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The History of the Lutheran Church -Missouri Synod in Guatemala Until June, 1949

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THE HISTORY OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD
IN GUATEMALA UNTIL JUNE, 1949

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Historical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

Clarence T. Kuehn

June 1950

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The History of Missions is an intensely interesting and profitable study; interesting because it reveals God's mysterious guidance in the spreading of His Holy Word to every nation, and profitable because through its study one can learn to judge successes and failures of the Church's work in certain areas, and plan to profit in the future by heeding their signals.

In the present history of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod in Guatemala up to June, 1949, the author will attempt to set forth clearly the incidents which led to the calling of the first missionary to Guatemala, and the history of his first twenty-two months in the field, with an account of the help he received from student vicars from Concordia Seminary.

A short history and geography of the republic of Guatemala may be useful to the understanding of this thesis. The country gained its independence from Spain in 1821, while the present constitution dates to March 11, 1945. This constitution grants religious freedom and provides for a democratic-representative form of government.¹ It is the most populous of the Central American Republics, with a population of more than three million people. It lies just

¹Constitución de la Republica de Guatemala, March 11, 1945.

to the south of Mexico between $13^{\circ} 42'$ and $17^{\circ} 49'$ North Latitude. It is the northernmost republic of Central America. The area of Guatemala is 54,452 square miles. A description of the terrain of the country is, in general, that there is a tropical Pacific Coastal Lowland, averaging 50 miles in width; the Sierra Madre range of mountains, reaching, in some places, an altitude of 14,000 feet; a high plateaux country; the Sierra de Las Minas range of mountains, parallel to which runs the Motagua River, which flows into the Caribbean; and the Atlantic Coastal Plain, called the Peten Plain, which comprises almost one-third of the area of the country. Guatemala City, the capital, lies 198 miles by rail from Puerto Barrios on the Atlantic Coast and 75 miles by rail from Puerto San Jose on the Pacific Coast. Midway between Puerto Barrios and Guatemala City lies Zacapa, a rail center. The chief exports of the country are coffee, bananas, sugar, and chicle for chewing gum.²

The cities most important for our study are Guatemala City, situated on a cool plateaux, altitude 5000 feet, the largest of the cities in Central America; Puerto Barrios, third-largest city in the republic, and the chief seaport, situated at the edge of a swampy jungle; and Zacapa, fourth-largest city, located on the Motagua River, 90 miles inland from the Atlantic Coast, at an elevation of about 700 feet,

²Wallace Thompson, "Guatemala," The Encyclopaedia Britannica (New York: The Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1937) X, 939-44.

surrounded by mountains that cut off rain from both coasts, making that region a semi-desert. It would be well to refer to the map in Appendix G.

While most of the inhabitants of the Pacific Highlands area of the country are descendants of the Mayan Indians and speak the Quiché language, those among whom the Lutheran Church is working at present in the cities of Zacapa and Puerto Barrios are of mixed Spanish and Indian blood, and are called mestizos. They speak the Spanish language. Those among whom the Church is working in the capital city, at present, speak three languages; German, English, and Spanish.

Much of the material for this thesis has been drawn from letters, not a few of which were originally written in Spanish, and translated by the author. Some of them, especially those found in the files of the Board for Home Missions, have been translated by Rev. Andrew Melendez, Spanish-language translator for Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

The author wishes to thank Rev. Herman A. Mayer for cheerfully granting permission to use the files of the Board for Home Missions, and Professor E. C. Zimmermann for permission to use his files and those of the Mission School at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

All reference to "The Lutheran Church" or to "The Missouri Lutheran Church" refer to The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, since it is the only Lutheran body working in Guatemala and in Central America.

CHAPTER II

CORRESPONDENCE LEADING TO A SURVEY OF THE FIELD

Concerning Zacapa

Christian bookstores are invaluable, for by means of such stores Christian literature reaches into homes and places where a pastor oftentimes does not visit. So it was, that, while the Missouri Lutheran Church was doing no active work among any of the Spanish-speaking peoples of Central America by having missionaries or colporteurs among them, it was reaching into Central America through its bookstore, La Librería Evangélica Luterana, situated in Brownsville, Texas. This bookstore has since been moved to McAllen, Texas. Good Christian literature is not at all easy to obtain in Guatemala, and it is the custom of certain of those who are very interested in tract missions to print out the names of bookstores so that many may have the opportunity of writing for literature of their own. Sometime near the end of the year 1945, a man by the name of Linn P. Sullenberger, living in Guatemala City, Calle Calendaria, Oriente, Apartado 378, printed the name of our Spanish bookstore in Brownsville, Texas, in his small magazine El Mensajero (The Messenger.)¹

At times tracts from Mr. Sullenberger's press are handed

¹A letter from Mr. Alfredo Vásquez A. to Rev. Harry H. Smith, dated Nov. 13, 1945.

out on trains or distributed at the doors in various cities. In some way his periodical reached the hands of a carpenter in the city of Zacapa in the department (state) of Zacapa, Guatemala. This carpenter, Mr. José Alfredo Vásquez Aldana, belonged to what he later admittedly called the "sect" of the Friends. Mr. Vásquez wrote a letter on November 13, 1945 to the Librería Evangélica Luterana and asked for an assortment of literature for distribution and for a biography of Martin Luther.² His daughter of less than fifteen years of age wrote a letter with his letter and sent it, too, to Rev. Harry H. Smith, the manager of the bookstore.³ These two letters were written on notebook paper such as school children use, the Spanish spelling was very poor, but from the tone of the letters they seemed to be Christian Protestant people.

Rev. Harry Smith immediately sent a package containing one hundred forty-two pieces of literature and, on the same day, November 16, 1945, he wrote a fine letter to the Vásquez family, notifying them of the package he sent them, thanking them for their interest, and asking them pertinent questions about the religious situation in their city. Since the friendliness of this letter had much to do with the continued interest of Mr. Vásquez and since it brought answers which

²Ibid., see Appendix A for letter and translation.

³A letter from Miss Hilda Vásquez to Rev. Smith, dated Nov. 13, 1945. See Appendix B for this letter and translation.

have resulted directly in the beginning of the work of the Lutheran Church in Guatemala, the author feels it very necessary to quote from it, translating from the Spanish, which, of course, was used in the original:

The contents of the package are: 2 Small Catechisms, 1 "Life of Luther," 1 "The Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Light of Scripture," 1 "Thy Sins are Forgiven Thee," 1 "What Lutherans Teach," 4 booklets of Beginners' Sunday School Leaflets (one complete copy of the lessons for the year 1945), 40 "Are You A Christian?," 20 "Martin Luther," 20 "Only Believe," 20 "Today," 20 "Rock of Ages," 10 "Christ Crucified," 1 Prayer Book, and a copy of the Noticiero Luterano (Spanish-language Lutheran Witness.)

My prayer is that the Holy Spirit bless your study of the booklets and the distribution of the tracts. The Sunday School Leaflets are good to read to the children and to explain the story, using the pictures later, while asking the questions.

. . .If you know others who would like to receive our newspaper free of charge for one year, we ask you to send us their names and addresses.

It is a pleasure to send you this literature so that you can help us announce the Gospel of Christ. At the same time we are interested in knowing how you knew of our bookstore. I would like to know how our literature got into your hands. Will you write me so that I can show those that support our bookstore and the Fund for Tracts for Free Distribution that God is blessing the work?

Our Evangelical Lutheran Church also is looking for new fields of work in Latin America. Therefore I ask if, in your opinion, there are places in your country where our church can come without duplicating the work of another church. We like to work where the existing protestant churches cannot reach the whole population or where there are no other protestant churches. Of what protestant church are you? If you are protestant or evangelical, but not affiliated with a church, would you like to learn more about The Evangelical Lutheran Church, with the possibility of becoming members if you believe that our doctrine is truly biblical?⁴

⁴A letter from Rev. Smith to Mr. Vásquez, dated Nov. 16, 19

Mr. Vásquez answered this letter immediately and gave the names of five people to whom he thought the Noticiero Luterano should be sent. Among them was the name of the pastor of the Friends Church in Zacapa. He mentioned that he belonged to the Friends, but that they were not able to cover the territory in that department of 100,000 inhabitants, and that he had mentioned to some that our church was thinking of working there and that they had said that would be fine. In closing his letter, he asked for a copy of Christian Liberty by Martin Luther.⁵

Through a long series of letters, Rev. Smith collected a large amount of information concerning the people of Zacapa and those in the sphere of Lutheran influence. There was a general sense of dissatisfaction with the Friends Church evident in the letters. These letters suggested especially that they were lacking in love and did not preach to all as they should. This undoubtedly sprang from the fact that they were a perfectionistic group and were prone to criticize severely the worldliness about them and to indulge in back-biting among themselves. Mr. Vásquez gave the names of more who should receive the Noticiero. Among these were the names of a doctor and two lawyers in Zacapa and names of many even outside of his town. He gave the name and address of the man with whom Rev. Smith could exchange our paper for that entitled Corazon Y Vida (Heart and Life), a Friends' publication.

⁵A letter from Mr. Vásquez to Rev. Smith, dated Dec. 16, 1945.

This same letter gives an example of the type of back-biting that went on among those who called themselves "evangelicals." Mr. Vásquez told Rev. Smith that Mr. José Flores, who had also begun writing to Rev. Smith, no longer belonged to any church because his (Flores') wife and the pastor of the Friends Church had been plotting together to get Mrs. Flores to leave her husband.⁶ This type of tale-bearing was common among those with Friends' background and carried on through the Lutheran group in Zacapa for quite a while. Rev. Smith tactfully handled such situations and was also very evangelical in his words as he tried to clear up certain doctrinal difficulties in the next months, the first months of 1946.

Just before Christmas in 1945, Mr. Vásquez received the package of literature that Rev. Smith sent to him, and wrote that he was very happy with the books and tracts and that he had begun to distribute the tracts. He added that most of the people in his region were totally ignorant of Luther and of his wonderful teachings, and said that it was not their fault, but that of those who were teaching them. He concluded this letter of great joy by saying that his daughter Hilda "está a volverse loca" (was almost hysterical with joy) over the lessons for the children.⁷ She also wrote a note along with her father's letter and said that since not many in Zacapa

⁶A letter from Mr. Vásquez to Rev. Smith, dated Dec. 25, 1945.

⁷Ibid.

knew how to play the organ, she was beginning to learn, and was interested in receiving a hymnbook with words and notes. She concluded her letter by saying, "Ojalá que Uds. pudieron establecer una obra aquí en Guatemala." (Oh, I hope that you can establish work here in Guatemala.)⁸ This expression of hers came only a short month and a half after the first letter from Zacapa asking for literature. Before the end of the year, during that last week of 1945, there came letters to Rev. Smith from three other sources in Zacapa: from Mr. Ángel Vásquez, Alfredo Vásquez' brother;⁹ from Mr. Manuel Franco and Jesús Perez;¹⁰ and from Mr. José Flores. Mr. Vásquez must have been very anxious to bring these men to agree to assent to Lutheran work in Guatemala, for Mr. Flores wrote:

Now with respect to myself, I will tell you that I do not have anything against affiliating with you, but I must know the doctrines that you teach. And so I ask you to send me some books that I may learn your doctrines and, if they please me, I will begin to work. To conclude, let me advise you that I have known Jesus in my heart for 13 years already and know the work of the Spirit of Christ and that in it there is no failing, and I know how to work well.

. . . Zacapa is a large department that has, I believe, more or less 100,000 inhabitants. There is much need for laborers in the work.¹¹

⁸A letter from Miss Hilda Vásquez to Rev. Smith, dated Dec. 25, 1945.

⁹A letter from Mr. Ángel Vásquez to Rev. Smith, dated Dec. 29, 1945.

¹⁰A letter from Mr. Manuel Franco to Rev. Smith, dated Dec. 29, 1945.

¹¹A letter from Mr. José Flores to Rev. Smith, dated Dec. 17, 1945.

The others wrote in the same vein, showing, perhaps, their ignorance of the fact that the Lutherans would ask them to go through quite some rigorous training before they could become members, but at the same time showing their great zeal for souls. So great was their anxiety to spread the news about the Lutheran Church that before the year was over, they had held the first "Lutheran" service in Guatemala. The writer feels that it is most important to give the whole text of the letter, signed by eight Zacapanecos, that announced the first "Evangelical Lutheran Service" in Guatemala. It was written by Mr. Vásquez for the group, and reflects much about their way of thinking regarding church work. With great joy, they wrote:

Dear brother in Jesus. We salute you with the love of Jesus in our hearts and hope to find you with your honored family rejoicing in the blessings of the Lord. We do not know the family, but are happy to salute them. I had wanted to write you upon receiving your letter, and I was anxious to tell you that the tracts, especially those which treat of the doctrine you teach, have been a great blessing, for this is what I wanted, and what we all wanted, I believe. The Friends Church, of which I was a member, does not teach the whole truth of Scripture. They teach that Baptism is not necessary and they say the same of the Holy Supper. They teach also that sanctification is not progressive, but instantaneous, and that it is possible to attain it in this world in spite of what St. Paul says in Philippians 3, 12 and following.

The object of this letter is to give you the news that today, December 30, the joy of some of the brothers was so great that we had to celebrate the first service as the "Evangelical Lutheran Church." (Although we were few, you know that great things begin with small ones.) God blessed us in a special way.

There are many who are ready to unite with us. The number of brothers and unconverted was over 28 and a few children, and we have an idea to have a sign made with the

name of "Evangelical Lutheran Church." Our department is large, as I told you before, with more than 100,000 inhabitants, and if there are 500 believers, that is a lot. Furthermore, the mission is preoccupied and souls are being lost for the lack of love. Now, if you would ask them, they would say that they are working, and the rest of the missions say that they are working in the republic. But that is a lie. Guatemala needs a mission that truly obeys the command of the Lord in St. Mark 14, 15 and 16. Imagine, brother! The city where I live is very large; furthermore, it has a central train station from which three railroads leave. One of them goes to the Republic of El Salvador. In a word, it is a city with much business, but if you would ask how many services are held in the neighborhoods in the city, they would tell you, none! Isn't that a shame? Because of this, we hope that you will come to work here. God will bless your work. Tell us when you will come. We are expecting you, because we need you. When you come, you will see for yourself that it is true that Guatemala needs the Gospel of Christ.

Will you send us hymnals, one with music, three packets of Sunday School material and more tracts for distribution? As I told you before, my daughter plays the organ, as well as a boy who is a singer here. We have met with the difficulty that we do not have an organ and we who compose this little church that just formed are poor.

