

Research on the Evangelical Mega-Church Phenomenon in Central America: Facts and Fiction

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By Clifton L. Holland

Introduction

On April 25, 2011, my old friend Dr. J.B.A. (John) Kessler wrote me the following: Jorge {last name deleted} told me that I had no right to criticize mega-churches in Costa Rica unless I had actually been to them. So for the last few months, I have wasted my time doing just that. My experience is that it is a mixed bag. Three churches were simply awful. One was doubtful because, although the preaching was good, the pastor spent more time speaking about the offering than on his sermon. Two were doubtful because, although they did not say anything heretical about the offering, they did not really edify the sheep. One was good and one was very good.

So I decided to find out from John which churches he visited, when and what he thinks about each one in particular, so that I can sort out which ones he was talking about above. However, John was travelling in Peru and wasn't expected to return to Costa Rica for several weeks.

In the meanwhile, I began to explore the Internet in an attempt to find out what others have been saying about mega-churches in Central America in particular and in Latin America in general. On the narrower search on "mega-churches in Central America" I discovered that there were nine listings on Google: eight of them were my own web pages (in the Central America section of www.prolades.com) and one was from an article written in 1994 by a veteran Evangelical missionary in Central America who represents the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition. Below are his comments about Evangelical mega-churches to start off my discussion of this growing phenomenon in Central America.

Some Alleged Characteristics of Mega-Churches in Central America

Amzie Yoder: "Fundamentalism and the Church in Central America" in *Mission Focus Annual Review*, 1994, Volume 2 (pp.45-50), available at:

http://www.ambs.edu/files/documents/news-and-publications/publications/mf/Mission_Focus_Vol_2.pdf

- Evangelical mega-churches are conservative theologically, socially and politically.

- Evangelical mega-churches are predominantly Pentecostal-Charismatic (or neo-Pentecostal).
- Evangelical mega-churches are predominantly fundamentalist with a strong tendency toward sectarian exclusiveness that promotes dogmatism and fanaticism.
- Evangelical mega-churches have leadership structures that are very hierarchical and authoritarian.
- Evangelical mega-churches are predominantly composed of members with little education who are drawn from the lower socio-economic levels of society.
- Evangelical mega-churches preach and teach the “prosperity gospel” of health, wealth and happiness that promotes capitalism and the free enterprise system.
- Evangelical mega-churches support rightwing political parties and governments.

Therefore, if we start off with the premise that these are the perceived characteristics of mega-churches in Central America by some observers, then we can proceed to investigate the phenomenon first-hand through fieldwork in each country of the region using a case study approach with participant-observation as our research method in an attempt to prove, disprove or modify these perceived characteristics in order to describe the reality of the situation from my own profession perspective based on more than 40 years of experience in designing, conducting, coordinating and supervising social science research in Latin America.

Current Research Findings by PROLADES

At the beginning of 2011, I began to gather, study and evaluate information about the Evangelical mega-church phenomenon worldwide in preparation for conducting my own fieldwork (and motivating and training others to do the same) in Costa Rica and the rest of Central America, where I have lived and worked as a Christian educator since April 1972. I soon came to realize that what most observers were saying about mega-churches around the world was not necessarily true of the situation in Central America.

Consequently, I began to make plans for travelling to El Salvador and Guatemala to start the long process of identifying what and where the mega-churches are within a country, when they were first founded as a congregation and by whom (founder/ founders, denominational background and theological orientation), when each congregation developed into a mega-church (defined as those churches having 2,000 or more people in attendance in Sunday worship services on a given day), what are the actual characteristics of each mega-church in each country (using every criteria known

to mankind), and make a photo documentary of my journey using my digital camera that takes still shots as well as moving pictures.

My personal observations in El Salvador in April 2011

My journey began at my home in San Pedro, Montes de Oca, Costa Rica (where the offices of PROLADES are located) on April 7, 2011, when I left for the Juan Santamaria International Airport near the city of Alajuela to catch my brief flight on TACA Airlines to El Salvador. There I spent the next six days conducting personal interviews with Evangelical leaders (church and para-church officials), attending an important government-sponsored conference at the National Museum of Anthropology in San Salvador on "The Construction of the Nation: the contribution of Evangelical Protestants in the formation of the Salvadoran nation-state, XIX-XX Centuries," making new contacts and visiting with old friends, meeting and discussing the historiography of the Evangelical Church in El Salvador with local Evangelical church historians and university professors, and conducting my own on-site fieldwork on Evangelical mega-churches in San Salvador.

Regarding the latter task, I was fortunate to have the assistance of the Rev. Enrique Barillas, a local Salvadoran church historian who is a member of the Assemblies of God and who knows his way around the large city of San Salvador, the nation's capital, with an estimated population of 972,800 in 2009 (2.3 million people in the metropolitan area). The City of San Salvador has the third-largest population in Central America after Guatemala City (1.2 million) and Managua (974,000) and is the second-most populated metropolitan area in the region after Metro Guatemala City (3,681,300 in 2010).

