 4 of Guatemala City. The featured main speaker was the well-known Argentine evangelist Santiago Garabaya, a missionary with

Overseas Crusades (now known as O.C. Ministries), and special music was provided by Chilean gospel singer Francisco Bilboa, both of whom had participated in other major crusades in Latin America sponsored by EVAF and the BGEA. Also, the crusade's United Choir, directed by maestro Oscar López M., included hundreds of singers from churches throughout the capital city.

It is interesting to note that Suazo includes a section in his report on "Problems and Disturbances," which mentions seven items: (1) the national political context; (2) malicious rumors against the National Campaign; (3) internal problems of the Executive Committee; (4) public attacks by leaders of four denominations against the National Campaign; (5) lack of funds; (6) parallel evangelistic programs that conflicted with the National Campaign (conducted by the Central American Evangelical Church, the Baptists, the Friends/Quakers, the Assemblies of God and Grupo Acción Juvenil); and (7) lack of moral and financial support from missionaries and mission agencies (Source: A report by Miguel Angel Suazo, entitled "Informe General de la Campaña Nacional de Evangelismo de Guatemala, 1968." Typewritten report, January 1969).

**Evangelistic Crusades during the 1970s.** In 1971, Argentine-born **Luis Palau** held a crusade in Guatemala City's Olympic Gymnasium during 22 days in March, with 3,140 recorded "decisions for Christ." His messages were transmitted via radio and TV throughout the entire nation, and Palau held a series of smaller meetings with between 100 and 500 professionals, businessmen, women, youth and children in attendance at particular events. The crusade was sponsored by Radio Cultural TGN (owned by CAM International, a Fundamentalist and anti-Pentecostal Faith Mission) and its directors, Donald Rutledge and Oscar López Marroquín, in cooperation with a large group of denominations and local churches, but with a marginal presence of Pentecostal leaders. Later campaigns with Palau in November 1972 attracted a total attendance of over 115,000 people in five western cities: Coatepeque (20,000), San Pedro and San Marcos (27,000), Huehuetenango (18,000) and Quezaltenango (50,000). Source: Zapata 1982.

**Manuel Bonilla**, a Mexican evangelist and popular gospel singer, filled the Mateo Flores National Stadium in Guatemala City during a brief crusade in 1978.

**Pentecostal evangelist Yiye Avila of Puerto Rico** held a two-week crusade in the Mateo Flores National Stadium in October of 1979, with the support of over 300 local Pentecostal churches. Zapata (1982) reported that the 50,000-seat stadium was packed during the evening meetings, as well as on two consecutive Sunday afternoons, by enthusiastic crowds. Source: Zapata 1982.

**Earthquake Damage.** On 4 February 1976, Guatemala City and a large part of the country (16 of 22 departments) were severely shaken by a major earthquake that registered 7.5 on the Richter scale, which caused massive destruction and loss of life. According to Roger Plant (1978:5), "Of a total population of approximately 5,500,000, over 22,000 were killed, more than 77,000 injured and over 1,000,000 made homeless; it was the severest natural catastrophe in Central America during the twentieth century."

Although upper- and middle-class neighborhoods were only slightly damaged, many of the poorer districts of Guatemala City were devastated, along with poorly-constructed homes of the peasantry in the central highland provinces of Chimaltenango and Sacatepéquez and the lowland areas of Zacapa and El Progreso, where whole villages were flattened or virtually disappeared under landslides and large displacements of land. The failure of the government to rebuild destroyed rural villages only added to already great misery among the various Mayan communities that turned to international aid agencies and religious organizations for assistance.

In addition, vast numbers of urban squatters were left with no place to live amidst the mass of rubble and fallen earth along the steep hillsides of river valleys, where re-settlement was prohibited for safety reasons. In order to survive the harsh conditions, thousands of urban squatters improvised by setting up tents and huts in vacant lots, public parks or by the roadside in the major cities.

The response of Protestant denominations and service agencies, both national and international, to the survivors in the aftermath of this earthquake was swift and significant, both in terms of emergency assistance and more long-term community development activities. *This produced a favorable reaction among those who received immediate as well as long-term assistance from Evangelical organizations, with a resulting burst of growth in attendance and membership of Evangelical churches.*

**The new social concern among Protestants that resulted from the 1976 earthquake had a positive impact on society in general**, because Evangelicals and their neighbors were forced to deal with the emergency situation and with rebuilding efforts as part of the same local community. National and international Evangelical relief and development efforts were directed at all those in need, and not just at the needs of local Protestant congregations and their adherents. Therefore, the Guatemalan population, in general, was favorably impressed by expressions of Evangelical friendship and compassion through their local, national and international relief and development activities in the post-earthquake period, according to reports from scores of local pastors, relief and development workers, and denominational officials between 1976 and 1980. This general situation produced a favorable climate for Evangelical church growth after 1976, especially in areas hardest hit by the great earthquake.

The AEG created a special emergency-response committee in 1972 to aid those suffering from the effects of the devastating earthquake in Managua, Nicaragua. This committee was reactivated in 1974 and named the **Permanent Evangelical Committee for Relief (CEPA)** to channel help to victims of Hurricane Fifi in northern Honduras. The AEG and CEPA were among the first responders to the emergency situation that existed following the major earthquake of February 1976 that hit Guatemala City and other parts of the country. In 1979, CEPA was restructured to meet the continuing needs and opportunities of the post-earthquake period, which called for new efforts in the area of community development, and it was renamed the **Evangelical Committee for Integral Development (CEDI)**. Because of economic assistance received following the 1976 earthquake, the AEG was able to construct its own offices in Guatemala City, thereby improving its service function to the evangelical community and others in need.

**Social Concern.** Prior to 1976, few Protestant missions or service agencies were involved in relief and development activities in Guatemala. Following the devastating 1976 earthquake (it killed an estimated 22,000-26,000 people and destroyed countless buildings, including many Evangelical churches) that hit Guatemala in February of that year, dozens of Protestant relief and development organizations and denominational agencies, along with Roman Catholic agencies, were soon aiding victims and assisting in the rebuilding of whole towns, villages and urban neighborhoods (Plant 1978:5).

In addition to denominational programs of social assistance, the following international Protestant service agencies have assisted in relief and development projects in Guatemala since the great earthquake: AMG International, Baptist World Relief, Christian Children's Fund, Christian National Evangelism Commission, Church World Service, Food for the Hungry, Heifer Project International, Lutheran World Relief, MAP International, Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Economic Development Association, Norwegian Church Aid, Wycliffe

Bible Translators/Summer Institute of Linguistics, World Relief Commission of the National Association of Evangelicals (USA), and World Vision International, among others. These and other Protestant agencies have participated either directly or indirectly in a variety of programs in the areas of community development, economic assistance, education, child-sponsorship, equipment and material aid, literacy, medicine and public health, nutrition, reconstruction, rural and agricultural development, industrial development, aid to small businesses, family planning, social welfare and vocational training.

Prior to the 1976 earthquake, several members of the **Calvary Evangelical Churches Association** said they receiving a vision of a future major earthquake, and reported this to leaders of the central church in Guatemala City. In response to this warning, church leaders and members began to stockpile emergency items. Therefore, when the earthquake hit, leaders of the Calvary Church Association (led by Pastor Norman Parish, Jr.) were prepared and met that same day to formally organize the **Emergency Committee of Calvary Evangelical Church (CEMEC)**, and immediately sent out representatives all over the country to determine the extent of the disaster. Funds were collected from church members and appeals were made to international relief and development organizations to aid CEMEC in the task of helping earthquake victims and beginning the hard work of reconstruction. Special service brigades were organized and sent out to distribute food, clothing, medicine and other emergency items to thousands of suffering people. In this way, emergency aid was given to 40 churches within 15 days, while distributing food and other supplies to more than 200 families daily. After obtaining building supplies and organizing work crews, CEMEC began the task of reconstruction, in coordination with the **National Emergency Committee** of the Guatemalan government. Volunteer workers soon arrived from the U.S. and other countries to help with reconstruction.

During 1976, CEMEC worked in 22 different projects, including the building of 1,750 houses. As work progressed, CEMEC began to develop more long-range projects that included programs of community development, health, education, small industries, agriculture, cooperatives, construction, reforestation and similar projects. But, at the same time, CEMEC and Calvary Evangelical Church Association ministered to the spiritual and psychological needs of the people, bringing hope and new life in Christ to thousands of fellow countrymen as the Gospel was shared along with practical expressions of Christian love.

In 1977, CEMEC's largest single project was in Colonia Carolingia in Zone 19 of the capital city, where CEMEC administered the construction of 1,500 houses and community buildings for a population of about 9,500 people, at a cost of \$1,500,000. Several other Protestant agencies collaborated in this project, including Church World Service, Norwegian Church Aid and the Mennonite Central Committee. In 1980, after four years of valuable experience, CEMEC was reorganized as the **Christian Foundation for Education and Development (FUNDACED)**. Sources: Zapata 1982; Holland 1982.

**Ministerial Associations.** During the 1970s, several new ministerial associations were formed that represented the majority of the Evangelical ministers in Guatemala, with the membership composed of individual pastors rather than denominational representatives, whereas the AEG is composed of church associations and service agencies. The new ministerial associations give evidence of a growing spirit of unity among Evangelical pastors in Guatemala. The **Association of Evangelical Ministers of Guatemala (AMEG)** represents pastors in Guatemala City and its environs, although its scope is national. The **Association of Evangelical Ministers of Quetzaltenango (AMEQ)** is composed of pastors in the nation's second-largest city. In reality, AMEG and AMEQ were more broadly representative of Protestant denominations and

independent churches than was AMEG, since some of the major denominations currently were not members of AMEG in 1980, such as CAM, the Assemblies of God, the Full Gospel Church of God (Cleveland, TN), the Church of the Nazarene, Friends-Quakers, Primitive Methodists and Southern Baptists.

In December 1979, a new Evangelical organization was formed among Amerindian pastors and Christian workers, called the *Asociación Indigenista de Evangelización* (ASIDE). This organization has sponsored two congresses on Indigenous work in Guatemala, with the participation of representatives of most language groups and denominations in the country. Their purpose is to promote the integral growth of Amerindian Evangelical churches. Although most members of ASIDE are Amerindians, the membership includes some foreign missionaries and *ladinos* who work among the Indigenous communities.

**A combination of these events signaled a new era of rapid church growth among Protestants in most areas of the country.** Between 1960 and 1964, the total number of Protestant congregations (churches and missions) increased from 1,156 nationally to 1,611. The national Protestant membership grew from 36,928 in 1960 to 72,500 in 1964, which represents a membership increase of 18.3 percent annually; this was the highest period of church growth in Guatemalan history. The second-highest growth period was 1973-1978, when the total membership growth increased by 17.5 percent annually – from 127,778 to 286,130. By mid-1980, there were 6,448 Protestant congregations in Guatemala with 334,453 baptized members and a Protestant community of 1,003,359 or about 13.8 percent of the national population of 7,262,419 (30 June 1980), according to PROCADES.

A 1978-1981 national survey of the Protestant movement in Guatemala was conducted by the PROCADES-SEPAL research team that revealed the presence of over 200 denominations and independent church associations with 334,453 baptized church members (15 years or older) in 1980. Between 1960 and 1980, the national Protestant average annual growth rate was 11.8 percent. The total Protestant population of Guatemala was estimated by PROCADES (Central American Socio-Religious Studies Program, based in Costa Rica) to be 13.8 percent in 1980, up significantly from 6.7 percent in 1973, 4.7 percent in 1965 and 2.8 percent in 1950.

SEPAL (*Servicio Evangelizadora para América Latina*), the service arm of Overseas Crusades Ministries in Latin America, was headed by the Rev. Galo Vásquez in Guatemala City, who provided logistical assistance. Clifton L. Holland, Director of PROCADES, served as the chief technical advisor for the study and the Rev. John G. Durkovic of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod served as Assistant Director of PROCADES in Guatemala and leader of the research team that included several SEPAL members and other volunteers.

**Between 1980 and 1999, at least 35 Protestant organizations (foreign missions and church associations) were established in Guatemala, compared to 97 organizations in the period 1960-1979.** In 1980, Protestantism in Guatemala had become a very diverse phenomenon after a century of growth and development since the first Presbyterian missionary arrived in 1882.

**In 1982, Guatemala Evangelicals celebrated the Centennial of the arrival of the first Protestant mission board, the Presbyterian Church in the USA, by sponsoring a variety of interdenominational activities nationwide.** With growing social strength in Guatemalan society, the Protestant community in general has taken more interest in the humanitarian problems and needs of the larger society and a more active role in community affairs, but not

necessarily in politics. Their theology tends to be premillennial and their hope is that the Lord will “rapture” them out of this present evil world to escape the Great Tribulation.

Most Guatemalan Evangelicals believe that politics are “dirty and sinful” and that it is dangerous to even discuss social problems in public out of fear of being labeled a “social activist” or a “subversive,” which could have serious repercussions: someone might report them to the civil authorities and they could run the risk of being detained, threatened, beaten, tortured and/or disappeared. The “disappeared” are never seen again by their relatives and friends, the police have no record of their arrest or detention, and usually their bodies are never found. However, some dead bodies, usually with their head and hands cutoff to avoid identification, are found frequently along the roadside throughout the country, allegedly left by “death squads” as a warning to others who might be tempted to criticize the government, military, police, political party leaders, etc., such as Mayan leaders, labor union organizers, opposition political party members and human rights advocates.

Complicating this general situation is the case of former **General José Efraín Ríos Montt** (1926-2018) who took over the government as part of a three-man junta in June 1982 with the support of the Guatemalan armed forces. He quickly identified himself as a “born-again” Christian and a member since 1979 of a local Evangelical church in Guatemala City, known as *Iglesia Cristiana Verbo* (The Word Christian Church, related to a U.S.-based missionary organization from Eureka, California, called Gospel Outreach).

For about 18 months, Guatemala was ruled by this Protestant military dictator who gave orders for the Army to brutally suppress the nation’s guerrilla movement and its sympathizers, who in growing numbers were Mayans living in rural villages in the Central Highlands. Ríos Montt was strongly criticized by the general public, especially Roman Catholics, for his moralistic leadership style (while “President,” he preached on the radio about the virtues of morality and good citizenship), his odd personality (weird, Quixotic), his religion (Protestant and Pentecostal) and his genocidal acts against the civilian population. During his rule, Guatemala experienced the most brutal and bloody stage of the entire civil war that began in 1960 with a revolt by young, reformist military officers.

Although at first, some Evangelical leaders rallied around Ríos Montt and enjoyed the notoriety of being seen with him, others more wisely decided to keep a safe distance from him and his government policies, fearing a backlash of resentment and repression against the Evangelical Church after he left power. Some commentators have argued that the identification of Ríos Montt with the Evangelical movement helped the churches to grow, while others believe that the Ríos Montt melodrama harmed the Evangelical public image and hindered Protestant church growth.

However, the ouster of Gen. Ríos Montt in August 1983 had surprisingly little impact on Evangelical church growth in Guatemala, although there was some negative backlash. During the weeks immediately following the coup led by **Gen. Óscar Humberto Mejía Victores** there was a brief period of tension between Protestants and Catholics, when Evangelical pastors complained of police intimidation, anonymous death threats, and general public harassment. However, at the urging of the Guatemalan Evangelical Alliance, Gen. Mejía discouraged the harassment of Evangelicals by issuing a reaffirmation of the nation’s commitment to freedom of religion and by providing police protection for Evangelical activities.

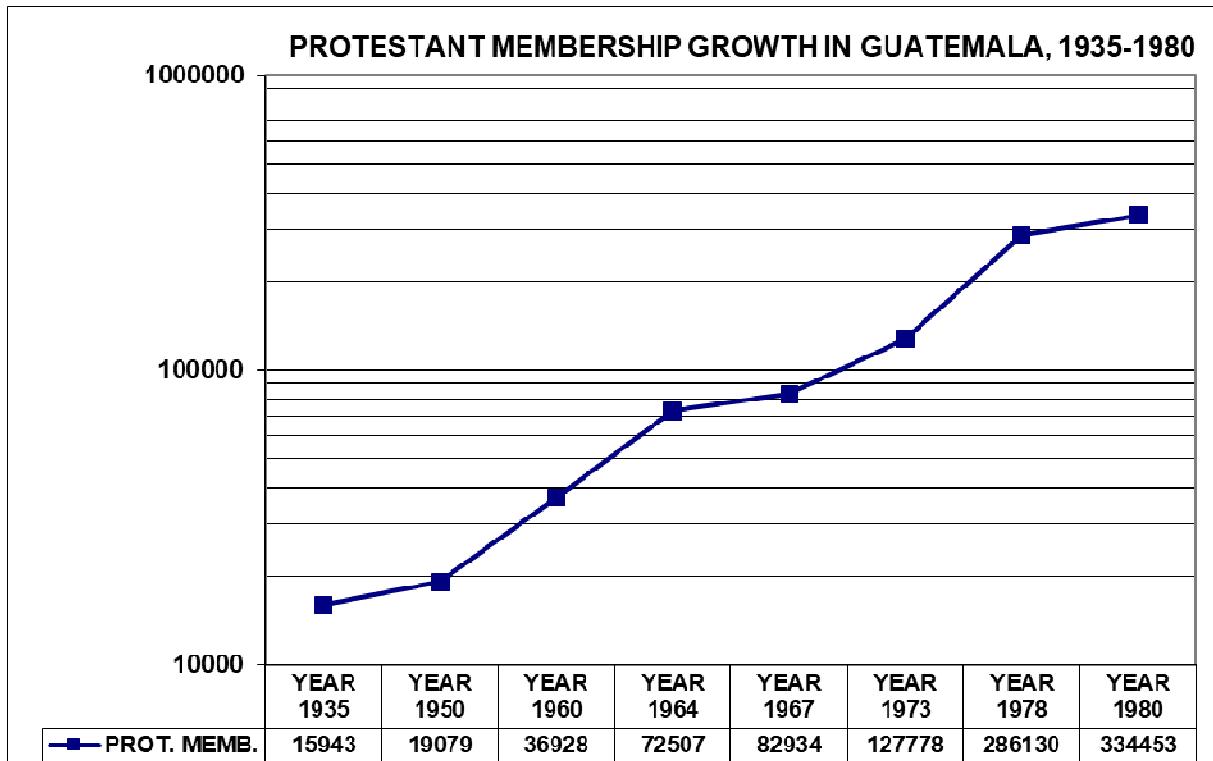
When the **National Directory of the Protestant Movement in Guatemala** was published by PROCADES-SEPAL in 1981, the 14 largest denominations were the following (congregations = churches and missions):

- Association of Central American Churches (807 churches and missions with 38,480 members)
- Assemblies of God (748 congregations with 35,909 members)
- Church of God-Cleveland, TN (898 congregations with 34,451 members)
- Prince of Peace Evangelical Church (567 congregations with 29,130 members)
- Seventh-Day Adventist Church (216 congregations with 17,207 members)
- National Presbyterian Church (295 congregations with 16,263 members)
- Elim Christian Mission (147 congregations with 15,290 members)
- Plymouth Brethren / Christian Assemblies (250 congregations with about 12,500 members)
- Church of the Nazarene (129 congregations with 11,349 members)
- Baptist Convention of Guatemala (168 congregations with 7,178 members)
- National Primitive Methodist Church (87 congregations with about 7,000 members)
- Calvary Evangelical Churches (148 congregations with 6,450 members)
- Voice of God Church Association (29 congregations with 5,320 members)
- Galilea Church of God / Anderson, IN (216 congregations with about 5,000 members)

All the other Protestant denominations had less than 5,000 members in 1980, but Pentecostal groups had 53.2 percent of all the Protestant church members in the country, compared to 5.4 percent for the Adventists, and 31.6 percent for the Separatist-Free Church Traditions. However, of the 14 largest Protestant denominations in 1980, only six were Pentecostal.

