

Accompany the Topsfield Congregational Church Team To Encounter Guatemala in 2026 Through Your Prayers



As a Prayer Partner

2026 Topsfield Congregational Church Guatemala Encounter Prayer Team Guide

Thank you for participating in the 2026 Topsfield Congregational Church mission experience in Guatemala by accompanying us with your prayers. This guide will help you participate in our daily meditations and give you some idea of the Guatemalan reality we

will experience each day. The meditations are dated using two Maya calendars to correspond to the Gregorian calendar we use. The two glyphs on the left give the name of the day according to the *Tzolkin*, the Sacred Calendar of 260 days. The two glyphs on the right give the month, based on the 365-day *Haab'* or solar calendar. (For more information about the different Mayan calendars, see <https://mayanpeninsula.com/en/mayan-calendar/>). The names of the days and months are presented in the Tz'utujil Maya language spoken on the southern and western shores of Lake Atitlán.

Maltyoöx ("Thank you" in Tz'utujil Maya) for your prayerful support.

Kim Love

James Love

Charise Nulsen

Jac Nulsen

Beth Hutchins

Fletcher Mayes

Rev. Jack Soper

Rev. Marti Soper

Ron Wilhelm, team leader



JoAna Dwyer, ODIM founder

Thursday, July 16



Waajquii' Tz'kin

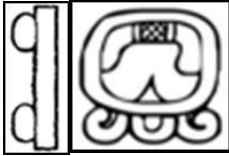


Wajxaquii' Xuul

Team members depart from Boston and once in Guatemala, we'll drive to the colonial capital of Antigua where we will spend the night.



Friday, July 17



Wuquu' Ajmaq



B'elejeej' Xuul

The team travels to San Marcos La Laguna, a Kaqchikel speaking Maya community on the shores of Lake Atitlán, where we will stay the week at Casa Kotz'i'j Pa' Tak Abäj (House of Flowers among the Rocks). On the way we will visit the ruins of the ancient Kaqchikel Maya capital of Iximche'.



Meditation: Father **Dean Brackley, S. J.** message to foreign visitors, especially missionaries.

"I invite you to discover your vocation in downward mobility. It's a scary request... The world is obsessed with wealth and security and upward mobility and prestige. But let us teach solidarity, walking with the victims, serving, and loving. I offer this for you to consider - downward mobility. And I would say in this enterprise there is a great deal of hope."

Have the courage to lose control.

Have the courage to feel useless.

Have the courage to listen.

Have the courage to receive.

Have the courage to let your heart be broken.

Have the courage to feel.

Have the courage to fall in love.

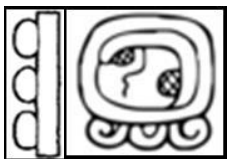
Have the courage to get ruined for life.

Have the courage to make a friend.”

A Blessing Prayer

“Wherever you go today
Whoever you meet,
Remember to be kind and gentle,
to be thoughtful
and gracious,
for you know not what burdens others may bear
in their hearts
Or in their minds
Or in their bodies.”

Saturday, July 18



Wajxaqii' No'j



Lajuuj Xuul

After breakfast and our morning meditation, the team will travel by lancha across the lake to the community of Panajachel to visit a nature reserve with a butterfly habitat containing at least 13 varieties of butterflies, some spider monkeys, and coati mundi. The more adventurous of the group may try zip lining while others will enjoy hiking the nature trails.

Meditation: Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Guatemala has highest rate (approximately 49%) of chronic malnutrition in children under

five in all Latin America.

In rural Guatemala, many children (particularly girls) do not complete their basic education, speak only their native Mayan language, and grow up functionally illiterate. Adolescent females marry as young as 12 years of age and have an average of seven children. Illiteracy is 31.1 percent in women 15 years of age and older and reaches 59 percent among indigenous women.

<http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6151425/>

Sololá, in the western highlands of Guatemala, is the second poorest of Guatemala's 22 departments, where 94% of people live on less than \$3.00 per day. 98% of the population of Sololá is indigenous Maya.