If God wills, we will continue holding services in the cottages of the brothers. Pray for us and we will pray for you. I believe that your prayers will sustain us. If you have not received the letters some of the brothers wrote, you will receive them soon. The news of this "Evangelical Lutheran Church" has been a success, thanks to God. In the name of the church we sign:¹²

God had worked in a most marvelous way through the bookstore in Texas. The director of the store, Rev. Smith, deemed it advisable to send all the letters received thus far from Zacapa to Dr. F. C. Streufert, the Executive Secretary of the Board for Home Missions in North and South America. After he sent the letters to Dr. Streufert in St. Louis, Rev. Andrew Melendez, Spanish-language Lutheran Hour Speaker and translator

¹²A letter from the Church at Zacapa to Rev. Smith, dated Dec. 30, 1945. See Appendix C for the full original text.

of Spanish literature for Concordia Publishing House in St. Louis, did them into English for Dr. Streufert. Rev. Smith wrote to the men in Zacapa telling them of this fact, and saying that it was "a triumph of the Word of God" that they had constituted themselves as a Lutheran Church. He asked the question whether literature printed in the United States was well-received. In some countries it is hailed as "Yankee propaganda." He asked whether the constitution of Guatemala permitted foreigners, and especially North Americans, to establish primary and secondary schools in Guatemala. He asked for the number of protestant churches and schools in Zacapa and whether there was a religious book store in that city. Finally, he asked whether the Friends Church was opposed to what they were doing and whether it would be possible for our church to build buildings in Zacapa. He stressed:

As I wrote you in one of my first letters, we do not want to disturb the work of another church. But your desire to have the sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper and to gain more souls for the Gospel of Christ is a biblical and praiseworthy one. It was a surprise to me to know that the Friends do not value Baptism and the Lord's Supper. . . . Every Christian has the solemn obligation to fight for and to urge the teaching of the Word of God in all its truth and purity and the correct administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. . . . For the present I will continue to send the literature that you ask for with the prayer that the will of God be done to His glory and to salvation of many souls in Guatemala. God grant that the Evangelical Lutheran Church grows in Zacapa and in all of Guatemala.¹³

Mr. Vásquez wrote an answer to all of these questions and included in his letter an officially-sealed report of the

¹³A letter from Rev. Smith to Mr. Vásquez, dated Jan. 15, 1946.

census taken in the beginning of 1946 in that department.

The census gave the population of the city of Zacapa as

14,798. The answers he gave Rev. Smith were of much value:

1. . . .today the evangelistic literature that reaches us from the North Americans is well-received, except among the fanatical Romanists who say that it is a form of conquest. But for the most part, that is not the case.
2. An evangelical missionary can teach in a private school in my country, since the Friends Mission has a primary school in the Department of Chiquimula.
4. In the city of Zacapa there are two protestant churches, the Friends Church and the Baptist Church.
5. The Friends have 75 members and the Baptists have no more than 35. . . .
7. In Zacapa neither of the two churches has a school. The government maintains a primary school here. The news that I gave to many important people in the Government that you will come to our country with the purpose of establishing primary and secondary schools has been received with praise.
8. In Zacapa we would like to have an evangelistic library since there is none. There is no print shop of any kind in the Department.
9. In Zacapa the pastors are natives, but they can be North Americans.
10. The opposition on the part of the Friends is little or nothing.
11. In Guatemala a church can buy property that it wants, and any foreigner can also buy property.¹⁴

Mr. Vásquez also gave the order of services that were held weekly by the newly-formed church in Zacapa. They held services almost every day:

Monday: Prayer meeting in my house.
 Tuesday: - - -
 Wednesday: Meeting in the home of Mr. José Flores. . .
 Thursday: Catechism study in my house. . .
 Friday: Children's service with an attendance of 30. . .
 Saturday: Study of the Sunday School lesson in my house. God always blesses us with an attendance of 51.
 Sunday: Sunday School. We have three classes. I am in charge of the adult class. That of children

¹⁴A letter from Mr. Vásquez to Rev. Smith, dated Feb. 4, 1946.

from 3-7 years of age is taught by my daughter Hilda. The class of children from 8-12 years old is taught by Mrs. Elizabeth Flores. . . .¹⁵

A letter from Mr. Vásquez' sister, Amada, told of a service during which a man who had been under the influence of alcohol for 25 years was converted to the Lord and was now a very happy person. She also mentioned that the entire Vásquez relationship that lived in their neighborhood, called "La Laguna," numbered about 30 persons.¹⁶ Another sister of Mr. Vásquez, Odilia, in a letter dated February 19, 1946, told of the repentance of two men in the Sunday service of the 10th of February and of the reconciliation of a woman on the 17th of February. These letters, too, reflect the spirit with which the people who were called "evangelicals" worked. Mr. Vasquez sent a list of towns in the surrounding territory with the number of protestants in each town. All of these little churches were - and are - served by Guatemaltecos and many of them meet only in private homes. His list included the following:

Guimcal	20
Zacapa	75
Rio Hondo	30
Guaranja	25
Malluelas	15
Gualán	50
Llano Largo	16
San Juan de la Reforma	40
El Chile	25

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶A letter from Amada Vásquez to Rev. Smith, dated Jan. 31, 1946.

Las Cañas	12
Cari	15
La Unión	1417

This list shows that very few protestants lived in the area. The Friends Church, however, was the strongest in the area. The group that was working in Guatemala was connected with The California Yearly Meeting of the Friends Church.¹⁸ They have their headquarters in a city in the mountains behind Zacapa called Chiquimula. There they maintain a secondary school and have a staff of American workers. Miss Ruth Smith, who has since died,¹⁹ was one of their oldest workers. Upon hearing that a group in Zacapa were calling themselves Lutherans, she wrote a note to Rev. Smith, asking for "the name of the Gen. Sec'y or officer of Mission Bd. that has to do with Latin America of the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church."²⁰ When Rev. Smith supplied her with Dr. Streufert's name, she then wrote to him and complained to him that a group of "come-outers" had broken off from the Friends Church in Zacapa and were using the name Lutheran and saying that they expected "the coming of one or two missionaries, money for property, schools, an organ, and support for workers, well paid." She

¹⁷A letter from Mr. Vásquez to Rev. Smith, dated Feb. 4, 1946.

¹⁸Infra. Appendix E.

¹⁹A letter from Rev. H. A. Mayer to Mr. John Astleford of Chiquimula, Guatemala, dated May 29, 1947. Miss Smith died April 19, 1947, at the age of 77. She had been in Guatemala 41 years.

²⁰A letter from Miss Ruth Smith to Rev. Smith, dated Jan. 12, 1946.

described the Evangelical Synod of Guatemala. It is composed of Presbyterians, the interdenominational Central American Mission, the Nazarene, the Primitive Methodist, and the Friends churches. "Territory is allotted and limits of the same are respected by the missionary bodies belonging to the Synod."²¹ Dr. Streufert replied, assuring Miss Smith that to date, the "come-outers" had not applied to the Board of Missions for anything, and that "it has ever been the policy of our Mission Department not to proselytize nor to approach any field fully occupied by given missionary groups." He mentioned that he had received correspondence from other Lutherans in Guatemala and that if someone should be sent to Guatemala, they would be glad to visit her.²²

After this came a letter from Zacapa to Dr. Streufert asking for his prayers and support, reaching him in April, 1946. It was written by Mr. Vásquez, president, and Mrs. Flores, secretary, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. This letter mentioned that the Friends were charging the Lutheran Church with being too much like the Catholic Church and that the group in Zacapa would wait in vain for help to come to them from the United States. The group told Dr. Streufert that they were confident he would begin now to help them.²³

²¹A letter from Miss Smith to Dr. Streufert, dated Jan. 29, 1946.

²²A letter from Dr. Streufert to Miss Smith, dated Feb. 4, 1946.

²³A letter from Mr. Vásquez to Dr. Streufert, dated April 10, 1946.

During the spring of 1946 the little church at Zacapa continued to preach the Word of God, ever striving to become more and more true to the doctrines found in the Bible and explained in Luther's Small Catechism. The group in Zacapa made periodic trips to a village four miles from Zacapa, called Maguey. A man in that village by the name of Enrique Fuentes joined the Zacapa group and he even began to serve two more villages with his preaching. In June, Mr. Vásquez wrote about this new work and stressed again that "it is imperative that you send a man here." He showed that the field was in need of an experienced preacher and that he felt he could not do justice to the work. He also mentioned that Brother Flores had stopped coming to the services and that an "unpleasant testimony" had appeared about him. Mr. Vásquez felt that he ought not even come to services any more unless he repented.²⁴ There were a number of men such as Mr. Enrique Fuentes throughout the area who had some degree of connection with the Lutheran group in Zacapa. Some of them wrote to Rev. Smith or to Dr. Streufert. All of these letters helped the Board of Missions in North and South America to reach the decision to enter Guatemala, their first act being to send a man to survey the field. This decision was reached during the last days of June, 1946, in a meeting of that Board.²⁵

²⁴A letter from Mr. Vásquez to Rev. Smith, dated June 9, 1946.

²⁵A letter from Dr. Streufert to Rev. Moeller, dated July 3, 1946.

Concerning Puerto Barrios

Two of the men who wrote from Guatemala showing their interest in the new church, were preachers Eliseo J. Duarte of Jocotán,²⁶ and José Pilar Alvarez of Puerto Barrios. Already in February Mr. Alvarez had written to Rev. Smith, asking for literature about Luther and the Lutheran Church, of which he had heard through Mr. Vásquez.²⁷ A lively exchange of letters also began between Rev. Smith and a newly-formed group in Puerto Barrios. It must be noted, however, that as Mr. Alvarez gathered a group about him in that port city, his continued study of Lutheran teachings did not bring him into such complete doctrinal agreement with the Lutherans as it had Mr. Vásquez. Although he wrote to Rev. Smith regularly, and his group also asked for help in their town, and were as eager as the Zacapanecos for representatives from the United States to visit with them, Mr. Alvarez was very sceptical about the Lutheran teachings regarding the Sacraments. Mr. Vásquez and his group studied and believed that what they read in Lutheran literature was in accord with God's Holy Word. Not so with Mr. Alvarez. He carried on much doctrinal discussion with Rev. Smith, Mr. Vásquez, and with the men of the Board for Missions in St. Louis. He had been a pastor of the Friends Church in Puerto Barrios, but through

²⁶A letter from Mr. Duarte to Rev. Smith, dated March 15, 1946.

²⁷A letter from Mr. Alvarez to Rev. Smith, dated Feb. 8, 1946.

certain difficulties he had been forced to leave that office. He wrote a great many tracts over a period of years. One of them tells of his conversion in 1916 and of his many trials in the Lord's work ever since.²⁸ Some of his tracts, dating as far back as 1934, are to be found in the files of the School of Missions, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. Mr. Alvarez had one statement that was written into most of his letters. It was, "Esto que le digo guarde el secreto."²⁹ (what I tell you is a secret that you must guard.)

Despite his doubts, Mr. Alvarez was the sort of man who simply had to testify to the Lord Jesus, though in his own peculiar way, and in July of 1946 he wrote to Mr. Vásquez of Zacapa telling him that he had a group of 60 people gathered around him that was studying the Lutheran writings, and if everything went well, they were ready to call themselves Lutheran.³⁰ In August, when the representatives of the Lutheran Church were ready to go to Guatemala from the United States, Mr. Alvarez was very anxious to become a Lutheran pastor and asked many questions concerning that point. He pointed out that the other churches of his country were anxious for him to join them again, (he had been pastor in a number of them) but that he was more willing to wait until the men from the

²⁸J. Pilar Alvarez, Tract: Para Honra del EVANGELIO, Jan., 1947.

²⁹A letter from Mr. Alvarez to Rev. Smith, dated March 30, 1946, and others.

³⁰A letter from Mr. Alvarez to Mr. Vásquez, dated July 16, 1946.

United States would speak to him about the Lutheran Church.³¹ Mr. Alvarez made trips to various parts of Guatemala, accepting preaching engagements, for he was quite noted for his persuasive powers and evangelistic work. He contacted one Joachin Vela and this man, too, wrote a series of letters to the United States,³² and later met with the representatives who first visited in Guatemala. His enthusiasm was unbounded. It is sad to note, however, that in two letters written in September, 1946, the month that Rev. Mayer and Rev. Pankow visited Guatemala for the first time, Mr. Alvarez told Mr. Vázquez "We want a chapel. That is what interests us the most."³³ From all of the letters in the series between these two men in Guatemala, it appears that Mr. Alvarez was most anxious to become a salaried Lutheran pastor and at the same time continue to do the work in the same manner in which he had been doing it for years.

Another man in Puerto Barrios became interested much later in the Lutheran Church. He was one of the large group of negroes living in Puerto Barrios, having come from Jamaica and from British Honduras.³⁴ He was the Field Dispenser (of

³¹A letter from Mr. Alvarez to Mr. Vázquez, dated Aug. 12, 1946.

³²A letter from Mr. Joachin Vela to Dr. Streufert, dated Aug. 23, 1946.

³³A letter from Mr. Alvarez to Mr. Vázquez, dated Sept. 19, 1946.

³⁴Called Belice by Guatemala and claimed to be Guatemalan territory.

medicines) for the United Fruit Company in Puerto Barrios. He had been serving a group, for the most part Anglicans, in Puerto Barrios for almost eight years as a lay reader. Hearing of the Lutheran Church through Mr. Alvarez, he wrote to Rev. Smith in Texas, telling him of his work in Puerto Barrios and of the desire of the group to see him as their ordained pastor. He wrote, reflecting the peculiar style of English he and his people employ:

To the above information if it please your grace, I would so gratefully oblige through God's Holy Will that you make it possible to have me ordained whereby I may be able to serve our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.³⁵

There are about 2000 negroes living in Puerto Barrios, who speak English for the most part, and Mr. Edward Willoughby is one of the leaders in that community. For years he has been trying to keep his people with the Lord. There was also a Seventh-Day Adventist Church for the English-speaking people in Puerto Barrios, which maintained a grade school. Two other schools were conducted in English by Jamaican ladies, Mrs. Young and Mrs. Martinez. These two women were interested in Mr. Willoughby's suggestions that they attempt to join the Lutheran Church, since it is, in some respects, most like the Church of England, which they had attended years ago.

These Anglican people heard of the Lutheran Church just a few days before Rev. Mayer, Assistant Executive Secretary

³⁵A letter from Mr. Edward Willoughby to Rev. Smith, dated Sept. 11, 1946. Complete text of this letter is written in Appendix D.

of the Board for Home Missions, arrived in Puerto Barrios. He had not seen their letter, written to Rev. Smith, before he visited that city, and was surprised to find that group waiting for him.