**Historical Overview: 1910-1980.** The Protestant community increased from 79 congregations (churches and missions) with 1,574 total members (average congregational size was 20 members) in 1910 to 638 congregations with 15,943 members (average congregational size was 25 members) and the Protestant community (adherents) was estimated at 40,657 in 1935, according to Kenneth Grubb in *Religion in Central America* (1937). The Read, Monterroso and Johnson study of *Latin American Church Growth* (1969) reported 763 Protestant congregations with 19,079 members in 1950, 1,156 congregations with 36,928 members in 1960, and 1,659 congregations with 82,935 members in 1967 when the average congregational size had increased to 50 members. However, in 1965, the size of the Protestant population in Guatemala was only 4.7 percent, up from 2.8 percent in 1950. By 1980, there were at least 6,448 congregations with 334,453 church members and a Protestant community estimated at 1,003,425 or about 13.8 percent of the national population. Source: Holland 1982:37-41.

Overall, Protestants in Guatemala experienced phenomenal growth between 1960 and 1980: from 3.2 percent of the population in 1960, to 5.8 percent in 1970, to 13.8 percent in 1980. After three decades of explosive growth 14 out of 100 Guatemalans were Protestants in 1980. Most of this growth has occurred among the *Ladino* population, but several “people movements” (voluntary mass conversions to the Protestant Faith within an ethnolinguistic group) were reported among a few Amerindian groups. Source: Holland 1982:41.



During the period 1960-1980, Guatemala became a "showcase" for the growth of the Protestant Movement in Latin America, but the enthusiasm of Evangelical leaders regarding continued high rates of church growth in Guatemala often exceeded the reality. A series of national public opinion polls taken between 1990 and 2001 in Guatemala helped to correct some of the erroneous growth projections made by Evangelical leaders: the CID-Gallup company reported that the Protestant population was 26.4 percent in May of 1990 and 25 percent in April of 1996. Early in 2001, SEPAL conducted a public opinion poll in Guatemala that showed Protestants to be 25.3 percent of the national population. Therefore, it seems clear that the size of the Protestant population had not changed in Guatemala in more than a decade, although the number of Protestant congregations (churches and missions) had continued to increase: from about 6,450 in 1980, to 10,500 in 1989, to about 18,000 in 2001. It seems logical to assume that if the number of Protestant congregations grew by 279 percent between 1980 and 2001 that the total membership probably increased by a similar rate of growth. So why has the size of the Protestant population remained stable at about 25 percent?

One possible explanation is that there may have been "a great falling away" (desertion or exodus) of Protestant adherents in Guatemala during the 1980s-1990s due to discouragement about the performance of Evangelical politicians, such as Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt (military dictator during 1982-1983) and Jorge Serrano (president during 1990-1993), as well as disillusionment over the financial and sex scandals regarding popular Evangelical TV personalities, such as Jim and Tammy Bakker (1987) and Jimmy Swaggart (1991). It is easier for "adherents" to desert the church when things go badly than for committed baptized church members to abandon ship during stormy weather, so it may be true that there was "a falling away" of the less committed churchgoers during these hard times in Guatemala.

Another major factor that must be considered during the period 1960-1996 was the political and social upheaval caused by a brutal and bloody civil war between the "public security forces"

of the Conservative governments and a series of Marxist-led revolutionary forces, which at the time of the Peace Talks in late-1996 were led by the URNG. The 36-years of armed conflict caused an estimated 200,000 deaths and the forced exile to Mexico of about 250,000 people from conflictive zones, mainly among Amerindian peoples in the Central Highlands, and about one million internal refugees.

During the 1980s, Evangelical public opinion was divided for and against support for Gen. Ríos Montt, who offended many people – Catholics and Protestants alike – by his public radio messages that blended anti-Marxist rhetoric with Evangelical sermons. The leadership of the Evangelical Alliance of Guatemala, which represents most Evangelical organizations in the country, decided to back off from publicly supporting Ríos Montt and to distance themselves from his government to avoid a possible negative backlash and the persecution of Evangelicals should Gen. Ríos Montt be overthrown.

After alienating business, military and political opposition leaders, as well as the Catholic Church, **Ríos Montt was overthrown by Defense Minister Gen. Oscar Humberto Mejía Victores** in August 1983 who served as Head of State until January 1986. Although Evangelicals were not persecuted after the ousting of Ríos Montt, there is no doubt that the public image of Evangelicals did suffer. Consequently, there was a growing erosion of Evangelical strength as the less committed adherents stopped attending Evangelical worship services and either drifted back to the Catholic Church or stopped going to church altogether, thereby joining the growing ranks of those with no religious affiliation. At a later date, President Mejía was charged with murder, kidnapping, and genocide in the Spanish court system, along with Ríos Montt.

However, despite the evidence of a “falling away” by some Evangelicals during the 1980s, according to Roger Grossman (2002:257):

From 1976 until 1993, evangelicals experienced an unprecedented growth, expanding from 10.1% to 26.4% of the population. This period of unprecedented growth was triggered by the national disaster of the devastating earthquake [in 1976] that killed 23,000 people. It opened the flood gates of evangelical aid and church planting from the United States. Further, the horrible civil war continued. *The war created social instability and mass exodus from the countryside to the cities.* Pentecostal doctrine and theology with apocalyptic preaching were simple. They offered immediate solutions to the harsh social problems. The mass media was exploited effectively by evangelicals. The Gospel was broadcast to many isolated areas of Guatemala in Spanish as well as in Mayan languages. Evangelicals had a sense of euphoria as the presidencies of two evangelicals extended the momentum.

**During the period 1990 to 2010, the Protestant movement in Guatemala underwent some significant changes.** The rate of growth of Protestants flatlined between 1990 and 1997 when the size of the Protestant population averaged 21.3 percent, according to a series of public opinion polls by various reputable organizations. This indicated that there was a decline in the number of Guatemalans who self-identified as Protestant-Evangelical with the movement unable to even maintain those born into Protestant-Evangelical families (biological growth). However, something significant happened between 1997-2006, because the Protestant population increased from 21 percent in 1997 to 34 percent in 2006 (an increase of 13 percentage points), while this growth pattern declined slightly between 2006 and 2017 – the Protestant population increased from 34 to 41 percent, which only was an increase of seven percentage points. During the period 2006-2017, the size of the Catholic population decreased from 54 to 43 percent (down by 11 percentage points), while the “nones” increased from 10 percent in 2006 to 14 percent in 2017. *The reasons*

*for these changes in religious affiliation between 1997 and 2017 (20 years) need to be thoroughly investigated.* Source: [http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/gte/guat\\_polls\\_1990-2017.pdf](http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/gte/guat_polls_1990-2017.pdf)

Southern Baptist missionary Roger Grossman, who supervised a massive field-research project in Guatemala during 2000-2001, came to the following conclusions regarding the stagnation in Protestant-Evangelical church growth during the 1990s (2002:258-259):

**The Current Plateau of the Growth Rate of the Evangelical Church.** Currently, many of the denominations do not enjoy the same rapid growth that was common in the 1970s and 1980s. A continual loss and gains of members from one church to another created an illusion of expansion. In fact, the Evangelical Church was barely maintaining its fraction of the population in relation to the general population growth rate. In spite of the high coverage of the Evangelical Church, the growth rate of the Church in relation to the general population growth has plateaued since 1993. From 1990 to 2001, the general Guatemalan population grew by 30.1%, and the net numbers of Evangelicals increased by 25%. This signifies that church growth has not kept pace with the growing population by -5%. The continued high growth rate of the two largest denominations, the Assemblies of God and the Church of God [Cleveland, TN], as well as the high profiles of several Neo-Pentecostal mega-churches, mask the sluggish performance of the remainder of the Evangelical Church. For the first time in the history of the Evangelical Church in Guatemala, some large denominations have declined in the number of their adherents within a five-year period.

Increasing personal comfort and security fostered by the resolution of the civil war, rising secularism, globalization, and importation of post-modern ideas that conflicted with Christianity, the resurgence of the Catholic Church, the promotion of the Neo-Mayan religion, and a religiously neutral government were additional *significant external sociological factors* that contributed to the declining growth of the Evangelical Church. The churches have no direct control over these factors, but they must recognize their existence and significance within their context. Evangelical churches can influence other church growth factors that are directly within its control. Some of these are: general moral problems within churches, lack of adequate preparation by many rural pastors, syncretism with inadequate assimilation of the message of the Gospel, and a crippling legalism within many churches. Illiteracy is a problem in both the realm of public policy and the church's domain.

*The plateaued growth rate is also due to an inability to contextualize fully the Gospel into another culture.* There is a definite discrepancy between the percentage of Evangelicals in the Ladino and Indigenous populations living in proximity to each other. The high level of syncretism in many parts of the country has further compromised the growth rate of Christianity, as well as Her vitality. There is a rapid increase in the number of persons not affiliated with any religion. This is due in part to the secularization of society causing membership losses from Evangelical churches and the Catholic Church.

**During the 1990s, at least 27 Protestant mission agencies and new church associations began their ministries in Guatemala, followed by at least 16 more during the 2000s.**

**One of the important positive factors that influenced Protestant growth between 1990 and 2010 was the growth and development of Evangelical mega-churches** (congregations with a Sunday attendance of 2,000 people or more; some of these churches had multiple worship services on a given Sunday), especially in the Guatemala City Metropolitan Area (GCMA). In

2010, Evangelical mega-churches in the GCMA included the following in order of relative size (13 of the 14 churches listed are Pentecostal or Neo-Pentecostal):

- House of God Christian Church (Carlos “Cash” Luna, founded in 1994) – attendance 15,000
- Christian Fraternity (Jorge H. López, founded in 1978) – 10,000
- Ebenezer Ministries of Guatemala / Ebenezer Church of Christ (Apostle Sergio Enríquez Oliva, founded in 1997) - 10,000
- Family of God Church of Jesus Christ (Luís Fernando Solares, 1990) – 10,000
- Elim Central Church of Christ (Pastor General Héctor Nufio in 1998, founded by Dr. Othoniel Ríos Paredes in 1963) – 6,000
- El Shaddai Church (Apostles Harold & Cecilia Caballeros, founded in 1983) – 4,700
- Showers of Grace Church (Apostle Ángel Edmundo Madrid Morales, 1971) – 4,700
- Palabra MIEL Church of Jesus Christ (Apostle Gaspar Sapalu Alvarado, a 1998 split from the group founded by Dr. Othoniel Ríos Paredes: Misión Cristiana Elim) – 3,000
- Royal Life Christian Church (founded in 2002 by Pastor Rony David Madrid, son of Edmundo Madrid, in 2002) – 3,000
- Prince of Peace Central Church (Apostle Josué Abel Muñoz Mazariegos) – 2,500
- Nazareth Central Church (Pastors Danilo de León y Walter Heidenreich: non-Pentecostal & nondenominational) – 2,500
- Assembly of God Central Church (Pastor Byron Josué Girón) – 2,000
- Full Gospel Central Church of God (Pastor Nicolás Menéndez) – 2,000
- El Calvario Central Church (Apostle Abraham Eliú Castillo) – 2,000

For a description of these mega-churches and their attendance statistics, see:

[http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/holland\\_megachurch\\_study\\_CAM\\_eng2.pdf](http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/holland_megachurch_study_CAM_eng2.pdf)

Martha Saint de Berberian, in her book *Mega Iglesias en Guatemala: una reseña panorámica* (2012), mentions 17 other Protestant mega-churches in Guatemala City (3), Quetzaltenango (5) and elsewhere (9), as follows:

- Ministerios “Palabra Fiel”, Zona 18, Ciudad de Guatemala (Pastor Fredy Molina)
- Iglesia de Restauración Guatemala (Elim Internacional), Zona 5, Ciudad de Guatemala
- Iglesia Bautista Shalom, salida al Atlántico, Ciudad de Guatemala
- Iglesia Evangélica Bethania (Apóstol Efraín Avelar) – Quetzaltenango
- Iglesia de Cristo El Adonai – Quetzaltenango
- Iglesia Evangélica Central Monte Calvario – Quetzaltenango
- Iglesia Palabra en Acción – Quetzaltenango
- Iglesia Pentecostés de América – Quetzaltenango
- Iglesia Pentecostés de América – Patzicia
- Iglesia Alfa y Omega - Santiago, Atitlán
- Iglesia de Dios Evangelio Completo – San Juan Cotzal
- Iglesia MI-EL – San Marcos
- Iglesia Príncipe de Paz – Chimaltenango
- Iglesia Príncipe de Paz - Coatepeque
- Iglesia Elim – Mazatenango
- Iglesia La Biblia Abierta – Petén
- Iglesia Jesús Salva – Barillas, Huehuetenango

According to Grossman (2002:262), “Guatemalan mega-churches have a unique place in Evangelical life. They can teach many lessons of leadership, vision, and projecting the Gospel. Mega-churches have a strong leadership base and are emulated by many churches and denominations. Although most mega-churches are *Ladino* and centered in the Capital, there are some notable exceptions in Indian areas.”

In March 2015, the *Periódico La Verdad* (pp. 32-33) published a report on Protestant mega-churches in various Departments of Guatemala, which included the following:

- Elim Quiché – Pastor Conelio Rey
- Almolonga – Pastor Mariano Riscajche
- Antigua – Apóstol Robin García
- Iglesia Evangélica Bethania, Quetzaltenango – Apóstol Efraín Avelar
- Casa del Alfarero, Mazatenango – Pastor Joel
- Coatepeque – Pastor Ezequiel
- Candelero del Oro – Apóstol Moisés Fuentes
- Comunidad Cristiana Petén
- Elim Panajachel – Pastor Daniel Joj Chávez
- Lluvias de Bendición Quetzaltenango – Pastor Rocael Mazariegos
- Miel San Macos - Pastor Luis Morales

Source: [https://issuu.com/periodicolaverdadgt/docs/mayo\\_2015/24](https://issuu.com/periodicolaverdadgt/docs/mayo_2015/24)

**During the 1990s, there emerged what Dr. C. Peter Wagner called the “New Apostolic Reformation” (NAR)** within the Charismatic-Deliverance-Shepherding Pentecostals by advocating for the restoration of the role of “prophets” and “apostles” within the Christian Church, gifts which non-Pentecostal denominations believe ended in the 1<sup>st</sup> century with the death of the last of the Apostles chosen by Jesus of Nazareth. Wagner described the NAR as follows:

I use the term ‘Reform’, because (...) these new skins appear to be at least as radical as those of the Protestant Reformation almost five hundred years ago. ‘Apostolic’ denotes a strong approach toward the scope, coupled with a recognition of the apostolic ministries of this time. ‘New’ adds a contemporary draft to the name.

The New Apostolic Reformation is an extraordinary work that God closes 20<sup>th</sup> century (...) by changing the shape of the Protestant Christianity around the world. For more than five hundred years the Christian churches have worked mostly with traditional denominational structures, of one kind or another. Particularly in the nineties, but with roots that run throughout the century, have begun to emerge new forms and operational procedures in areas such as the government of the local church, inter-ecclesial relations, financing, evangelism, missions, prayer, the selection and training of leadership, the role of supernatural power, adoration and other important aspects of the life of the church.

Most of the New Apostolic Churches not only believe in the work of the Holy Spirit, but also regularly they invite it to be with them and bring its supernatural power. It is very common, of that time, to observe active departments of health, liberation of demons, spiritual war, prediction, spilling of the Holy Spirit, spiritual mapping, prophetic acts, fervent intercession and prayer that gives light, and even more in the new apostolic churches.

Source: <https://www.lausanne.org/content/88558>

The NAR is a movement known for its dominion theology and a belief in the continuing ministries of apostles and prophets alongside those of evangelists, pastors and teachers, as well as its strong focus on Spiritual Warfare where prayer warriors are organized to do battle against demonic forces in specific geographical areas, such as Mexico City, whole regions of a country or whole nations. Throughout the word today, there are “networks of prophets and apostles” that operate outside of denominational boundaries, and these networks are led by a “senior apostle” or “council of apostles” who form the leadership of the NAR. Some of these “apostles” were appointed by a senior apostle or members of an apostolic council, while others are self-appointed “apostles” who provide “apostolic coverage” to other leaders and their churches (mostly independent churches). However, there are some senior leaders of some Pentecostal denominations who have been named “apostles” by a group of other “apostles” or who have claimed the title of “apostle” for themselves. Some of the current “apostles” in Guatemala are pastors of some of the mega-churches described above who have formed their own “networks of apostles” and have provided “apostolic coverage” to other leaders and their churches, both in Guatemala and internationally (such as Apostle Sergio Enríquez of Ebenezer Church of Christ in Guatemala City).

**Statistical information about Protestant denominations in Guatemala since 2000.** In 2002, Grossman reported the following statistics on Protestant-Evangelical adherents, based on an extensive national research project with widespread support from Evangelical leaders (2002:162, 210).

NAME-ENGLISH	ADHERENTS 2001
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD	600,540
FULL GOSPEL CHURCH OF GOD (CLEVELAND, TN)	487,984
PRINCE OF PEACE EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION	179,038
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, GENERAL CONFERENCE	175,849
GENERAL EVANGELICAL COUNCIL OF CENTRAL AMERICAN EVANGELICAL CHURCHES	162,175
PENTECOSTAL CHURCH OF GOD OF GUATEMALA	136,743
ELIM CHRISTIAN MISSION (MI-EL CHURCH OF CHRIST, ELIM MINISTRIES)	105,435
CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE	102,345
NATIONAL EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GUATEMALA	65,800
BETHANY EVANGELICAL CHURCH	60,000
MISION EVANGELICAL ELIM – MIEL CENTRAL	43,929
CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLIES - GOSPEL HALLS (PLYMOUTH BRETHREN)	40,000
CONVENTION OF BAPTIST CHURCHES OF GUATEMALA (SOUTHERN BAPTIST AFFILIATED)	30,000
**NEW CHURCH OF GOD (UNABLE TO IDENTIFY THIS GROUP IN OTHER SOURCES)-NEW JERUSALEM?	28,129
GALILEE CHURCH OF GOD (ANDERSON, INDIANA)	25,705
ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF FRIENDS EVANGELICAL CHURCHES OF CENTRAL AMERICA	23,347
CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY	22,984
EVANGELICAL MISSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT	18,790
CALVARY EVANGELICAL CHURCH	17,730
EL SHADDAI CHURCH	15,000

WORD CHRISTIAN CHURCH – VERBO	14,640
EVANGELICAL HOUSE OF GOD	14,109
LIVING WATER MINISTRIES	11,693
THE VOICE OF GOD EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION	11,047

All other Protestant-Evangelical groups had less than 10,000 adherents each.

