

Guatemala:

Challenges for Prayer:

Sins of the past must be recognized, repented of and reparations made. Most notably this includes the terrible mistreatment of the indigenous population and a generation of war with atrocities on both sides. The part played by the USA in arming the oppressors and turning a blind eye to human rights abuses has only been partially acknowledged. There must also be a recognition of the multicultural character of the country. Progress is being made in these areas. Pray especially for evangelical leaders from both Mayan and Spanish-speaking communities as they work toward the healing of the nation.

Violence is a present-day plague caused by the upheaval and ruin of the last few decades. Murder is common, and life is cheap. Guatemala has the highest murder rate in all Latin America. The causes: *maras* (youth gangs), drug traffickers, organized crime and “social cleansing” – a.k.a. death squads. Government forces can do little to tackle these issues, and private armed guards outnumber police two to one. Pray for a binding of the spirit of murder and for the peace of Christ to prevail.

The Catholic Church has declined in influence and number. Defection to evangelicalism or to the revived Mayan spirituality is massive. Efforts by the Church to limit the impact of the large, charismatic renewal movement have only further hastened the decline, with many Catholic charismatics leaving to start new churches or to join evangelical denominations. Pray for new life to permeate the Church, and that charismatics may be rooted in Scripture rather than in subjective experience.

Widespread evangelism occurs by many means – city crusades, nationwide efforts, 148 Christian schools and institutes, two Christian television channels, more than 50 local Christian radio stations, numerous Christian magazines and newspapers as well as the fervent personal witness of individual Christians. Pray that the fruit may be retained, the believers matured and the new generation won for Christ. Shallow professions of faith and an increased rate of backsliding are becoming common as evangelicals become more “popular”. Nominal evangelicalism is a new challenge facing the churches.

The strength and growth of evangelicals are not yet fully reflected in their social impact and spiritual depth. There are now as many as 25,000 congregations of evangelical persuasion. A number of rapidly growing megachurches have recently emerged to ascend to great size and influence. These are often based on cell models and prosperity theology. Pray that unity among evangelical leaders might continue to improve and be maintained, an aim of the Evangelical Alliance of Guatemala, which represents the vast majority of evangelicals. Pray that these quickly-growing churches might reach out to address the many needs in the wider community.

The future of evangelicalism is uncertain. While there has been great growth since the 1960s, especially among Pentecostals, much of this growth is superficial, impressive only in number. Discipleship is sorely lacking as a deep value in most evangelical churches. Syncretism is nearly as common in many evangelical churches – particularly among Amerindians – as it is in

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Catholicism. If serious efforts are not made to build disciples on a solid biblical foundation, the next couple of decades will see stagnation and possibly a disastrous decline in evangelicalism. Some claim this decline has been occurring for over 10 years, obscured only by strong growth in a few churches and zealous over-reporting in most others. Pray that this crucial issue of turning converts into disciples might be rightly addressed by evangelicals as the key to Guatemala's spiritual future.

Leadership training is a key issue, but a solid foundation has been laid. There are six seminaries, including SETECA (Central American Theological Seminary), founded by CAMI and now under Guatemalan leadership. It has 1,000 students from 18 countries, and 2,000 graduates serving worldwide. There are many Bible schools (including 27 of AoG) and over six TEE programs. TEE was pioneered here by Presbyterians in the 1960s and is now used worldwide. Pray especially for effective ways to train leaders of poorer rural churches. Pray also that pastors and leaders would demonstrate Christ-like humility and graciousness and rise above petty divisions, pride and carnality.

I **Mayan culture is enjoying a renaissance** after the rediscovery of their ancient civilization. For some, this is a resurrection of the old, long-submerged Mayan religion, but to others, it is a blossoming of indigenous Christianity aided by the many new translations of the Bible in indigenous languages. There are church-planting movements among many groups, most notably the Kekchi (Baptists and Mennonites). CAMI, CoN and Mennonites also work among Mayan peoples. There has been outreach to every tribe. Pray for these churches to become mature, effectively led and a vital contribution to the Church in the nation.

O **Bible translation.** SIL made a significant contribution to 38 Amerindian peoples in overseeing NT translations for many of them. National believers now carry the torch for most or all of the dozen remaining translation projects. Pray for the successful completion and effective use of these translations.

a **The less-reached:**

a) Amerindian peoples with fewer active believers – the Chorti, Pocomchi, Ixil and Jacalteco show less response to the gospel, yet there are active, growing churches and ministries among them.

b) Garifuna (Black Carib), who are descendants of Africans and Carib Amerindians. The JESUS film has been dubbed in their language, and the whole Bible was completed in their language in 2002.

c) Asians, including the Chinese. Only a few small fellowships of believers are known for this rapidly growing population. The numbers of Koreans and Arabs are also growing.

d) Young people and students are a massive harvest field; 72% of the population are under 30 years old. Both CCCI (four groups) and GEU/IFES (seven groups) have campus ministries and evangelistic outreach – but there are over 100 colleges in the capital city alone.