Concerning Guatemala City.

On January 23, 1946 a letter came to the office of Dr. Streufert from the Rev. Elmer Moeller, pastor of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bismarck, North Dakota. Rev. Moeller served a group of enemy aliens at Fort Lincoln, in Bismarck, during the war, and brought the news that some of the men with whom he worked seemed interested in the possibility of beginning Missouri Lutheran missions in Guatemala. He wrote:

I am writing to you in your capacity as Executive Secretary for the Board of South American Missions of our Church on a matter which may be of importance in Central American missions work by our church. I shall describe the background as clearly as possible.

For the past two years I have been pastor-in-charge for the Protestants at the Enemy Alien Internment Camp, Fort Lincoln, Bismarck, N. Dak. For more than a year I have had the privilege of serving, in the group of internees who attended my services, a large number of Latin-Americans from countries like Guatemala, Panama, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Peru. Many, most, in fact, have been released with a clean bill of health by the State Department. Their countries have demanded their release, and the latter has been granted. Possibly you have read details of their cases in the Chicago Tribune. For information on the political angles of the matter you can go to Director T. W. Strieter of the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War.

Before all of them left (there are yet a few here), I asked for information on the possibility of starting mission work in the Central American countries. The following seems to be the situation, as described to me by the two men who have acted as representatives of the

Latin-American group in their fight for freedom:

In Guatemala there was, prior to the war, a Lutheran congregation, self-supporting, served by a pastor who was a missionary for the Evangelisch-Lutherische Landeskirche of Germany. The pastor, interned also for a period of time, has gone back to his family in Germany. The congregation is without a pastor. These two men (cf. supra) feel that the congregation would welcome a pastor of the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church. Such a pastor would serve a large territory outside Guatemala City, working chiefly among the whites, of German and Spanish descent. Other work, by another man, might well be started among the native Indians, although the Catholic Church seems to be very active in the latter field. The congregation, although of Lutheran background, is made up of a mixed Protestant membership.

. . . These two men have volunteered, were our Church to send a representative down to Guatemala to investigate the situation, to arrange for meetings in Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, in order that it might be ascertained what possibilities lie open.³⁶

Dr. Streufert's answer to this letter was dramatic:

You do not know what an inspiration it was for me to get added information on mission possibilities in Guatemala. Here is the story - not three weeks old. Our Spanish Book Concern (Librería Evangélica Luterana), Brownsville, Texas, tells me that large quantities of our Spanish Sunday School Leaflets, Catechisms, Hymnals, and tracts are going to Guatemala...that individuals from Guatemala were inquiring whether a Lutheran Church could not be established in their midst, because the truths presented by our Church were so convincing. My name and address as Secretary of Missions was requested. No doubt I shall receive a letter from that area.

. . . I presented matters pertaining to the Guatemala possibilities to the Board of Home Missions awaiting added information. - And now comes your letter of January 23rd. What a coincidence! I wish to thank you for the information given. - Guatemala will be another link in the chain of our missions, stretching along the Pacific Coast from Alaska down to California - to Mexico - to Guatemala and the Canal Zone.³⁷

³⁶A letter from Rev. Moeller to Dr. Streufert, dated Jan. 23, 1946.

³⁷A letter from Dr. Streufert to Rev. Moeller, dated Jan. 25, 1946.

Dr. Streufert began to gather further information about the country of Guatemala and about the men who were released from the Prisoner of War Internment Camp. The names of the two men who were leaders in the group, as Rev. Moeller stated, were Mr. Hermann Kaltwasser and Mr. Martin Knoetzsch. When Dr. Streufert wrote to Rev. T. W. Strieter of the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners of War, he received this answer:

. . . Kaltwasser had a large retail-wholesale establishment in Guatemala. Knoetzsch also is a prominent citizen. It should not be difficult to establish contact with them.

. . . We will run no risk in sending a representative down there who, without a doubt, will be able to effect the organization of congregations down there. Since these men stand very well with the Government and with those nations, it will be a simple step to convert this into Spanish.³⁸

Mr. Kaltwasser and Mr. Knoetzsch were released from the Camp and went to New York and Washington, D. C. to see various officials and senators regarding the insurance of their freedom to work again in Guatemala. They soon flew from New Orleans and arrived safely in Guatemala. Very soon after their arrival, Mr. Knoetzsch wrote to Rev. Moeller, explaining to him that it would be very advantageous for the German Lutherans to become part of the Union Church of Guatemala, since financial conditions and political conditions were such that it would be desirable to do so. He mentioned, however, that the Union Church was losing its

³⁸A letter from Rev. Strieter to Dr. Streufert, dated Feb. 6, 1946.

pastor, and hinted that it might be possible for Rev. Moeller to become pastor of the Union Church of Guatemala. The Presbyterian Church was instrumental in the work of the Union Church, but Mr. Knoetzsch felt that there was a chance for a Lutheran to become pastor of that congregation. He stressed:

Therefore, this is the real opportunity that the North American Christians would come to help their brethren in Christ of German descent. This would prove not only that Christianity is above all nations, but also that U. S. citizens in Guatemala do not feel hatred and disdain against people of German descent. In fact, I would not favor that the people of German descent in Guatemala would endeavor to have again a congregation of their own but I think we serve Christian principles better if all Protestant Christians of this country join one congregation only. This would have many, many advantages: spiritually, ideally, materially, financially.³⁹

During the months of May, June, and July there was more correspondence between Rev. Moeller and Mr. Knoetzsch, and the latter persisted in showing why it was imperative that the German Lutherans of Guatemala try to join the Union Church. He showed that there was a need for a common Protestant front against the Catholicism in Guatemala, that a separate congregation composed of Germans, who were still not in favor with the Guatemalan government at the time, would be considered a camouflage for German activities, and that financially the Germans would not be able to support either a pastor or a church building.

After several months, Rev. Herman A. Mayer, of Zion

³⁹A letter from Mr. Knoetzsch to Rev. Moeller, dated May 15, 1946.

Lutheran Church, Bay City, Michigan, was called to become the Assistant Executive Secretary of the Board for Home Missions in North and South America and began this work on September 1, 1946. He was at once appointed by Dr. Streufert to the task of making the initial survey in Guatemala, but it became evident that he would not be able to visit that south-land until the middle of September. While the Board for Home Missions was laying these plans for this first visit to Guatemala, Mr. Knoetzsch formally approached the Union Church of Guatemala, asking its Board of Directors to consider a German-speaking pastor and the absorption of the German congregation into its midst. At the end of July, a letter was directed through Rev. Moeller to the Home Mission Board. It had come from Guatemala, and was signed by both Mr. Knoetzsch and by Mr. Calvin F. Wallis, M. D., for the Union Evangelical Church. It stated:

... There is the Union Evangelical Church of Guatemala which offers an opportunity for regular Sunday worshipping. However, this Church has no permanent pastor at this time but is relying on the pastors of the Presbyterian mission in this country.

There are many Lutherans in this country, mostly of German descent. They feel the necessity to have the permanent pastor whom they may approach in their own language and to whom they may entrust the religious education of their children and who may be the center of their religious activities.

From your letter of June 18, I understand that the Missouri Synode is ready to send to Guatemala an experienced representative who will undertake to study the situation of the Protestants in Guatemala in the spirit of helping the various groups. The cost of this visit will be borne by the Missouri Synode and will not include financial responsibility for anyone in Guatemala; neither is anybody obligated to accept the suggestions of said representatives before calling a pastor. Please, advise

us in time the arrival of the delegate and the time he will stay here.⁴⁰

It was evident that the Union Church was anxious to find a man to fill their pulpit, and, despite the pleadings of Mr. Knoetzsch and Mr. Kaltwasser, called a meeting for the 27th of August, 1946, at which there was to be considered a plan to call Dr. Charles T. Holman for six months as pastor of the Union Church. He was a man of considerable reputation: Dean of the Baptist Division of the University of Chicago Federation Seminary, author, Doctor of Divinity, and named in Who's Who in America as an outstanding American churchman.⁴¹

On September 20, 1946, when Rev. Mayer was in Guatemala, he met with the Board of the Union Church and found that it would be impossible to establish fellowship with the Union Church and please the German Lutherans.⁴²

Soon after his trip to Guatemala, which shall be described in the following chapter, this notice appeared in a leading newspaper of Guatemala City:

ALL ENGLISH-SPEAKING PROTESTANTS are cordially invited to attend the services of the Union Church of Guatemala (5a Calle Oriente No. 1) on Sunday, September 29, 1946, at 11 A. M. to hear Dr. Charles T. Holman, Professor of Theology at the University of Chicago. Dr. Holman has accepted the call to the pastorate of the Union

⁴⁰A letter from Mr. Knoetzsch to Rev. Moeller, dated July 27, 1946.

⁴¹A letter to the Congregation of the Union Church, written before August 27, 1946, inviting members to a special meeting.

⁴²H. A. Mayer, Transcript of a Diary on a Trip to Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, September 18-October 9, 1946.

Church for six months, and he will occupy the pulpit for the first time Sunday, the 29th.⁴³

After his first six months were up, Dr. Holman became permanent pastor of that church. It was apparent to all that a German Lutheran Church could not be begun for various reasons, nor could the German Lutherans conscientiously become members of the Union Church. The German Church, founded some twenty years before,⁴⁴ would never be able to resume its work. Their problems were many and they looked to the Missouri Lutheran Church in the United States for help.

Thus three protestant groups in widely separated areas of Guatemala looked to the Missouri Synod for help. God directed their pleas in such a manner that they were almost simultaneous, making a deep impression upon the leaders of the Mission Board, and moving them to hasten a survey of Guatemala.

⁴³Imparcial, Guatemala, C. A. (Sept. 28, 1946.)

⁴⁴A letter from Mr. Knoetzsch to Rev. Moeller, dated May 15, 1946.

CHAPTER III

THE SURVEY LEADING TO THE INSTALLATION OF THE FIRST MISSIONARY

Exploratory Trips to Guatemala

In the previous chapter we have reviewed the materials which led to a decision of the Board for Home Missions in North and South America to survey the mission possibilities. In November, 1946, the readers of the Lutheran Witness heard for the first time the news of the calls to Guatemala when they read the article entitled "A Threefold Call to Guatemala."¹ This article stated that groups in Guatemala City, Zacapa, and Puerto Barrios had called The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod to serve them, describing also the visit of the official representatives of that Church. In this chapter we wish to describe that visit and subsequent visits in detail, as well as the installation of the first missionary of the Lutheran Church to Guatemala.

Rev. Bernard J. Pankow, pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Mexico City, had presented a resolution to investigate Guatemala at a Latin-American Conference in San Antonio, Texas, sometime during January, 1946.² He also

¹H. A. Mayer, "A Threefold Call to Guatemala," The Lutheran Witness, LXV (Nov. 19, 1946), 390-91.

²A letter from Rev. B. J. Pankow to Dr. Streufert, dated Feb. 8, 1946.

sent Dr. Streufert a copy of a mimeographed sheet, with much information regarding Guatemala and its mission possibilities, which also urged:

Should not these apparent opportunities be immediately ascertained by a trip to Guatemala? If such freedom exists, should not the Lutheran Church forthwith send messengers of the Gospel to that benighted land?
THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONSTRAINS US!³

Therefore, not only were the people of Guatemala itself calling for help, but Lutheran pastors were aware of the possibilities. In his letter to Dr. Streufert, Rev. Pankow stated that he had heard much about Guatemala through his contacts with missionaries from that land who were visiting in Mexico City. Rev. Pankow's interest in Guatemala, as well as his command of the Spanish language, made him the logical choice of the Board for Home Missions to accompany Rev. H. A. Mayer on his first official trip to a foreign country as the newly-appointed Assistant Executive Secretary of the Board for Home Missions. Rev. Pankow acted as interpreter for Rev. Mayer during this first trip.

In a letter addressed to the members and friends of the Lutheran Church in Guatemala, sent to each of the three cities, Rev. Mayer advised that he would leave St. Louis on September 15, 1946, meet Rev. Pankow in Mexico City, and then the two of them would leave for Guatemala.⁴ Between the first days

³GUATEMALA, a mimeographed sheet, dated Jan. 15, 1946. Paper probably used at the San Antonio Conference.

⁴A letter from Rev. Mayer to the Lutheran Church in Guatemala, dated Aug. 5, 1946.

of August and the middle of September there were numerous plans made by Rev. Mayer for the trip. He and Rev. Pankow planned their itinerary, gathered cameras and movie equipment, arranged for tourist cards, and posted themselves on every development in Guatemala in order to be perfectly prepared for their exploratory trip.

On the evening of September 16, 1946, Rev. Mayer flew from St. Louis to Mexico City, and Rev. Pankow and Rev. Cesar A. Lazos, the pastor of the Spanish-speaking St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Mexico City, met him at the airport the next morning. After a few days' visit in Mexico, Rev. Mayer and Rev. Pankow flew to Guatemala City on September 19, 1946, where they were met by Mr. and Mrs. Martin Knoetzsch, Mr. Kaltwasser, and Mr. Joachin Vela.⁵ Mr. Knoetzsch took the two visitors in his Lincoln automobile to the Palace Hotel, the best in Guatemala City. Bouquets of flowers were placed in the hotel rooms from Mr. Knoetzsch with the best wishes for a successful mission in Guatemala. The representatives had dinner at Mr. Knoetzsch's home the first evening, and met with Rev. Harer, moderator of the Presbyterian group, after dinner. There was a lengthy discussion of the methods of the Presbyterians in Guatemala and it was evident that they were training their men well and that their work in the capital city and in the Indian Highlands was extensive and intensive. Rev.

⁵H. A. Mayer, Transcript of a Diary on a trip to Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, Sept. 16-Oct. 9, 1946. All material regarding this trip will be drawn from this source.

Harer invited the Lutherans to preach at the Union Church, but they declined the invitation. He also indicated that the Friends required no training for their preachers before they became pastors of congregations in Guatemala, in many instances. The Presbyterians have a school in the capital.

The next day, September 20, 1946, the representatives met with Mr. Joachin Vela, who had gotten into contact with the Lutherans through Mr. Alvarez. He had at one time been a Presbyterian minister, but after about five years as a pastor for that Church, his wife died, he had remarried in 1923, and soon afterwards was put out of that church. He claimed he didn't know why they opposed his second marriage. He described work as a traveling evangelist and they discussed especially the doctrine of the Means of Grace with him. He was very anxious to hear more about Lutheran doctrine and appeared to be floundering and eager to accept the truth. He was presented with a Spanish catechism and several tracts.