Source: <http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/gte/grossmann/grossmann.htm>

**Current reliable statistics regarding the largest Protestant denominations in Guatemala are not available at this time.** However, Dr. Virgilio Zapata (1928-2017) had been working on an update of his important study, *Historia de la Iglesia Evangélica en Guatemala* (Guatemala City: Génesis Publicidad, 1982), until his death in April 2017, at age 89. He was the founder and director of the *Instituto América Latina* in Guatemala City (primary and secondary education) and one of the nation's outstanding Evangelical leaders:

<http://labibliayelmundomoderno.blogspot.com/2016/06/don-virgilio.html>

However, the book *Operation World 2010*, edited by Jason Mandryk (seventh edition), provided the following estimate of the size of Protestant denominations in Guatemala based on its own research (these statistics need to be verified by further research in Guatemala from official denominational sources).

It is important to note that the rank order of the largest denominations given by Grossman for 2001 does not agree with the rank order provided by Mankryk in 2010. This situation reveals a basic flaw with statistics elaborated by outside organizations from unknown inside sources, while the study by Grossman was a comprehensive national research project coordinated by the resident SEPAL team and supervised by team leaders in the field using trained Guatemalan personnel as interviewers (more than 19,000 personal interviews were conducted door-to-door).  
 Source: <https://missionexus.org/guatemala-research-the-joshua-project/>

NAME OF DENOMINATION	MEMBERS	NO. OF CONG.
1 IGLESIA DE DIOS DEL EVANGELIO COMPLETO (CLEVELAND, TN)	210,000	1,900
2 CONSEJO EVANGELICO GENERAL DE LAS IGLESIAS CENTROAMERICANAS	181,250	3,215
3 IGLESIA EVANGELICA DEL PRINCIPE DE PAZ	155,000	1,900
4 CONCILIO NACIONAL DE ASAMBLEAS DE DIOS EN GUATEMALA	133,127	2,720
5 IGLESIA ADVENTISTA DEL SEPTIMO DIA	130,337	515
6 IGLESIA EVANGELICA EL CALVARIO	110,000	647
7 MISION CRISTIANA ELIM	104,000	1,486
8 IGLESIA DEL NAZARENO	76,500	580
9 MISION EVANGELICA DEL ESPIRITU SANTO (SANTUARIO MONTE SINAI)	64,583	718
10 ASAMBLEAS CRISTIANAS / SALAS EVANGELICAS (PLYMOUTH BRETHREN)	58,000	920
11 ASOCIACION EVANGELICA LA VOZ DE DIOS	54,000	900
12 IGLESIA LLUVIAS DE GRACIA	44,300	189
13 CONVENCION DE IGLESIAS BAUTISTAS DE GUATEMALA	43,000	350
14 IGLESIA DE DIOS GALILEA (ANDERSON, IN)	37,000	411
15 JUNTA ANUAL DE IGLESIAS EVANGELICAS DE CENTROAMERICA AMIGOS	31,000	160

16 IGLESIA DE DIOS MISIONERA	28,000	467
17 IGLESIA DE DIOS DE LA PROFECIA	26,000	520
18 IGLESIA EVANGELICA BETANIA	22,000	244
19 IGLESIA APOSTOLICA DE LA FE EN CRISTO JESUS	20,000	250
20 FRATERNIDAD CRISTIANA DE GUATEMALA	18,421	4
21 IGLESIA CRISTIANA VERBO	18,000	257
22 IGLESIA DE DIOS NUEVA JERUSALEN	17,600	176
23 AGRUPACION DE IGLESIAS EVANGELICAS MONTE BASAN	17,100	285
24 ASOCIACION IGLESIAS EVANGELICAS MANANTIAL DE VIDA ETERNA	15,700	262
25 MISION EVANGELICA PUERTA DEL CIELO	15,000	150
26 IGLESIA DE JESUCRISTO FAMILIA DE DIOS	15,000	188
27 IGLESIA EVANGELICA PRESBITERIANA NACIONAL DE GUATEMALA	13,733	303
28 IGLESIA INTERNACIONAL DEL EVANGELIO CUADRANGULAR	13,300	165
29 MINISTERIO EL SHADDAI	12,600	44
30 IGLESIA EVANGELICA EBENEZER - MINISTERIOS EBENEZER	12,000	240
31 IGLESIA PENTECOSTAL UNIDA	10,135	390
<b>SUBTOTAL OF THOSE LISTED ABOVE (31)</b>	<b>1,706,686</b>	<b>20,556</b>
<b>SUBTOTAL-ALL OTHER DENOMINATIONS &amp; CHURCH ASSOCIATIONS (205)</b>	<b>326,657</b>	<b>5,974</b>
<b>GRAND TOTALS (236 denominations and church associations)</b>	<b>2,033,343</b>	<b>26,530</b>

- (a) Estimated size of Protestant-Evangelical church members nationally = 14.2% (2,033,343)
- (b) Estimated size of Protestant-Evangelical adherents nationally = 30.7% (4,409,031) – Latinobarómetro 2006.
- (c) Difference between (a) and (b): non-members who attend and inactive members = 16.5% (2,375,688)
- (d) Ratio of Members to Adherents: Members X 2.17 = Adherents

Source: produced by Clifton L. Holland, Director of PROLADES, 17 June 2011, for CONELA.

NOTE: Some of these denominations do not keep official membership or attendance statistics so any estimates of “membership” or “attendance” can vary greatly depending on who has made these estimates and their credibility. Also, only eight of the 31 denominations listed above are non-Pentecostal and only one is affiliated with a Liberal Protestant denomination in the USA: #27 *Iglesia Evangélica Presbiteriana Nacional de Guatemala / National Presbyterian Evangelical Church of Guatemala* (affiliated with the Presbyterian Church USA, a member of the National Council of Churches in the USA).

However, a random check on some of the denominational statistics from their official websites revealed the following (note that the presence of mega-churches within some of these denominations increases the average church size considerably); the numbering below is the same as in the table above.

- (1) *Iglesia de Dios del Evangelio Completo (Cleveland, TN)* / Full Gospel Church of God (Cleveland, TN): *Operation World 2010* estimated 210,000 members in 1,500 churches and missions in 2010, whereas Zapata reported 224,190 church members in 2,263 churches and missions in 2010 (an average of 99 members per church). Currently, this denomination’s website reports 3,062 churches in Guatemala with an estimated 303,345 church members.

Webpages: <https://www.soyidec.com/> - [https://www.facebook.com/pg/Idecgt/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/Idecgt/about/?ref=page_internal) - <https://www.soyidec.com/estructura-de-la-iglesia?fbclid=IwAR1ASKHTEJRWUGnjxHdP7caj7y2NwG3cdBl3nDJ76XgqnuSCIVjHEuo5pA>

- (2) **Consejo Evangélico General de las Iglesias Centroamericanas (CECIC)** / General Evangelical Council of the Central American Churches. In 1999, CECIC reported approximately 130,000 members in 1,000 affiliated churches (data on congregations = missions were not included), compared to the *Operation World 2010* estimate of 181,250 members in 3,215 churches and congregations (missions) in 2010, which would be considered an exceptional growth rate if true: +51,250 members and +1,215 churches in 10 years. However, Zapata reported about 225,000 church members in 1,500 churches and missions in 2010. CECIC reported 1,500 churches in 2008 after 110 years of the founding of this denomination in Guatemala (1898-2008):  
[https://docit.tips/download/historia-de-la-iglesia-evangelica-centroamericana-de-guatemala\\_pdf](https://docit.tips/download/historia-de-la-iglesia-evangelica-centroamericana-de-guatemala_pdf)
- (3) **Iglesia Evangélica del Príncipe de Paz** / Prince of Peace Evangelical Church: *Operation World 2010* estimated 155,000 members in 1,900 churches and missions in 2010. Zapata reported the following for 2010 from his own research: 220,000 members in 1,600 churches and missions (an average of 138 members per congregation). The denomination's website currently reports 2,300 affiliated churches in Guatemala ( $2,300 \times 138 = 317,400$  members):  
[https://www.facebook.com/pg/principedepazcentral/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/principedepazcentral/about/?ref=page_internal)
- (4) **Concilio Nacional de las Asambleas de Dios** / National Council of the Assemblies of God. In 2012, this denomination reported a membership of 333,917 among 2,634 churches, compared to the *Operation World 2010* estimate of 133,127 members in 2,720 churches and congregations (missions) in 2010, which means that the OW2010 data for this denomination was a serious undercount. Zapata reported about 312,000 church members in 2,080 churches and missions in 2010, which would make this denomination the largest in the country for 2010. This denomination's website reports a total membership of 333,917 in 2,634 local churches (an average of 127 members per church) in 2012: <http://asambleasdedios.org.gt/historia>
- (5) **Iglesia Adventista del Séptimo Día** / Seventh-day Adventist Church (2015): 242,503 church members in 1,151 churches and congregations (missions), compared to the *Operation World 2010* estimate of 130,337 church members in 515 churches and missions; this means that the OW2010 data for this denomination was a serious undercount. Zapata did not include this denomination in his report for 2010. In 2015, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Guatemala reported 242,503 church members, 1,151 churches and congregations (missions), for an average of 211 members per church:  
<https://www.interamerica.org/2015/07/in-guatemala-church-sees-dramatic-growth-in-adventist-communication/>
- (6) **Iglesia Evangélica El Calvario** / Calvary Evangelical Church: *Operation World 2010* estimated 110,000 church members in 647 churches and missions, whereas Zapata lists two denominations with a similar name in 2010: Calvary Evangelical Church (pastored by Apostle Abraham Castillo Zan) and Calvary International Ministries (*Ministerios El Calvario Internacional*, pastored by Apostle Job Eliú Castillo Zan, brother of the former). Both of these organizations emerged from the original *Iglesias Evangélicas El Calvario* founded by Norman Parish, Sr., in 1948 in Guatemala City but became separated in 2003 in a dispute over ownership of the denomination's local church properties. In 1980, Abraham Castillo Zan was the General Superintendent of the original organization, which was associated with the **Continental Missionary Crusade**, founded by Norman Parish, Jr., in the USA. Zapata listed Calvary Evangelical Church with 160,000 church members in about 800 churches and missions; and Calvary Ministries International with 106,000 church members in 350 churches and missions. The totals for both of these El Calvario-related organizations was 1,150 congregations (churches and missions) with 266,000 members (an average of 231 members per church), according to Zapata in 2010.
- (7) **Misión Cristiana Elim** / Elim Christian Mission. There are now two Elim organizations: *Iglesia de Cristo Ministerios Asociados Elim* (Pastor General Héctor Nufio); and *Iglesia de Jesucristo Palabra*

*MIEL Guatemala* (Apóstol Gaspal Sapalú Alvarado). Both of these organizations trace their origin to the denomination founded by Dr. Othoniel Ríos Paredes (1927-1998) in 1963, known as Elim Christian Mission in Guatemala City. No statistics are given on either of these denomination's websites. Zapata reported an estimated 48,000 church members (both denominations) and about 200 churches and missions in 2010 (an average of 240 members per congregation), whereas *Operation World 2010* estimated 104,000 church members in 1,486 churches and missions. Obviously, these statistical discrepancies are difficult to explain.

- (8) ***Iglesia del Nazareno / Church of the Nazarene***: *Operation World 2010* estimated 76,500 church members in 580 churches and missions, whereas Zapata reported 75,000 church members in about 720 churches and missions in 2010. According to official Nazarene Church statistics for 2018 (year ending 2017), there were 86,033 church members in 662 local churches in Guatemala (an average of 130 members per church):  
<http://www.nazarene.org/sites/default/files/docs/GenSec/Statistics/Annual%20Church%20Statistical%20Reports%202018.pdf>
- (9) ***Misión Evangélica del Espíritu Santo (Santuario Monte Sinaí) / Evangelical Mission of the Holy Spirit (Mount Sinai Sanctuary)***: *Operation World 2010* estimated 64,583 church members in 718 churches and missions, whereas Zapata did not include this denomination in his 2010 report.
- (10) ***Asambleas Cristianas / Salas Evangelicas / Plymouth Brethren Assemblies***: *Operation World 2010* estimated 58,000 church members in 920 churches and missions, whereas Zapata did not include this denomination in his 2010 report.
- (11) ***Asociación Evangélica La Voz de Dios / The Voice of God Evangelical Association***: *Operation World 2010* estimated 54,000 church members in 900 churches and missions, whereas Zapata did not include this denomination in his 2010 report.
- (12) ***Iglesia Evangélica Lluvias de Gracia / Showers of Grace Evangelical Church***: *Operation World 2010* estimated 44,300 church members in 189 churches and missions, whereas Zapata reported 26,000 church members in 13 churches and missions in 2010. Obviously, these statistical discrepancies are difficult to explain.
- (13) ***Convención de Iglesias Bautistas de Guatemala / Convention of Baptist Churches of Guatemala***: *Operation World 2010* estimated 43,000 church members in 350 churches and missions, whereas Zapata reported 42,159 church members in 549 churches and missions in 2010. The annual report of the CIBG for 2017 revealed 689 churches and 264 missions (953 congregations) nationally with a total membership of 51,056 for 2016, which is an average congregational size of 54 members).
- (14) ***Iglesia de Dios Galilea / Church of God (Anderson, IN)***: *Operation World 2010* estimated 37,000 church members in 411 churches and missions, whereas Zapata reported 75,000 church members in 720 churches and missions in 2010.
- (15) ***Junta Anual de Iglesias Evangélicas de Centroamérica Amigos / Quakers-Friends***: *Operation World 2010* estimated 31,000 church members in 160 churches and missions, whereas Zapata reported 10,000 church members in 250 churches and missions in 2010.
- (16) ***Iglesia de Dios Misionera / Missionary Church of God***: *Operation World 2010* estimated 28,000 church members in 467 churches and missions, whereas Zapata did not include this denomination in his 2010 report.

- (17) *Iglesia de Dios de la Profecía* / Church of God of Prophecy (2018): 414 churches and 186 missions (total 600) with 19,408 members, compared to the *Operation World 2010* estimate of 26,000 church members in 520 churches and missions, which leads to the conclusion that the OW2010 data was not based on reliable information. Zapata reported the following for 2010 from his own research: 16,000 members in 260 churches and missions.
- (18) *Iglesia Evangélica Betania* / Bethany Evangelical Church: *Operation World 2010* estimated 22,000 church members in 244 churches and missions, whereas Zapata reported 10,000 church members in 20 churches and missions in 2010. Obviously, these statistical discrepancies are difficult to explain.
- (19) *Iglesia Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús* / Apostolic Church of Faith in Christ Jesus: *Operation World 2010* estimated 20,000 church members in 250 churches and missions, whereas Zapata did not include this denomination in his 2010 report.
- (20) *Fraternidad Cristiana de Guatemala* / Christian Fraternity of Guatemala: *Operation World 2010* estimated 18,421 church members in 4 churches and missions, whereas Zapata reported 15,000 church members in 4 churches and missions in 2010.
- (21) *Iglesia Cristiana Verbo* / Word Christian Church: *Operation World 2010* estimated 18,000 church members in 257 churches and missions, whereas Zapata did not include this denomination in his 2010 report.
- (22) *Iglesia de Dios Nueva Jerusalém* / New Jerusalem Church of God: *Operation World 2010* estimated 17,600 church members in 176 churches and missions, whereas Zapata did not include this denomination in his 2010 report.
- (23) *Iglesias Evangélicas Monte Basan* / Mount Basan Evangelical Churches: *Operation World 2010* estimated 17,100 church members in 285 churches and missions, whereas Zapata reported 15,000 church members in 105 churches and missions in 2010.
- (24) *Iglesias Evangélicas Manantial de Vida Eterna* / Fountain of Life Evangelical Churches: *Operation World 2010* estimated 15,700 church members in 262 churches and missions, whereas Zapata did not include this denomination in his 2010 report.
- (25) *Misión Evangélica Puerta del Cielo* / Door of Heaven Evangelical Mission: *Operation World 2010* estimated 15,000 church members in 150 churches and missions, whereas Zapata did not include this denomination in his 2010 report.
- (26) *Iglesia de Jesucristo Familia de Dios* / Family of God Church of Jesus Christ: *Operation World 2010* estimated 15,000 church members in 188 churches and missions, whereas Zapata reported 10,000 church members in 1 church in 2010.
- (27) *Iglesia Evangélica Presbiteriana Nacional* / National Evangelical Presbyterian Church: *Operation World 2010* estimated 13,733 church members in 303 churches and missions, whereas Zapata reported 20,000 church members in 600 churches and missions in 2010. Obviously, these statistical discrepancies are difficult to explain.
- (28) *Iglesia Internacional del Evangelio Cuadrangular* / International Church of the Foursquare Gospel: *Operation World 2010* estimated 13,300 church members in 165 churches and missions, whereas Zapata reported 10,000 church members in 1 church in 2010. Zapata had a serious undercount in his report.

(29) **Ministerios El Shaddai** / El Shaddai Ministries: *Operation World 2010* estimated 12,600 church members in 44 churches and missions, whereas Zapata reported 12,000 church members in 62 churches and missions in 2010.

(30) **Ministerios Ebenezer de Guatemala** / Ebenezer Ministries of Guatemala: *Operation World 2010* estimated 12,000 church members in 240 churches and missions, whereas Zapata reported 52,000 church members in 300 churches and missions in 2010. However, this denomination's website only lists 37 affiliated churches with about 27,000 members in Guatemala:

<http://ebenezer.org.gt/fer/iglesias.html>

In 2010, Dr. Virgilio Zapata provided PROLADES with an updated statistical table on Protestant denominations in Guatemala; although the list is incomplete, it does provide a general overview of some of the denominations with more than 2,000 members according to his sources.

