

THE MAM CHRISTIAN CENTER

**—a center of
extension work among
the MAM Indians**

**—devoted to the
entire scope of human
need, from morale to
medicine**

**—sponsored by and
based upon the Presbyterian
Church of Guatemala in
fraternal cooperation with
the United Presbyterian Church
in the U.S.A.**

**"What you have heard from me...
commit to faithful men who will
be able to teach others also."—**

2 Tim. 2:2.

MAM: This funny name, Mam, (pronounced like "mom") denotes a group of American Indians in the cool, beautiful western highlands of Guatemala, who together constitute about one quarter of the million modern descendants of the Ancient Maya ("the most brilliant aboriginal people on this planet.")

North of the Equator in our hemisphere there is probably no other group of aboriginal people as large who speak only their own exotic tongue. For a group their size they may well be the poorest.

Their region covers some 5,000 square miles of land that was until very recently practically roadless. But this area is not by any means exclusively their own: the managing nucleus of every little town consists of mountain dwellers of Spanish descent (called "ladinos"—from "latin" or "latino").

The hilly nature of the terrain makes it literally possible to "fall out of a cornfield" and quite apparently forbids extensive agricultural development. On the other hand light industry carefully chosen is a possible productive outlet for these people. Otherwise it seems inevitable that the more progressive will leave the area under the twin pressures of rising expectations and population surge. Those leaving will mainly become city slum dwellers, those who stay behind, shorn of their keener brethren, will harden into hillbillies, a degraded backwash of what is still a virile race.

This "cream separation" of a minority culture is a phenomenon by now well-known as an end worse than sudden death and properly to be dreaded. It is as inevitable as tomorrow if nothing is done. A similar process in the rest of Guatemala will ruin not only the 2 million Indians but every bright prospect of the 1 million of European descent. Who will act?

CHRISTIAN But nothing can be done without a sound moral and spiritual foundation. Compared to all the world's array of welcome helping agencies, new and old, the Christian movement is the only one that even attempts to work on every level "from morale to medicine."

Aside from the church being in all the world today easily the most extensive movement of any kind, penetrating to almost every smallest town on the entire face of the earth, it is also self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating.

The rugged Mam area of Guatemala is no exception, thanks to the deep roots of 80 years of missionary toil; the two agencies are the Presbyterian Church of Guatemala, the Central American Mission's Evangelical Church.

No new idea, no new seed or seed-thought, no benevolent program of any source can possibly get a better presentation to this vast, distributed group of Indians than through the equally dispersed church network. This is why its vitality is so important to foster even in an organizational sense.

This humble church movement, often overlooked or ignored by secular students of the area, is nevertheless the only agency that is "turning the hearts of the fathers to the children"* and families through fundamental renovation of heart and life, and it is also the most extensive point of contact and confidence with those beyond its immediate adherents. (The evangelical believers, relatively few as they are, already have a high reputation in every corner of Guatemala.)

This is why our work is not only "sponsored by" but "based upon" the church. This is why most of our time goes into the development of trustworthy, well-rounded, self-supporting leaders who are 100% Indian.

*Luke 1:17.

CENTER What is the tool in our hands? It is, physically, an old adobe L-shaped building with 7 rooms, a newer combination clinic-school structure with 9 rooms, two residences, and about 10 acres of land.

How is this tool used? A "center" can mean either of two things: 1) a center to which people are attracted and then influenced, or 2) a center from which an attractive and influential program reaches out to the people.

Now, only the most modern society provides for even relatively safe mobility of its population. In the rest of the world, population movements are almost always accompanied by disastrous and destructive side-effects upon the social fabric of the people, their morals and morale.

Thus we believe the kindest program will go to the people, reach them, teach them, train them where they are, to get in touch with a transforming Christian faith and to get in step with the wholesome and positive features of our modern world. The phases of our work can at least be listed: Experimental Farm, Clinic, Grade School, Institute, Extension, Literature, Literacy, Industries, Adult Evening Study through the ninth grade.

But basically this mountain fastness — beautiful beyond comparison for anyone with an outside source of income — can be made hospitable to the rising ambition and population only through immediate, forceful, and strategic leadership development on the grass-roots level. Our center thus works out to the people, and does its work always as a servant of, for and through the precious, struggling (but existing!) Christian Church that is deployed out through these fabulous mountains. This church, hanging on by the skin of its teeth, is in some ways like a key in the door that can be easily removed, or turned.

CENTER PERSONNEL

GUATEMALAN:

Rev. Candelario Pérez, in charge of the Farm and Extension Departments.

Mr. Inés Díaz, laboratory technician, Institute teacher.

U.S. FRATERNAL WORKERS:

Miss Ruth Wardell, R. N., Medical Department.

Dr. and Mrs. Ralph D. Winter, Institute Program

Founders: Rev. and Mrs. H. Dudley Peck.

THE FINANCIAL PICTURE*

Clinic	\$1200
Extension	100
Farm	250
Grade School	300
Institute Program	500
Literature	200
National Salaries	1100
Other	150

THE MAM CHRISTIAN CENTER

San Juan Ostuncalco, Quez.

Guatemala, C. A.

* These annual funds come from the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. through its Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, and are mediated through the Presbyterian Church of Guatemala.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

A. You can come and see these Mam Christians, and help us figure out how love can find a way to all their various problems.

B. You can sit at home in spare moments and analyze reports from us and be an arm-chair strategist in the intriguingly diverse ministry of the Mam Christian Center.

C. You can pray, and you can praise God for what he has already done (the Center has 150 "alumni" now). And you can let what you know of this project be representative of the solid, significant work being done by your church's official benevolence program throughout the U.S. and the world. You can read up and thrill to other phases of that program and become an informed, No. 1 backer and promoter of the benevolence budget in your local church.

D. Write for these brief materials on various aspects of our situation:

1. Guatemala: Switzerland of Central America.
2. Guatemala, the Indian and European Balance.
3. How to Drive or Fly to Guatemala.
4. Ideas for Children's Sunday School Programs.
5. Question for Serious Discussion (for Y. P. & Adults).
6. Operation Steppingstone — Napkins and Grinding Poverty (for women's groups).
7. A Closer Look at the Mam Center Budget.
8. Why You Shouldn't Send Money Directly Overseas.
9. Your Missionary and Your Church — Do's and Don'ts (for specifically related churches).
10. Forty Years in Guatemala — Dorothy and Dudley Peck and the Mam Center.
11. The Winter Family at Close Range.
12. All in a Day's Work — Ruth Wardell, R. N.