<http://www.watercharity.org/taxonomy/term/2>

"The real weapons of mass destruction are not toxic gases or deadly virus, but poverty and social injustice."

[Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, Honduras]

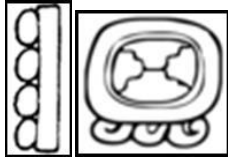
Prayer

Holy God, on this your new day, in a country that is not our own, we give thanks for life and breath in a world that is yours. Grant us the courage and energy to breathe life into the hidden pockets of our compassion so that we may see with your generous, neighborly eyes what you give us today.

Press us onward, God, so that we may listen with our hearts and speak with our hands as we come into contact with each life that crosses our path. We pray in your holy essence, which is love . . .

Rev. Diana Holbert

Sunday, July 19



B'elejee' Tijax



Ju'lajuuj Xuul

After breakfast, the team will travel by lancha to the nearby community of San Juan La Laguna and hike up the Mirador Kaqasiwaan for a view of Lake Atitlán, then tour the beautiful community murals, watch the local Ajpopab' Tz'utujil team practice the traditional Maya ball game, and tour an artist cooperative of 26 painters of costumbrista style art.



Mural of Lake Atitlán and spiritual guide Tata Pedro, San Juan La Laguna



Los Nahuales, Spirit Guides



Homage to Weaving

Meditation: Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

Guatemala is one of the 36 countries that account for 90 percent of stunting in the world. The chronic malnutrition rate for children under 5 is 49.8 percent, the highest in the region and the sixth highest in the world. Chronic malnutrition in indigenous areas is 69.5 percent. Fifty-three percent of the population lives in poverty, and 13 percent in extreme poverty. The most vulnerable groups are indigenous women, girls and boys living in the highlands and the “dry corridor” (a semi-arid zone in northern Guatemala with periods of droughts, degraded soils and low agricultural yields).

Threats to Food Security

- Climate Change, recurring floods, and drought
- Difficult access to food and safe water
- Subsistence farming
- Chronic deprivation of the socially vulnerable
- Low sanitation levels
- Low education levels

<https://www.wfp.org/countries/guatemala/overview>

Almost half the population cannot afford the cost of the basic food basket. As a result, the prevalence of **stunting (impaired development due to malnutrition) in children under 5 is one of the highest in the world – and the highest in Latin America and the Caribbean.**

A multi-ethnic country with a rich cultural heritage, Guatemala is a country where **poverty affects people disproportionately** in terms of food insecurity, nutrition, health and education.

Guatemala is **among the ten countries in the world most vulnerable to disasters and climate emergencies**: over the past three years, extended dry seasons have had a severely damaging impact on the livelihoods of subsistence farmers, who rely on rain-fed agriculture – especially in the Dry Corridor (a tropical dry forest region on the Pacific Coast of Central America).

<https://www.wfp.org/countries/guatemala>

Prayer

Lord, you placed me in the world to be its salt.

**I was afraid of committing myself,
afraid of being stained by the world.**

**I did not want to hear what 'they' might say.
and my salt dissolved as if in water.**

Forgive me, Jesus.

Lord, you placed me in the world to be its light.

I was afraid of the shadows, afraid of the poverty.

**I did not want to know other people.
and my light slowly faded away.**

Forgive me, Jesus.

Lord, you placed me in the world to live in community.

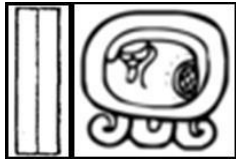
**Thus you taught me to love, to share life,
to struggle for bread and for justice,
your truth incarnate in my life.**

So be it, Jesus.

— Peggy M de Cuehlo, Uruguay

Your Will Be Done, 1984

Monday, July 20



Lajuuj Kawoq

Kab'lajuuj Xuul

Today the team will meet ODIM staff and learn about ODIM's community health programs. We will lunch with some of the ODIM staff and then we will learn how to install Onil stoves to address air contamination and Ecofilter water filters to address water contamination in the homes in San Pablo La Laguna. A generous donor provided the team with a grant of \$5,000.00 so that we can install 10 stoves and water filters this year.