	NAME-ENGLISH	2010 MEM	2010 CHRS
1	NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD IN GUATEMALA	312000	2080
2	GENERAL EVANGELICAL COUNCIL OF CENTRAL AMERICAN EVANGELICAL CHURCHES	225000	1500
3	FULL GOSPEL CHURCH OF GOD (CLEVELAND, TN)	224190	2263
4	PRINCE OF PEACE EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION	220000	1600
5	CALVARY EVANGELICAL CHURCH	160000	800
6	CALVARY INTERNATIONAL CHURCH	106000	350
7	CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE	75000	720
8	EBENEZER CHURCH OF CHRIST - EBENEZER MINISTRIES	52000	300
9	ELIM CHRISTIAN MISSION (ELIM CENTRAL CHURCH & AFFILIATES)	48000	200
10	CONVENTION OF BAPTIST CHURCHES OF GUATEMALA	42159	549
11	SHOWERS OF GRACE CHURCH	26000	13
12	HOUSE OF GOD CHRISTIAN CHURCH (CASH LUNA)	21000	1
13	NATIONAL EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GUATEMALA	20000	600
14	CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY	16000	360
15	CHRISTIAN FRATERNITY OF GUATEMALA	15000	4
16	MT. BASAN EVANGELICAL CHURCHES	15000	105
17	EL SHADDAI MINISTRY	12000	62
18	PRIMITIVE NATIONAL EVANGELICAL METHODIST CHURCH	12000	67
19	EMMANUAL NATIONAL EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF GUATEMALA	12000	67
20	ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF FRIENDS EVANGELICAL CHURCHES OF CENTRAL AMERICA	10000	250
21	BETHANY EVANGELICAL CHURCH	10000	20
22	FAMILY OF GOD CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST	10000	1
23	NAZARETH CENTRAL CHURCH	10000	4
24	ROYAL LIFE CHURCH (Rony Madrid)	5000	2
25	CHRISTIAN CITY CHURCH (unrecognized name)	4000	1
26	MACEDONIA WORLD BAPTIST MISSIONS	3500	32
27	RESTORATION CHRISTIAN CENTER	3000	12
28	ASSOCIATION OF EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONS OF GUATEMALA	2000	36
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1,670,849</b>	<b>11,999</b>
	(average church size = 139 members)		

However, the 12,000 congregations (churches and missions) reported in this table only represent about 56 percent of the 22,000 congregations that Zapata reported to exist nationally in 2009. The estimate of 1,670,840 church members (from the table above) only represents 33

percent of the estimated 5,000,000 Protestant adherents that Zapata reported to exist in 2009, based on a quote from the document he presented at a conference in 2009:

**“Statistics and Presence:** In this sense there are very varied opinions and calculations. It seems that the more conservative and realistic is the one that considers that there are around 22,000 Evangelical churches in the country, and little more than 5 million Evangelicals [adherents], some 500 Evangelical schools, 40 radio stations, (although some like "Radio Cultural TGN" has 36 repeaters and "Stereo Vision" has 32 stations), 2 television channels (Channel 27 already has 10 repeaters that reach potentially 8 million inhabitants, and Channel 21 is linked to the whole Continent and Spain) and 4 regional channels. In addition, there is a considerable percentage of Evangelical students in many theological seminaries and in the country's 11 universities, 3 of which are Evangelical and a fourth is to be authorized.”

Source: Zapata, “Presencia del Protestantismo en Guatemala: Los últimos 25 años,” Centro Esdras, Consulta 2009, Rostros del Protestantismo en Guatemala. Available at: <http://centroesdras.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Presencia-del-Protestantismo-en-Guatemala-Virgilio-Zapata.pdf>

**According to the 2010 national public opinion poll by Latinobarómetro**, the Protestant population of Guatemala was 5,745,582 or 39 percent of the total population. The number of Protestant church members in 2010 was estimated at 2,872,790 or 19.5 percent of the national population (about half the reported number of adherents = Protestant population). By dividing 2,872,790 church members by 22,000 local congregations we arrive at an estimated average of 131 members per church. Source: PROLADES.

**The latest statistical data available on Protestant denominations in Guatemala** revealed that the following six denominations were the nation's largest and totaled 1,688,165 church members in 11,797 congregations (churches and missions), for an average of 143 members per congregation. These six denominations represented about 59 percent of the total estimated Protestant church membership in the country in 2010, according to PROLADES (see table below), and 54 percent of the total number of congregations (churches and missions) that Zapata had estimated to exist in 2010. The remaining 41 percent of the estimated total Protestant membership in Guatemala was distributed among an estimated 250 denominations and independent church associations.

	NAME OF DENOMINATION	MEMBERS	NO. OF CONG.
1	CONCILIO NACIONAL DE ASAMBLEAS DE DIOS EN GUATEMALA	333,917	2,634
2	IGLESIA EVANGELICA DEL PRINCIPE DE PAZ	317,400	2,300
3	IGLESIA DE DIOS DEL EVANGELIO COMPLETO (CLEVELAND, TN)	303,345	3,062
4	IGLESIAS EVANGELICAS EL CALVARIO (BOTH DENOMINATIONS)	266,000	1,150
5	IGLESIA ADVENTISTA DEL SEPTIMO DIA	242,503	1,151
6	CONSEJO EVANGELICO GENERAL DE LAS IGLESIAS CENTROAMERICANAS	225,000	1,500
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1,688,165</b>	<b>11,797</b>

Note: see pages 84-85 for the sources of these statistics.

## Geographical Distribution of Protestant churches in Guatemala: 1980 and 2001.

The first source of information about the geographical distribution of the Protestant population is from Holland's "Expanded Status of Christianity Country Profile: Guatemala, 1980" (pp. 43-44; first edition, October 1982; last revised in January 2008), which is available at:

[http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/gte/guate1980\\_profile.pdf](http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/gte/guate1980_profile.pdf)

**FIGURE 19  
NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF  
PROTESTANT CONGREGATIONS (CHURCHES & MISSIONS)  
IN GUATEMALA BY REGIONS AND DEPARTMENTS, 1980**

REGION & DEPARTMENT	POP. 1980 <sup>1</sup>	# CONG	CONG/POP.
<b>PACIFIC REGION</b>	<b>1,411,859</b>	<b>1,170</b>	<b>1:1,207</b>
<b>San Marcos:</b> San Rafael Pie de la Cuesta, Nuevo Progreso, El Tumbador, El Rodeo, Malacatán, Catarina, Ayutla, Ocos, San Pablo, El Quetzal, La Reforma, Pajapita	212,633	243	1:0,875
<b>Quezaltenango:</b> Colomá, El Palmar, Coatepeque, Génova, Flores Costa Cuca	143,563	111	1:1,293
<b>Retalhuleu:</b> all municipalities	192,891	177	1:1,090
<b>Suchitepéquez:</b> all municipalities	290,189	223	1:1,301
<b>Escuintla:</b> Escuintla, Santa Lucía Cotzumalguapa, La Democracia, Siquinalá, Masagua, Tiquisate, La Gomera, Guanagazapa, San José, Iztapa, Nueva Concepción	426,030	314	1:1,357
<b>Santa Rosa:</b> San Juan Tecuoco, Chiquimulilla, Taxisco, Guazacapán	79,770	65	1:1,227
<b>Jutiapa:</b> Jalpatagua, Conguaco, Moyuta, Pasaco	66,783	37	1:1,805
<b>CENTRAL HIGHLAND REGION</b>	<b>4,062,148</b>	<b>2,426</b>	<b>1:1.675</b>
<b>San Marcos:</b> San Marcos, San Pedro Sacatepéquez, San Antonio Sacatepéquez, Comitancillo, San Miguel Ixtahuacán, Concepción Tutuapa, Tacaná, Sibinal, Tajumulco, Tejuela, Ixchiguán, San José Ojetenam, San Cristóbal Cucho, Sicapa, Esquipulas Palo Gordo, Río Blanco, San Lorenzo	315,020	227	1:1,388
<b>Quezaltenango:</b> Quezaltenango, Salcajá, Olintepeque, San Carlos Sija, Sibilia, Cabricán, Cajolá, San Miguel Siguilá, Ostuncalco, San Mateo, Concepción Chiquirichampa San Martín Sacatepéquez, Almolonga, Cantel, Hitán, Zunil, San Francisco La Unión, La Esperanza, Palestina de Los Altos	284,171	263	1:1,080
<b>Totonicapán:</b> all municipios	227,531	85	1:2,677
<b>Sololá:</b> all municipios	167,864	147	1:1,142
<b>Chimaltenango:</b> all municipios	256,377	237	1:4,082
<b>Sacatepéquez:</b> all municipios	130,966	69	1:1,898
<b>Escuintla:</b> Palin, San Vicente Pacaya	29,018	8	1:3,627
<b>Guatemala:</b> all municipios	1,626,953	683	1:2,382
<b>Santa Rosa:</b> Cuilapa, Barberena, Santa Rosa de Lima, Casillas, San Rafael Las Flores, Oratorio, Santa María Ixhuatán, Santa Cruz Naranjo, Pueblo Nuevo Viñas, Nueva Santa Rosa	161,567	55	1:2,938
<b>El Progreso:</b> all municipalities	97,968	70	1:1,400
<b>Zacapa:</b> all municipalities	145,129	179	1:0,811
<b>Chiquimula:</b> all municipalities	212,181	95	1:2,233
<b>Jalapa:</b> all municipalities	157,260	111	1:1,417

<sup>1</sup> Guatemala: Población estimada por departamentos y municipios, años 1974-1985. Dirección General de Estadística, Ministerio de Economía, República de Guatemala (julio de 1979), Cuadro #1, pp. 14-15.

<b>Jutiapa:</b> Jutiapa, El Progreso, Santa Catarina Mita, Agua Blanca, Asunción Mita, Yupiltepeque, Atescatempa, Jeréz, El Adelanto, Zapotitlán, Comapa, San José Acatempa, Quezada	250,143	197	1:1,270
<b>NORTHERN HIGHLAND REGION</b>	<b>1,248,442</b>	<b>732</b>	<b>1:1,758</b>
<b>Huehuetenango:</b> all municipalities	495,554	346	1:1,432
<b>El Quiché:</b> all municipalities	410,186	237	1:1,731
<b>Baja Verapaz:</b> all municipalities	147,017	47	1:4,324
<b>Alta Verapaz:</b> Santa Cruz Verapaz, San Cristóbal Verapaz, Tactic, Tamahú, Tucurú, Senahú, San Pedro Carchá, San Juan Chamelco	195,685	102	1:1,918
<b>NORTHERN LOWLAND REGION</b>	<b>237,698</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>1:0,626</b>
<b>Alta Verapaz:</b> Cobán, Lanquín, Cahabón, Chisec, Chahal, Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas	144,067	104	1:1,385
<b>El Petén:</b> all municipalities	93,631	276	1:0,339
<b>CARIBBEAN REGION</b>	<b>302,272</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>1:0,854</b>
<b>Alta Verapaz:</b> Panzós	36,415	38	1:0,958
<b>Izabal:</b> all municipalities	265,857	316	1:0,841
<b>GEOGRAPHICAL SAMPLE TOTAL</b>	<b>7,262,419</b>	<b>5,052<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>1:1,438</b>
<b>COUNTRY TOTAL</b>	<b>7,262,419</b>	<b>6,448<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>1:1,126</b>

Note 2: The geographical sample of Protestant congregations represents 78.5% of the churches and missions reported to exist by the various denominational offices, according to the national church growth study conducted by PROCADES during 1978-1980.

Note 3: The total number of congregations (churches and missions) reported to exist by all known Protestant denominations and independent church associations in Guatemala, according to the national church growth study conducted by PROCADES during 1978-1980.

**COMMENTARY:** This table not only shows the geographical distribution of Protestant congregations (churches and missions) by regions, but also the regions with the highest proportion of Protestant congregations (churches and missions) to population as well as those regions with the lowest proportion of Protestant congregations (churches and missions) to population. For example, the **NORTHERN LOWLAND REGION** is the **MOST** “evangelized” or “reached” with the Gospel of Jesus Christ based on the ratio of one Protestant congregation for every 626 inhabitants (1:0,626), whereas the **NORTHERN MOUNTAIN REGION** is the **LEAST** “evangelized” or “reached” with the Gospel of Jesus Christ based on the ratio of one Protestant congregation for every 1,758 inhabitants (1:1,758). See table below.

REGION & DEPARTMENT	POP. 1980	# CONG	CONG/POP.
NORTHERN LOWLAND REGION	237,698	380	1:0626
CARIBBEAN REGION	302,272	354	1:0854
PACIFIC REGION	1,411,859	1,17	1:1207
CENTRAL HIGHLAND REGION	4,062,148	2,426	1:1675
NORTHERN HIGHLAND REGION	1,248,442	732	1:1758
<b>GEOGRAPHICAL SAMPLE TOTAL</b>	<b>7,262,419</b>	<b>5,052</b>	<b>1:1438</b>

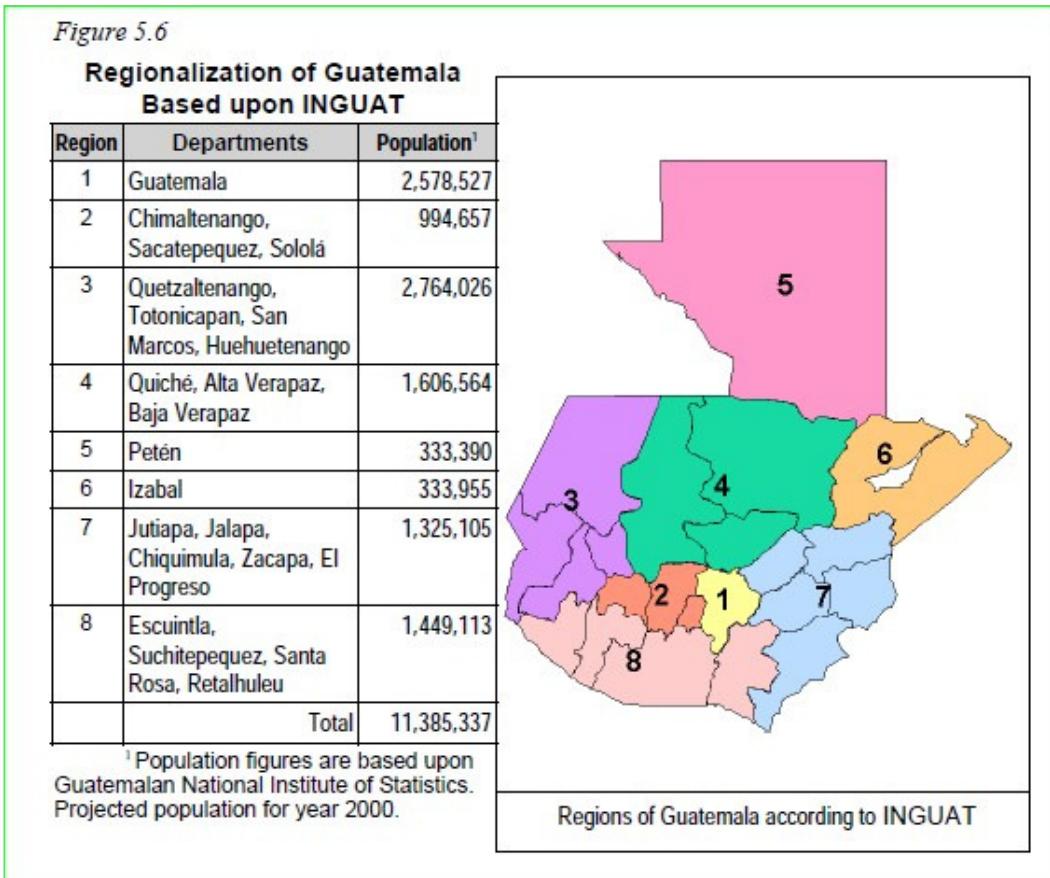
Another source of information about the geographical distribution of the Protestant population is provided by Roger Grossman in his 2002 study; however, the regions included are not the same ones defined in the 1980 study cited above. See table and map on following page for details.

## Evangelicals, Catholics, Sects and Non-Affiliated by Region-Weighted Values

Regions	Evangelical	Catholic	Non-Affiliated	Cults
Region 1	25.7%	64.9%	9.0%	0.4%
Region 2	34.5%	47.7%	10.6%	1.7%
Region 3	27.0%	58.0%	11.4%	4.4%
Region 4	24.5%	65.4%	8.5%	1.6%
Region 5	32.4%	45.4%	19.7%	2.5%
Region 6	21.8%	46.6%	28.1%	3.5%
Region 7	18.5%	63.2%	16.6%	1.7%
Region 8	26.7%	49.4%	19.4%	4.7%
Country Weighted	25.4%	58.1%	13.9%	2.6%

**NOTE:** Because Region 1 contains the very populated Guatemala City and its urban area, which are totally distinct from the rural Indian areas in the same department, the calculations for weighing the data are more involved. *Municipios* that are similar in culture, urban, or have a high level of Ladinos as compared to the Capital are: Guatemala, Palencia, Chinautla, Mixco, Chuarrancho, Fraijanes, Amatítlan, Villa Nueva, Villa Canales and Petapa with a total population of 2,250,813. The *municipios* more similar to San Pedro Sacatepequez with regard to traditional rural Indian culture are: Santa Catalina Pinula, San José Pinula, San José del Golfo, San Pedro Ayampuc, San Pedro Sacatepequez, San Juan Sacatepequez, and San Raymundo with a total population of 327,714. This gives a ratio of 85.8% for urban/capital culture and 14.2% rural, Mayan, Christo-pagan culture. This is the percentage used in weighting the calculations for Region 1.

Above info source: Grossman (2002:141) Table & Map below source: Grossman (2002:139)



Obviously, these two studies (Holland 1982 and Grossman 2002) are measuring different things; the first measured church-to-population ratios by five geographical regions defined by PROCADES, and the second estimated the size of the population by various religious groups (Evangelicals, Catholics, Sects and Non-Affiliated) in eight regions defined by INGUAT.

Below is Grossman's table sorted by the Evangelical population, from highest to lowest reported. Regions 2, 5, 3 and 8 are above the national average of 25.4% while regions 4, 6 and 7 are below the national average; region 1 is close to the national average, 25.7% compared to 25.4%.

Regions	Evangelical	Catholic	Non-Affiliated	Cults
Region 2	34.5%	47.7%	10.6%	1.7%
Region 5	32.4%	45.4%	19.7%	2.5%
Region 3	27.0%	58.0%	11.4%	4.4%
Region 8	26.7%	49.4%	19.4%	4.7%
Region 1	25.7%	64.9%	9.0%	0.4%
Region 4	24.5%	65.4%	8.5%	1.6%
Region 6	21.8%	46.6%	28.1%	3.5%
Region 7	18.5%	63.2%	16.6%	1.7%
Country				
Weighted	25.4%	58.1%	13.9%	2.6%

**Theological Education.** The training of pastors and Christian workers in formal programs of theological education has grown significantly over the years, from five Bible institutes in 1935 to 23 Bible institutes and six seminaries in 1978. Eleven of these Bible institutes and three of the seminaries were located in Guatemala City in 1980. The influential **Central American Theological Seminary (SETECA)**, founded in 1929 by CAM as a Bible institute, has provided theological education for pastors and laymen of many conservative, non-Pentecostal denominations and independent churches in Guatemala and neighboring countries. CAM also operated four Bible institutes in Guatemala. In 1980, other theological seminaries included the **Southern Baptist Theological Institute**, the **Fundamentalist Bible Presbyterian Seminary**, the **Latin American Theological Seminary** (Full Gospel Church of God), and the **Department of Theology of Mariano Gálvez University** (nondenominational). Also, there were at least six programs of Theological Education by Extension (TEE) in Guatemala, with the **Presbyterian Theological Seminary** (founded in 1940 in Guatemala City, now located in San Felipe, Retalhuleu) providing an early TEE model that has stimulated similar programs around the world.