The team of Holland-Barillas conducted the on-site fieldwork at six Evangelical mega-churches in San Salvador on Sunday, April 10, 2011, between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM. The following mega-churches were visited (in the same order as presented below) and a series of photos were taken both inside and outside of the main auditoriums:

- (1) Templo Cristiano de las Asambleas de Dios
Pastor Orlando Flores
Colonia San Benito, San Salvador

Observations: the main auditorium has a seating capacity of 1,800 people; the attendance was only about 50% of capacity in the three Sunday worship services, with a total estimated attendance of about 3,000 people. The predominant socio-economic level of those in attendance was middle-class attendees (using public transportation and some rented buses), while about a third of those in attendance were from the upper-middle class to lower-upper class (using their own private automobiles and parking garages on or near the church's installations). The mega-church has a large, modern facility for worship and Christian education programs, both for Sunday School classes and a private Christian School.



(2) Tabernaculo Biblico Bautista "Amigos de Israel" -
Pastor Dr. Edgar Lopez Bertrand (known as "Brother Toby")-
Colonia San Benito, San Salvador
(affiliated with the International Baptist Mission)

Observations: the main auditorium has a seating capacity of about 10,000 people; there were six Sunday worship services with a total average attendance of between 48,000 and 50,000 according to our estimates. The predominant socio-economic level of those in attendance was middle-class attendees (using public transportation and some rented buses), while about a third of those in attendance were from the upper-middle class to lower -upper class (using their own private automobiles and parking garages on or near the church's installations). This mega-church has a large, modern facility for worship and Christian education programs, both for Sunday School classes and a private Christian School. It had the largest average Sunday attendance of the mega-churches we visited in San Salvador.

Additional observation: Both the Templo Cristiano de las Asambleas de Dios and the Tabernaculo Biblico Bautista "Amigos de Israel" are located close to one another in the same upper-class residencial neighborhood of Colonia San Benito, but separated from one another by a deep ravine.







(3) Iglesia Centro Familiar de Adoración de las Asambleas de Dios
Pastor Francisco Karra
Colonia Santa Lucia, San Salvador

Observations: the main auditorium has a seating capacity of about 1,000 people; there were three Sunday worship services with a total average attendance of about 2,600 people. The predominant socio-economic level of those in attendance was mid-to-lower middle class, with most people using public transportation to attend services in this middle class neighbourhood surrounded by commercial buildings and several private schools.





(4) Iglesia Elim Central de San Salvador - Mision Cristiana Elim Internacional
Pastor General Mario Vega (independent Pentecostal)
Calle al Matazano, Final Colonia Santa Lucia

Observations: the church's main auditorium is a remodelled factory building that now seats about 5,000; there are five Sunday worship services with a total average attendance of about 48,000 to 50,000 people. The organization rents about 50 private school buses to transport people to and from the church's installations on a given Sunday for each of the five worship services from various parts of the metropolitan area. The predominant socio-economic level of those in attendance was poor working class, with a minority of middle-class attendees, in this poor working-class neighbourhood on the edge of San Salvador.







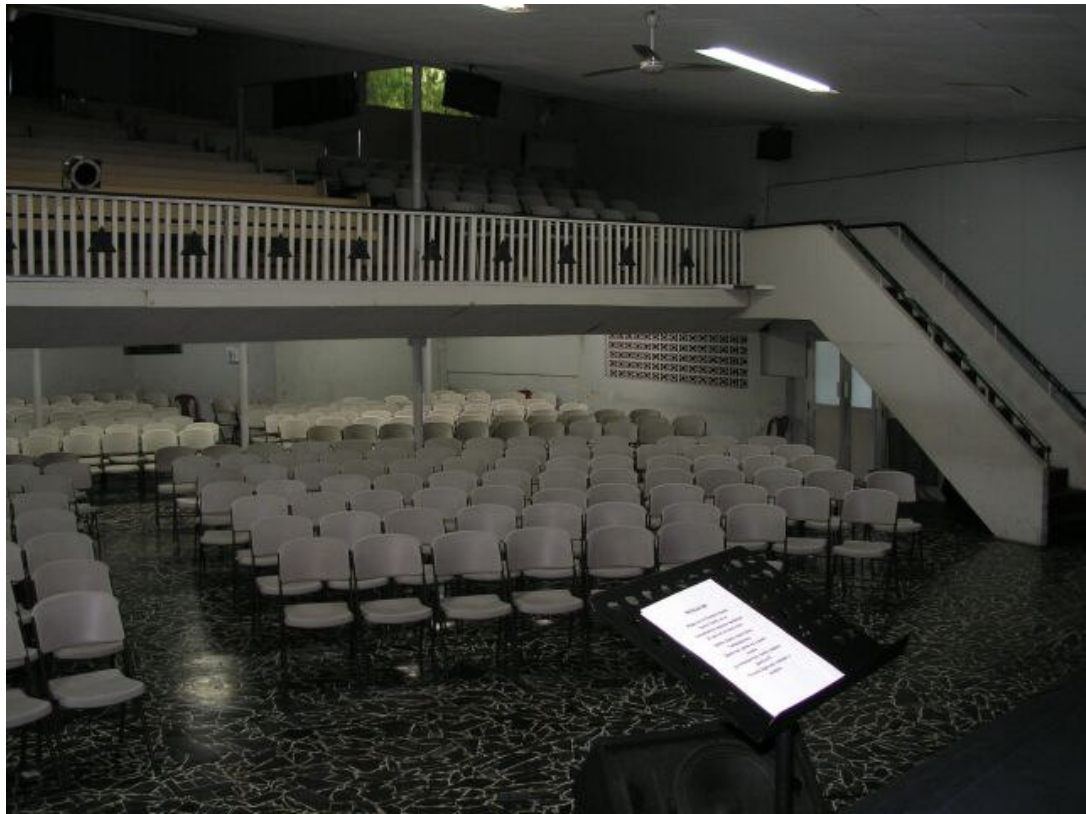
(5) Iglesia Cristiana Josué de las Asambleas de Dios
Pastor Lisandro Bojorquez
Avenida Mansferrer Sur, Colonia Campestre, San Salvador