Class on water purification with Ecofilter



Onil stove installation

Meditation: Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

In terms of how March 8 was observed at the departmental level, Rabinal, Baja Verapaz, stands out: there, survivors from the Mujeres Achí case and human rights organizations reinstalled a mural dedicated to the indigenous women who reported sexual assaults committed during Guatemala's internal armed conflict. The mural is part of the reparations ordered by the courts in this landmark case. Two rulings—issued in 2022 and 2025—convicted former Civil Defense Patrolmen (PAC) of sexual violence and crimes against humanity committed between 1981 and 1985. For the Maya Achí women survivors, the mural symbolizes public recognition of their truth after decades of silence, stigmatization, and denial of the crimes committed during the genocide carried out by the de facto governments of General Romeo Lucas García and General José Efraín Ríos Montt, in power from 1978 to 1983. The mural also represents an act of collective dignity, as the images recall the violence they endured while simultaneously highlighting the resilience of the women who spoke out about what happened, their struggle for justice, and a message for future generations: the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war must never be repeated. The mural was restored after the Rabinal municipal government removed the original painting on July 22, 2025, covering it with yellow paint.



(<https://pbi-guatemala.org/en/news/current-political-situacion-march-2026>)

Prayer

God of power
God of people,
You are the Life of all
that lives,
Energy
that fills the earth,
Vitality
that brings to birth,
the impetus
toward making whole
whatever is bruised or broken.
In You we grow
to know the truth
that sets all creation free.
You are the Song
the whole earth sings,
the Promise
liberation brings,
now and forever.

Miriam Therese Winter, *Woman Prayer, Woman Song*

Tuesday, July 21



Ju'lajuuj Ajpu



Oxlajuuj Xuul

Today the team will finish installing stoves and Ecofilters in homes. In the evening, we will gather at JoAna Dwyer's (ODIM's founder) home in San Pablo La Laguna to learn how to make tortillas and listen to music from members of JoAna's caretaker family.



Meditation: Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

The poor in Guatemala do not have easy access to good health care, particularly because health-care facilities and experts are focused in metropolitan areas. This factor, combined with the negative health effects of pesticides and the low availability of drinking water and waste disposal services in rural areas, results in a higher occurrence of health problems in rural areas than in urban centers.

<http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/economies/Americas/Guatemala-POVERTY-AND-WEALTH.html>

In **2025**, with a budget of **\$494,027.90**, ODIM staff delivered the following program to benefit **4,366** people:

- A total of **2,771** patients were served in our two primary health care clinics and **343** in the dental clinic.

- ODIM staff and international volunteer teams installed **180** water filters and **180** energy efficient stoves, benefiting a total of **434** individuals to combat gastrointestinal and upper respiratory illnesses through ODIM's "High Impact Home Improvement" program.
- Of the 50 patients in the diabetes support program, "Let's Walk Together," **55%** achieved their personal goals of controlling their A1C level. ODIM staff distributed **200** food baskets to participants.

Twenty-six mothers and babies enrolled in the program graduated after 1,000 days. **88.5%** of babies and infants in ODIM's "Healthy Mommy & Me" program achieved healthy height and weight for their age by graduation. ODIM staff distributed **532** food baskets to mothers.

- All 8 of the junior high and senior high school students in ODIM's "Reaching Dreams" scholarship program passed on to the next grade. Three students graduated from high school. Students and staff planted **118** trees in San Pablo La Laguna to address the deforestation problem as part of their community service.
- **39** adolescents, aged 11-13, graduated from ODIM's "Adolescent Health" program. **86%** of the graduates demonstrated comprehension of health topics at the end of the five-month course. Staff and some student graduates conducted **5** workshops in local schools with **142** students in attendance.