That afternoon there was a discussion with Mr. Kaltwasser, in which differences between Lutheran and Reformed doctrines were stressed. Mr. Kaltwasser said "Das sind verschiedene Richtungen. Ihr vertretet die Paulinische Richtung in der Rechtfertigung." (Those are different directions. You follow the Pauline direction in justification.)

That evening there was a meeting between the Lutheran representatives and the Board of the Union Church. Rev. Mayer and Rev. Pankow were told that the German group in the city of Guatemala were quite clannish and were not assimilated into

the social life of Guatemala and therefore were under suspicion. The sentiment was still strong against them at that time. Special attention was given to a discussion of Lutheran principles on Unionism and, though the discussion was friendly, no hope was held for developing any arrangement for work in conjunction with that Church, whether the Germans would like that or not.

On Saturday, September 21, 1946, the representatives visited Radio Station TYO, from which the Lutheran Hour was broadcast in Spanish. They heard suggestions for improvement of the program, which was already well-received and the best of three religious broadcasts emanating from that station, according to the station manager, Mr. Manuel Gonzales.

Mr. Kurt-Heinz Nottebohm took Rev. Mayer to his home, where he explained to Rev. Mayer how the firm of Nottebohm and Sons had at one time had a 40-50 million dollar import and export business. He told how the government had deprived them of that business during the war.

Sunday evening, September 22, 1946, Rev. Mayer preached a sermon based on the Gospel for the Day, Luke 17, 11-19, to a group of twenty-one in Mr. Knoetzsch's home.

On Monday morning, September 23, 1946, the representatives met with a pastor of the Central American Mission, Rev. Harold Broekhoven, who did a lot of religious broadcasting and also used the Lutheran Hour records. The Lutheran Laymen's League was paying for the broadcast, but the Central American Mission was receiving the mail from the broadcasts of the Lutheran Hour, which Rev. Mayer felt was not a good

arrangement. It was changed. That afternoon they met with the Minister of Education and the minister of Government and found that private schools could be opened as long as they did not interfere with politics.

The next day they were offered an opportunity to buy time on Radio Station TGW, the strongest station in Guatemala, for the Lutheran Hour, and subsequently the program was broadcast over that station also. In the evening there was a baptismal service in the home of Mr. Kurt Nottebohm. Carl-Ludewig Nottebohm, and Marlene Nottebohm were the first two children baptized by Rev. Mayer in Guatemala. The verse from Tobias 4, 6, "My son, be mindful of the Lord our God all thy days, and let not thy will be set to sin, or to transgress his commandments," was spoken over the children.

On Wednesday, September 25, 1946, the representatives left the capital city of Guatemala and traveled to Zacapa by rail and arrived in that city by noon. They were met by a large delegation and taken to the Iglesia Evangélica Luterana, and were welcomed there by a hymn sung by the children. During the afternoon they became acquainted with the leaders of the group, Mr. Vásquez, Mr. Flores, Mr. Reyes, and Mr. Franco. In the evening the first service was held, attended by about 100 people. Rev. Pankow preached the sermon in Spanish on Romans 8, 31, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" At the end of the service, Mr. J. Pilar Alvarez of Puerto Barrios, a visitor at these services in Zacapa, arose and called upon backsliders to reconcile themselves to the Lord. Nobody arose.

Next morning the two North Americans visited the schoolmasters in Zacapa, the doctor, and the mayor of the city. All of them were very friendly and encouraged more education for the city. That afternoon, Rev. Mayer visited the Friends Mission in Chiquimula and Miss Ruth Smith, discussing with her and her colleagues the purpose of his trip to Guatemala; pointing out, in answer to their questions, that the Lutheran Church could not be bound to the resolutions of their Synod in Guatemala and that the Lutheran Church had the command to teach all nations also and would serve those who appealed to it. Rev. Pankow stayed in Zacapa to discuss Baptism with the group there. That evening, service in Zacapa was attended by some 60 people and the sermon was based on Revelation 3, 20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

The next evening, Friday, September 27, 1946, there was a baptismal service in Zacapa with twenty children being baptized. Among them were five of Mr. Vásquez' children and four children of Mr. José Flores. Mr. Alvarez opposed the practice of having sponsors, but all the children had sponsors for their baptism.

On Saturday Rev. Mayer and Rev. Pankow accompanied Mr. Alvarez on the train to the coast town of Puerto Barrios, arriving there around five o'clock in the evening. After a meal at the hotel by the side of the water, for this was the

port city for the country, they went into a tropical bush house for their first meeting with the people of that city. There were some 65 people at that first service. One elderly colored Jamaican, husband of one of the Spanish-speaking women who was at the service, made a short welcome speech, "O Lord, we thank Thee for sending these men to teach us the Gospel." The sermon, based on Romans 8, 31, was received with many "Amen's" during the sermon pauses, and was preached by Rev. Pankow in Spanish.

Sunday morning there was another Spanish service, Sunday School, during which Rev. Pankow explained much about the Lutheran Church. That afternoon the first service was held for the English-speaking Jamaicans. Just before this service, someone in front of the building shouted out that the whole group were "hypocrites" and another man pursued him with a knife. Both of them were under the influence of alcohol. Twenty-one persons attended this meeting, at which Rev. Mayer preached on Ephesians 1, 7a, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." One man in this group said, "I was all choked up for joy." Mr. Willoughby of the Fruit Company Dispensary was present and showed a petition he had gotten up to circularize, which asked the English Colony in Puerto Barrios to try to raise \$400 to move and renovate the chapel that had formerly belonged to the Anglican Church. He was told to continue his endeavor and to inform the Board of Home Missions of his success.

That evening another Spanish service was held, at which

125 were present. Israel Alvarez, the son of Mr. Pilar Alvarez, and the Nazarene preacher of Puerto Barrios sang a duet during the service. Rev. Fankow preached on the text in Revelation 3, 20. A number of the people present wanted to make it known that they wished Mr. Alvarez to be their pastor, and one man wished to be baptized, in accordance with a vision he had seen. His name was Mr. Miguel García.

The next afternoon, the last day in Puerto Barrios, Monday, September 30, 1946, Rev. Fankow explained Baptism to the best of his ability, and despite the insistence of Mr. Alvarez that the group was not ready to accept the baptism of their children, the group wanted their children to be baptized that evening. After supper, and after a sermon on Mark 10, 13-16, twenty children were baptized. In all cases, Rev. Mayer baptized the children. The adults had all been baptized in the Roman Catholic Church during their infancy. This was also the farewell service as far as this trip to Puerto Barrios was concerned.

In the morning, before the airplane left for the capital city with the two representatives aboard, Mr. Miguel García came to the hotel with a strong plea that he be baptized. He was baptized there and Mr. Alvarez was one of the sponsors. In the plane on the way back to the capital city, the two representatives had for companions, among other passengers, a parrot, a live turtle, and a bag of alligator skins.

On Wednesday the two men saw the Chief of Immigration and found that a minister could enter the country of Guatemala

with the request for his entry and full stipulations as to his support from the group that would support him. They also had lunch with Dr. Holman, the new minister of the Union Church. From Guatemala, they went to El Salvador and Honduras for surveys, and from there back to Mexico City.

The author of this thesis has given a full account of these few days in Guatemala on the part of The Missouri Synod's representatives so that every one may know just what was involved on this first missionary exploratory trip. The total cost of the trip for the two men, excluding the trips to El Salvador and Honduras, was about \$750.00.

During the trip, Rev. Mayer wrote almost constantly to Dr. Streufert, and in one letter he stated:

Our work is taking very definite directions. We are convinced that the Lord has a big field for us here. The country is wide open. Pankow feels that we should consider centering our activities in Guatemala, even to the establishing of our training school here. It may be easier to bring our prospective students to Guatemala than to establish two schools: in Guatemala and in Mexico. All this will be further discussed between us. We need manpower - and need it quickly. . . . Already on Saturday evening three colored men, English-speaking Jamaicans, asked for a service. Their expressions of the hunger and thirst for God's Word deeply moved us. . . . They have already written to Brownsville. Perhaps you have their letter. That also is a great field. There are about 1000 of them right here in Barrios. . . . We put in long days and strenuous days. Yesterday we walked to the church three times, back and forth, along the railroad tracks, a distance of about eight miles in all. . . . Our meals are good - too good. Four and five course lunches and dinners. We don't eat it all. Here is a menu of a dinner: Fruit juice, soup, rice and pigs knuckles, scrambled eggs, meat, potatoes, some native vegetable, coffee and dessert - baked banana, very delicious.⁶

A letter from Rev. Mayer to Dr. Streufert, dated Sept. 30, 1946.

In a brief report to the Board for Home Missions, Rev. Mayer summed up some of the impressions of the work in Guatemala and, thanking the Home Mission Board for the confidence placed in himself and Rev. Pankow by sending them as representatives of the Board on so difficult and far-reaching a mission, he said:

The Lutheran Hour has paved the way. The Catholic clergy has lost its hold in government circles. We signed up four new stations in Guatemala and El Salvador, and made contact with two in Honduras. . . . One man should be called at once and as soon as possible two candidates should be placed⁷ at his side. -- The fields are white unto harvest.

The Lutheran Hour office in St. Louis was very appreciative of the efforts to expand their outlets in Central America and wrote both to the Board of Missions and to Rev. Pankow in order to continue pressing the urgency of their work. The Board for Home Missions was ready to get into the work of Guatemala by calling a man for the position of first missionary to that country. In November, Dr. Streufert and Rev. Mayer, his assistant, began to search for likely men. Meanwhile, Rev. Pankow was asked to visit Guatemala again during November and in January.

There was a long period of waiting for those in Zacapa and Puerto Barrios. Especially those of the Spanish-speaking group in Puerto Barrios were not as sure of themselves and very much worried about the future of their little group. Most of all, they did not find themselves in agreement with the

⁷H. A. Mayer, "Brief Report on Exploration Trip to Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras." n.d.

Lutheran Church on certain points of doctrine and practice, and, substantially, these points of disagreement, written to Rev. Pankow, were the basis for their vacillation for the next two years. They wrote him:

With pain the committee commissioned to direct this letter to you (plural) does it with the faith that you (plural) will be satisfied with our frankness, as when you were with us. You told us that in order to recognize us as members, we must first study the doctrine in the light of the Word. Very well said. And that we were at liberty to choose whether we would like or not like the doctrine, and after one year of test you would recognize us as members. We think that this would be one year of vacillating without having a definite backing. The church has studied the doctrine and in the meetings has studied some points that don't appear well to us. 1) The baptism of children, as you practice it, that you have sponsors. It is believed that this is not scriptural, and thus the Roman Church practices it here in Guatemala, and we don't want anything that brings Romanism. 2) We don't accept candles, nor crucifixes, nor crosses on the altar, because we believe that God is a spirit and there is no necessity to use material things on the altar. That is used only in the Roman temples. 3) The catechism teaches the office of the keys and confession. That we do not understand the manner in which you believe it, because it treats of a confessor, and if Christ is our confessor, why use mediators as the Romans do? 4) That there isn't liberty in the services to pray and to testify as the evangelical churches here are accustomed to do. Everything is too mechanical without the liberty of the spirit. 5) That you do not make the national worker capable, that he must study many years in order to be able to carry out some position in the church. If you correct the declared points, which do not seem well to us as you teach them, we are ready to adhere to the Lutheran Church. . . . This which we say in the present letter is not that you become discouraged or desist in your plans. It is that you might soon send missionaries in order to open fields. If this business is of God, He will take charge of it. Here in this port are many people that desire the Lutheran doctrine, and I am sure that very soon you will have people. . . . As far as the moral part is concerned, we are at your orders. Don't hesitate to trouble us. By the committee, (signed)⁸

⁸A letter from the church at Puerto Barrios to Rev. Pankow, dated Oct. 30, 1946.

The signers of that letter were Mr. Mariano Menendez, Mr. José C. Ramirez, and Mr. Antonio Suchite. They were eager to learn from the Lutherans, and hastened to add in this letter that they were retaining the name "Evangelical Church of Berea" that Rev. Mayer had given them because they had asked so very many questions. There was much internal conflict. Mr. Alvarez wrote to Rev. Pankow and told him very frankly that because he had been told that the Lutheran Church could not tolerate Unionism, he did not want to become a Lutheran member. At the same time, he urged that the Lutheran Church come to the group at Puerto Barrios with a pastor that was well-trained. He also stated that "Brother Miguel, whom you baptized, is indeed a faithful Lutheran, as he affirms, but is very carnal, with the result that last night he wished to hit a brother in the service. Where is the fear and respect to God?"⁹

In late November, Rev. Pankow again visited the three cities in Guatemala to sustain the hopes of the various groups and to further instruct them in Lutheran doctrine. During his whole trip, he baptized six children, held twenty-one different services, and had some 15 in attendance at one time in the capital city, 50 in Zacapa, and 70 in Puerto Barrios. The people of Zacapa urged him to visit with them in the town of Maguey, where there were a good many more than 100 in attendance at his service. Of course, the main result

⁹A letter from Mr. Alvarez to Rev. Pankow, dated Oct. 29, 1946.

of this second trip to Guatemala was the strengthening of the ties between the Guatemalans and the Lutheran Church, and all the groups were more than anxious for a Lutheran pastor to be with them. Again, many Bibles, Catechisms, and tracts were sold and distributed in each city. On this trip Rev. Pankow was able to hear the President of Guatemala, Dr. Juan José Arévalo, speak in Puerto Barrios at a labor rally and presented him with a Lutheran Catechism.¹⁰

After having come to the United States for his wedding, around Christmastime in 1946, Rev. Pankow returned to Mexico, and, from March 3 - March 13 of 1947, made a third trip to Guatemala. This time again the Germans in the capital city were very much afraid to have services in their homes, for they were being molested by the government.¹¹ Some of the people in Puerto Barrios were very disturbed about the order of the ten commandments and spoke with Rev. Pankow about that. He wrote them upon returning from his trip that they should not become discouraged, and that soon their new pastor would arrive and would have much time to explain all their questions to them.¹² In Zacapa, each succeeding visit of Rev. Pankow was welcomed as a sign that the pastor whom they patiently awaited would soon be with them.

¹⁰A letter from Rev. Pankow to Rev. Mayer, dated Nov. 27, 1946, written from Zacapa.

¹¹A letter from Rev. Pankow to Rev. Mayer, dated March 7, 1947, written from Zacapa.

¹²A letter from Rev. Pankow to Mr. Alvarez, dated May 5, 1947.