Observations: the main auditorium and adjacent open patio area seats about 1,000 people for each of the three Sunday worship services, with a total average Sunday attendance of about 3,000 people. The back of the auditorium and adjacent patio area has several large-flat, color TV monitors so that those in the rear can have a closer view of the raised platform and area. The predominant socio-economic level of those in attendance was mid-to-upper middle class; most people drive to church and park in the church's large grass-covered parking lot adjacent to the main church building.



(6) Centro Evangelístico de San Salvador – Assemblies of God
Pastors Juan Angel and Edith Castro
2a Avenida Norte, Colonia La Rabida, San Salvador

Observations: we arrived to visit this church late on Sunday afternoon when no services were being held; the auditorium has a seating capacity of about 1,500 people, and the total average attendance in the three Sunday worship services is reported to be about 3,000 people. This congregation was pastored by the Rev. Juan Bueno for 28 years, during which time it became the largest Evangelical congregation in San Salvador with 12 daughter churches throughout the city. However, many former members left to attend other congregations in the city because the church facilities are now old and there is limited parking for those who attend from all over town; previously, most members travelled to and from the church using public transportation. The congregation is planning to build a larger auditorium that will seat about 5,000 people, and it will have larger parking facilities to accommodate the growing middle-class membership.





Because of time limitations, we were unable to visit two other known mega-churches in San Salvador:

Iglesia Tabernáculo de Fe
Pastor Oscar Sánchez (independent neo-Pentecostal)
Calle Paleca #83, Ciudad Delgado, San Salvador

Tabernáculo de Avivamiento Internacional
Pastor Carlos Heriberto Rivas (independent neo-Pentecostal)
Blvd. de Ejercito Nacional, near Unicentro Altavista and
close to the old Ilopango International Airport in San Salvador

**CUADRO COMPARATIVO DE MEGA-IGLESIAS EN SAN SALVADOR
INVESTIGACION DEL DR. CLIFTON HOLLAND Y ENRIQUE BARILLAS IN SITU
DOMINGO, 10 DE ABRIL 2011**

IGLESIA	PASTOR	CAPA- CIDAD DEL TEMPLO	NO. DE CULTOS	ASISTENCIA TOTAL ESTIMADA
(1) Templo Cristiano AD - Christian Temple of the Assemblies of God	Orlando Flores	1.800	3	3.000
(2) Tabernáculo Bíblico Bautista - Baptist Bible Tabernacle	Hermano Toby	10.000	6	48.000
(3) CEFAD - Family Worship Center of the Assemblies of God	Francisco Karra	1.000	3	2.600
(4) Misión Elim Central - Central Elim Mission	Mario Vega	5.000	5	22.000
(5) Iglesia Josue AD - Joseph Church Assemblies of God	Lisandro Bojorquez	1.000	3	3.000
(6) Centro Evangelístico AD - Evangelistic Center of the Assemblies of God	Juan Gastol	1.500	3	3.500
TOTALES (6)		20.300	23	82.100

My personal observations in Guatemala in April 2011

The next stop on my journey was in Guatemala City on April 13, where I spent the next six days conducting personal interviews with Evangelical leaders (church and para-church officials), making new contacts and visiting with old friends, meeting and discussing the historiography of the Evangelical Church in Guatemala with local Evangelical church historians and university professors, and conducting my own on-site fieldwork on Evangelical mega-churches in Guatemala City.

While interviewing the director of the Guatemalan Bible Society, I was able to make arrangements for one of their staff members to assist me in visiting mega-churches in Guatemala City on Sunday, April 17. Mr. Francisco González picked me up in his car 8:00 AM on Sunday to begin our visits to nine mega-churches that ended about 5:00 PM when we returned to my hotel to have an early dinner together and debrief from the activities of our busy day together.