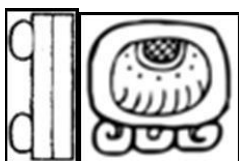
More than a list of accomplishments, **ODIM Guatemala is comprised of people who believe this world can be a better, more just place.** Working together with volunteers like you, we will continue to **make a difference here in 2026...and beyond!**

Prayer

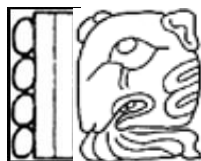
God of vision,
 we long to see your face
 and are afraid to see it;
 We long to break the grip of suffering,
 and we cannot cast it out.
 Uncover our faces
 and expose us to your glory,
 that we may comprehend the poor
 in their suffering and insight,
 and the world may be transfigured in you.

[Janet Morley, *Christian Aid*]

Wednesday, July 22



Kab'lajuuj Imox



Kalajuuj Xuul

Today the team will spend in San Juan La Laguna where we will receive a team blessing during a Maya fire ceremony, tour ODIM's Clínica Sanjuanerita and meet medical and financial staff and participate in an activity with Salud del Adolescente participants at Clínica Sanjuanerita. Salud del Adolescente is a five-month course for youth 11-13 years old. The curriculum includes human development, birth control, consent and healthy relationships in order to combat early teen pregnancy, which continues to be a national crisis in Guatemala. Following the ceremony, we will visit a weaving cooperative where women support their families through their beautiful creations woven on a backstrap loom.



Spiritual Guide, Nana Felician



Weaving Cooperative "Flor de Azucena"

Meditation: In 2010, Monsignor Bernabé and Father Juan Manuel Arija founded the Diocesan Commission for the Defense of Nature—CODIDENA, an organization of the Catholic Church focused on working with Indigenous communities in the department of Santa Rosa to defend Mother Earth.

CODIDENA has a team of ten specialists in environmental issues and grassroots organizing. They know the territory very well, as they are originally from the region and are part of the local communities—most of whom belong to the Indigenous Xinka People and have a profound connection to the care of Mother Earth and water.

We offer training in environmental issues, forest nurseries, water monitoring, human rights, civic engagement, and advocacy. We also support conflict resolution, inter-institutional dialogue, and provide consultancies on institutional responsibilities, waste management, and forest use. Additionally, we help communities secure funding to preserve forest reserves in their territories.

CODIDENA formed a group of young community scientists, the “Tekuanes”, who are equipped with specialized tools to measure and monitor water pollution caused by mining and share data to inform and protect the population.

(<https://nisgua.org/wp-content/uploads/R123-ENG-version-crema-2.pdf>)

A Franciscan Benediction

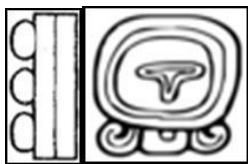
**May God bless us with discomfort. . . .
at easy answers, half truths,
and superficial relationship,
so that we may live deep within our hearts.**

**May God bless us with anger. . . .
at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people,
so that we may work
for justice, freedom, and peace.**

**May God bless us with tears. . . .
to shed for those who suffer from
pain, rejection, starvation, and war,
so that we may reach out our hands
to comfort them
and to turn their pain into JOY.**

**And may God bless us with enough foolishness. . . .
to believe that we can make a difference in this world,
so that we can DO what others claim cannot be done.**

Thursday, July 23



Ox'lajuuj Ik'



Jo'lajuuj Xuul

Today we say good-bye to our friends at Lake Atitlán and travel to Antigua for our last day. There we will visit museums featuring Guatemalan painters and sculptors, art galleries, partially restored convents and monasteries, We'll celebrate our encounter with Guatemala with a meal at one of Antigua's fabulous restaurants.

Meditation: **Blessed are those who suffer in faith for justice's sake, for the glory of God is theirs.**

Amnesty International in Guatemala 2025

Human rights defenders, journalists, students, prosecutors and Indigenous leaders continued to be the targets of unfounded prosecutions and arbitrary detention. Impunity for crimes under international law and human rights violations committed during the internal armed conflict persisted. Access to clean water was limited and forced evictions threatened the rights of entire communities. Girls and LGBTI people faced high levels of violence, and several draft bills threatened their rights.