TEE was first developed in 1963 by a team of Presbyterian missionaries in Guatemala who noticed the need for a decentralized system for training pastors “at a distance” that would have greater success than traditional residential seminary programs. The first two men who developed this ingenious method of training leaders in their own towns using programmed textbooks were Ralph D. Winter and James H. Emery, with the later addition of F. Ross Kinsler. Ralph and Roberta Winter served as Guatemalan missionaries for ten years (1956-1966) with a Mayan tribal group in Guatemala and were professors at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Guatemala

City (and, later, in San Felipe, Retalhuleu). For another ten years, Dr. Winter was on the faculty of the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA, where he taught more than 1,000 missionaries to study their field situations in-depth. Emery, after serving as a missionary for 25 years in Guatemala and elsewhere, became a Presbyterian pastor in the USA. Kinsler later served with the World Council of Churches' Programme for Theological Education in Geneva and travelled around the world promoting programs of theological education.

In 1980, the National Presbyterian Church also sponsored two Bible institutes for Mayans: the Mam Evangelical Center and the Quiché Bible Institute, which were co-sponsored by the Primitive Methodists.

Source: Holland 1982.

According to the *Directorio de Instituciones Teológicas Protestantes en Centro América, 2012*, compilado por Dr. Clifton L. Holland & Dra. Dorothy Bullón (16 de febrero de 2012) de PRO-LADES (San José, Costa Rica), the following programs of theological education existed in 2011 in Guatemala:

## **EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR / HIGHER EDUCATION (16 PROGRAMS)**

### **1. Universidad Mariano Gálvez de Guatemala**

<http://teologia.umg.edu.gt/>

3a. Avenida 9-00, Zona 2, 01002 Interior Finca El Zapote

Apartado Postal 1811, Ciudad de Guatemala

Teléfono (502) 2411-1800/ 2268-3400

FAX: (502) 2288-4040

Facultad de Teología

Profesorado y licenciatura en Teología y Filosofía

Profesorado en Educación Cristina Escolar

Maestría en Teología

Doctorado en Teología con especialidades

### **2. Seminario Bíblico Alianza**

Apartado 2254, Ciudad de Guatemala

Auspiciado por la Alianza Cristiana y Misionera de Guatemala

### **3. Seminario Bíblico Pentecostal Centroamericano (SEBIPCA)**

Barrio Lugar, 7<sup>a</sup>, Avenida 32-31, Zona 11

Colonia Las Charcas, Ciudad de Guatemala

Auspiciado por la Iglesia de Dios del Evangelio Completo (Cleveland, TN)

### **4. Seminario Bíblico Teológico de Guatemala (SETEGUA)**

<https://www.setegua.org/>

Km. 14.5 Calzada Roosevelt 2-61, Zona 3

Mixco, Tierra Santa III

Teléfono 2426-8700.

SETEGUA está afiliado a AETAL

Bachillerato en Teología (24 asignaturas)

Profesorado en Teología (12 asignaturas más)

Licenciatura en Ministerio

Auspiciado por Ministerio de Motivación Cristiana - Iglesia Familia de Dios

**5. Seminario Bíblico Teológico Kairós (SBTK)**

[seminarioteologicokairos@gmail.com](mailto:seminarioteologicokairos@gmail.com)

15 Avenida 400, Zona 13, Ciudad de Guatemala

Frente a la estación “los Arcos del Transmetro”

Teléfono 4340-7542 / 2334-2258

Diploma en estudios bíblicos

Bachillerato en estudios bíblicos

Licenciatura en Teología

Maestría en Teología

Afiliado al movimiento neo-carismático y con AETAL

**6. Seminario Evangélico Presbiteriano (SEP)**

<http://www.sep.org.gt>

Km.182.5, San Martin Zapotitlán, Retalhuleu

Teléfono (502) 7772-5523

Fax (502) 7772-5591

Diplomado en Teología y Misión

Diplomado en actualización ministerial

Bachillerato en ministerio pastoral

Licenciatura en teología pastoral intercultural

Licenciatura en gestión eclesiástica

Licenciatura en Ministerio pastoral

Maestría en administración eclesiástica con especialidad en liderazgo  
intercultural

Auspiciado por la Iglesia Presbiteriana Nacional

**7. Seminario Teológico Bautista**

<http://seminariobautistaguatemala.org/>

[seminario1@intellnett.com](mailto:seminario1@intellnett.com)

2<sup>a</sup>. Calle 36-18, Zona 7, Ciudad de Guatemala

Teléfonos: 2439-6615 / 2439-4869

Celular: 5354-2435

Programa juvenil

Programa de diplomado en estudios bíblicos y teológicos

Programa de Bachillerato en estudios bíblicos

Programa de profesorado teología

Programa de licenciatura estudios bíblicos y teológicos

Programa de Maestría en Teología

Auspiciado por las Iglesias Bautistas de Guatemala (Bautistas del Sur)

**8. Seminario Superior Educativo Teológico Interdenominacional (ASETI)**

San Benito, Guatemala

Afiliada a AETAL

**9. Seminario Teológico Amigos de Berea (STAB)**

9a Avenida 5-96, Zona 1, Chiquimula

Apartado 8, Chiquimula

Auspiciado por la Sociedad de Amigos (AETAL & CETA)

**10. Seminario Teológico Quátero (SETEQU)**

<http://institutoalma.org/Literatura/Amigos/01PortadaIndicehastaIntroduccion.pdf>

4<sup>a</sup> Avenida 2-24, Zona 1, Chiquimula

Apartado 5, Chiquimula

Profesorado en Teología, Biblia y Educación Cristiana en línea.

Auspiciado por los Quáteros de Guatemala

**11. Seminario Anabautista Latinoamericana (SEMILLA)**

<http://www.semilla.org.gt/>

26 Calle 15-56 Zona 11, Colonia Las Charcas

Teléfono 2485-7617 al 20

Apartado 371-1, Zona 7, Ciudad de Guatemala

Diplomado en Biblia y Teología pastoral

Diplomado Bachillerato Medio en Teología Pastoral

Licenciatura en Teología con Especialización

Auspiciada por la Iglesia Menonita y ALIET

**12. Seminario Teológico Centro Americano [SETECA]**

<http://seteca.edu> - [seteca@seteca.edu](mailto:seteca@seteca.edu)

Apartado 2130-1901, Ciudad de Guatemala

Teléfono (502) 2449-4596, ext. 121. Fax (502) 2473-5957

Programas Teológicas:

Bachillerato en ministerio cristiano

Diplomado en estudios bíblicos

Diplomado ministerial

Profesorados:

Profesorado en música

Profesorado en estudios bíblicos

Profesorado en estudios teológicos

Licenciaturas:

Énfasis en Biblia y Teología

Énfasis en misiones transculturales

Afiliada históricamente a la Misión Centroamericana (MCA)

**13. Seminario Teológico Nazareno**

[www.stn.org.gt](http://www.stn.org.gt) - [info@stn.org.gt](mailto:info@stn.org.gt)

Km. 8.5 Ruta al Atlántico 2-94, Zona 18

Ciudad de Guatemala

Teléfonos: 502- 2261-6401 y 502-2261-6410

Programas Teológicos:

Diploma en Ministerio Cristiano

Bachillerato en Ministerio cristiano

Bachillerato en Teología

Profesorado en Teología

Profesorado en Educación Teológica

Licenciatura en Educación Teológica

Licenciatura en Teología Pastoral

Diplomado Avanzado (Postgrado) en Teología Pastoral

Diplomado Avanzado (Postgrado) en Docencia Eclesiástica

Auspiciado por la Iglesia del Nazareno y afiliado a AETAL y SENDAS

**14. Seminario Bíblico Pentecostal Centroamericano (SEBIPCA)**

<http://www.sebipca.org>

7a. Av 13-41, Zona 5, Quetzaltenango

Teléfono: (502) 7763-0003 y Fax (502) 7761-0112

Licenciatura en ministerio cristiano con especialización en ministerio pastoral urbano

Auspiciado por la Iglesia de Dios Evangelio Completo en Centro América (Cleveland, TN)

**15. Universidad Panamericana (UPANA)**

[www.upana.edu.gt](http://www.upana.edu.gt)

Carretera a San Isidro, Aldea Acatan, Zona 16 (campus central cerca de la Iglesia Cristiana Verbo)

Guatemala, Guatemala

Teléfono: 502-2390-1200

Facultad de Teología: Dr. Samuel Berberián, decano (2012)  
Auspiciada por: empresa privada no denominacional (1997)

**16. World Vision Seminary - Seminario Teológico Latinoamericano Unido (SETELU)**

<http://worldvision.university/> - [info@worldvision.university](mailto:info@worldvision.university)

37 Avenida 3-36 Zona 7, Ciudad de Guatemala 01007

Teléfono: 502-2259-7043

Auspiciado por: 5 iglesias coreanas (2004)

Afiliações: AETAL / Asociación Educativa Teológica en América Latina (2012)

**ESCUELAS BÍBLICAS / INSTITUTOS BÍBLICOS DE LA CIUDAD DE GUATEMALA (21 PROGRAMS)**

**1. Centro Cristiano “Salem”**

10<sup>a</sup> Ave. 29-09, Zona 8

Apartado Postal 2803, Ciudad de Guatemala

Teléfono: 44-769

Trabaja en Guatemala en los distintos departamentos con **Misión Cristiana El Calvario** (Apóstol Eliu Castillo).

**2. Instituto Teológico de la Iglesia El Calvario (IFTEC)**

<http://elcalvariointernacional.net>

33 calle “A” 2-69, Zona 8. Ciudad de Guatemala

Teléfono (502) 2246- 8080 Ext. 8018

Teléfono USA: (702) 560-0133

Bachillerato en Teología

Auspiciado por Iglesias El Calvario Internacional

**3. Centro de Entrenamiento Bíblico Pentecostés**

5<sup>a</sup> Ave. 1-116, Zona 1, Lomas de Portugal

Mixco, Guatemala

Auspiciado por Iglesia Pentecostal “Evangelio Mundial Extendido”

Lote No.7, Buena Vista, Puerto Iztapa, Escuintla, **Guatemala**. 502-5977-5836

**4. Centro de entrenamiento “Fe, Esperanza y Amor”**

<http://centrodefeesperanzayamor.org>

6<sup>a</sup> Ave. 5-22, Zona 12, Ciudad de Guatemala

Su web page dice que no tiene ahora obra en Guatemala, pero si tiene cursos en línea “Agua Viva”.

**5. Escuela de Evangelismo**

Sección “A”, Lote #105, Los Álamos, San Miguel Petapa

Auspiciado por Misión de Santidad (Holiness Mission)

**6. Iglesia Evangélica “Puerta del Cielo”**

<http://www.iglesiadediospuertadelcielo.com>

Ave. 7-69, Zona 7, Colonia Tikal II, Ciudad de Guatemala

Teléfono 91-1025 y 91-1016

Escuela de Obreros

Auspiciado por “Misión Evangélica Puerta del Cielo” e Iglesia de Dios (Cleveland, TN)

**7. Instituto Bíblico de las Asambleas de Dios**

Avenida Elena 27-61, Zona 3, Ciudad de Guatemala

Apartado 1619, Ciudad de Guatemala

Teléfono 4-1522

Auspiciada por el Concilio Nacional de las Asambleas de Dios

**8. BICA**

Apartado 73, Correo Central, Ciudad de Guatemala  
Overseen by Fairmont Park Church of Christ

**9. Instituto Bíblico Cuadrangular**

Colonia Castañas, Zona 11  
Apartado 671, Ciudad de Guatemala  
Auspiciado por la Iglesia del Evangelio Cuadrangular de Guatemala

**10. Educación Teológica por Extensión**

Casa de Estudios, San Luis, Petén  
Auspiciado por la Misión Hispanoamericana

**11. Instituto Bíblico Faro de Luz**

4<sup>a</sup> Calle 1-45, Zona 3, Ciudad de Guatemala  
Auspiciado por la Iglesia Centroamericana

**12. Comunidad de Autoformación Teológica [CAT]**

12 Calle 11-18, Ciudad de Guatemala  
Apartado Postal 1186, Ciudad de Guatemala  
Teléfono 253-7368  
Afiliado a la Comunidad de Educación Teológica Ecuménica Latinoamericana y Caribe (CETELA) y Lutheran World Federation (LWF)

**13. Instituto Bíblico “Fuentes de Vida”**

17 Calle 36-54, Zona 5  
Apartado 725, Ciudad de Guatemala  
Teléfono 51-32-02  
Auspiciada por el Concilio Nacional de las Asambleas de Dios

**14. Instituto Bíblico Misionero**

8<sup>a</sup> Calle 6-73, Zona 7, Colonia Landívar  
Apartado 48 b, Ciudad de Guatemala  
Teléfono 4-71-51

**15. Instituto Bíblico “Mizpa”**

14 Avenida “B” 16-71, Zona 6, Colonia los Cipresales  
Apartado 2055, Ciudad de Guatemala  
Auspiciado por la Iglesia de Dios Pentecostés de Guatemala

**16. Instituto Bíblico Pentecostés de América**

Lote 44 “A”, Colonia los Álamos, Villa Canales  
Apartado 2352, Ciudad de Guatemala  
Auspiciado por la Iglesia de Dios Pentecostés de América

**17. Instituto Bíblico del “Príncipe de Paz”**

Colonia Los Álamos (por el Km 17)  
Apartado 786, Ciudad de Guatemala  
Auspiciado por la Asociación Evangélica Príncipe de Paz

**18. Instituto Cristiano en Acción**

San José, Villa Nueva (frente Textiles Aguilar)  
Apartado 2256, Ciudad de Guatemala  
Auspiciado por la Iglesia Cristianos en Acción

**19. Instituto “Emmanuel”**

9<sup>a</sup>. Ave. 39-43, Zona 8, Ciudad de Guatemala

Teléfono 4-3491

Auspiciado por la Asociación Evangélica “Emmanuel”

**20. Instituto Ministerial Hebrón**

<http://institute.hebronministries.com/es>

10<sup>a</sup>. Ave. 28-29, Zona 13, Colonia Santa Fe, Ciudad de Guatemala

Teléfono (502) 2268-2999

Auspiciado por la Iglesia “Hebrón” Guatemala

**21. Instituto Teológico de las Asambleas de Iglesias Cristianas**

Colonia Monserrat, Zona 7, Ciudad de Guatemala

Apartado 2778, Ciudad de Guatemala

Auspiciado por la Asamblea de Iglesias Cristianas

**INSTITUTOS BÍBLICOS FUERA DE LA CIUDAD DE GUATEMALA (18 PROGRAMS)****1. Seminario Bíblico Guatemalteco**

1<sup>a</sup>. Calle 7-206, Zona 3, Chimaltenango.

Teléfono: 7839-1434

Auspiciado por la Iglesia Centroamericana

**2. Centro Guatemalteco de Teología Práctica**

7<sup>a</sup> Avenida 13-41, Zona 5, Quezaltenango

Apartado 102, Quezaltenango

Auspiciado por la iglesia de Dios del Evangelio Completo

**3. Instituto Bíblico de Occidente (IBO)**

1<sup>a</sup> Calle y 3<sup>a</sup> Avenida 3-22, Zona 2

Teléfono: 7760-5114.

Apartado Postal 14, San Pedro Sacatepéquez, San Marcos

Auspiciado por la Iglesia Centroamericana

**4. Instituto Bíblico Berea K’anjobal**

Villa de Barillas, Huehuetenango

Auspiciado por la Iglesia Centroamericana

**5. Instituto Bíblico Breve de Oriente**

Piedra Blanca, Jutiapa.

Auspiciado por la Iglesia Centroamericana

**6. Instituto Bíblico Bautista Pablo Bell**

Santiago Atitlán, Sololá, Guatemala

Auspiciado por la Convención de Iglesias Bautistas de Guatemala

**7. El Centro Evangélico “MAM”**

San Juan Ostuncalcio, Quezaltenango

Auspiciado por La iglesia Presbiteriana Nacional de Guatemala

**8. Centro Guatemalteco de Teología Práctica**

7<sup>a</sup> Avenida 102, Quezaltenango

Teléfono 2108

Auspiciado por la Iglesia de Dios del Evangelio Completo

**9. Instituto Bíblico “Agua Viva”**

Calle “C”, D5-26, Zona 1,

Apartado 248, Quezaltenango,

Auspiciado por Ministerios de Agua Viva

**10. Instituto Bíblico “Berea”**

9<sup>a</sup> Ave 5-96, Chiquimula

Apartado 8, Chiquimula

Teléfono 42-0149

Auspiciado por Junta Anual de Iglesias Evangélicas Centroamericanos “Amigos”

**11. Instituto Bíblico “Emmanuel”**

Jalapa

Auspiciado por Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Emmanuel de Guatemala

**12. Instituto Bíblico “Juan Franklyn”**

Panajachel, Sololá

Auspiciado por el Concilio Nacional de las Asambleas de Dios

**13. Instituto Bíblico Menonita**

San Pedro Carchá, Alta Verapaz

Auspiciado por la Iglesia Menonita

**14. Instituto Bíblico “Vida Nueva”**

Sayaxché, El Petén

Auspiciado por Misión “Nueva Vida”

**15. Instituto Bíblico Nazareno**

E-correo: [aibncoban@hotmail.com](mailto:aibncoban@hotmail.com)

8a Ave 4-42, Zona 4, Cobán, Alta Verapaz, Guatemala

Teléfono: 502-7952-1670

Programas Teológicos:

Diplomado en Ministerio Cristiano

Diplomado en Educación Cristiana

Diplomado en Teología Misional

Diplomado en Música Cristiana

Diplomado en Pastoral Juvenil

Auspiciado por la Iglesia del Nazareno, SENDAS y AETAL

**16. Ministerio de Enseñanza y Predicación Renuevo**

[www.MinRenuevo.gt](http://www.MinRenuevo.gt) - [diegoyclaudia@gmail.com](mailto:diegoyclaudia@gmail.com)

Calle B 27-27, Zona 1, Quetzaltenango, Guatemala

Teléfono (502) 7761-9550

**17. Enseñanza de Agua Viva**

<http://www.ensenanzaviva.com>

Avenida las Américas 8-76, Zona 3, Quetzaltenango, Guatemala

Instituto Bíblico con más de 20.000 graduados.