Guatemala City is the most populated capital city in Central America, with an estimated 1.2 million people within the city limits and about 3,681,300 (2010) in the Guatemala City Metropolitan Area. During recent decades the metropolitan area grew considerably as new residential and commercial areas were developed around the older parts of the central city, which provided an opportunity for some of the growing Evangelical congregations in older sections of the capital to purchase property and build new, larger

facilities in outlying areas at a more reasonable price that it would have cost to do the same within the central city. For that reason, most of the mega-churches that we visited were located in areas surrounding the old capital city, but six of the mega-churches that we did not visit were located in the older sections of Guatemala City.

Below is a brief account of the mega-churches that we visited along with some of the photos that were taken inside and outside of the main auditoriums:

(1) Iglesia El Shaddai - El Shaddai Church
4 Calle 23-03, Zona 14, Guatemala City
Pastor Cecilia de Caballeros

Observations: This church was founded by the Rev. Harold Caballeros and his wife Cecilia, who became the senior pastor when Harold resigned to begin a political career. Apparently, the Sunday worship attendance declined after Cecilia de Caballeros took over the church's leadership. The church facilities are relatively new and well equipped, with a large parking lot for private cars in front of the church for those who attend as well as a large adjoining parking lot used by dozens of private busses that are rented to provide transportation for those who attend from all over the metropolitan area of Guatemala City.

The main church auditorium seats about 5,000 people, and the accumulative Sunday worship attendance in the three services was about 4,700 people. The service that we attended was less than half-full, but the previous service seemed to have greater attendance in our judgment by observing the crowds of people who were leaving when we arrived, with dozens of buses arriving with new people while others were departing.

This neo-Pentecostal church identifies with the New Apostolic Reformation, and Harold Caballeros has been one of its leading spokespersons in Central America. See the photos below.





(2) Iglesia Cristiana Vida Real - Royal Life Christian Church
Centro de Convenciones Ilumina
19 Avenida 16-02, Zona 10, Guatemala City
Pastor Rony Madrid

Observations: This church is located in an upper-class neighborhood of Guatemala City near a private sports club. There is a large parking lot in front of the church auditorium for those who attend and no private busses were seen nearby. The leased building was identified as the Ilumina Convention Center and contains a large auditorium (seating about 1,100 people) as well as several adjoining meeting rooms for children and youth activities. The total combined Sunday attendance in the three worship services was about 3,000 people

The senior pastor is the son of the Rev. Eduardo Madrid Morales, who is the founder and senior pastor of the Showers of Blessing Church in Planes de Minerva, Zona 11, of the Municipality of Mixco. Both of these are independent Pentecostal churches that identify with the New Apostolic Reformation.







(3) Ministerios Ebenezer de Guatemala - Ebenezer Ministries of Guatemala
(aka Iglesia de Cristo Ebenezer)
Barrio San Pedrito, Zona 5, Guatemala City
Pastor Sergio Enríquez

Observations: This was one of the most interesting churches that we visited. It is located in a working class neighbourhood surrounded by many stores, and the street in front of the church (a large warehouse building that has as a series of adjoining meeting rooms with video monitors so that everyone can see the platform) is closed to traffic during the Sunday worship services. The overflow crowd at the 10:00 am service spilled out into the street and was seated in white plastic chairs with people walking by and with the sounds of street vendors hawking their wares.

It was a very colorful and busy meeting place, with several full parking lots nearby for the cars of church members and visitors; the lots were manned by church officials and there were several bus stops nearby where attendees could easily find public

transportation. Also, the church provides free private bus service for many of those who attend from various areas of Guatemala City.

There were four Sunday worship services with seating for about 2,500 people, with an accumulative total attendance of about 10,000 people. See the photos below.