The Installation of the First Missionary

Among the few men who were considered as likely prospects to be called as the Missouri Synod's first missionary to Guatemala, was Rev. Robert F. Gussick of Chilton, Wisconsin. He was called by the Board for Home Missions, and, in due time, accepted the call. Pastor Gussick was commissioned to his new field of activity by Rev. Herman A. Mayer, who was assisted by Pastors A. Huber, W. M. Ave-Lallemant, G. F. Barthel, and L. Spilker on Easter Monday, 1947, at St. Martin's Lutheran Church in Chilton, Wisconsin.¹³

Rev. Gussick was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on November 19, 1917. His father is a layman, a combustion engineer and valve manufacturer, and a Lutheran by choice, having been born of Polish Roman Catholic parents. His mother, nee Gierach, is the grand-daughter of one of the German immigrants that left Germany with Grabau, later moving from Buffalo to Freistadt, Wisconsin.

After studying in a Milwaukee Public School, Hartford Avenue School, and being confirmed by the now sainted Pastor O. F. Engelbrecht at Luther Memorial Chapel, he entered Concordia College, Milwaukee, in 1931, and graduated from there in 1937. He graduated from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis in 1941, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Divinity. He had spent his year of vicarage at the Lutheran Orphanage in Indianapolis, Indiana. He attended the Graduate School

¹³H. A. Mayer, "Missionary Assigned to Central America," The Lutheran Witness, LXVI (June 17, 1947), 203.

of Butler University in Indianapolis, working in the Old Testament Department. Since 1939 he has held membership in the American School of Oriental Research.

His interest in the Spanish language was first stimulated at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, where he studied Spanish under the late Pastor Jargo, paying him ten cents an hour. Upon leaving the Seminary, he taught school in Trinity Lutheran Church (Spanish) at San Antonio, Texas, for one year. When Rev. Andrew Melendez left that congregation, December, 1941, Rev. Gussick was in charge of the entire mission until July of 1942.

In April, 1942, he was married to Ruth Yungans, daughter of E. H. Yungans, principal of St. Peter's School in Indianapolis, Indiana. They have had three children, Steven John, who died at birth, Carol Ann, and Mary Louise.

In July, 1942, Rev. Gussick accepted the call to St. Martin's Church in Chilton, Wisconsin, where he served from 1942 until 1947. During that time he and his wife presented many lectures in various parts of the middle west on the need for greater mission work in Mexico, using pictures they had taken in Mexico on a visit. He continued his Spanish education through correspondence courses at the University of Wisconsin.¹⁴

Soon after his commissinning, Pastor Gussick left for Mexico, arriving in Mexico City the first day of May, 1947. He enrolled in a school there to refresh his knowledge of

¹⁴A letter from Rev. R. F. Gussick to Prof. E. C. Zimmermann, dated Jan. 18, 1950.

Spanish, and soon returned to Austin, Texas, to meet his wife and their baby Carol on the baby's first birthday, July 2, 1947. From there the family drove their car south to Mexico City, and later drove it to Acapulco, Mexico, from where it was shipped by boat to Guatemala. Rev. and Mrs. Gussick and their child flew to Guatemala City, setting foot on Guatemalan soil July 25, 1947.¹⁵ After a few weeks, during which Rev. Gussick and his family sought a place to live in the capital city of Guatemala, he made his first trip to the cities of Zacapa and Puerto Barrios. Rev. Pankow from Mexico City came to Guatemala for the fourth and last time, and accompanied him to these cities.

On August 18, 1947 Rev. Gussick was installed as pastor of the congregation in Zacapa by Rev. Pankow. The installation took place in the home of Mr. Vásquez, a room of which had been set aside as the Lutheran Church for the past year and a half. About one hundred worshippers assembled in the room for the service, some of whom had walked a great distance to attend, one of them coming twenty miles.

The next evening a service was held in Puerto Barrios where Rev. Gussick was installed as pastor of the Spanish group there. It was impossible to arrange for a service at the time with the English-speaking group, but Mr. Willoughby welcomed the new pastor in the name of his group. In both cities Rev. Pankow's sermon was based on I Thessalonians

¹⁵R. F. Gussick, THE GUATEMALAN PIONEER, Newsletter No. 1, December, 1947.

5, 12-13, "And we beseech you, brethern, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves." While Pastor Gussick knelt on the dirt floor, the words of Acts 20, 28 and Romans 1, 16, were said over him with "the laying on of hands." In Puerto Barrios, Mr. Inez León exclaimed "This night my heart is celebrating a great fiesta," signifying the feelings of all the Guatemalans in their joy at having a Lutheran pastor with them at last.

Mr. Fred Pankow, brother of Rev. B. J. Pankow, a graduate of Concordia Seminary, assisted at these services. He had gone to Guatemala in the beginning of July to help in the new mission. He had taken courses in the summer school at San Carlos University in Guatemala City, the oldest University in North America, but now remained in Puerto Barrios for one month. He then left Guatemala to continue his graduate studies at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri.¹⁶

Rev. and Mrs. Gussick had found a boarding house with the aid of Mr. Knoetzsch in Guatemala City and lived there until October 2, 1947. Mrs. Sharoch, a German lady who owned the boarding house, charged them \$160 a month for room and board. This was an indication, he wrote Rev. Mayer on August 15, 1947, of the high cost of living in Guatemala. He added that baby food for their child which normally would cost

¹⁶B. J. Pankow, "Work Begun in Guatemala," The Lutheran Witness, LXVI (Oct. 21, 1947) 346.

ninety cents in the United States, cost them \$4.55. In another letter to Rev. Mayer, ten days later, he mentioned that a small bar of facial soap cost forty cents, a roll of toilet paper cost twenty cents, and that half a pound of salted soda crackers cost fifty cents. Throughout the first months of their stay, they explained how hard it was for them to adjust themselves to such a high cost of living, much higher than they had ever experienced in the United States. On October 2, 1947 he moved with his family into an American-style house in the section of the city called Tivoli, where many United States citizens lived. This was one of the very few houses in the city that was available and the rent there was \$110 a month. The cost of living was high because North Americans are not used to living with the few bare necessities of life that the Guatemalan is used to. Many things that Rev. Gussick's family absolutely needed were things that needed to be imported. They could be bought, but the duty on these items forced the storekeepers to sell them at a very high price.

The early weeks found Rev. Gussick visiting the Custom House almost daily in an effort to free his car from customs and to clear all of his household goods, which had been brought from the United States. These, and many visits in the homes of the Germans in the capital city, did not allow him much time to make regular visits to Zacapa and Puerto Barrios, ninety and one hundred and eighty miles distant, respectively. Rev. Gussick obtained permission from the Board of Missions to take a train one way and fly via the domestic

airway, Aviateca, on the return trip when he made trips outside the capital to visit the two stations in the Motagua River Valley, Zacapa and Puerto Barrios. The traveling expenses on this trip cost \$18 and the Hotel expenses in each city were \$5.00 a day. Of further interest is the fact that the total expenses of moving Rev. Gussick's family and household equipment, his books, and his car from Wisconsin to Guatemala were \$3222.99.¹⁷

Mrs. Gussick accustomed herself to having a maid in her house to help her, mainly because it was necessary to have someone in the house to protect it from thieves if they were away from it, and because there was added housework in Guatemala, such as boiling all the drinking water, cleaning all the vegetables very thoroughly, mixing powdered milk, and being very careful to guard against vermin and bacteria which cause disease so suddenly in the tropics.

At long last the hopes of the people of Zacapa and Puerto Barrios, kindled through their first correspondence with Rev. Smith at the beginning of the year 1946, were fulfilled. Rev. Gussick had come to Guatemala to be their first Lutheran pastor. At the same time, the hopes of many in the United States were fulfilled, in that the first Lutheran work of any Synod of the Lutheran Church in America had been established among the Spanish-speaking people of Central America. God answered the prayers of many and sent

¹⁷A letter from Rev. Gussick to Rev. Mayer, dated Oct. 17, 1947.

His own chosen worker to begin this phase of his work in Guatemala. The Board for Home Missions in North and South America began to look for a second full-time missionary to go to the assistance of Rev. Gussick in that large field.

In Guatemala City

Rev. Gussick met with difficulty in Guatemala City in that many of the Germans who had declared themselves anxious to have a Lutheran pastor in their midst did not demonstrate the willingness to cooperate with him when he did arrive to serve them. Mr. Gussick and a few others were eager to do their all to help, but at the same time every one of these men had gone through some suffering on account of the war, the hardships imposed on them by the government, their separation to the United States during the war, and were not likely to cooperate lest they be suspected of plots against the government. Furthermore, Rev. Gussick and the interested parties in the capital city searched in vain for a place to hold the worship. One building, formerly a library, was offered for the purpose, but at the last moment they were unable to reach it. Some of the men then volunteered to have services in their homes, but Rev. Gussick did not want

CHAPTER IV

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERMANENT WORK

This chapter will deal with the work of Rev. Robert F. Gussick and his student assistants from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri until June, 1949. Since much of the missionary work over this period of twenty-two months, from August, 1947 to June, 1949, was routine, we shall consider only the highlights of the progress in each city.

In Guatemala City

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to begin services in their homes because they would not be able to publicize or announce them and there was danger that the Lutheran Church would be stigmatized from the start as being German, for, after all, it was to be for anyone in the city.

In the first week of November, 1947, Rev. Gussick began classes for the children of the German residents, preparing them for confirmation, in the language of the country, Spanish. Soon there were fourteen children enrolled in these classes. He held these classes in his own home.¹

The first church service in the capital city was planned for Christmas, but had to be postponed on account of sickness in the group. It was held on January 6, 1948, Epiphany Evening, in the home of Rev. Gussick. There were twenty-one present, of whom seven were adults. There were no more services for some time for the reasons mentioned above, and because of the press of work in the other two stations.²

Rev. Gussick divided the instruction classes into two groups according to age, and continued to hold them in his home, until another meeting place was secured later in the same year. Eleven of the children in the class were confirmed on Pentecost Sunday, 1949.

In May, 1948, a room was found for rent in a school, "Colegio Guatemala," and classes were continued in that room.

¹A letter from Rev. Gussick to Rev. Mayer, dated Nov. 10, 1947.

²R. F. Gussick, The Guatemalan Pioneer, No. 2, Jan. 9, 1948.

The first regular English service was held in that room on Sunday, July 11, 1948. There was an attendance of eighteen and Rev. Gussick preached a sermon based on Mark 8, 1-11. This room was not attractive for church services, but Rev. and Mrs. Gussick cleaned it each Sunday morning and tacked a sheet over a mirror which hung on the wall over the mantle of a fireplace in the room, brought in a small portable organ, and made the room look as much like a church as they were able. The school desks, however, were far too small for adults to sit in them comfortably. Services were held there weekly, and a number of instruction classes were held there each week.³

Later on, in December of that same year, a house was found in the center of Guatemala City, near the National Palace, and it was rented for use as a church. The main room of this house was arranged like an early Roman house, with columns at either end, and the niche at one end was fixed so as to make a fine chancel. Rev. Gussick made an altar with materials at hand. The Christmas service in the capital city that year was beautiful. It was held in English, and there was a Spanish Vesper Service held in the evening. A few people who were at home only in that language attended this service, among others. During the whole year of 1948 and until June, 1949, attendance at the church services was very poor, with an average of about 12 to 15

³C. T. Kuehn, 1948 Desk Diary. This was used to keep daily reports by Student Kuehn.

people attending them. One man, Dr. Ainslie, the chief doctor at the American Hospital (Presbyterian), attended very regularly because he appreciated the fine sermons, which were all held in English. At intervals, American tourists who were Lutherans also visited these services and were happy to find a Lutheran missionary in Guatemala.

Lutheran Hour broadcasts brought much mail to the stations that broadcast that program in Guatemala, four of them by 1949. Rev. Gussick received this mail, as well as some from other Central American Radio Stations. Some Spanish-speaking people even came to his door seeking further information about the Lutheran Church. Rev. Gussick was not able at this time to begin mission work among the many Spanish-speaking inhabitants of that city of over 200,000 population, because he was so pressed with his work in the Motagua River Valley and with administrative details, and with his repeated attempts to rouse interest among the German Lutherans in Guatemala City. He did much thinking about ways to break into the Spanish community with his work, but came to the conclusion, as is evidenced by his letters to the Mission Board, and in THE GUATEMALAN PIONEER, a newsletter which the Gussicks mimeographed and sent to friends in the United States, that it was imperative to have a larger staff of missionaries before extensive work could be done in the capital.

In February of 1948 Mrs. Gussick had to return to the United States. On April 7, 1948 their third child, Mary Louise, was born to them. On May 3, 1948 Rev. Gussick re-

turned to the United States for a short time. One of the reasons for this trip to the States was to raise money through lectures, by permission of the Board for Home Missions, to buy a Jeep, Visual Aids, a portable organ, and a 2-kilowatt generator to place on the Jeep. During this period of lecturing, Rev. Gussick stressed the needs for manpower in mission fields, especially in his own, since he could speak from experience regarding the work in Guatemala. He arrived back in Guatemala with his family June 24, 1948, two months later.⁴

Just before the mid-semester vacation at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis during the school year 1947-1948, student Clarence T. Kuehn of Kingston, New York, son of the late Rev. Theodore Kuehn of Rome, New York, was approached and asked whether he would like to go to Rev. Gussick's side in Guatemala and help him with the work in that virgin mission field of the Missouri Synod. He agreed to go for one year to Guatemala, and prepared to leave at the close of the half-year of the school term. He had completed, at the time, two and one-half years of his course of theological studies and was somewhat acquainted with the Spanish language, having spent a year's vicarage in Corpus Christi, Texas, teaching school at Our Savior Lutheran School. Our Savior Church was a Spanish Mission of the Texas District. He left St. Louis in a snowstorm during the first week of February, 1948, and

⁴R. F. Gussick, The Guatemalan Pioneer, No. 3, Oct. 18, 1948.

traveled by train and bus to Mexico City, with a stop at Monterrey. Then he flew to Guatemala City from Mexico City, arriving in Guatemala on February 12, 1948.⁵ He spent the months of February and March with Rev. Gussick, traveling over the field with him, and learning the habits and customs of the people, reviewing the Spanish language, and learning the goals to be achieved in mission work. At the end of March he left the capital city to live in Puerto Barrios for one month. During May and June, while Rev. Gussick was in the United States gathering materials for expanding the work in the field, he lived in the capital city and visited Zacapa and Puerto Barrios periodically. Later, he lived in the Motagua River Valley, sharing his time between Zacapa and Puerto Barrios each week, visiting the capital city for a rest and for consultation with Rev. Gussick a few days each month.⁶ After his year's work in Guatemala, he returned to the United States in January of 1949 to complete his studies at Concordia Seminary, where, God willing, he is to finish his studies in June, 1950.