**18. Instituto Bíblico Calvary Chapel Guatemala**

<https://www.facebook.com/CalvaryChapelBibleCollegeGuatemala/>

<https://instituto-biblico-calvary-chapel-guatemala.negocio.site/>

Lote 6D-B Panorama, Antigua Guatemala, Sacatepéquez 03001

+502 7934 6350

Afiliaciones: Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, California

**Ecumenical relations in Guatemala are complex, with strong divisions between some Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal leaders and their respective denominations.** Nevertheless, many conservative Evangelical leaders are represented by the **Guatemalan Evangelical Alliance** (*Alianza Evangélica de Guatemala – AEG, founded in 1937*) at the national level, regardless of their denominational affiliation. The AEG, the largest organization of Protestants in the nation, represents more than 30,000 individual churches. Internationally, the AEG is affiliated with the **Latin American Confraternity of Evangelicals (CONELA)**, which is associated with the **World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF)**.

The AEG membership in 2015 included the following 78 organizations:

- 1 Agrupación Evangélica Monte Basan
- 2 Asociación Cultural y Educacional Guatimalteca
- 3 Asociación de Congregaciones Evangélicas de Guatemala
- 4 Asociación Evangélica Metodista Primitiva de Guatemala
- 5 Asociación Evangélica Pentecostés Arca de Noé
- 6 Asociación Evangélica Macedonia
- 7 Asociación Indigenista de Evangelización de Guatemala
- 8 Asociación Evangélica Pentecostés Buenas Nuevas
- 9 Asociación de Ministros de Coatepeque Unidos por la Paz
- 10 Concilio Pentecostés Refugio de Salvación
- 11 Confraternidad Internacional de Ministros Evangélicos de Villa Nueva
- 12 Confraternidad de Ministros Evangélicos del Occidente
- 13 Consejo Evangélica General de la Iglesia Evangélica Centroamericana
- 14 Convención de Iglesias Bautistas de Guatemala
- 15 Iglesia de Restauración Elim Internacional
- 16 Canal 21
- 17 Asociación Tomando Mi Nación
- 18 Cristianos en Acción
- 19 Cruzada Estudiantil y Profesional para Cristo
- 20 Club 700
- 21 Embajadores Médicos
- 22 Fundación Contra El Hambre
- 23 Fundación Emmanuel
- 24 Fraternidad de Mujeres Cristiana Aglow
- 25 Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal Movimiento Internacional
- 26 Iglesia Cristiana Familiar Bethania
- 27 Iglesia Cristiana Verbo
- 28 Iglesia Cristiana Visión de Fe
- 29 Iglesia de Cristo COF?
- 30 Iglesia de Cristo Misionera
- 31 Iglesia de Dios de la Profecía Universal
- 32 Iglesia de Dios Evangelio Completo
- 33 Iglesia del Nazareno en Guatemala
- 34 Iglesia El Shaddai
- 35 Iglesia Evangélica El Verbo de Dios
- 36 Iglesia Evangélica Misionera en Orden Divino El Alto y Eterno Dios
- 37 Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Emmanuel de Guatemala
- 38 Iglesia Hebreos 13:8
- 39 Iglesia Santidad Pentecostal de Guatemala

- 40 Gracia Internacional
- 41 Iglesia Casa de Dios
- 42 Iglesia de Cristo Elim Central
- 43 Iglesia Ministerios Palabra y Espíritu
- 44 Iglesia Evangélica La Fe
- 45 Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Amigos de Guatemala (Quákeros)
- 46 Iglesia Evangélica Casa de Refugio
- 47 Iglesia Cristiana Bíblica Vida Cristiana
- 48 Iglesia de Dios en el Espíritu Santo
- 49 Misión de Iglesias Interdenominacionales de Guatemala
- 50 Iglesia Evangelio del Cuadrangular de Guatemala
- 51 Misión Evangélica del Príncipe de Paz
- 52 Misión Cristiana Lluvias de Gracia
- 53 Misión Evangélica Mundo Unido de Guatemala
- 54 Misión Evangélica Pentecostés Hermosa Jerusalén
- 55 Misión Pentecostés Restauración Divina
- 56 Misión Cristiana Rey de las Naciones
- 57 Misión Cristiana Evangélica Palabra Viva
- 58 Misión Cristiana Sión
- 59 Misión Cristiana Vida
- 60 Ministerios de Agua Viva
- 61 Ministerio Arrebata a las Naciones Para Jesucristo
- 62 Ministerio de Motivación Cristiana
- 63 Militares Cristianos de Guatemala
- 64 Periódico La Palabra 2000
- 65 Iglesia Cristiana Rhema
- 66 Servicio Evangelizador para América Latina (SEPAL)
- 67 Sociedad Jurídica Cristiana
- 68 Asociación Renuevo - ONG
- 69 Iglesia Cristiana Rey Victorioso
- 70 Organización Cristiana de Beneficio Social Esperanza de Vida - ONG
- 71 Buckner Orphan Care BOCIGUA
- 72 Fundación REMAR Guatemala
- 73 Ministerio Mi Corazón para los Niños
- 74 CIDEPGUA y Nación TV
- 75 Asociación de Ministros Evangélicos de Guatemala (AMEG – founded in 1950)
- 76 World Vision Seminary (founded by five Korean churches in 2004)
- 77 Asociación Viva, Juntos por la Niñez
- 78 Iglesia Candelero de Oro

Source: <http://alianzaevangelicadeguatemala.blogspot.com/>

However, some of the most conservative Evangelical denominations (called Fundamentalists) are not members of the AEG and do not support its activities, such as the Trinitarian Bible Society (affiliated with the Independent Board of Presbyterian Foreign Missions, led by the Rev. Harold Ricker), the Plymouth Brethren (*Hermanos Libres*), Baptist Bible Fellowship, the independent Christian Churches / Churches of Christ, and other such Fundamentalist groups, many of which are affiliated with independent Baptist mission agencies in the USA.

Also, the **Latin American Council of Churches** (CLAI), affiliated with the World Council of Churches (WCC), has a few members in Guatemala. Currently, these are the only member organizations listed for Guatemala:

- Conference of Evangelical Churches of Guatemala Association / *Asociación Conferencia de Iglesias Evangélicas de Guatemala (CIEDEG)*:  
<https://actalliance.org/about/members/asociacion-conferencia-de-iglesias-evangelicas-de-guatemala-ciedeg/>

NUEVO CIEDEG is composed of a group of people from churches and organized communities that work enthusiastically and with hope, in a team effort with values and principles that reaffirm their mission with the Kingdom of God, focused on service to the community.

We are an alternative Evangelical movement with inter-religious interest, proclaiming the values of the Kingdom of God in the wholeness of life and in a space of service, where there is a convergence of local churches, denominations, indigenous and rural communities, women's groups and areas of development, that coordinate their efforts for unity and Christian witness in situations of crisis that present themselves to Guatemalan society, physically, spiritually and materially.

CIEDEG offers technical, solidarity and spiritual accompaniment, from a Biblical-Theological perspective, approaching those with need in their different cosmovisions.

- Episcopal Church of Guatemala / *Iglesia Episcopal de Guatemala*, with 38 congregations:  
<http://www.iglepicoguate.org.gt/ladiocesis.html>
- National Evangelical Primitive Methodist Church of Guatemala / *Iglesia Metodista Primitiva Evangélica Nacional*, affiliated with the United Methodist Church in the USA:  
<https://www.umcmission.org/Explore-Our-Work/Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean/Guatemala>

Source: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/latin-america/clai>

Previously, CLAI listed the following organizations as fraternal members:

- **Evangelical Center of Pastoral Studies in Central America** (*Centro Evangélico de Estudios Pastorales en Centroamérica*), which is now called **The Protestant Center for Pastoral Studies in Central America** (CEDEPCA): <http://www.cedepca.org/en/who-we-are/our-history>
- The Guatemalan chapter of the **Mesoamerican Christian Community** (*Comunidad Cristiana Mesoamericana*); no Internet links found.

### **The ACT-Alliance in Guatemala is composed of the following organizations:**

- [Asociación Conferencia de Iglesias Evangélicas de Guatemala \(CIEDEG\)](#)
- [Baptist World Aid \(USA\)](#)
- [Bread for the World \(BfdW\)](#)

- [Centro Evangélico de Estudios Pastorales en Centro América \(CEDEPCA\)](#)
- [Christian Aid \(CA\)](#)
- [Consejo Ecuménico Cristiano de Guatemala \(CECG\)](#)
- [DanChurchAid \(DCA\)](#)
- [Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe \(DKH\)](#)
- [ICCO Cooperation](#)
- [Kerk in Actie](#)
- [Norwegian Church Aid \(NCA\)](#)
- [Presbyterian Disaster Assistance – Presbyterian Church \(USA\)](#)
- [Presbyterian World Service & Development \(PWS&D\)](#)
- [Primates World Relief and Development Fund \(PWRDF\)](#)
- [The Lutheran World Federation \(LWF\)](#)
- [United Church of Canada: Justice, Global and Ecumenical Relations Unit \(UCC\)](#)
- [World Association for Christian Communication \(WACC\)](#)
- [World Renew \(WR\)](#)

ACT Alliance is a coalition of 152 churches and church-related organizations working together in over 125 countries to create positive and sustainable change in the lives of poor and marginalized people regardless of their religion, politics, gender, sexual orientation, race or nationality in keeping with the highest international codes and standards.

ACT Alliance is supported by 25,000 staff from member organizations and mobilizes about \$3 billion for its work each year in three targeted areas:

- humanitarian aid
- development
- advocacy

ACT Alliance is deeply rooted in the communities it serves. It has earned the trust and respect of local people long before large international interventions scale up, and remains steadfast in its grassroots commitments for many years after world attention has shifted elsewhere.

- **Humanitarian Aid.** Within the diversity of organizations that make up its membership, ACT Alliance endeavors to respond to emergencies around the world – local or global, large or small – with an ecumenical commitment to respond to the needs of communities when they are at their most vulnerable.
- Through **advocacy** ACT Alliance seeks to influence decision makers, policies, structures, systems to bring about a just, peaceful and sustainable world. ACT leverages the knowledge, experience and member relationships, and the power communities, to advocate for just laws, policies and practices at all levels.
- ACT Alliance members work in long term transformational and sustainable **development** around the world and are at the forefront of this policy debate. For ACT development is deeply rooted in the growth and protection of human dignity, community resilience and environmental sustainability.

Source: <https://actalliance.org/about/>

## **Other International Relief & Development Agencies in Guatemala**

**World Vision Guatemala** began its support for the development of communities of limited resources in 1976. This support focuses on children and their effect on families. The main areas of work are: development, defense of causes, and attention to emergencies.

World Vision Guatemala has defined three strategic ministerial areas, which are:

1. Community management strengthening
2. Family life conditions improvement
3. Children's holistic welfare promotion

These three strategies areas cover the following program areas.

1. Local organizations strengthening
2. Community participation
3. Training on childhood development
4. Spiritual strengthening
5. Prevention, Emergency and Rehabilitation (PER)
6. Economic Development
7. Transformer Education
8. Integrated housing
9. Food security
10. Elementary Education
11. Christian and for life formation
12. Nutrition and health
13. Children Participation

The Area Development Program is a World Vision Guatemala strategy for the promotion of the sustainable transformational development. It seeks to promote and strengthen community base organizations and to promote organized civil participation at a local and municipal level in the country.

A development association is formed by community members that share common characteristics as history, culture, problems, interests, opportunities, among others. These associations are organized to generate processes of change and human development for collective impact. Each one of the associations that World Vision works with has a legal authorization, and has the faculty of seeking democratic ways that allow them to transform their conditions and quality of life in a holistic and sustainable manner while protecting the environment resources for future generations.

World Vision supports these organizations by means of cooperation agreements to provide them with technical, administrative, legal and financial advisory.

Website: <https://www.worldvision.org.gt/>

## **Other Religions and those with No Religious Affiliation (“nones”)**

Between 2001 and 2014, those affiliated with “other religions” remained steady at two to three percent, while those with “no religious affiliation” (this includes agnostics, atheists, those with “no preference” and “no response”) averaged 11.1 percent, according to a series of polls by CID-Gallup, Latinobarómetro and Pew Research. However, the latest Latinobarómetro poll of 2017 reported that the “nones” had increased to 14 percent, while those identified with “other religions” remained at two percent of the national population.

Source: [http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/gte/guat\\_polls\\_1990-2017.pdf](http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/gte/guat_polls_1990-2017.pdf)

Included in the “other religions” category are various **non-Protestant marginal Christian groups**, such as the following:

**The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.** Mormon missionaries first arrived in Guatemala in 1947. The first official meeting was held in a rented building on 22 August 1948, with 66 people in attendance. Later that year, John F. O'Donnal baptized the first convert in Guatemala. By 1956, three small congregations with a membership of about 250 had been established. Membership grew to 10,000 by 1966, and 18 years later, when the Guatemala City Temple was dedicated in 1984, membership had risen to 40,000. By 1998, membership had quadrupled again to 164,000. In 2007, the Mormon Church reported one Temple and 418 congregations with 215,186 members. If these last statistics are valid, then the Mormon Church was larger than most Protestant denominations in Guatemala at that time. [Note: Roger Grossman's 2001 study reported only 55,441 Mormon adherents nationally.] Currently, the LDS-Mormon website for Guatemala reports 272,449 members in 440 congregations within 48 stakes (districts), and with two Mormon Temples in the country:

<https://www.saladeprensamormona.gt/datos-y-estadisticas>

**Jehovah's Witnesses / Watchtower Bible & Tract Society** was founded by Charles Taze Russell in 1881 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; it was first established in Guatemala in 1949. According to its official sources, there were 364 congregations with about 24,000 “publishers” (active members) in 2005; 775 congregations with 38,266 “publishers” in 2014; currently, its website reported 884 congregations with 40,490 “publishers” on 19 March 2019:

<https://www.jw.org/es/testigos-de-jehov%C3%A1/por-todo-el-mundo/GT/> -

[https://www.academia.edu/7565426/Los testigos de Jehov%C3%A1 en Centroam%C3%A9rica 1984 -2008](https://www.academia.edu/7565426/Los_testigos_de_Jehov%C3%A1_en_Centroam%C3%A9rica_1984_-2008)

**Church of God, A Worldwide Association** is a sabbatical church that split from **United Church of God** in 2010, which had split from the *Worldwide Church of God* in 1995 [which changed its name to Grace Communion International, GCI, in 2000], with roots in the original Worldwide Church of God's beliefs and practices, as founded by radio-evangelist Herbert W. Armstrong in 1933 in Eugene, Oregon, who was an advocate of British Israelism. **The Living Church of God** was founded in 1998 by Roderick C. Meredith in San Diego, California, after having a falling out with the leadership of the **Global Church of God (later renamed Church of the Eternal God)**, founded in 1992 in Glendora, California, by Meredith who was one of Armstrong's disciples and who wanted to continue Armstrong's legacy. Some of the churches listed below may have been affiliated previously with the **Philadelphia Church of God**, founded in Edmond, Oklahoma, by Gerald R. Flurry, who was an ordained minister for

over 35 years and formerly served as a pastor in the Worldwide Church of God, from which he was excommunicated in December 1989, "for resisting sweeping doctrinal changes." See the following denominational websites: <https://cogwa.org/> - <https://pcg.church/> - <https://www.lcg.org/> - <https://www.globalchurchofgod.co.uk/> -

Barillas: [Church of God, a Worldwide Association](#)

Coatepeque: [Living Church of God](#)

El Estor: [Church of God, a Worldwide Association](#)

Guatemala City: [United Church of God](#)

Guatemala City: [Church of God, a Worldwide Association](#)

Jutiapa: [Church of God, a Worldwide Association](#)

Mazatenango: [Living Church of God](#)

Quetzaltenango: [Church of God, a Worldwide Association](#)

Quetzaltenango: [United Church of God](#)

San Benito: [Church of God, a Worldwide Association](#)

San Marcos: [United Church of God](#)

**The Light of the World Church – Iglesia La Luz del Mundo** (founded in 1926 in Guadalajara, Mexico): "The Church of the Living God, Column and Pillar of Truth, Jesus the Light of the World" was founded by **Eusebio Joaquín González**, known by his followers as "Aarón;" he was considered by his followers to be the "voice of God on earth; work was begun in 1966 in Chiquimulilla, Santa Rosa Department, Guatemala:  
<http://www.bereainternacional.com/regocijo-en-guatemala/>

**The Voice of the Cornerstone**, founded by William Soto Santiago in 1979 in Cayey, Puerto Rico; there are two congregations listed for Guatemala:

**La Voz De La Piedra Angular**

**Elder Escobar Monzón**

Manzana 6 Lote 733, Colonia Maya, Zona 18

Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

50253956165-50222600279

[vozprofeticadeliapostrero@hotmail.com](mailto:vozprofeticadeliapostrero@hotmail.com)

**La Voz De La Piedra Angular**

**Tirzo Ramiro Girón Pinzón**

5ta calle 10 – 74, Zona 4 de Mixco, Colonia Monte Real, Guatemala

502 24371014 - 502 53940037 - 502 560 43884

[tirzoafrica@hotmail.com](mailto:tirzoafrica@hotmail.com)

Sources: <https://es.aleteia.org/2017/03/27/la-voz-de-la-piedra-angular-y-william-soto-santiago/> - <http://alabanzaschristianas2016.blogspot.com/2016/06/Direcciones-Internacionales.html>

**Children of God (The Family International)**, may no longer exist in Guatemala:

<https://www.thefamilyinternational.org/en/work/americas-central/articles/hurricane-stan-relief-effort-43/>

**Church of Christian Science & Reading Rooms** (Mary Baker Eddy) in Guatemala:

<https://directory.christianscience.com/list/a117000000Xv7laas,a117000000Xv7LAAS>

**Science of the Mind-New Thought / Ciencia de la Mente Guatemala** (Ernest Holmes):  
<http://findacenter.com/nuevo-pensamiento-guatemala/nuevo-pensamiento-guatemala.htm>

**Christadelphian Bible Mission:** <http://www.labiblia.com/iglesias/guatemala.htm>

**Growing in Grace Ministries International** was founded in 1988 by Puerto Rican José Luis de Jesús Miranda in Miami, Florida (deceased in 2013). A few months after the leader's death, the organization was in the hands of three people, Lisbeth García (now called "Cristo Lisbeth de Melquisedec"), who was the last wife of José Luís de Jesús Miranda; Martin Guio, Bishop of *Creciendo en Gracia* in Colombia; and Andres Cudris (now deceased). A division of the movement occurred in Guatemala, which currently operates under the name of "The Science of JH," directed by Emilio Gramajo, who wanted to be a faithful follower of the teachings of Miranda but who could not stand the way that the organization was going under the director of Miranda's widow: <https://davidgaitan.wordpress.com/2017/06/21/que-paso-con-creciendo-en-gracia-despues-de-la-muerte-de-su-lider/> - <https://www.lacienciadejh.com/quien-es-jh>

## Eastern Orthodox groups in Guatemala

This refers to adherents, communities and organizations of Eastern Orthodox Christianity in the country, many of whom are ethnic Mayans. **There are four Eastern Orthodox jurisdictions in Guatemala.**

(1) Eastern Orthodox Christianity arrived in Guatemala at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with immigrants from Eastern Europe and the Middle East. In 1986, two Catholic women converted to Eastern Orthodoxy and established the **Orthodox Monastery of the Holy Trinity Lavra Mambré**, which was founded by Mother Inés Ayau García and Mother María A. Amistoso with the blessing of Metropolitan Damaskinos Papandreu. Although the monastery was originally located in Guatemala City, a new complex of buildings was constructed on the shores of Lake Amatitlán during the 1990s, under the leadership of Madre Inés.