Human rights defenders faced violence and criminalization. In August, Leocadio Juracán, leader of the Altiplano Peasant Committee, was arrested for crimes allegedly committed during a forced eviction in Izabal department. Between January and September, the local organization Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala recorded at least 4,520 attacks against human rights defenders.

(<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/americas/central-america-and-the-caribbean/guatemala/report-guatemala/>)

Peace Brigades International-Guatemala

This month (April 2026), the Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders of Guatemala (UDEFEQUA) released its report on the situation of human rights defenders in 2025. They recorded a total of 5,238 attacks, representing a 26.71% increase compared to 2024. More than 90% of the attacks recorded occurred digitally, primarily through social media. Other notable attacks include 12 murders, 11 attempted murders or homicides (mainly targeting land rights defenders), and more than 10 flawed judicial proceedings. Stigmatization, harassment, and defamation are the most common forms of attack on social media, with more than 80 percent committed by netcenters. . . Thirty-one percent

of the attacks were against women human rights defenders.

(<https://pbi-guatemala.org/en/news/current-political-situacion-march-2026>)

Prayer

O Giver of Justice, fan the flame of our outrage when we would rather turn our heads.

Give energy to our anger.

Focus us clearly on what is happening.

Give us righteous indignation that is guided not by our sanctimony but by generosity.

Give us action that is taken not with rage but with honest caring.

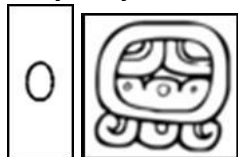
You have not left us as orphans; help us not to leave others.

Propel us. Compel us.

And we will give you the thanks and praise. . . .

Rev. Diana Holbert

Friday, July 24



Juun Ak'ab'al

Waq'lajuuj Xuul

Today the team travels from Antigua to Guatemala City to catch their return flights to the U.S., filled with good memories to share with you all. Thank you for supporting us through your prayers.

Since poverty and wealth are not only matters of money but also of power, it is time to move from charity and advocacy to what I am calling “deep solidarity”. , , Solidarity is no longer a matter of the privileged helping the underprivileged; it is a matter of

understanding what we have in common and how we all need to work together to organize and to embrace a different power.

Deep solidarity brings into focus God's power, which is different from the power of the one percent. Deep solidarity reminds us that Godself is found among the poor, among the Hebrew slaves of the Exodus, and among the widows, the orphans, and strangers of the Hebrew Bible. God is transforming the world in and through them. . . The 99 percent are invited to join in this deep solidarity with God and others. Indeed, even those who are situated within the exalted one percent are called to "follow me."

Joerg Rieger, *Deep Solidarity: Embracing God's Power to Alleviate Poverty and Create Structural Change*

The victims of history -- the destitute, abused women, oppressed minorities, all those the Bible calls "the poor" -- not only put us in touch with the world and with ourselves, but also with the mercy of God. There is something fathomless about the encounter with the poor, as we have said -- like the opening of a chess game with its infinite possibilities. If we let them, the poor will place us before the abyss of the holy Mystery we call God. They are a kind of door that opens before that Mystery and through which God passes to get at us. Clearly we need them more than they need us.

Father Dean Brackley, S.J., *Meeting the victims, falling in love*

Dear Jesus,

Our journey through life is long and hard.
We cannot make this trip alone; we must walk together on the journey.
You promised to send us a helper, your Spirit.
Help us to see your Spirit in those you send to journey with us.
In the refugee family, seeking safety from violence,
Let us see your Spirit.
In the migrant worker, bringing food to our tables,
Let us see your Spirit.
In the asylum---seeker, seeking justice for himself and his family,
Let us see your Spirit.
In the unaccompanied child, traveling in a dangerous world,
Let us see your Spirit.
Teach us to recognize that as we walk with each other,
You are present.
Teach us to welcome not only the strangers in our midst but
The gifts they bring as well:
The invitation to conversion, communion, and solidarity.
This is the help you have sent:

We are not alone.

We are together on the journey, and for this we give you thanks.

Amen.

(Interfaith Worker Justice: Immigration through the Lens of Faith, Collective Prayers for Immigrants)