The next Concordia Seminary student to assist Rev. Gussick in his missionary activities was Gerhard F. Kempff of Spokane, Washington. His father was a layman, very active in church work in Spokane. Mr. Kempff had taught school at St. John's Lutheran School in New Germany, Minnesota, for one year,

⁵U. T. Kuehn, Guatemalan Diary - 1948. This is a compilation of letters written home during that year.

⁶U. T. Kuehn, 1948 Desk Diary.

and had begun his third full year at the Seminary. However, upon hearing that Mr. Kuehn was returning to the Seminary in January, 1949 to complete his studies, Mr. Kempff very kindly discontinued the semester of school work he had begun and left for Guatemala, arriving there on October 23, 1948. His Spanish was weak, since he had completed only four units of Spanish at the Seminary and had not served in any Spanish mission previously. However, he applied himself diligently and preached his first Spanish sermon on January 6, 1949. When Mr. Kuehn left, he was able to continue to work in the Motagua River Valley, preaching each week in Zacapa, two villages near Zacapa, and in Puerto Barrios. He returned to the United States in August of 1949.⁷

As far as we are able to ascertain, these two men were the first in many years to spend an entire year's vicarage in a foreign country during their Seminary days. Rev. Paul Prokopy of Manchester, Connecticut, and later, Rev. Thomas Urban, spent a year in the Isle of Pines during their Seminary days, about 1918 and 1950, respectively.⁸

The first week in March, 1948, Dr. Streufert, Executive Secretary of the Home Mission Board, visited Guatemala and Nicaragua. This was his first trip to Guatemala and he visited the whole field, helping to lay plans for the future of the mission work. When he returned to the United States,

⁷G. F. Kempff, Diary of Guatemala, 1948-9. This was his day by day diary.

⁸Files of the School of Missions, Concordia Seminary. These are in the Office of Professor Zimmermann.

he wrote in The Lutheran Witness:

If only all of our members could spend a day or two with one of our missionaries who are blazing a trail for Christ in virgin territories, there would be no need for the Church to plead for funds for its mission treasuries. These men are representing us - and their support is our responsibility!⁹

During the first week of March, 1949, Rev. Mayer made his second trip to Guatemala, visiting the whole field and marking the progress that had been made during the intervening months.¹⁰

During the time since Rev. Gussick had gone to Guatemala until the present, men have been sought who would go to Guatemala as full-time missionaries, since Rev. Gussick was bearing the greatest part of the responsibilities involved in keeping up with the rapid growth in a mission field. At the end of a series of three articles appearing in The Lutheran Witness in the spring of 1949, written by Rev. Gussick, and entitled "What of Guatemala?", there was a statement added to the articles and enclosed in a special box, reading, "A second full-time man will be sent to Guatemala just as quickly as possible. Such an addition to the field is now being sought."¹¹

Though the progress of missionary work in Guatemala City may have been slow, more abundant missionary possibilities were offered in the two cities of the Motagua River Valley.

⁹Dr. F. C. Streafert, "The Church Moves Forward in Latin America," The Lutheran Witness, LXVII (May 4, 1948), 144.

¹⁰G. F. Kempff, Diary of Guatemala, 1948-9.

¹¹R. F. Gussick, "What of Guatemala?" The Lutheran Witness LXVIII (April 19, 1949), 125.

In Zacapa

Soon after Rev. Gussick had arrived in Guatemala and been installed, he began making regular trips to Zacapa and Puerto Barrios every two weeks. Almost immediately the group in Zacapa was able to find a house on the main street, which was rented and equipped for services. Half the house was sub-let to a family of members who took care of the bookstore which was organized in one room of the building.¹² There was no altar in the room that was used for church services, since most of the early visitors to the services, sometimes numbering more than forty, were not accustomed to having an altar. On his semi-monthly visits to Zacapa, Rev. Gussick at once began to hold instruction classes after his church services. He also conducted a Sunday School for about 25 children. The cooperation of the group was wonderful.

The first Christmas service in Zacapa, at which Rev. Gussick used colored slides of the Nativity, which were lent to him by his father-in-law, was held in the regular chapel room of the rented house. The room measured about 15 by 20 feet. One hundred twenty-five adults and one hundred children crowded into that room to hear the Christmas Story and to see the pictures.¹³

While Rev. Gussick was in Zacapa in January, 1948, on one of his early trips to that city, there came a letter to him

666 ¹²R. F. Gussick, The Guatemalan Pioneer, No. 1, Dec. 10, 1927.

¹³Ibid. No. 2, Jan. 9, 1948.

from a village near-by, called Maguey. It invited him to visit that village and to preach the Gospel there, too. He followed an ox-cart trail the four miles across semidesert land to the village, and preached one evening to a group of about fifty people in a lantern-lit room, for there was no electricity in that village. Of the whole population of 300, only one, Enrique Fuentes, could read and write.¹⁴

Mr. Kuehn began to visit regularly each week between Zacapa and Puerto Barrios in July, 1948. He lived in Hotel Ferrocarril, in Zacapa, three days each week, and thereafter, services were held each week. On Wednesday evening, adult instruction classes were held; Friday afternoon was set for the children's Bible Class, for which the Spanish-language Concordia Sunday School Leaflets were used; and each Friday evening was the time for Divine Service. For a while, the four-mile walk was made to Maguey each Thursday evening. Later, Maguey was served twice a month, when visits to Monte Grande were begun.¹⁵

The first full order of service, as is found in the Lutheran Hymnal, was conducted in Zacapa on March 16, 1948. Prior to that time, only parts of the liturgy were used. From that time on, the entire service was read. It was only at Christmas, 1948, that an organ was brought to Zacapa for regular use. In September of that year an altar was built by

¹⁴Ibid., Newsletter No. 3, Oct. 18, 1948.

¹⁵C. T. Kuehn, 1948 Desk Diary. Material following will be taken from this source unless otherwise indicated.

hand of mahogany wood by one of the men, Mr. Genaro Reyes, who was also the first person to be married in the Lutheran Church of Zacapa. His wedding took place on November 13, 1948. Rev. Gussick, who visited Zacapa and Puerto Barrios at least once every six weeks, officiated at this wedding.

In October, the first trip was made to the town called Monte Grande, which was one of the many villages near Zacapa without any spiritual care. From then on trips were made to Monte Grande every two weeks, and to Maguey every two weeks. Monte Grande lay some fifteen miles across the desert from Zacapa, and the trip was made most of the time on bicycles. Almost immediately large groups congregated in the patio of a home in that village to hear the Word of God. A few times during the two years covered in this thesis, Rev. Gussick drove the Jeep, owned by the mission, down from the capital to Zacapa and then out to Monte Grande and Maguey. These two villages, without electricity, were virtually cut off from civilization. There were no regular roads leading to them. Rev. Gussick drove the Jeep into the towns over rough ox-cart trails. As mentioned before, a two-kilowatt generator and visual aids equipment was placed on the Jeep. A light was strung up on a pole, and, when it was lit, many people came from the houses of the villages to see what was happening. With the aid of colored slides, Rev. Gussick described the Gospel for the Day and preached on it to many who had never heard the Word of God presented in its truth and purity. The first such use of the Jeep and visual aids equipment was made during the first week of Advent, 1948, when

such a service was held in both villages. A portable organ was played, for many of the simple folk had never heard nor seen an organ and it was a great drawing power. At one such service, in March, 1949, the Passion History was shown to more than 250 people in Monte Grande and to 150 people in Maguey.¹⁶

The building which was rented for the chapel in Zacapa had a room in it which was used for a bookstore. Mr. Manuel Franco, though he could neither read nor write at the time,¹⁷ sold the tracts and books that were offered for sale. This bookstore was widely known in the city and throughout the territory. Mr. Franco earned his livelihood repairing bicycles and watches in this same shop. It was his bicycles that were lent to the missionaries for their trips to Maguey and Monte Grande. When the first public library was opened in Zacapa during 1948, this Lutheran bookstore donated a Bible to it. Especially at Christmastime, many wall plaques and manger sets were offered for sale and sold. The tracts distributed from this store were read in many homes.

About the same time that Rev. Gussick arrived in Guatemala, one Salvador Marriquin Sandoval opened a radio station in Zacapa. Rev. Gussick was successful in buying time over that station for the Lutheran Hour. Mr. Sandoval was so glad to

¹⁶G. F. Kempff, Diary of Guatemala, 1948-9.

¹⁷R. F. Gussick, "The Blind Receive Their Sight," The Mission Call, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Jan., 1950), p. 3. Mr. Franco learned to read and write by the Laubach method in late 1949.

have such a program as the Lutheran Hour, that he broadcast the program twice each Sunday, though he charged for one broadcast each Sunday. A number of times during the year he offered Rev. Gussick free radio time to speak to a wider public, and he announced the time of local services each week after his morning broadcast. Finally, at Christmas, 1948, Rev. Gussick accepted the offer for free radio time. The 24th of December Rev. Gussick preached over Station TGZA, Zacapa, Guatemala. This program was heard in all parts of Central America and in other parts of Latin-America, for Station TGZA is a short-wave station. This radio service was complete in that, again, the whole liturgy was employed. Mrs. Gussick played the portable organ, and the two Seminarians, who were together in Guatemala at the time, sang the liturgy and the hymns.

After this service, the doors of the patio behind the radio station were thrown open and the public was invited to come inside the patio to visit the station's first public broadcast. This broadcast was that of the Christmas Program of the Lutheran Sunday School in Zacapa. The script included eight hymns and a "piece" for each child. Each "piece" was a Bible passage. In this manner, sixty children brought the Christmas message to many people that year. Near the end of the service, the lights were put out, and, while the older children recited the actual Christmas Story, colored slides of the story were shown on a screen. There were 140 visitors present.

On December 30, 1948, a class of twelve adults was confirmed in Zacapa and received the Lord's Supper together with

their pastor and the Seminary students who were with him. Among them were Mr. Vásquez and his wife and daughter, Mr. Reyes, Mr. Franco, and Mr. and Mrs. Flores. There were three more confirmations in Zacapa before June, 1949.

Mr. Fuentes of Maguey was in this first confirmation group. From June, 1948, to June, 1949, there were about seven baptisms in Zacapa. In the town of Maguey there was a little girl who was sick and died of dysentery. Before she died, at the age of three years, she was baptized by Mr. Fuentes. Her father had not been willing for her to be baptized, but in the hours before her death, Mr. Fuentes and others led him to consent to the baptism. It brought the gentleman much comfort to know that his child had been baptized before she died.

The average attendance in church services in Zacapa during the first year of Rev. Gussick's work in Guatemala was about thirty-six. Fewer attended the adult instruction classes regularly, but the children's Bible classes were attended by an average of 50 children.

On April 1, 1949 a congregation was organized at Zacapa with a voting membership of six. The name of the congregation, chosen some time before, was La Iglesia del Divino Salvador (The Church of the Divine Savior.) Mr. Vásquez was elected President, Mr. Enrique Fuentes was elected Secretary, and Mr. Genaro Reyes was elected Treasurer. This was the first and only group to organize as a congregation during the period with which this thesis deals. The group in Zacapa had progressed, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to such a

status in a comparatively short time.¹⁸

The need for property on which to build a church was felt almost immediately, and in February, 1949, a small house was bought for \$1800. This house had one room twenty feet square and was situated on a lot approximately fifty by seventy-five feet. It was located on the main street of Zacapa, just opposite the building that had at first been rented for one year. Plans are to build a church on that property in the near future. Another piece of land was acquired in Zacapa, also on the main street, but slightly away from the center of town. This measures 18,300 square yards, and was bought on June 1, 1949 for \$1200. It is to be the site of missionary homes sometime in the near future.¹⁹

A great number of canvass calls and pastoral visits were made each month and a large number of tracts and Bible portions were distributed. For example, during the month of September, 1948, there were 108 calls made in private homes, and during October of that year 75 homes were visited in Zacapa.

In July, 1949, a Seminarian, Bob Hoferkamp, from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, went from the United States to Zacapa in order to serve in that city for one full year.

Zacapa is a chief city for a very large area of Guatemala and the work of the Lutheran Church that is done on the main street of that city is noted by many who visit the city, and

¹⁸G. F. Kempff, Diary of Guatemala, 1948-9.

¹⁹Ibid.

the news of the Lutheran Church and its bookstore is carried by these travelers to many places.

In Puerto Barrios

Mr. Fred Pankow, who had assisted his brother at the installation service for Rev. Gussick, and who is now one of the Missouri Lutheran pastors in Cuba, stayed in Puerto Barrios for one month before returning to his studies at Concordia Seminary Post Graduate School in September, 1947. During that time he held meetings almost every night and studied the catechism with the Spanish group in that city. Mr. Pilar Alvarez was not in Puerto Barrios during most of the time that Mr. Pankow was there. He returned just as Mr. Pankow was preparing to leave.

When Mr. Pankow left, Rev. Gussick began to visit Puerto Barrios about twice a month. He soon found, after several meetings with Mr. Pilar Alvarez, the man who had been leader of the group there, that Mr. Alvarez was not in agreement with Lutheran doctrine and was not willing to yield to the study of it. Mr. Alvarez, in fact, caused much disturbance in the Spanish group in his city, and many of the people left with him and did not worship with the Lutherans when Rev. Gussick visited and had services with the group. At first, Spanish services had been held in a chapel in front of Mr. Alvarez's home, but almost immediately another place of worship had to be found. Mr. Mariano Menendez offered the use of his home to the Lutheran group, and thereafter Spanish services were

held there, until a small chapel was built. Israel Alvarez, the son of Mr. Pilar Alvarez, was very interested in becoming a Lutheran pastor, and began to study with Rev. Gussick, but very soon he was married and he felt that he could not continue studying. He never came to the services held in the home of Mr. Mariano Menendez.

The English group, on the other hand, had not been successful in raising money to move the old Anglican Chapel to a new site, and Rev. Gussick was not in favor of using money from the United States for this purpose because the building was in a very poor state of repair. There was a building used as a club house for the Jamaican negro group which was secured for use as a temporary church and meeting place. It was favorably located in the area of the city near the docks, and not hard to reach, except when it rained very hard and the approach to the building was muddy.