S **Children at risk.** The majority of children between ages six and 18 live in extreme poverty, with large numbers orphaned or from broken homes. Non-existent social support structures drive them to child labor or toward drugs, gangs or the sex industry. Around 15,000 children live on the streets. Many documented cases exist of death squads murdering these unwanted “nuisances”. A number of local and international ministries seek to help them; pray for real solutions to these desperate needs.

d **The Guatemalan missionary movement** began in 1982 with a vision for the world.

In 1984, the *Agencia Misionera Evangélica* (AME) was founded, and since then, other missions have been launched. There are at least three missionary training centers. CONEM (the National Commission of Mission to the World) coordinates the national mission's effort. A missions conference for pastors put on by national mission organizations is a new development; pray for its effectiveness in helping church leaders catch a vision for missions.

Foreign missions have lavished attention on the land. The pioneer missionaries' battle

of faith sowed today's harvest. Special note must be made of the Presbyterians, **AoG**, ICFG, **CAMI**, Brethren and Nazarene pioneers. Though much foreign input is being phased out, there are still key areas where mission input is important.

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June 9-10

Guinea

Republic of Guinea

Africa

Area 245,857 sq km on Africa's west coast, between Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone.

Population Ann Gr Density

2010 10,323,755 2.29% 42/sq km

2020 13,467,039 2.60% 55/sq km

2030 16,896,954 2.20% 69/sq km

Capital Conakry 11,653,495. **Urbanites** 35.4%.

Pop under 15 yrs 43%. **Life expectancy** 57.3 yrs.

About 40 ethnic groups.

West Atlantic 45.8%. Fulbe(3) 39.2%; Kissi 4.4%;

Wassoulounke 1.0%; Baga(5) 0.5%; Landoma 0.2%;

Konyagui 0.1%; Bassari 0.1%.

Mande 42.7%. Malinke 25.1%; Susu 11.1%; Konyanke

2.0%; Yalunka 0.9%; Kuranko 0.9%; Sankaran 0.8%;

Manya 0.6%; Lele 0.4%; Mandéni 0.3%; Jakanke 0.3%;

Mikifore 0.1%.

Mande-Fu 9.2%. Kpelle 4.7%; Toma 2.0%; Kono

1.3%; Mano 1.0%.

Other 2.3%. Refugees: Liberian/Sierra Leonean, other

smaller groups; European, Lebanese, others.

Literacy 41%. **Official language** French.

Major vernacular languages Fulbe, Malinke,

Susu, Kissi, Guerze and Toma. **All languages** 38.

Indigenous languages 34. **Languages with**

Scriptures 1Bi 10NT 12por 10w.i.p.

Guinea's huge mineral deposits, along with fertile and plentiful land and water, offer potential riches. Inept and corrupt governance have reduced it to subsistence and poverty, leading to occasional riots and demonstrations.

HDI Rank 170th/182. **Public debt** 88% of

GDP. **Income/person** \$439 (1% of USA).

French colony until independence in 1958.

President Touré led the country into a Marxist

experiment that virtually destroyed it. This

regime was swept away in a military coup in

1984. The succeeding president led the country

for 24 years. His passing was followed by a

military junta seizing control; then the head of

the junta was shot by an aide. Regional powers,

including Burkina Faso's leader, stepped in to

help the remaining junta members accept a

transition to a civilian government, which

culminated in democratic elections in 2010.

There is relative freedom for Christian witness

and missionary activity. In recent years,

intolerance by Muslims has increased in certain

areas.

gChristian media:

a) *The JESUS film*, available in 13 languages, has been widely used by many churches. Please pray for progress in the translation and production of the JESUS film in the remaining

languages of smaller, isolated people groups who currently have little or no access to Scripture in their mother tongue.

b) Christian TV/Radio programmes are widely available on many national and local radio stations – there are literally dozens of stations. **HCJB** moved its TV operations to Guatemala and cooperates with a local Christian station to broadcast to Guatemala and globally. Radio Cultural TGN is one of a few broadcasting in several indigenous languages. However, a number of Christian radio stations are being forced to shut down due to pressure from secular radio on the government.

c) Audio recordings are vital for the many illiterates. **GRN** has gospel resources in 47 languages. Scripture tapes produced by SIL and others are a key contribution to teaching. Pocket-sized digital audio players packed with Scripture and Christian teaching are proving effective; translating the materials into indigenous languages is the next challenge.