

February 2007

Visiting Guatemala

My heart ached from what I learned during my recent trip to Guatemala in February. It is easy to forget what profound impact the Cold War had on the world outside the boundaries of the two primary "warring" countries: the United States and the Soviet Union. This world-wide battle for ideological supremacy unfortunately descended upon the everyday lives of innocent Mayan people in many Central American countries, especially Guatemala. Thousands of Guatemalans lost their lives during the 23 years of civil war. But, even more unfortunately, this human ravage left horrible psychological and spiritual scars on many individual and collective lives throughout the country, including within the Presbyterian church of Guatemala. Divisions and corruption within the church left it almost paralyzed. Fellow Christians often found themselves pitted against each other, vying for power and control, trying to discern if more leftist or rightist theological persuasions were correct. The country has been in a mess for quite awhile.

However, things have now improved. The political situation has stabilized. But even more importantly, the good health and harmony of the Protestant Church as a whole in Guatemala is beginning to return. My visit was viewed as a breath of fresh air to the new leadership of the Presbyterian Church of Guatemala in particular. They were elated to learn that PFF stood ready to help them with their mission, dreams and plans. Clearly, the Holy Spirit is moving throughout this precious Central American country giving these new leaders hope for the future as to how they might become more active participants in the global community toward the collective goal of world evangelization.



For instance, I was overjoyed to learn during my visit that today there are more than 20 Guatemalan missionaries working in one particular country of North Africa alone. Because there are so many new mission forces in the world today, emerging from such places as Korea, Brazil, or Nigeria, God is clearly able to "mix and match" the best cultural arrangements for sending missionaries to certain areas of the world. Clearly, Latin Americans are sensing a call to the Middle East along with other new places of passion to them, including the indigenous people groups of Latin America.



During my trip, I had the wonderful privilege of traveling with the Rev. Phil Truesdale of the Colonial Presbyterian Church of Kansas City, MO. When I was learning Spanish and living in San Jose, Costa Rica in the early 1980's, Phil baptized me as new, born-again believer and follower of Jesus Christ. Phil and I have never lost touch. In fact, his church is one of my supporting congregations with PFF. For quite some time, Phil and I had dreamed of traveling together in Guatemala, looking for ways our contacts in the USA could be a blessing for the development and organizing of Presbyterian missionaries from Guatemala. Well, the dream finally came true. During the trip, Phil and I praised God for how he prepared us long ago to have a deep and everlasting love for the Latin American people. Our prayer now is to mobilize the Presbyterian Church USA into partnering with the Presbyterian Church of Guatemala for the purposes of educating, training, and sending a new Guatemalan mission force into the world. I ask that you keep these precious people in your prayers.