The first Christmas service in Puerto Barrios was held the Monday before Christmas in 1947. Rev. Gussick flew from Guatemala City, nearly missing serious injury when his airplane, a DC-3 of the Guatemalan commercial airline, Aviateca, got out of control during a landing and snapped off two palm trees and ripped through two small houses at Bananera, headquarters city for the United Fruit Company, a town carved out of the jungle, mid-way between Zacapa and Puerto Barrios. No one was hurt. That evening the Jamaican group invited the Spanish group to their Club House Chapel for service. The hymns were sung in both languages simultaneously, the melodies

being the same, though the words were in different languages. The Christmas Story was read and colored pictures were shown on a screen. The attendance at this service was fifty.²⁰

Rev. Gussick worked hard on his trips to Puerto Barrios to bring a clear understanding of Scripture teaching of the Means of Grace, and of the mediate working of the Holy Spirit to the Spanish group, but it was quite a while before the spirit of complete sanctification in the heart of the individual Christian lost its hold on the hearts of the people, for they were not as ready to accept what he taught them as were those in Zacapa. But the good people of Puerto Barrios studied the Holy Bible very hard and soon it took root in their hearts and they realized more of the implications of the doctrine of original sin.

The Seminary student assistants of Rev. Gussick, first Mr. Kuehn, and later, Mr. Kempff, lived at Hotel de Norte in Puerto Barrios during their period of stay in that city each week. Mr. Kuehn lived in Puerto Barrios the entire month of April, 1948. The program was, after July, 1948, that the student live in Puerto Barrios four days a week. He usually flew to Puerto Barrios from Zacapa on Saturday morning, thus having time for visits in the afternoon and adult class in the evening. If he took the train, he would not have been able to have classes in the evening. In Zacapa, there were three services each week, and one in either Maguey or Monte Grande;

²⁰R. F. Gussick, The Guatemalan Pioneer, No. 2., Jan. 9, 1948.

in Puerto Barrios, with both English and Spanish groups, there were six meetings a week, and sometimes seven. This made it impossible to miss Saturday night classes and made airplane travel necessary. However, the cost of that travel was only \$2.00 more by plane than by train, and the plane saved five hours during the 90-mile trip between the two cities. On the trip to Zacapa, the student usually traveled by train, for then the train left in the morning from Puerto Barrios on the coast and arrived in Zacapa by noon.

As time went on, the groups in Puerto Barrios, both Spanish and English, did not become very large, but remained small. This was due in part to the aforementioned problem of the Spanish group, and to the indifference to church on the part of the Jamaican group. But the worst impediment to the work of the preaching of the Gospel in that third-largest city of Guatemala was the very low moral standard prevalent in the city. There were innumerable cantinas (bars) and houses of ill-fame scattered throughout the city. A priest came from Bananera once a month, and therefore there was no restraint felt from the "church of the land," which had no regular priest in that large city. Furthermore, for the Spanish group, the home of Mr. Menendez was not easily accessible, being situated on the top of a hill on the outskirts of the city, and reached only after a long walk over muddy paths - muddy almost all of the time, for in this area it rained almost every day for most of the year. There were no streetlights and many were actually afraid to walk in that city after dark.

There was no effective means of advertising the services in that private home, and no effective means of directing people to it, for the streets were neither marked nor clearly definable, being nothing more than narrow paths. Until December, 1948, for one entire year, no other place of worship was found for the Spanish group. For the English group, the only available place for worship was the Club House, previously mentioned, and many people complained that, since there were Saturday night dances there, it was not a fit place for worship. Too, the ships from the United States, and other countries, were constantly in port and most of the men of Puerto Barrios were stevedores and "on call" to work.

Attendance at the Spanish adult classes often was less than five; at the children's Sunday School less than twenty; and at the Sunday service, less than twenty. The English church services and adult classes were attended by still fewer people. There was, however, an English part-time school run by two Jamaican women, Mrs. Martinez and Mrs. Young, and they allowed the missionary to come to their schools each week to teach a Bible story. Between these two groups of children, for that school was divided according to age, the missionary always reached fifty children a week. Though they learned the stories well, and showed by their actions at times that they were learning the love of Jesus, only two or three of them would come to church services. Their parents were not interested in sending or bringing them to church.

At Easter, 1948, there was another combined English-

Spanish service, and this time there were one hundred present to hear and see the Easter story, for colored pictures again were brought and shown to them.

Twice in May visits were made at "Mile Four." The railroad is the only highway that leads out of Puerto Barrios going toward the capital city, and four miles out of the city there was a village of palm-thatched houses, called "Mile Four." One home was opened to the Lutheran Group for worship, but after two visits it became evident that almost every night in the week a different man would be allowed to preach in that house, and, since the owner of the house and the people who visited the services were interested in having unionistic services where anyone could pray and preach, and since the work in Puerto Barrios itself was very pressing, they were not continued.

The men of the Spanish group in Puerto Barrios were not, however, satisfied with seeing Lutheran work being done only in Puerto Barrios, and they planned trips to a number of villages far out of town. Three times during the latter part of 1948, and again in the spring of 1949, they traveled by railroad through the banana farms, hired a canoe, and traveled along the Motagua River to its mouth to a number of villages, the principal one being La Barra de la Motagua. This was a two-day trip one way, and sometimes was a three or four-day trip. They would stay for a few days, holding classes and services morning, noon, and night for the people of the villages, preach, leave tracts, and their own Bibles and

catechisms, and Sunday School materials, and return to Puerto Barrios. As a result of this work, Mr. Jesús Mejía, a resident of La Barra de la Motagua, visited Puerto Barrios and told Rev. Gussick of his desire to work with the Lutherans and preach for them, which he then did. In November, 1948, he brought his wife and child to Puerto Barrios, and the baby was baptized. That evening it had rained very hard and there had been no service because no one had come to church. The baptism was performed by Mr. Kuehn on November 7, 1948, in a private home. He worked faithfully in two villages until his death.²¹

On September 2, 1948, the first wedding was blessed by the Lutheran Church in Guatemala. The law of the country is that the couple must be married by the judge, and later can be blessed in the church, if the couple so wishes. Mr. Kuehn was asked to officiate at the wedding and Rev. Gussick was asked to preach. The couple were Miss Irene Flowers of Puerto Barrios, and Mr. Antonio Charles of New Orleans, Louisiana, a sailor on one of the boats. This English wedding service was attended by more than one hundred people.

One effective means of bringing the word of God before the people of Puerto Barrios was through "birthday services." When someone would have a birthday, he invited his friends to his birthday party, and invited the pastor to tell a story or preach on a Bible text. At one of these services, held at

²¹R. F. Gussick, The Guatemalan Pioneer, No. 5, Nov. 25, 1949.

the home of Mr. Thomas Frances, one of the faithful members of the Spanish-speaking group, who lived two miles out of Puerto Barrios, along the railroad track, a child was brought to the Lord in Holy Baptism on November 1, 1948. In this same home private instructions were held regularly, for the family was not able to visit the regular adult classes each Saturday.

On November 2, 1948, a lot was bought on the most favorable street in Puerto Barrios. Of the two all-weather streets, Fifth Avenue was the most important. The lot that was bought for \$700 measured 50 by 150 feet. It was low and swampy. There had been an opportunity to buy another lot, the same size, near the lot that was finally bought. This lot was near a school and was solid ground. It cost \$1000. The Home Mission Board asked Rev. Gussick to arrange to buy the lot on Fifth Avenue. However, the people were overjoyed to have land. They cleared the lot of derbis, dug drainage ditches, which drained into the open sewer on the street, and hauled sand and clay to fill the section of the lot where their temporary chapel was to be built. A space 20 by 40 feet at the back of the lot was filled with sand and gravel at the cost of \$68.25, the men went into the bush some five miles from the city and cut enough poles to build a chapel, hauled them into the city, and set up the frame of the building. They bought the palm-thatch, for the type that is used in building such a building grows in deep swamp-water and is difficult to get. Certain men make their living by cutting and selling these palm branches for building.

material. Thirteen hundred branches were used in the construction of the building and cost \$72.00. The total cost of the structure was \$339.25. This included the fill for the lot, the entire 20 by 40-foot building, the rough benches, and the altar, built of rough lumber and covered with cloth.

On December 25, 1948, there were four services held in the newly-opened church. Fifteen attended the early morning English Christmas Service, and fifteen attended the Spanish Christmas Service. In the afternoon, fifty-five attended the Spanish, and eighteen the English, Children's Program.

While about twenty individuals had been studying and preparing themselves for confirmation in Puerto Barrios, on December 20, 1948, five Spanish-speaking adults were confirmed and received the Lord's Supper, and on December 21, three English-speaking people, two adults and a younger girl, were confirmed and received the Sacrament. One man of the Spanish-speaking group in Puerto Barrios, as mentioned before, was a negro. Therefore, at the first Spanish-language communion service, which was the first Lutheran Communion Service in Guatemala, a Jamaican negro, Guatemalans, and North Americans, (Rev. Gussick and the two students) received the Lord's Supper from a common cup, symbolizing the unity of believers in Christ. The name of the church in Puerto Barrios - and when the congregation is organized, the two language groups will be one congregation - is La Iglesia de Cristo, el Salvador, or, in English, The Church of Christ the Savior.

On New Year's Eve there was another combined service.

This was a watch-night service, and the liturgy was sung, accompanied by the portable organ lent to the church by Mr. Willoughby, first in one language, then in the other. Mr. Kempff preached in English, and Mr. Kuehn preached in Spanish. The service was attended by forty people and the communicants of both language groups communed together. In Puerto Barrios, as well as in Zacapa, the Lord's Supper is celebrated every week. Rev. Gussick discussed the matter with the members in both cities and they agreed that it would be wise to have an opportunity to receive the Sacrament as often as possible. The Seminary students have special permission to administer the Lord's Supper.

The Jamaicans brought many of their children to be baptized. From June, 1948 to June, 1949, there were twenty-three English-language baptisms in Puerto Barrios, performed by the Seminary students. There was one more English wedding in the spring of 1949, performed by Rev. Gussick.

No book store was established in Puerto Barrios. The building of the church on Fifth Avenue helped to centralize the work in both languages, and more visitors began to come to services, especially towards the middle of 1949. Much literature was distributed, but here not from door to door, as in Zacapa. After the chapel was built in Puerto Barrios, then the immediate neighborhood of the chapel was canvassed. The amount of literature distributed was nearly one thousand pieces each month, between both Puerto Barrios and Zacapa. In June, 1949, plans were to build a permanent chapel on the

lot that was owned by the Mission Board, in front of what is now the first Lutheran Church built for the Spanish-speaking people of Central America. At such time that the new building be built, the Palm Thatch Chapel will be used for other purposes.

Though there was much difficulty for the beginning of the permanent mission work in Puerto Barrios, due to the loss of interest on the part of certain of the men, poor location, and extremely low moral conditions in the city, generally, the zeal of the small group was remarkable and they grew, not in Puerto Barrios alone, but spread the Gospel of Jesus to more villages.

In July, 1949, a student vicar, Carl Bretcher, from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, went to Puerto Barrios to stay and serve that city for one full year.

CHAPTER V

GOD'S EARLY BLESSINGS IN REVIEW

This history covers a very short, but important period of time, for it marks the beginning of the first work of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod among the Spanish-speaking people in Central America. From the first letter received by Rev. Harry H. Smith in Texas from Zacapa, in November of 1945, the succeeding letters from Puerto Barrios to Rev. Smith, and the desire of the interned Germans in the United States to have a Lutheran Church again in Guatemala City, to the entrance of Rev. Gussick as the first full-time missionary, was a period of twenty-one months. From his entrance until June, 1949, we count twenty-two months. These three years and seven months were months of great strain for all involved, for the birth of a new church is not easy, and they were months of great joy, for the birth of a new church is a God-pleasing thing.

The exploratory trips of Rev. Mayer and Rev. Pankow yielded much fruit, for the hearts of the Guatemalans who were interested in the Lutheran Church leaped for joy when Rev. Gussick was installed as their first Lutheran pastor. God blessed the efforts he made to teach His Word, and the efforts of the Concordia Seminary students who aided him in this great task.

There were statistics available on the years 1948 and

1949, printed in the Statistical Yearbook of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, but it is true, that in the inception of work such as this, in any field, early figures can be very deceptive. For that reason, they have not been listed. The growth in Christian love, the desire to spread the Word of God to other towns and villages, and the number of people who are asking for Lutheran work to be begun in their villages (seventeen villages are calling for help right now!), are proof that God has blessed His Word in Guatemala.

A comparison of figures mentioned in a letter from Rev. Gussick to Mr. Kempff early in 1950, shows that at the end of 1949 there were approximately double the number of people who attended church services regularly and who visited Christmas services throughout the field than there were at the end of the year 1948. At the end of the year 1949 the number of regular visitors at church in the whole field was six hundred, and the number at the Christmas services was one thousand.

Through Mr. Vázquez' search for literature and his appeal to the Lutheran Bookstore in Texas, the Lutheran Church entered Guatemala and has spread to many places in Guatemala. It is sad to know that some who eagerly awaited the coming of the missionary lost interest when he did come, but heartening to know that many more gathered around him to hear God's Word. God's unfeeling promise is that He will bless His work.

SOLI DEO GLORIA

APPENDIX A

THE FIRST LETTER FROM MR. VASQUEZ TO REV. SMITH

13. Noviembre, 1945.

Mis apreciables hermanos:

Deseo que cuando mi presente esté en sus manos, les encuentre gozando de las inescrutables riquezas de mi Señor, pues son los deseos de mi corazón para con Uds. Aunque no les conozco, pero siento en mi espíritu la comunión del Señor con Uds. Hermanos me gusta hablar siempre que me toca, francamente: deseo que Uds. me manden por la remesa gratuita un buen surtido de tratados para la distribución, que sean especiales para evangelización sobre todo aquellos que tratan las falsas doctrinas romanas. Si no hay de este, los que tengan. Lo que necesito es literatura para repartir.

También les suplico si pueden me hagan favor de mandarme la biografía de Martín Lutero pues me gusta leer libros de edificación espiritual y me es bastante dificultoso comprarlos por tener a mi cargo seis hijos de familia a quienes sostengo con mi propio trabajo. Además deseo que mis hijos se instruyan en los caminos del Señor. Perdoname hermanos mi franquesa.

Soy de Uds. su hermano en Jesús,
(signed) Alfredo Vásquez A.

Its translation:

November 13, 1945.

My esteemed brothers,

I wish that when this is in your hands, it finds you rejoicing in the inscrutable riches of my Lord, for that is the desire of my heart for you. Although I do not know you, I feel communion with you in the Lord. Brothers, I like to speak frankly: I wish you to send me free of charge a good assortment of tracts for distribution, which are especially for evangelization of those which treat of the false Roman doctrines. If you have none of those, what you have. What I need is literature to distribute.

