

Brief History of Intermissions

The first permanent evangelical missions work in Guatemala began with the arrival in 1882 of John C. Hill, a Presbyterian who came at the invitation of President Justo Rufino Barrios. In 1899, the Central American Mission (now CAM International) became the second agency, followed by the Friends, the Nazarenes, and the Primitive Methodists. These five pioneer groups made a committee agreement to work in different areas of the country. As the missionary body was small, most people knew each other, and there were some joint conferences and other endeavors.



The first Intermissions, as we know it, must have been in 1935 or 36, but the first one of which we have a record was held March 2-4 (Tuesday to Thursday), 1937, as the "Conference of Evangelical Missionaries," at "Colegio La Patria" in Guatemala City. It was organized by a coordinating committee that included Frank Toms and Frank Bundy of C.A.M. and Paul Burgess of the Presbyterians as well as the Primitive Methodists.

The program included devotional times, topics of current interest, and recognition of Presbyterian E.M Haymaker's 50 years of service in Guatemala. It was decided that a similar meeting be held the next year for fellowship, and that event, in 1938, was called "The Intermission Conference." After that it was variously "Inter-Mission," "Intermissions," "Inter-missions" and "Inter-Missionary. For the first several years, the meetings were held in Guatemala City at La Patria, the Garden of Roses School, the Central American Bible Institute, and Central Presbyterian Church. The main purpose was fellowship, but there was also discussion of current issues and ways to work together.

Business sessions, often three per conference were an important part of the program, with minutes faithfully kept. Besides the election of new officers, there was consideration of policy matters and joint projects. For several of the early years one item on the agenda was the sending of a telegram to President Ubico with greetings from the assembled body.

In 1940, it was voted to invite missionaries for the next year from all of Central America, including the Canal Zone. A motion was also passed that the conference be held annually. In 1941, the treasurer reported receipts of \$3.30, expenditures of \$2.93, and a balance of 37 cents toward the next year.

In the late '40s the various missions began hosting the conference where they had facilities; the Friends in Chiquimula, Nazarenes in Coban, and the Primitive Methodists in Chichicastenango and San Cristobal Totonicapan. The invitation to Chiquimula in 1950 included information on how to take the train (1st Class cost \$3.40 and 2nd class \$1.70). Or you could fly four days a week for \$5.50, but please advise of your arrival as the airstrip was five miles from town with no bus service.

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Curiously, the organizing committee was not necessarily headed by the host mission. In recent years, the president has been from the current host agency and the vice-president from the next year's.

In 1948, in Coban, Matilda Haworth was President, the first woman to hold that office as far as I know, although many women have served in other capacities. Each person attending that year was asked to contribute \$1 to the treasury.

Beginning in 1958 the Monte Sion Camp near Amatitlan became a favored location for Intermissions, although it was still held elsewhere at times. The Ramada it was not. Early registrants got bunk beds in cabins; others were housed in tents or took their own tents or campers. Everyone brought his own bedding and towels. On the other hand, the cost was \$1.50 per day for food and lodging. By 1976, the price had gone up to 25 cents per night in the old cabins and 50 cents in the new, plus \$1 per meal.

Those attending the 1961 conference in Chiquimula, hosted by the Friends, were asked to bring not only bedding, but also the bed, as well as a drinking glass and small dessert dish!

As new agencies began work in Guatemala, Intermissions expanded. Wycliffe and the Southern Baptists were added as hosts, and more recently other groups. In 1968, it was voted to receive several missions as members: the Mennonites, Church of God, Source of Light, Global Harvesters, and the Foursquare Church.

More recently there does not seem to have been any formal membership. Misión Emanuel, Global Harvesters, Christians in Action, United World Mission, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Mission Aviation Fellowship, the Mennonites, Medical Ambassadors, Union Church, SEPAL, and Living Water Teaching have taken part in putting on the conference over the past decades.

Locations where Intermissions has been held, besides those already listed, include Panajachel, Quetzaltenango, the Nazarene Seminary in Z. 18, Christian Academy of Guatemala, Union Church, and some facilities in Antigua.

Some of the better-known speakers have included Richard Halverson, Richard Seume, George Cowan, Eugene Nida, Joe Aldrich, Howard Hendricks and John Garlock. David LeShana, president of George Fox College when he spoke in 1977, donated church hymnals (which the school was replacing) to Intermissions.

In 1966, Ray Steadman of Peninsula Bible Church in California was among several speakers at the "Guatemala Intermissions Keswick Conference," which was jointly sponsored by Mount Hermon Conference Center.



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The Intermissions Directory, in one form or another, has been an important feature almost from the beginning. In early years there were so few missionaries that the list was actually printed in the program. Later there were mimeographed or dittoed sheets. Thanks to Wycliffe and their computer department, for several years, we had enjoyed an attractive and useful booklet updated for each conference.

~ Stephen Sywulka, CAM International

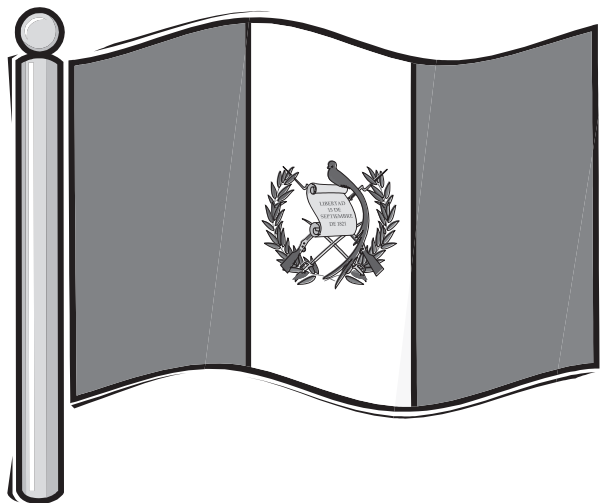


Update 2007: The directory now is printed at a local printer and is assembled on the computer by an Intermissions committee volunteer. Keep your information updated at:

<http://membership.intermissionsgt.org/>

Are you called to serve your peers?

This conference and community is possible because of your fellow peers answering the call to volunteer and serve the community in various capacities. Please consider being a volunteer on the Intermissions Finishing Committee. Contact the current coordinator or any committee member and be sure to fill out a “Finishing Committee Volunteer” form. The forms are passed out at the conference. If you do not get one, then email intermissions-owner@yahoogroups.com and say you want to serve!



FINISHING COMMITTEE:

The Finishing Committee is named each year and made up of representatives from various mission organizations or ministries. This committee is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the Intermissions conference. It is ideal that some serve on this committee for 2 or 3 years, giving continuity to the program. It is preferred that the Coordinator be one who has served on the Finishing Committee at least one year previously. Monthly meetings are usually held for 7 to 10 months prior to a conference for making plans and arrangements.