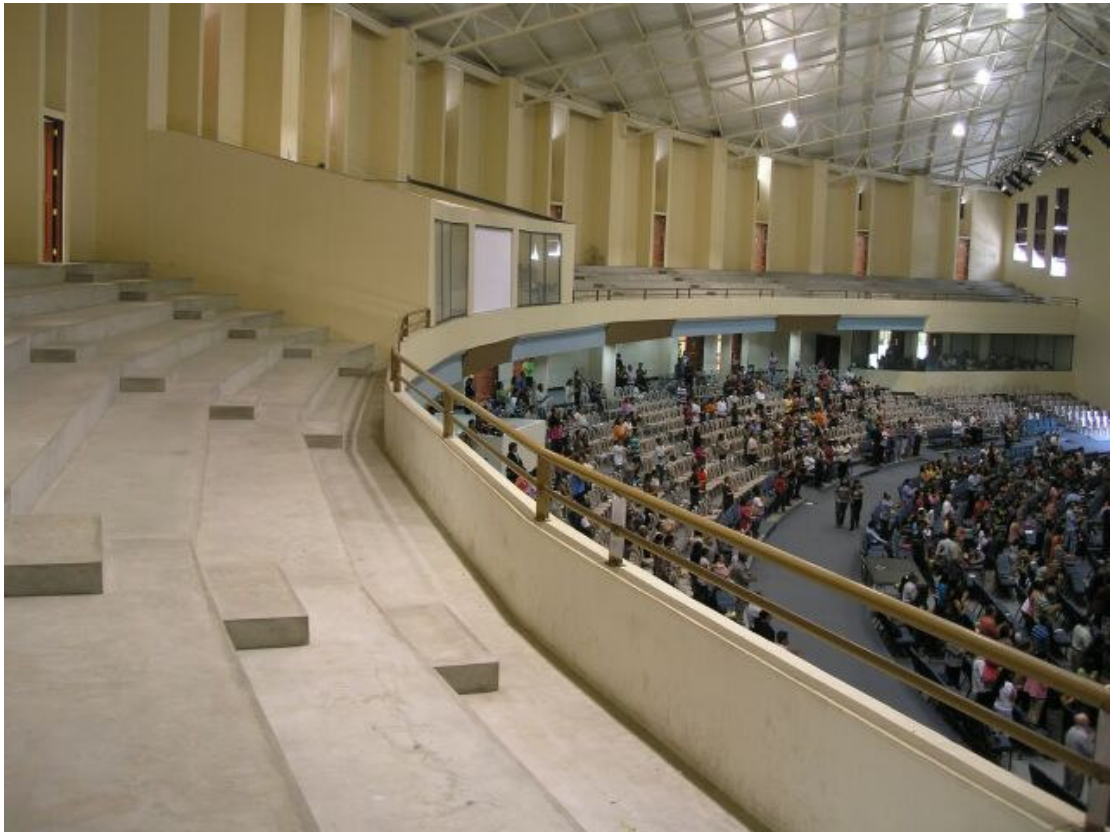


(4) Misión Cristiana Evangélica Lluvias de Gracia - Showers of Blessing Church
10 Avenida 16-70, Sector 5, Planes de Minerva
Zona 11, Municipality of Mixco
Pastor Apostle Edmundo Madrid Morales

Observations: This church was established in the early 1980s in Mixco by Edmundo Madrid Morales who became one of the new “apostles” in the New Apostolic Reformation family of denominations, which are considered to be neo-Pentecostal. Although the main auditorium seats about 5,000 people, only an estimated 1,000 to 2,100 people attend each of the three Sunday worship services, for a total accumulate Sunday attendance of about 4,700 people. The church has a large parking lot for automobiles as to accommodate 15 to 20 buses that provide transportation for many people of middle and lower socio-economic classes who attend from various parts of Guatemala City and environs. This church also sponsors an estimated 960 cell groups during the week where trained leaders minister to church members and invited guests in private homes throughout the metropolitan area.







(5) Iglesia de Jesucristo Palabra Mi-El Central
Boulevard El Naranjo 29-55, Zona 4
Municipality of Mixco, Guatemala City
Pastor Apostle Gaspar Sapalú Alvarado

Observations: We visited this church about noon and found the main auditorium packed with about 3,500 people, which is the maximum seating capacity. The one Sunday worship service begins at 9:00 AM and ends about 12:30 PM. It also provides free bus service for many of those who attend.

The church officials were polite but did not allow us to take any photos inside the auditorium, although were able to be seated at the rear of the auditorium and observe the proceedings for about 20 minutes before heading off to our next location. See below for an overview of historical information about this church, which previously was affiliated with Elim Church Church of Christ. Both these denominations are Pentecostal but Palabra Mi-El Church identifies with the Finished Work of Christ Family whereas the later became part of the New Apostolic Reformation under its founder, the Rev. Othoniel Ríos Paredes.