Also may I ask you to do me the favor of sending me the biography of Martin Luther for I love to read books of spiritual edification and it is very difficult for me to buy them, for I have six children of my own to take care of, whom I support by my own work. Pardon my frankness, brothers.

I am your brother in Jesus,
(signed) Alfredo Vásquez A.

APPENDIX B

THE FIRST LETTER FROM HILDA VASQUEZ TO REV. SMITH

Zacapa, 13. Noviembre, 1945.

Estimados hermanos:

El objeto de mi presente, es saludarlos en el amor de mi Salvador y al mismo tiempo ruego a mi padre celestial que les colme de especial bendición.

Hermanos. El fin de mi cartita es hacerles la siguiente súplica y es esta: Deseo que me manden un surtido de tratados por la remesa gratuita y unas figuritas para repartir a unas niñitas a quienes les enseñe la palabra de Dios. No les mando ofrenda porque me es imposible, pues mi padre es muy pobre. Perdón hermano.

Su hermana en Jesús,
(signed) Hilda Vásquez

Its translation:

Zacapa, November 13, 1945.

Esteemed brothers,

The object of this is to salute you in the love of my Savior and at the same time pray my celestial father that He crown you with a special blessing.

Brothers, the purpose of my little letter is to make the following request and it is this: I wish that you would send me an assortment of tracts free of charge and some little pictures to distribute to a few children whom I teach the Word of God. I cannot send you an offering because it is impossible for me, since my father is very poor. Pardon, brother.

Your sister in Jesus,
(signed) Hilda Vásquez

APPENDIX C

A LETTER FROM THE CHURCH AT ZACAPA TO REV. SMITH

Zacapa, 30. Diciembre, 1945.

Sr. Harry H. Smith,

Mi amado hermano en Jesús: Con el amor de Jesús en nuestros corazones lo saludamos deseando se encuentre gozando de las bendiciones del Señor en unión de su apreciable familia, a quienes no conocemos pero nos gozamos en saludarlos. Había pensado escribirles en cuanto recibiese carta suya, pero me anticipé para contarle que los folletos especialmente los que tratan de la doctrina que Uds. enseñan, nos han sido de gran bendición pues esto era lo que yo deseaba y deseábamos pues así creo yo. "La Iglesia Amigos" a la que yo pertenecía no enseñan toda la verdad de las escrituras. Ellos enseñan que el "Bautismo" no es necesario lo mismo dicen de la santa sena enseñan además que la santificación no es progresiva sino instantánea y que es posible alcanzarla en este mundo, a pesar de lo que dice San Pablo en Filipenses 3, 12 etc.

El objeto de mi presente es darle la nueva que hoy domingo 30, de Diciembre tanto era el gozo de algunos hermanos que tuvimos que celebrar el primer culto ya como "Iglesia Evangélica Luterana" (aunque pocos pero Ud. sabe que las cosas grandes empiesan por las pequeñas) Dios nos bendijo especialmente. Y hay muchos que están por unirse a nosotros. El numero de hermanos e inconvertidos pasa de 28 con algunos niños, y estamos con la idea de mandar hacer nuestro rótulo con el nombre de "Iglesia Evangélica Luterana." Nuestro departamento es grande como le dije anteriormente. Pasa de 100,000 habitantes y si hay 500 creyentes es mucho además la misión está despreocupada y las almas perdiéndose por falta de amor. Ahora: si Ud. pregunta a ellos dicen que están trabajando. Lo mismo dicen las demás misiones que trabajan en la Republica pero es mentira. Guatemala necesita de una misión que en verdad cumpla con el mandato del Señor, en San Marcos 14, 15-16. Figurese hermano, la ciudad donde yo vivo es muy grande además, tiene estación central donde salen 3 vias fereas una de ellas llega a la republica del Salvador en una palabra es una ciudad de mucho movimiento y si Ud. pregunta cuantos cultos se celebran en los barrios le dirán que nin uno. Verdad que es una lastima? Por esto nosotros esperamos que Uds. vengan a trabajar. Dios va a bendecir vuestra obra. Avisanos cuando vienen les esperamos porque les necesitamos. Cuando Uds. vengan se desengañarán que es cierto que Guatemala necesita del Evangelio de Cristo. Queremos que nos manden himnarios dentro de ellos uno de música, 3 rebistas de la

escuela Dominical y mas folletos para distribuir. Como le dije anteriormente mi hija toca el armonio lo mismo un joven de los firmantes pero tropesamos con la dificultad que no tenemos. Ademas los que componemos la pequeña Iglesia que se acaba de formar somos pobres. Los cultos los seguiremos celebrando en las casitas de los hermanos, Dios mediante. Oren por nosotros y nosotros por Uds. Yo creo que la oración de Uds. nos va a sostener. Si no ha recibido carta de algunos hermanos les va a recibir. La noticia de esta "Iglesia Evangélica Luterana" ha sido un éxito gracias a Dios. En nombre de la Iglesia nos firmamos:

(signed) José Alfredo Vásquez A.
 Angel M. Vásquez
 Jesús Perez
 a ruego de Manuel Franco que
 ignora firmar, Jesús Perez
 M. Hilda Vásquez
 José Flores B.
 Luz C. de Vásquez
 por no saber firmar Antonia
 Barahona, José Alfredo Vásquez A.

APPENDIX D

THE LETTER FROM MR. WILLOUGHBY TO REV. SMITH

Puerto Barrios, September 11, 1945.

Greetings:

I have been successful in gathering a few souls together who have been spiritually starving through the lack of a Spiritual Pastor to administer them the HOLY Supper of the Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST.

Those faithful were members of the Anglican Faith, including a few belonging to the Methodist, Baptist, Moravian, and the Presbyterian Faith. After the Rector Father Frank Kelly was called home to England the members began to drift away, some went over to the Seventh-Day Adventist while some went away to the vain pleasures of the world and the remaining few kept with me by staging a little Services to God in a Club House.

We after seeing the inadequacy of the place, approach the Manager of the United Fruit Company; supplicating to him in the name of our Redeemer Christ the Lord for a help. After the space of nine months God has touched his heart, and he gave us the Building which was once dedicated to the Anglican faith. The said building is now desecrated due to the fact that the Company had given it to some labourers to dwell therein. We will be removing the Building from its present state to a new locality which the government has so freely granted to us.

Now what we wanted is an ordained Pastor to lead this little flock which through the grace and blessing of God will steadily grow. The kind of Pastor we want is one who is in power to baptize, to marry and to administer the Holy Sacrament for I am not in power to do so.

It is the desire of the people that I should be ordained, since I have been preaching to them and burying the dead for practically eight years. To facilitate their desires I have been preparing myself to lead the said flock if confidence can be conferred on me to serve the Lord in that capacity.

My present qualifications are:

I am a graduate of the American Correspondence High School,

Chicago: a Solicitor of the American Correspondence School of Law: an Analytical and Industrial Chemist of the International Correspondence Schools, Scranton, Pa. A Doctor of Metaphysic of White Institute of Science, Los Angeles, a graduate of the Moody Bible Institute for Synthetic Bible; a Doctor of Psychology of the Divine College of Metaphysics, Indianapolis. In the said College of Divine Metaphysics I am taking instruction for the Degrees of Metaphysics and Doctor of Divinity. I have been a Lay Reader for the Anglican Church in Barrios for about twelve years. At present I am in the employ of the United Fruit Company as a Field Dispenser for nineteen years and two months.

To the above information if it please your grace, I would so gratefully oblige through God's Holy Will that you make it possible to have me ordained whereby I may be able to serve our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The harvest is ripening and the laborers are few. I do believe if you will consider me as how Paul was converted and made a faithful servant of our Lord, through God's most gracious will I can by pruning and harvesting bring fruits worthy to enter the joys of eternal life.

I had come across your address through Señor Don J. Pilar Alvarez of Puerto Barrios who was the Pastor of the Evangelist Church in Barrios by the name of "Los Amigos." The said Mr. Alvarez always supplied me with pamphlets, tracts, and other sacred literature both in English and Spanish. He can tell you a lot about me.

Yours in Christ,
 (signed)
 Edward Willoughby

APPENDIX E

GUATEMALA MISSION STATISTICS

Places of Worship	947
Communicant or Full Members	21,233
Total Christian Community - 1925	11,117
- 1938	21,740
Latest Available Figures	76,248
Staff -	
Ordained -	
National	36
Foreign	24
Laymen -	
National	101
Foreign	44
Women -	
National	2
Foreign	40
Theological Colleges	4
Bible Schools	8

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION	-	Iglesia Evangélica en Guatemala
BRITISH SOCIETY	-	Christian Missions in Many Lands
NORTH AMERICAN SOCIETIES	-	Assemblies of God
		California Yearly Meeting of
		Friends Church
		Central American Missions
		Church of God
		Church of the Nazarenes
		Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.
		Primitive Methodist Foreign
		Mission Board
		Seventh-Day Adventists
		Others

¹World Christian Handbook, Kenneth G. Grubb, editor. (London World Dominion Press, 1949), p. 287.

APPENDIX F

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 1949

Since July, 1949, before Mr. Gerhard Kempff returned to the United States, two Seminary students from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, have been assisting Rev. Gussick in Guatemala. They intend to return to the United States during the summer of 1950.

Mr. Robert Hoferkamp, son of Rev. Edward Hoferkamp of Jonesville, Indiana, is stationed in Zacapa. Mr. Carl Bretcher, son of Prof. Paul Bretcher of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, is stationed in Puerto Barrios. Both had vicared in Spanish Missions in Texas, in Corpus Christi and McAllen, respectively. Both have completed three years at Concordia Seminary. Mr. Robert Hoferkamp also instructed in the Spanish language at Concordia Seminary, as did Mr. Fred Pankow and Mr. Clarence Kuehn.

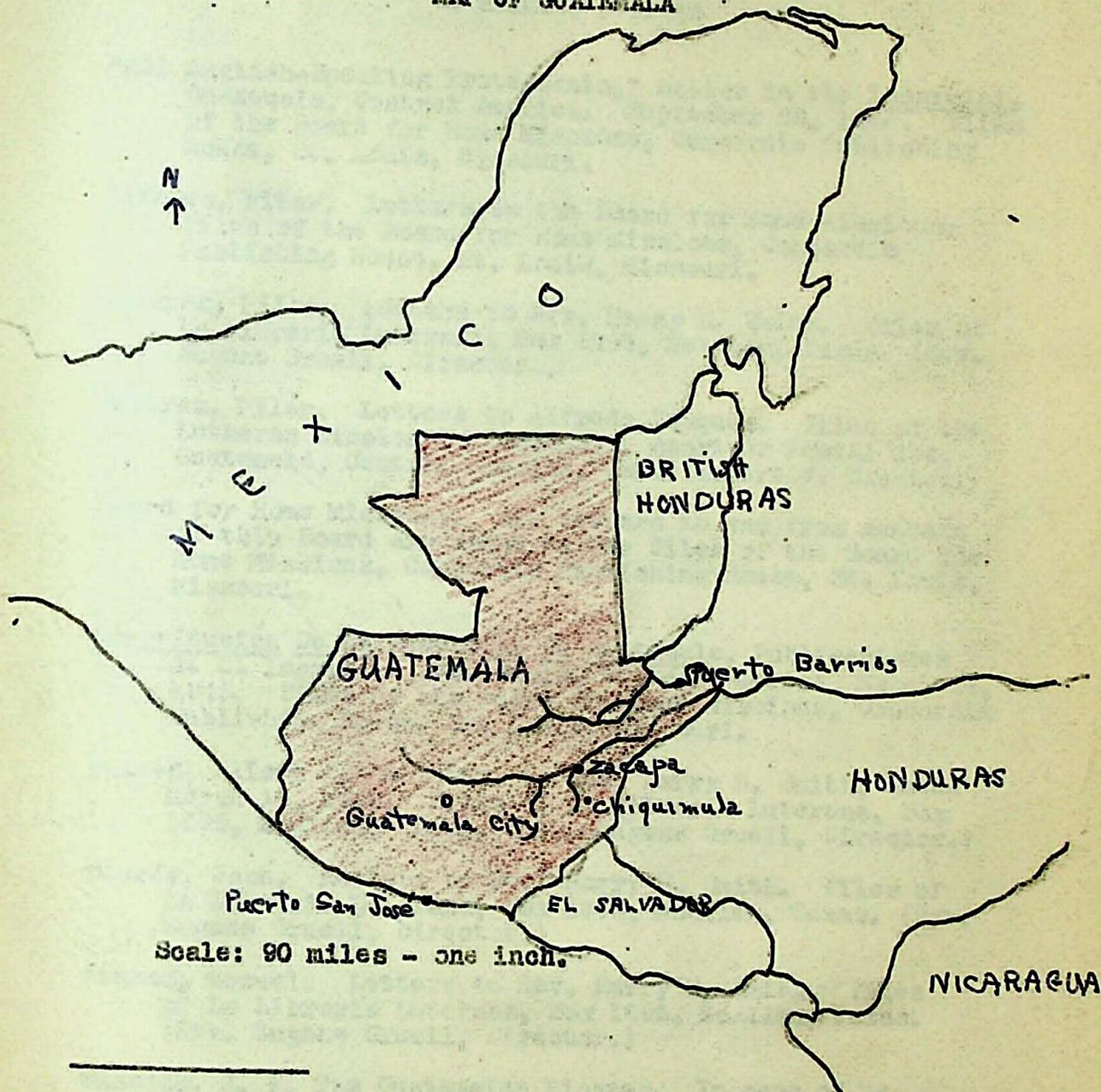
Upon his graduation from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in June, 1950, Mr. Kuehn will receive a call to Guatemala. He will go to Guatemala sometime during the summer of 1950.

Mr. Robert Huebner, son of Rev. Gerhard Huebner of Portage, Wisconsin, who had been a missionary in Argentina for twenty years, has been asked to spend a year in Guatemala starting during the summer of 1950. Mr. Huebner has finished three years at Concordia Seminary and is proficient in both Spanish and German.

Building operations in both Zacapa and Puerto Barrios are to begin during the year 1950, and a program of training for lay workers is under way, with one man, Mr. Miguel Garcia, already serving in La Barra de la Motagua, and another, Mr. Enrique Fuentes, serving in Maguey.

APPENDIX G

MAP OF GUATEMALA



Scale: 90 miles - one inch.

From a map of Mexico, Central America and the West Indies, compiled and drawn in the Cartographic Section of The National Geographic Society for The National Geographic Magazine, Gilbert Grosvenor, editor. Washington, D. C., Dec. 1939.

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