In 1992, Mother Inés and Mother María were received into the **Antiochian Patriarchate** and the **Catholic Apostolic Orthodox Church of Guatemala** was formally established in 1995 under the jurisdiction of Archbishop Antonio Chedraui, Metropolitan of Mexico, Central America, Venezuela and the Caribbean, which is affiliated with the **Holy Synod of the Patriarchy of Antioch** (headquarters in Damascus, Syria). The Orthodox Parish of Guatemala is centered at the *Catholic Orthodox Church of the Transfiguration* (dedicated in 1997), originally located at the Rafael Ayau Orphanage in Zone 1 of Guatemala City and led by Hieromonje Padre Atanasio Alegría. The state orphanage of *Hogar Rafael Ayau*, established in 1857, was privatized and transferred to their care in 1996. For an update about this orphanage, see:

[https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/features/hogar\\_orphanage\\_moving\\_on\\_up](https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/features/hogar_orphanage_moving_on_up)

The membership of this Orthodox Community is Arab (particularly Palestinian), Syrian, Greek, Russian, Romanian, American, Mexican and Guatemalan. Currently, they do not have their own property. However, the Divine Liturgy is celebrated alternating on a Sunday at 11 a.m. and a Saturday at 6.30 p.m. Provisionally, we are in Office #1103 on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor of the Murano Center Building (14 Calle 3-51, Zone 10) of Guatemala City.

Source: <https://iglesia-ortodoxa-de-guatemala.webnode.es/sobre-nosotros/>

(2) **The Holy Orthodox Old Apostolic Catholic Church of Guatemala and Central America / Santa Iglesia Católica Apostólica Antigua Ortodoxa de Guatemala** is led by Bishop José Adán Morán Santos, with headquarters in Colonia Inde de Villa Nueva, a southern suburb of Guatemala City. He is also listed as *Arzobispo de Guatemala y Centro América de la Iglesia Ortodoxa (No Calcedónica)*, *Patriarcado de Antioquía / Archbishop of Guatemala and Central America of the Orthodox Church (Non-Chalcedonian)*, Patriarch of Antioch:  
<http://ortodoxoshispanos.galeon.com/cvita2046161.html>

(3) The **Orthodox Catholic Church of North and South America** (with headquarters in Akron, Ohio) ordained José Imre as Bishop of Guatemala in 1990, with headquarters in Tiquisate, Department of Esquitla; this denomination operates a seminary in the municipality of Nueva Concepción, Esquitla. Prior to 1988, the Guatemala jurisdiction was known as the **Catholic Orthodox Church of Guatemala and Latin America** (Source: Melton 2009:197).

(4) The **Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Mexico, Central America, Colombia and Venezuela, and the Caribbean Islands**, headquartered in Mexico City, is an eparchy of the Orthodox Church of Constantinople (Ecumenical Patriarchate). Its current primate is His Eminence Metropolitan Athenagoras (Aneste). This is a single metropolis that includes the countries of: Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, and the Caribbean Islands. The central church, the Archdiocesan Church of Agia Sophia, is the headquarters of the Metropolis.

Source: [https://orthodoxwiki.org/Metropolis\\_of\\_Mexico\\_\(Ecumenical\\_Patriarchate\)](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Metropolis_of_Mexico_(Ecumenical_Patriarchate))

Below is part of an interview between radio host John Maddex and Friar Peter Jackson on *Ancient Path Radio* (13 September 2013) about what has taken place in the Orthodox Church in Guatemala: <https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/features/150000 Converts in guatemala>

### 150,000 Converts in Guatemala!

We talked with **Fr. Peter Jackson, newly appointed OCMC [Orthodox Christian Mission Center] missionary to Guatemala**, following the mass conversion of 150,000 people into the Orthodox Church. Learn about his work in training clergy and translating liturgical documents for the 300+ churches and eight priests.

John Maddex: Hi, this is John Maddex, and many of you have probably heard about what's happening in Guatemala, where there have been hundreds of individuals—men, women, children—coming into the Orthodox Church. This phenomenon has been of interest, I know, to a lot of you, and today we're going to find out more about that, but also about some missionary work that's planned in Guatemala to help train this influx of people. We're talking with Fr. Peter Jackson, who is a newly appointed OCMC missionary to Guatemala. He and his wife will be going soon, and we're going to find out today what that's all about. Fr. Peter, welcome to Ancient Faith Radio.

Fr. Peter Jackson: Thanks so much, John. Thank you for having me.

Mr. Maddex: Tell us the story about Guatemala. What happened there that we have so many converts coming into the Church?

Fr. Peter: I'm so glad you're asking about this, because it's only now starting to filter down to the consciousness of the Orthodox faithful up here in North America, but in 2010, a huge group of people [were] received into the Orthodox Church under Metropolitan Athenagoras of the Greek [Orthodox] Archdiocese of Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. In the intro you said there were hundreds of people; what if I told you there were *thousands* of people that came into the Orthodox Church in Guatemala just in the last two years?

Mr. Maddex: Thousands? Wow. Oh yes, 150 *thousand*?

Fr. Peter: Yes, 150 *thousand*. And your response is not unusual in my experience.

Mr. Maddex: That's amazing!

Fr. Peter: When we're out there, it takes a while to sort of digest that number. If I tell people there's thousands of people that have converted in Guatemala, that gets their attention. If you say there's *tens* of thousands, they're just dumbfounded. If you say there's 150 [thousand], well, they can't even comprehend that number.

Mr. Maddex: All right. So how did this happen? Where were they before, and how did they come into the Orthodox Church?

Fr. Peter: As you can imagine, it's a long, complicated story, but to make it very brief, there's a priest in Guatemala named **Fr. Andrés Jirón [Girón]**. He's Guatemalan himself. He's not an indigenous Guatemalan. In fact, a lot of the Orthodox faithful in Guatemala are Maya, indigenous people. Fr. Andrés Jirón [Girón] is not Maya, but he has always had a heart for the people. He was originally a Roman Catholic priest. He knew Dr. Martin Luther King in the 1960s. I'm sure you might be aware: there was a huge civil war in Guatemala in the '60s, '70s, '80s, and finally ending in the 1990s, so the country has a very turbulent recent history.

Fr. Andrés always had a heart for the poor, a heart for the Maya people. The Maya people love him. He would help them to get titles to their own land so they would be able to own their own land and not be taken advantage of by wealthy landowners and such, so he did a lot to help the people. The people are loyal to him, and they just love him. He's a very dear man. My wife and I went earlier this year to Guatemala. We spent several weeks there, and we met him. He ended up leaving the Roman Catholic Church about 20 years ago, and was sort of in the wilderness. He had a friend whom he met in Guatemala who ended up in a non-canonical Orthodox jurisdiction, so Fr. Andres sort of ended up in that non-canonical group and brought his people with him. He's sort of a Moses in the wilderness leading his crowds of people, and they're basically just following him wherever he goes.

He realized a while back that he needed to bring his people into authentic, canonical Orthodoxy, so that finally came about in 2010, just three years ago, when they were received by **Metropolitan Athenagoras of the Greek [Orthodox] Archdiocese of Mexico**. This huge church is now a canonical church. They've considered themselves Orthodox for the last couple of decades. They identify as Orthodox, they call themselves Orthodox, their churches all have "Orthodox" in the name over the door, but they don't really understand a lot about what Orthodoxy *means*, so this is the big task ahead of us, is to catechize the people and train clergy for them.

Mr. Maddex: In the first place, this must be one of the largest, if not the largest, mass conversion into the Orthodox Church in the history of the Church, is it not?

Fr. Peter: I'm thinking it's probably the biggest conversion since the Baptism of the Rus' in 988.

Mr. Maddex: Wow.

Fr. Peter: I was reading recently about St. Nicholas of Japan, and when he reposed there were 30,000 people in the Church of Japan, and that's just one of the greatest mission success stories of the last couple hundred years. But this is already five times bigger than that.

Mr. Maddex: The mind just reels when you start to think of the next steps: how do you train them, what about the clergy, how are they set up, and that's kind of what you're interested in helping to accomplish. Tell us about the infrastructure and what is needed there.

Fr. Peter: **They have 338 parishes.** When people ask about Guatemala, I tell them to picture it as: Guatemala is south of Mexico. It's about the size, the area, the population, of Ohio, so think of it kind of like Ohio. In Ohio, there are 80 Orthodox parishes of all different stripes, but in Guatemala there's already 338. So, in Guatemala there's three-and-a-half times that number. **In these 338 parishes, they only have eight priests.**

In my brief time down there, I was able to meet most of these priests, and they're all wonderful men, very dedicated, very godly, very mature, very wise. They don't know an awful lot about what Orthodoxy is, and there's only eight of them. **One of the priests I met, he's personally responsible for about 50 parishes.** In other words, these priests practically have to act like bishops over a diocese. Their flock is so huge.

So, the big task right now ahead of us is to train clergy for all these parishes, and to retrain the clergy that they already have. The Church there is already opening up a seminary. It's got a name. I was there for the first Liturgy served at the seminary. It's going to be called the Saints Peter and Paul Seminary there in Guatemala. The Church itself there owns the land. They're building the seminary. They're being as self-sufficient as possible, but they *need* missionaries to come from abroad, from the U.S., who have theological training and experience to come down and teach the people.

Source: <https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/features/150000 Converts in guatemala>

It appears that the above account by Friar Peter Jackson is somewhat over sensationalized due to the fact that **Roman Catholic priest Andrés Jirón (correct spelling is: Girón)**, who was an active leader in the National Confederation of Campesinos during the 1980s, may have left the Catholic Church (along with several other priests) and became associated with the Greek Orthodox Church while bringing the former Catholic parishes where he served under the jurisdiction of the same Orthodox Church. Therefore, rather than describing this episode as a “mass conversion to the Orthodox Church,” it should be called a mass desertion of Indigenous campesino Catholics to another religious denomination, in this case, to the Orthodox Church. The motivation and circumstances behind this “mass desertion” from the Catholic Church and the reasons given by those who left for becoming Orthodox Christians is still a mystery that needs to be explained by further investigations – Clifton L. Holland

Father Andrés Girón was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church on 17 August 2000 because he became dedicated to political causes and later became associated with the Orthodox Church. Source:

[https://www.prenslibre.com/guatemala/justicia/muerte\\_sacerdote\\_ortodoxo-invasion\\_de\\_tierras-andres\\_giron\\_0\\_1085891553-html/](https://www.prenslibre.com/guatemala/justicia/muerte_sacerdote_ortodoxo-invasion_de_tierras-andres_giron_0_1085891553-html/)

When Father Andrés Girón died in February 2014, a local Guatemalan newspaper, *El País*, wrote this about him:

### **Biography of The Very Rev. Archimandrite Andres Girón de Leon**

The Very Reverend Archimandrite Andrés Girón de León, a native of Guatemala, is the leader of the Guatemalan Orthodox Church under the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Athenagoras of Mexico. He is presently ministering and laboring unceasingly among the indigenous Mayans living in the mountainous regions of Guatemala and Southern Mexico. The group has 338 Churches and chapels throughout the region and numbers over 500,000 faithful and catechumens.

While growing up in Guatemala in a family of privilege, Fr. Girón was moved by the sufferings of the poor. A strong desire to devote his life to alleviating the poverty of his people, particularly the Mayan

Indians, led him to seek holy orders in the Roman Catholic Church at an early age. Upon completion of his seminary education in Colombia, he returned to his beloved Guatemala as a parish priest and itinerant preacher, ministering to the people in the remote and nearly inaccessible regions of the country.

His espousal of the cause of the indigenous people eventually motivated Fr. Girón to seek public office as President of the Country in 1988 and then as a Senator in 1991. His service in the congress until 1996 led to a land reform movement among the rural poor. Today, there are some 44 villages founded by him and many more which seek his leadership and counsel. His tireless and vociferous efforts to improve the life of his disadvantaged countrymen eventually brought him into conflict with his superiors in the church and a government, supported by a strong and at times brutal military.

During the Guatemalan civil war that lasted for 36 years, Fr. Girón led his people in a March for Peace in 1986, an event that brought real gains to the peace process. In the early eighties a loyal following among the disaffected Mayan people in search of a spiritual home coalesced around the man who had faithfully served them, not only as a parish priest, but also as a senator, ambassador to the UN, and advocate for their rights.

Father Girón, no longer serving as a Catholic priest, embraced these people who had been deprived of the sacraments for many years, eventually leading them to Orthodox Christianity. At first, he joined a non-canonical Orthodox group in 1996 (called the Society of Secular Clerics) and was soon ordained a bishop. Seeking to enter canonical Orthodoxy, Fr. Andres was received by Metropolitan Athenagoras, hierarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 2010. In addition to his seminary education, Fr. Girón has a Ph.D. from his studies in the USA, and is a trained counselor.

Source: <https://www.svots.edu/content/biography-very-rev-archimandrite-andres-gir%C3%B3n-de-leon>



In 2010, thousands of Mayan Indians converted to the Orthodox Church in Guatemala and Southern Mexico. This website was created to tell their story. It provides a hub for all the photos, videos, and blog posts about the Mayan communities. The content comes from the missionaries who are working in Guatemala under the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC).

For questions or comments, please contact: [mayanorthodoxy@gmail.com](mailto:mayanorthodoxy@gmail.com)

The missionaries working in Guatemala are commissioned by the **Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC)**, a pan-Orthodox organization endorsed by the Assembly of Orthodox Bishops. OCMC exists to enable all Orthodox of North America to respond to the missionary calling by sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with the entire world. For more info on missions or to inquire about becoming a missionary, visit [the OCMC website](#).

Source: <http://www.mayanorthodoxy.com/>

See this link for a map of the Orthodox Church parishes in Guatemala and southern Mexico:

<http://www.mayanorthodoxy.com/map>

The leaders of the Orthodox Church in Guatemala are: <http://www.mayanorthodoxy.com/leaders>

## Non-Christian religions

**Included are the following.** Middle-Eastern: Judaism, Islam and Bahai; Southeast Asian: Buddhism and Hinduism; Far Eastern: Chinese religions and Japanese religions; European & American Ancient Wisdom traditions; Animism and related Amerindian and Afro-derived religions; Psychic-Spiritualist-New Age & UFO-related groups.

### Middle-Eastern Religions

The origins of the nation's **Jewish community** can be traced to German immigrants who arrived in Guatemala in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The community formed by these immigrants was small and isolated from the rest of the Jewish world, and its descendants are mostly no longer Jewish, culturally or religiously. Immigrants whose Jewish traditions are still present arrived at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from Germany and the Middle East, followed in the 1920s by Eastern Europeans. Many of the latter came via Cuba and considered Guatemala only a temporary transit location until they could obtain visas to the USA. Due to Guatemala's restrictive immigration laws, the Jewish community was reduced to only 800 people in 1939.

After World War II many Jewish refugees entered the country and settled in Guatemala City, Quetzaltenango and San Marcos. According to the 1965 census, out of 1,030 registered Jews, 276 were engaged in industry and commerce, 66 in the free professions, and seven in agriculture. The same census indicated that the Jewish community had 74 mixed marriages, accounting for 27.2 percent of the Jewish population.

Approximately 1,500 Jews lived in Guatemala in 2010 and the majority resided in Guatemala City. The Jewish community continues to shrink due to assimilation and inter-marriage. *The Jewish community is comprised of three main groups: German, Sephardic and East European (Ashkenazi), each with its own institutions. Sociedad Israelita Maguén David synagogue (Sephardic, Orthodox, founded in 1923), Centro Hebreo / Shaaréi Binyamin synagogue (Eastern European Ashkenazi, Orthodox, founded in 1941), Sociedad Israelita de Guatemala and Bet-El synagogue (German Ashkenazi, Liberal, founded in 1969), and Casa Hillel Jewish Community (Comunidad Hebreña Beit Ha-madrij Hillel). Other organizations, unified under the Jewish Central Committee include B'nai B'rith, Wizo and two youth groups, the Maccabi and Guafty (a Reform youth movement). A Jewish school, Instituto Albert Einstein, was founded in 1957; it had an enrolment of about 100 children in 1969, from kindergarten through preparatory levels.*

Source: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/guatemala-virtual-jewish-history-tour>

The **Muslim community**, which resides primarily in Guatemala City, is composed of about 100 families (approximately 1,200 people), of which 95 percent are Palestinian Arab immigrants who arrived during and after the 1970s. The Islamic Da'wah Mosque of Guatemala (*Mezquita de Aldawaa Islámica*), founded in 1996, is located in Zone 9 on the outskirts of Guatemala City; it is led by its Imán, *Fahed Himed el-Sagini* (2016), who was born in Egypt. The majority of his congregation of about 350 people is composed of Palestinian Arabs along with a few Egyptians, Moroccans and Guatemalan converts. In Islamic theology, the purpose of Da'wah is to invite people, both Muslims and non-Muslims, to understand the worship of Allah as expressed in the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* ("the way of the prophet"), as well as to inform them about Muhammad. The president of the Da'wah Islamic Community in Guatemala is Jamal Mubarak.

The main Ahmadiyya mosque in the country is *Mezquita Baitul Awwal*, located in Mixco on the westside of Guatemala City and constructed in 1989. There are about 700 Ahmadis in the country, mostly Palestinian Arabs, with other mosques in Huehuetenango and Quetzaltenango. Ahmadiyya is an Islamic messianic movement founded in Punjab, British India, in 1889 by *Mirza Ghulam Ahmad* (1835-1908) of Qadian. **The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community** is the only Islamic organization to believe that the long-awaited Messiah has come in the person of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who claimed to be the metaphorical second coming of Jesus of Nazareth and the divine guide, whose advent was foretold by the Prophet Muhammad. However, in many Islamic countries the Ahmadis have been defined as heretics and non-Muslim and subjected to attacks and often systematic oppression by other Muslims in predominantly Muslim countries.