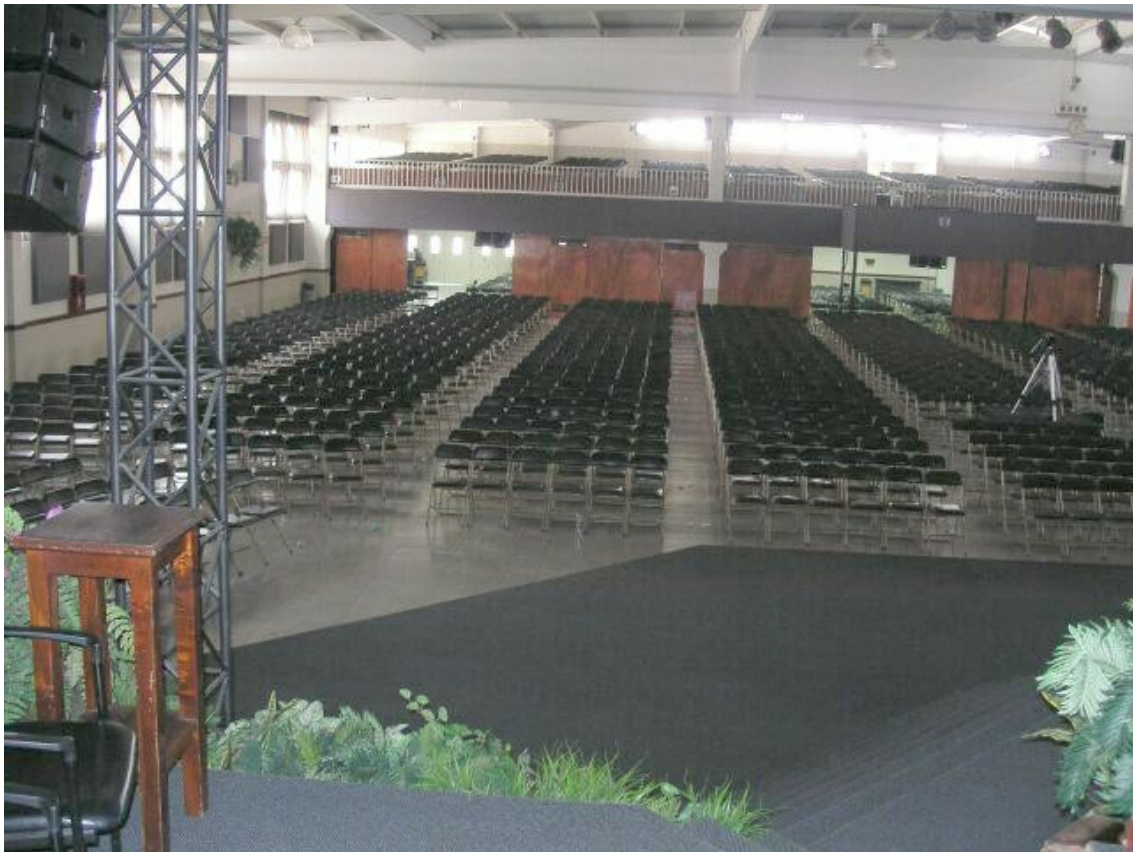


(6) Iglesia de Cristo Elim Central - Elim Central Church of Christ
3a Avenida 11-42, Colonia El Rosario, Zona 3
Municipality of Mixco, Guatemala City
Pastor General Héctor Nufio

Observations: the main auditorium, built in 1980, seats about 3,200 people for each of the two Sunday worship services (8:00 & 10:30 a.m.), with a total average Sunday attendance of about 6,000 people. The church rents seven buses to provide transportation to and from the Sunday services. During the week, this church sponsors 220 cell groups of 10-15 people in private homes throughout the metropolitan area.

We arrived at the church after the last Sunday morning worship service had ended and everyone was leaving, but one of the associate pastors was kind enough to speak with us in the church offices and to give us a brief tour of the main auditorium where he took the following photos for future reference.





Note: Misión Cristiana Elim was founded in Guatemala City in 1973 by Dr. Othoniel Ríos Paredes, who was converted to Christ in the 1962 during the nationwide Evangelism-in-Depth Crusade and later gave up his medical practice to establish a house church that grew and became a new Evangelical denomination within an already crowded playing field. By the mid-1970s, Elim Central Church had between 2,000-3,000 people attending its Sunday worship services, which meant that this church was one of the few mega-churches in existence in Guatemala at that time. Elim Church established many daughter churches throughout Guatemala as well as in other Central American countries.

The new denomination trained many new leaders who went to other nations and established Elim branch churches, some of which remained affiliated with the mother church and others that became independent. The latter was the case of pastor Sergio Solórzano in El Salvador who established Elim Church in the Ilopango district of San Salvador in 1977. However, Solórzano and his congregation decided to become independent of Elim Christian Mission in Guatemala in 1983 because Pastor General Ríos Paredes had endorsed “strange new doctrines” that Solórzano and his leadership team could not accept.

After Ríos Paredes death in 1998, the Elim Christian Mission in Guatemala split into several factions, but the Central Elim Church in Guatemala City continued under Pastor General Hector Nufio who was designated by the founder as his successor. Some of the leaders who left this organization and established new congregations before and after the founders death were Gaspar Sapalu Alvarado who established “Iglesia de Jesucristo Palabra Mi-El Central” on Boulevard El Naranjo 29-55, Zona 4, Municipality of Mixco, Guatemala City; Sergio Enríquez who founded Ebenezer Ministries of Guatemala (Iglesia de Cristo Ebenezer) in Barrio San Pedrito, Zona 5, Guatemala City; and the pastor of King of Kings Church and Ministries, founded in 1987 by Apostle Alex González, at 8a Calle 3-70, Zona 9, Guatemala City.

(7) Iglesia de Jesucristo La Familia de Dios - Family of God Church of Jesus Christ
Municipality of Mixco, Guatemala City
Pastor Luis Fernando Solares



Observations: this church is located on a long, narrow road that winds through several communities and then climbs higher to reveal a scenic view of the valley below in the Municipality of Mixco. The main auditorium (seats about 5,000) and other church buildings are perched on the side of a steep green hill down a steep drive-way that leads to a spacious parking lot for those who attend the various church services.



The main Sunday worship service is listed at 10:00 AM and rented buses bring attendees from far-off communities. Because we arrived at this location in the early afternoon, the facility was closed to the public and guarded by several security personnel behind a high chain-linked fence. We were only able to verify its location and took a few digital photos for future reference.



Photos of Pastor Luis Fernando Solares and the Family of God Church



(8) Iglesia Fraternidad Cristiana - Christian Brotherhood Church
Templo Mega-Frater, Boulevard San Cristóbal, Ciudad San Cristóbal
Pastor Jorge H. López

Observations: we visited this church in the mid-afternoon at a time when there was no activity except for security guards who kindly allowed us to walk down the driveway and take a few photos of the huge auditorium of the “Fraternidad Cristiana de Guatemala.”

This ministry was founded by Jorge H. López in 1978 with 22 members of Iglesia Evangélica El Calvario who were commissioned by that denomination’s senior pastor, the Rev. Norman Parish, Jr., to plant a new church among the growing number of Roman Catholics who were involved in the Charismatic Renewal Movement in Guatemala City that began in 1969-1970 among Roman Catholics and Evangelicals, led by Tim Rovenstine of World MAP (among others) who became involved in a local chapter of the Full Gospel Christian Businessmen’s Fellowship.

In January 1979, Pastor López and his small group of committed members began to hold worship services in a banquet room of the Hotel Guatemala Fiesta, where the Sunday attendance began to grow and fill the meeting place week by week. By December 1981, the growing church began holding services at El Cine Reforma (a movie theatre) that held a larger audience. In 1985, López and his congregation purchased a large property on Calzada Roosevelt (one of the cities major highways) where they planned to build a new sanctuary with a seating capacity for 3,500 people; in the meanwhile, the congregation moved into a remodelled rented auditorium that held about 750 people.

The new facility was inaugurated in February 1991 and soon thereafter the one Sunday worship service soon was filled to capacity, which motivated the church leaders to add another Sunday worship service to accommodate the growing congregation of an estimated 7,000 people. Therefore, by 1991, this congregation had become one of Guatemala City’s Evangelical mega-churches, and it continued to grow by adding another Sunday worship service to hold a combined average Sunday attendance of about 10,000 people.

By the early 2000s, the church leaders decided to purchase another large property in Ciudad Cristóbal, a suburb of Guatemala City, where they built a new church complex with an auditorium seating about 12,200 people, which was inaugurated in May 2007. This is the building shown in the photographs below. The church reports a membership of about 15,000. The main Sunday worship service begins at 9:30 a.m. and lasts until about noon.



(9) Iglesia Casa de Dios - House of God Church
Km. 17 on Main Highway to San José Pinula and El Salvador
Pastor Carlos "Cash" Luna

Observations:

Nació como iglesia el 11 de septiembre de 1994 después que el Señor llamó a los pastores Cash y Sonia Luna a iniciar el ministerio para el cual los había escogido. La congregación inició con la reunión de tres familias amigas en la sala de la casa de una de ellas. Desde su inicio, el Señor habló diciendo que esa iglesia no había nacido en el corazón de un hombre sino en el de Dios y que sería conocida, al igual que el Arca del Pacto, por las manifestaciones de Su presencia.

Cuando la congregación estaba integrada por aproximadamente 60 personas, el Espíritu Santo se derramó sobre muchos de ellos en un culto y los dejó embriagados, tal como sucedió con los discípulos en el día de Pentecostés. Desde entonces, la iglesia ha experimentado un crecimiento sobrenatural, pues muchas personas hambrientas y sedientas se han acercado al Señor buscando el toque del Espíritu Santo en sus vidas. En este año 2009, la iglesia acoge **un promedio de 20,000 personas cada domingo**, muchas pertenecientes a alguno de los 3,400 grupos en casa que existen. Más 2,800 niños son atendidos en Igle-Kids cada domingo.

Fue así como, de la sala de aquella casa, la iglesia se trasladó al salón de un hotel capitalino y luego al auditorium de la Cámara de la Industria, hasta llegar a las instalaciones ubicadas en el Bulevar Los Próceres. En este lugar se llegaron a celebrar hasta seis reuniones dominicales. **En julio de 1999 se inició la construcción del nuevo templo, con capacidad para más de 3,500 personas y un área de estacionamiento para 1,100 automóviles.**

En ese mismo año, los pastores y la congregación decidieron aceptar el reto puesto por Dios de alcanzar a las multitudes perdidas y discipularlas hasta ganar Guatemala para Cristo. Lograr ese objetivo fue el motor que puso en marcha la implementación de lo que se bautizó como "El modelo de Jesús". Dicho modelo se basa en el principio bíblico de bendecir a cada persona para alcanzar la multiplicación.

En febrero de 1999, luego de transmitir la visión al liderazgo y la congregación, se iniciaron los grupos de discipulado y los encuentros, además de la Academia de Líderes. En abril de ese año se lanzaron las primeras células de evangelismo. Actualmente, existen más de 2,600 células en casas y 5,300 personas preparándose para ser líderes. Dios es quien ha multiplicado el modelo y nos ha encomendado la tarea de formar obreros.

La iglesia tiene actualmente cinco servicios dominicales, uno el martes y otro el sábado por la tarde. Anhelamos compartir ese tiempo precioso que se puede disfrutar en la presencia del Espíritu Santo. Todos podemos ser renovados por el Señor y ver realizado Su propósito en nuestras vidas. Él desea que hagamos discípulos a todas las naciones.