Sources: <https://mezquitaguatemala.es.tl/Mezquita-Aldawa.htm> -

<https://www.prensalibre.com/revista-d/el-islam-es-paz/> -

<https://ahmadiyyatmosques.wordpress.com/2017/11/02/baitul-awal-mixco-guatemala/> -

<https://ahmadiyyatmosques.wordpress.com/about/> - <https://www.alislam.org/library/ahmadiyya-muslim-community/>

**Bahá'í Community.** The Bahá'í Faith began in Guatemala in 1936, when Bahá'í teachers visited the country for the first time. According to Artemus Lamb, the first Bahá'í pioneer was Gerard Sluter who was in the country during the years 1939-1940. The formation of the first Local Spiritual Assembly took place in 1945 in Guatemala City.

Source: <https://bahai.org.gt/>

## Southeast Asian Religions

### Buddhist organizations in Guatemala include the following.

Amigos del Dharma (Vajrayana, Tibetan):

[http://www.buddhanet.info/wbd/region.php?region\\_id=2](http://www.buddhanet.info/wbd/region.php?region_id=2)

Antigua Sangha (Vietnamese Zen):

[http://iriz.hanazono.ac.jp/zen\\_centers/centers\\_data/guatemala.htm](http://iriz.hanazono.ac.jp/zen_centers/centers_data/guatemala.htm)

Buddhist Center of Guatemala City (Tibetan, Karma Kagyu, Diamond Way):

<https://www.karmapa.org/centers/guatemala-city/guatemala-diamond-way-buddhist-center/>

Buddhist Center of Huehuetenango (Mahayana, Zen Buddhist):

[http://www.buddhanet.info/wbd/region.php?region\\_id=2](http://www.buddhanet.info/wbd/region.php?region_id=2)

Casa Tibet Guatemala (Lhundrup Tongpa Ling):

[http://www.buddhanet.info/wbd/region.php?region\\_id=2](http://www.buddhanet.info/wbd/region.php?region_id=2)

Losang Chogyel Study Group (Vajrayana, Tibetan, Gelugpa lineages):

[http://www.buddhanet.info/wbd/region.php?region\\_id=2](http://www.buddhanet.info/wbd/region.php?region_id=2)

## Hindu organizations in Guatemala include the following.

International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKON):

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Nonprofit-Organization/Hare-Krishna-Guatemala-1929912883911379/>

International Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organization:

<https://www.sathyasai.org/organize/countryintros/guatemala.html>

Transcendental Meditation (TM):

[http://www.meditacion.org/web/guatemala/inicio?utm\\_source=Facebook&utm\\_medium=Field-paradigm&utm\\_campaign=Field-paradigm](http://www.meditacion.org/web/guatemala/inicio?utm_source=Facebook&utm_medium=Field-paradigm&utm_campaign=Field-paradigm)

Ishayas Ascension Techniques: <http://wikieducator.org/Ascension - everyday meditation>

Vaishnava Mission: <https://www.vina.cc/2007/06/10/guatemala-and-the-vaishnava-future/>

## Far-Eastern Religions

**Chinese religions:** In 1897, a government decree was issued requiring all Chinese in Guatemala to register and take out residential permits, and forbidding any further immigration into the country by Chinese nationals. In December 1906, there were registered, under the decree of 1897, 604 Chinese citizens. Most of the early Chinese immigrants arrived in Guatemala between 1877 and 1908 during the construction of the national railroad system or to work in agriculture (coffee and banana plantations), whereas most of the newer arrivals came to Guatemala in the post-World War II period. The early Chinese immigrants, as well as later arrivals after World War II, *brought with them a variety of religious beliefs* (Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and animistic tribal religions), most of which were lost over time due to cultural assimilation, intermarriage and conversion to Roman Catholicism. In the late 1930s, as World War II was just beginning in Europe, many Chinese left their homeland, fleeing in the face of the impending Japanese invasion and occupation of China. After World War II, there was a new Chinese diaspora from mainland China, Taiwan and Southeast Asia, followed by later emigrations from Taiwan, Hong Kong and elsewhere to Latin America, including Guatemala.

Reference source: <https://asiاسociety.org/chinese-religions-and-philosophies>

**Japanese religions.** The small Japanese community in Guatemala since the 1980s resides mostly in Guatemala City and has taken part in economic development in the country, including the establishment of Japanese restaurants. In October 2014, the Japanese princes Akishino and Kiko visited Guatemala with their main objective to strengthen ties between Guatemala and Japan. Most of the Japanese immigrants probably have family ties to the various Shinto and Buddhist sects and to Japanese New Religions in their homeland but the only known Japanese religion with activities in Guatemala is the Sukyo Mahikari “Divine True Light” Mission:

[https://es.cybo.com/GT-biz/sukyo-mahikari-guatemala\\_1P](https://es.cybo.com/GT-biz/sukyo-mahikari-guatemala_1P)

Reference source: [https://spice.fsi.stanford.edu/docs/japanese\\_religions](https://spice.fsi.stanford.edu/docs/japanese_religions)

**Groups of Ancient Wisdom Traditions** in Guatemala include the following.

**Freemasonry:** The Grand Orient of Colombia was organized in 1881, Constance Lodge at Cartagena. This divided into three others affiliated with the Grand Orient of Central America. On 20 October 1903, the Grand Orient of Guatemala was opened in Guatemala City:  
<http://www.albedrio.org/htm/articulos/a/abp-039.htm>

**Grand Universal Fraternity:** <https://www.aquienguate.com/perfil/gran-fraternidad-universal>

**Ancient & Mystical Order of the Rosæ Crucis (AMORC):**  
<https://mitologialeyendas.ning.com/profiles/blogs/guatemala-centro-cultural-rosacruz-amorc>

**Universal Gnostic Movement:** <http://www.gnosisguatemala.org/escuelas-gnosticas-en-guatemala/>

**New Acropolis Cultural Centers:** <http://www.nuevaacropolis.org.gt/>

## Native American & African-derived Religions

**Many of the Amerindian peoples practice religious syncretism,** which combines their ancient animistic beliefs and practices with a Roman Catholicism imposed on them by civil and religious authorities during the Spanish colonial period (1521-1821). The result is a “popular Catholicism” that retains significant elements of Amerindian spirituality, which includes animistic beliefs and practices such as **magic** (white and black, good and evil), **witchcraft** (*bujería*), **herbal healing** (*curanderismo*) and **shamanism** (the shaman is an intermediary with the spirit world).

Animistic beliefs are strongest among the Amerindians (predominantly Mayan) who are the least acculturated to *ladino* society, and who live in the Central Highlands or the rainforests of the lowlands in the Petén region of northern Guatemala. However, since the end of Guatemala’s civil war (1960-1996), there has been a resurgence of Maya spirituality in the predominantly Mayan areas of the Central Highlands, among both Roman Catholics and Protestants.

According to Methodist missionary Paul Jeffrey, “With the reaffirmation of Indigenous culture that has accelerated since 1992 – the year that Rigoberta Menchú, a Maya K’iche’ woman from Guatemala, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize – Maya spirituality can be practiced in Guatemala with few restrictions. According to some estimates, more than one-third of Guatemala’s 11 million people practice some element of traditional Maya spirituality, and observers expect that percentage to grow” (Jeffrey 2000).

Although the law permits Maya spiritual groups to conduct religious ceremonies at Mayan historical sites on government-owned property, some Maya leaders stated the government continued to limit their access to some religious sites and require them to pay to access the sites. The government maintained that there were no limitations to access; however, anyone seeking access to the sites must pay “processing fees.” Many Mayan religious and archeological sites are national parks or protected areas where the national government charges admission fees to all visitors. According to leaders from the Committee on the Designation of Sacred Sites, practitioners of Maya spirituality generally were generally only able to obtain free access to sites

only if they were accredited and issued an identification card by certain indigenous organizations as spiritual guides and had received written permission from the culture ministry 15 days before the scheduled ceremony/religious practice. Maya leaders stated that written permission included long paperwork completed in Spanish. They said the process was difficult and expensive because it required travel to the capital, as well as fluency in Spanish, which many indigenous persons do not speak. The Presidential Commission against Discrimination and Racism (CODISRA), however, said it provided interpreters upon request to facilitate the process. Mayan advocates stated they should have access, within reasonable parameters, to all sacred sites (an estimated 2,000 locations on both public and private land).

Source: International Religious Freedom Report for 2017, U. S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/281320.pdf>

**National Conference of Ministers of Maya Spirituality of Guatemala / Conferencia Nacional de Ministros de la Espiritualidad Maya de Guatemala “Oxlajuj Ajpop”** was founded in 1991 with these objectives of reassessing and strengthening Maya spirituality by means of recovering, conserving and disseminating the historical, spiritual and scientific values of the Mayan Sacred Places in Guatemala. To accomplish these objectives, the “Oxlajuj Ajpop” (Maya spiritual guides) support a law to administer and protect their sacred ancestral sites.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Oxlajuj-Ajpop-515410961806227/>

Oxlajuj Ajpop offers legal support and advice to the families which, due to fear of retribution and social pressure, have never exhumed their relatives killed in the war. Psychological counselling is also offered based on concepts from the Mayan Cosmovision, with the intent of instilling human rights values and peace, and displacing fear.

Oxlajuj Ajpop began to work with Indigenous peoples after the peace treaty was signed in Guatemala in 1996. After witnessing the erosion of the traditional Mayan social structure, the organization began with the aim of assisting the rebuilding of social fabric through supporting the principle values of the Mayan culture. It strives to maintain the remaining structure of Mayan authority and spirituality and strengthen the position of local leaders inherent to Mayan culture.

Source: <https://www.peaceinsight.org/conflicts/central-america/peacebuilding-organisations/oxlajuj-ajpop/>

**Maximón** is a Mayan “folk saint” venerated in various forms by Maya people of several Guatemalan towns in the highlands of Western Guatemala. His effigies are found in San Jorge La Laguna, Nahualá and Santiago Atitlán (Sololá), as well as in Zunil (Quetzaltenango), and San Andrés Itzapa (Chimaltenango). **Maximón**, also known as **San Simón**, is represented by a dressed up wooden effigy sitting on a chair who, unlike other saints, smokes cigars and drinks alcohol. He is called the Great Grandfather Mam. Maximón is actively worshipped as part of Guatemala’s “**folk Catholic**“ traditions, especially in the Central Highlands. Maximón’s devotees travel from near and far to visit him and ask for protection, money, to be cured or to find a husband or a wife. Maximón receives everyone – men and women, villagers and urban dwellers, prostitutes and entrepreneurs – who come with many offerings, including tobacco, liquor, money and tortillas (his favorites according to tradition). A detailed description of Maximón and the practices associated with him is found at:

<http://www.santiagoatitlan.com/Religion/Maximon/maximon.html>

One school of thought associates him with pre-Columbian underworld “Lord of the Earth, wealthy beings who live inside mountains, associated with black water, the primordial sea from where all life was spawned. He can be bargained with to provide money or economic opportunity to client-petitioners.

One oral tradition holds that to combat the many witches and evil beings around Santiago Atitlán, the *Nahuales* (shamans) got together and sought a Great Grandfather for the village. They went to a place called *Chukox Aq'oom* and consulted a tree called *Tz'ajte'l*. The tree agreed to help and they cut it down to fashion the image of Great Grandfather. They formed the body with rags, using an ancient green stone carving as a heart, and put rings on his arms for tying him up. He came alive and they released him into the streets where he overcame the evil beings but went out of control causing his own form of mayhem. So the shamans twisted his head so he looked backwards and broke his legs so he couldn't walk around. Today, he only works with Nahuales and the Brotherhood of Santa Cruz to help the people.

Source: <https://www.wilderutopia.com/traditions/maximon-the-underground-great-grandfather-of-western-guatemala/>

**African-derived religions:** the **Garifuna religion** among the Black Carib and **creole religion** among English-speaking West Indians (Myalism and Obeah) is practiced on the Caribbean coast in Livingston, Puerto Barrios and surrounding areas of Izabal Department.

For a general historical overview of the Garifuna people, see the following document:  
<http://www.coha.org/garifuna-voices-of-guatemala-an-overlooked-segment-of-the-african-diaspora/>

For a general overview of “creole” religion, see: Fernández Olmos, Margarite and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert. *Creole Religions of the Caribbean: An Introduction from Vodou and Santería to Obeah and Espiritismo*. New York City, NY: New York University Press, 2003.

**Garifuna spirituality and religion** are a blend of the rituals and beliefs of Arawak, Island Caribs and West African beliefs and culture that evolved on the Caribbean island of St. Vincent. All of these cultures have a strong belief in ancestral spirits and their influence on those who are living. It is believed that by acknowledging these spirits through different ceremonies, they would bless their family members and ensure continued individual, family and community well-being. Over time Garifuna spirituality and religion has developed to be an integral part of the Garifuna culture. The most common Garifuna ceremonies are: Beluria (ninth night), Dugu and Chugu. The Dugu and Chugu ceremonies take place exclusively within the Garifuna temple, and the Dabuyaba under the direction of a *Buyei* (shaman). All Garifuna rituals and ceremonies include abundant drumming, dancing and singing in the Garifuna language. During these rituals and ceremonies, some of the dancers enter “an altered state of consciousness,” or trance, that is also called “spirit possession,” which is a common experience within most African-derived religions in the Caribbean and the Caribbean Basin countries.

Source: <http://www.warasadrumschool.com/garifuna-culture/garifuna-spirituality-and-religion/>

### **Garifuna & Afro-Antilleans in Guatemala**

The Afro-Amerindian population group known as the Garifuna live along a short stretch of coast in the eastern Caribbean lowlands of Guatemala. The Garifuna arrived from Honduras shortly after

Guatemalan independence in 1823...The Garifuna are of mixed African and native [Amerindian] ancestry. They speak a native language showing influences from both Yoruba and French. The number of Garifuna-speaking persons in Guatemala is estimated at 17,000. Many speak only Spanish or Creole English. A number of Garifuna have left the Caribbean coast to seek jobs and opportunities in the capital.

The three most important Afro-Guatemalan settlements along the Caribbean coast are Livingston (a Garifuna settlement), Puerto Barrios and Santa Tomas. All three towns have important Garifuna and/or Afro-Antillean communities. In Livingston, the Garifuna maintain many of their Afro-Amerindian traditions in art, music and food. The population there numbers around 4,000 and every May 15<sup>th</sup> a festival is held to celebrate the arrival of the first Garifuna on the shores of [Central America]. The town celebrates with traditional music and dancing. The Garifuna are well known for their hand made drums as well as their "punta" music that is popular throughout Latin-America. Many Garifuna in Livingston speak Spanish as well as Creole English.

A small Creole English-speaking community of Afro-Antilleans has also settled in Guatemala. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a number of Jamaican and Belizean blacks immigrated to Guatemala for employment opportunities. The Guatemalan government placed immigration restrictions on these newcomers and many could only stay in the country in two-year intervals.

The town of Puerto Barrios was built by the American United Fruit Company to ship bananas to New Orleans. The first United Fruit plantations in Guatemala were established in 1906, at the mouth of the Rio Matagua (near Puerto Barrios). Blacks from Jamaica were recruited to work on these plantations. Because they were English speaking, American employers favored the Jamaicans over the local Spanish-speaking workers. The banana plantations latter expanded into the areas along the lower Rio Motagua and around Lake Izabal. During the 1930's the plantations were struck by disease and United Fruit moved its operations to the Pacific coastal area, moving the bananas by rail to the Caribbean ports.

In Guatemala City Afro-Antilleans came to work as farm and services laborers. A small post war migration of Afro-Antilleans was reflected in the Guatemalan census of 1950, which reported 1,530 Belizean born Guatemalans and 435 Jamaican. Others have continued to migrate during the past 50 years making the Caribbean "lowlands" of Guatemala the most African influenced region in the country.

Source: <http://lestweforget.hamptonu.edu/page.cfm?uuid=9FEC3190-9B1E-6E44-83CF1EE60C801AAE>

## **Psychic-Spiritualist-New Age & UFO-related groups**

### **Psychic-Spiritualist groups:**

Spiritist Schools and Associations in Guatemala: <http://www.feguat.com/index.php/asociaciones-y-escuelas-espiritas/>

The International Spiritism Council (founded in 1992 in Brasilia) lists one member in Guatemala, the Guatemalan Heliosophical Study Network / *Cadena Heliosófica Guatemalteca*: <https://cei-spiritistcouncil.com/> - [www.guatespirita.org](http://www.guatespirita.org) - <http://cei-spiritistcouncil.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/49.ISCBulletin2013-EN.pdf>

Magnetic-Spiritual School of the Universal Commune / *Escuela Magnético-Espiritual de la Comuna Universal*: <https://www.emecu178.com/en/>

In addition, there are numerous psychics, mediums, clairvoyants and astrologers who announce their services in local Guatemalan newspapers. Go to Google and search on: “direcciones de centros espirituistas en guatemala”.

#### New Age groups:

Church of Scientology / Iglesia de Scientología: <http://www.guatemala.scientologymissions.org/>

Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity / Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (founded by “Sun Myung Moon” in 1954 in South Korea):  
<http://familyfedihq.org/about/>

Silva Mind Control / Silva Method: <https://directorio.guatemala.com/listado/metodo-silva-de-control-mental.html>

**UFO-related groups:** Raelian Movement - <http://www.raelians.org/>

### Ecumenical-Interfaith Groups

The vision of the Ecumenical Christian Council of Guatemala (*Concejo Ecuménico Cristiano de Guatemala* - CECG) is to be a common place (Oikoumene) for the meeting of Christians from different traditions and non-Christians who, through dialogue, strengthen the transformation of concrete reality. Its mission is to create spaces for dialogue and respect where life in all its diversity is recognized and affirmed.

CECG held a meeting in February 2011 in the Metropolitan Cathedral where about 400 people gathered for dialogue and prayer with the participation of Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, Mennonite and Presbyterian-Reformed church members, led by their bishops, priests, pastors and ministers; and for the first time representatives of other religions – Muslim, Buddhist and Maya – were invited to participate.

Sources: [https://www.ini-ecumenica.org/fileadmin/mediapool/einrichtungen/E\\_oekumen\\_initiative\\_mittelamerika/Guatemala/CECG/Musulmanes\\_budistas\\_mayas\\_y\\_cristianos\\_oran\\_por\\_la\\_PazF.pdf](https://www.ini-ecumenica.org/fileadmin/mediapool/einrichtungen/E_oekumen_initiative_mittelamerika/Guatemala/CECG/Musulmanes_budistas_mayas_y_cristianos_oran_por_la_PazF.pdf)

### Those with no religious affiliation or not specified

The “nones” (no religious affiliation) were reported to be 10-14 percent between 2010 and 2017, according to public opinion polls.

Source: [www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/gte/guat\\_polls\\_1990-2017.pdf](http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/gte/guat_polls_1990-2017.pdf)

Last updated on 30 March 2020

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