This church has undertaken to build a new, larger facility a few miles down the main highway on a large piece of property in an industrial area. See photos below.











Below is a list of the mega-churches that we did not have time to visit but that were reported by Francisco González to have more than 2,000 people in attendance in worship services on any given Sunday:

Iglesia Asamblea de Dios Central - Central Assembly of God Church
Avenida Elena 27-68, Zona 3, Guatemala City
Pastor Byron Josué Girón

Iglesia de Dios Evangelio Completo - Central Full Gospel Church of God
Calle Marti 12-03, Zona 2, Guatemala City
Pastor Nicolás Menéndez
(affiliated with the Church of God, Cleveland, TN)

Iglesia El Calvario Central - Calvary Central Church
(Ministerios El Calvario Internacional)
33 calle "A" 2-69, Zona 8, Guatemala City
Pastor Job Eliú Castillo

Iglesia Evangélica del Príncipe de Paz Central -
 Central Prince of Peace Evangelical Church
 Avenida Centro America 21-31, Zona 1, Guatemala City
 Pastor Benjamín Muñoz

Iglesia Nazaret Central - Central Nazareth Church
 (part of the Association of Central American Churches,
 related to the Central American Mission)
 Avenida Bolívar 30-61, Zona 8, Guatemala City
 Pastors Danilo de Leon and Walter Heidenreich

**CUADRO COMPARATIVO DE MEGA-IGLESIAS EN LA CIUDAD DE GUATEMALA
 INVESTIGACION DEL DR. CLIFTON HOLLAND Y FRANCISCO GONZÁLEZ IN SITU
 DOMINGO, 17 DE ABRIL 2011**

IGLESIA	PASTOR	CAPA- CIDAD DEL TEMPLO	NO. DE CULTOS	ASISTENCIA TOTAL ESTIMADA
(1) Iglesia El Shaddai - El Shaddai Church	Cecilia de Caballeros	5,000	3	4,700
(2) Iglesia Cristiana Vida Real - Royal Life Christian Church	Rony Madrid	1,100	3	3,000
(3) Ministerios Ebenezer de Guatemala - Ebenezer Ministries of Guatemala	Sergio Enríquez	2,500	4	10,000
(4) Misión Cristiana Evangélica Lluvias de Gracia - Showers of Blessing Church	Edmundo Madrid Morales	5,000	3	4,700
(5) Iglesia de Jesucristo Palabra Mi-El Central	Gaspar Sapalu Alvarado	3,500	1	3,500
(6) Iglesia de Cristo Elim Central - Elim Central Church of Christ	Héctor Nufio	3,200	2	6,000
(7) Iglesia de Jesucristo La Familia de Dios - Family of God Church of Jesus Christ	Luis Fernando Solares	5,000	2	10,000
(8) Iglesia Fraternidad Cristiana - Christian Brotherhood Church Templo Mega-Frater	Jorge H. López	12,200	1	10,000
(9) Iglesia Casa de Dios - House of God Church	Carlos "Cash" Luna y Sonia de Luna	3,500	5	15,000
TOTALES (9)		41,000	24	66,900

Separating Facts from Fiction: Case Studies on Mega-Churches, 2011-2015

The research on Evangelical mega-churches in Central America accomplished to date and described above is only the beginning of a five-year in-depth study that we plan to develop as a coordinated effort between PROLADES and professors and students in Evangelical universities and theological schools in each country. No doubt the list of mega-churches will grow for each country as new information becomes available from reliable sources.

Our purpose is not only to gather information about mega-churches but to motivate professors and their students explore the reality of these congregations, describe them in greater detail, analyze the factors that have contributed to their growth and development as well as to their possible fragmentation and decline during the next five years, and learn from this experience in order to grow healthy local congregations of faithful disciples of Jesus Christ while avoiding some of the pitfalls and mistakes that some of the leaders of these mega-churches have been accused of making.

PROLADES: New WebPages on Mega-Churches in Central America

In order to facilitate the distribution of the information we have compiled to date regarding mega-churches in Central America and to motivate more professors and students to become involved in the fieldwork in each country, we have created a website for our mega-church project on the Internet with a section for each country at: http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/megachurches_cam.htm

An Invitation for other Academic Institutions to Join Us in this Effort

Therefore, we would like to extend an invitation to the deans of Evangelical universities, theological schools and other academic institutions in Central America to join us in this five-year study by encouraging their own professors and students to become involved in a series of case studies on each of the mega-churches in their respective countries in cooperation with PROLADES.

Please go to the following Internet address to view and download a copy of our PROPOSAL in Spanish to these academic institutions in Central America at:

<http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/PROPUESTA-CAMrev4.pdf>

We look forward to hearing from those who read this document and would like to participate in this research effort.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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PROLADES

PROGRAMA LATINOAMERICANO DE ESTUDIOS SOCIORRELIGIOSOS

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